Communication and Morale in Public Schools: The Effects of the Wisconsin Budget Repair Bill
as Experienced by Public School Teachers in a High School

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Abstract

This body of research explored the effects of Governor Scott Walker’s Budget Repair Bill on public school teachers in the state of Wisconsin. This bill was introduced in February of 2011 and passed in March of 2011. Effects that were expected included any possible change in the communication climate of the school, and any effects on an individual’s professional life, specifically, morale. This study utilized the phenomenological method and, through a series of thirteen recorded and carefully transcribed interviews of teachers at a typical public high school in central Wisconsin, thoughts and opinions surrounding the effects of the bill on the communication climate of the school and the morale of the teachers were identified.
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In recent years in the United States, the economy and the budget have both been issues of concern and contention for individuals on both sides of the political aisle. For the American people, jobs had become scarce, and it had become increasingly difficult to carry out such day-to-day activities as paying household bills, and even putting food on the table. These economic hardships and budgetary concerns were also seen in a multitude of states around the country, including Wisconsin. In 2011, the Wisconsin state government and the newly elected governor made it widely known that Wisconsin was facing an estimated $3.6 billion budgetary shortfall. It has been posited that this number was brought to the public’s attention in order to ignite a consensus that drastic measures were needed to repair the present financial situation. In an attempt to repair this deficit, and get the state of Wisconsin back on track, the governor of the state proposed the Wisconsin Budget Repair Bill.

The Budget Repair Bill, introduced by Governor Scott Walker in 2011, stirred many emotions in the hearts and minds of Wisconsinites, as well as individuals, organizations, and governments across the country. This bill affected many people, regardless of their employment status. The bill, in sum, was “An Act relating to: state finances, collective bargaining for public employees, compensation and fringe benefits of public employees, the state civil service system, the Medical Assistance program, sale of certain facilities, granting bonding authority, and making an appropriation.” (2011-2012 State of Wisconsin Legislature, 2011, p. 1).

There has been a great deal of speculation surrounding whether or not the morale or productivity of the workforce is affected when organizations experience events that directly affect the entirety of the business, such as modifications to the budget, massive restructuring, and so forth. During organizational shifts, not only is the organizational culture and climate affected, but, additionally, these shifts can affect each individual employee in different ways. Despite the
amount of speculation surrounding this issue, there is little concrete research exploring how employees handle drastic organizational changes in their individual employment positions, as well as how employees’ organizational life is affected on the broader scale.

This study will explore how the Budget Repair Bill has affected public school teachers in the state of Wisconsin. In order to obtain a better grasp of the issues surrounding the potential effects on educators, a basic background of the topics is necessary, specifically, organizational and communication climate, the history of teachers’ unions, and a brief summary of the passage of the Budget Repair Bill.

**Review of Related Literature**

**Organizational and Communication Climate**

In all places of employment, including the public school systems in the state of Wisconsin, many factors have contributed to the smooth functioning and overall characterization of the organization. The communication climate and overall organizational climate in the workplace has had the ability to drastically affect how a person does his or her job, how a person identifies with their organization, whether or not they are satisfied in their position, and can even determine the level of commitment that person has to their position, as well as to their organization as a whole. In order to examine the effects that an organizational climate and a communication climate has on individual employees within an organization, a better understanding of the role that communication plays within organizations, as well as the definition of organizational climate and communication climate needs to be obtained. Additionally, it is crucial to highlight the different motivational issues, as well as details that factor into commitment to gain a better understanding of the effects of organizational climate and communication climate.
Communication within organizations. Communication has been thought of as one of the most essential of all activities that organizational managers take on, as well as the primary method of behavior within an organization (Ireland, Van Auken & Lewis, 1978). When an organization has a weak system of message transfer or no system at all, systematic procedures within the entire organization can become greatly inadequate (Kulhavy & Schwartz, 1981). It has been widely recognized within the managerial field that communication maintains a large and important part in influencing the breadth, depth, and range of an organization (Barnard, 1938; Kulhavy & Schwartz, 1981).

According to Kulhavy and Schwartz (1981) “Beyond logistics and procedures, communication carries other information – information which conveys meaning about the character of an organization as an entity in itself” (p. 17). Poole (1985) contends that it is desirable for communication, as practiced within organizations, to embody a climate of its own, distinct from other organizational climates (i.e., achievement climate, motivational climate, etc.). This climate has become thought of as the communication climate. The personality of an organization, or its character, is usually not described as singular in nature, as many have defined it to include an “organization’s values, norms, attitudes, and behavioral expectations (Payne, 1971; Kulhavy & Schwartz, 1981, p. 17). The precision with which information is communicated has been directly related to how a listener thinks of and sees different aspects of an organization. Muchinsky (1977) has stated that “The potential importance of accuracy as a determiner of climate is magnified by the fact that accuracy of communicated information is probably amenable to change and control within an organization” (p. 601).

Specific features of communication within organizations were thought to be directly tied to the supposed climate of those organizations. However, to some scholars, it seemed that other
aspects of organizational communication were completely unconnected to an organization’s climate (Muchinsky, 1977). Despite these thoughts, according to Guzley (1992), communication can be directly linked to the organizational climate in that communication is the tool used to accomplish a great deal of organizational work.

**Organizational climate.** Organizational climate has been defined many times by many different scholars. Organizational climate has been thought of as “a set of properties of the work environment, perceived directly or indirectly by the employees who work in this environment and…assumed to be a major force in influencing their behavior on the job.” (Gibson, Ivancevich, & Donnelly, 1973; Ireland, Van Auken, Lewis, 1978). However, the earliest known definition of organizational climate that gained wide acceptance was developed by Forehand and Gilmer in 1964. Their definition stated that organizational climate was

…the set of characteristics that describe an organization and that (a) distinguish the organization from other organizations, (b) are relatively enduring over time, and (c) influence the behavior of people in the organization (p 362).

A different interpretation of climate was posited by Pritchard and Karasick in 1973. These two scholars saw climate resulting from the attitudes, actions, and performance of members within an organization. Pritchard and Karasick (1973) stated that

Organizational climate is a relatively enduring quality of an organization’s internal environment distinguishing it from other organizations; (a) which results from the behavior and policies of members of organizations, especially top management; (b) which is perceived by members of the organization; (c) which serves as a basis for interpreting the situation; and (d) acts as a source of pressure for directing activity (p. 126).
According to Guzley (1992), organizational climate described an aspect of an organization as a whole, and could, in turn, be categorized by precise dimensions. Six of these dimensions were described as (a) human resource primacy (i.e., to what extent an organization values its employees and considers them an important resource); (b) communication flow (i.e., how effective the upward, downward, and lateral communication flow is within the organization as a whole); (c) motivational practices (i.e., how different relationships and conditions within an organization either encourage or discourage the accomplishment of work-related tasks); (d) decision-making practices (i.e., the details that go into how an organizational decision is made); (e) technological readiness (i.e., whether or not the members of the organization think that their resources, organizational processes, and equipment are effective enough [up-to-date, and well maintained] to get their job done well); and (f) lower-level influence (i.e., whether or not all employees feel that their ideas and opinions are valued and influential in their department).

It was quite obvious how, if one or more of these dimensions are missing, the climate of an organization could be lacking in substance, and, therefore, challenge the members of the organization in terms of their productivity and overall satisfaction. According to Muchinsky (1977), the climate that an organization embodied was, essentially, the qualities and characteristics, measured on a situational basis, by employees’ perceptions.

The climate within an organization has been thought of as a necessary tie amongst the organization and its members (Guzley, 1992), and the advancement of organizational climate was thought to occur through the process of informal and formal communication, alike (Ireland, Van Auken, & Lewis, 1978). The climate of an organization was usually thought of simultaneously as the organization’s character. Climate was thought of as “a term which assumes that it is a perceptual phenomenon abstracted by organizational members” (Hellriegel & Slocum,
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1974; Kulhavy & Schwartz, 1981, p. 17). Some scholars looked at an organization’s climate as a distinct aspect of the organization as a whole, as climate could be seen in terms of specific features, as well as understood by the members of the organization. Likewise, this understanding had a vital impact on members’ motivation within the organization, as well as their attitude (Guzley, 1992). Tagiuri (1968) posited that

climate is the relatively enduring quality of the total environment that (a) is experienced by the occupants, (b) influences their behavior, and (c) can be described in terms of the values of a particular set of characteristics (or attributes) of the environment” (p. 25).

Ashforth (1985) claimed that climate could be described as a “joint property of both the organization and the individual” (p. 838). Therefore, it could be deduced that climate is a product of the relationship between the features of an organization and the individual behaviors of the organization’s members (Guzley, 1992).

When it comes to looking at the structure of organizations, earlier studies have recognized the occurrence of a distinct climate. It seemed to be possible that an organizational aspect, such as climate, should be linked to certain elements of communication within an organization such as the precision of a communicated message. This could be due to the fact that both climate and the precision of communication help to examine the many features of organizational procedure (Muchinsky, 1977).

In terms of an organization’s climate, it has been thought that the unit of analysis is the organization. However, some scholars suggested that, in terms of organizational climate, the unit of analysis was, in fact, the individual as opposed to the organization. Furthermore, it has been suggested that methods of analyzing organizational climate should be descriptive in nature, as
opposed to affective. Despite this, it has been shown that a lot of different climate attributes contain assessments that are implied. Therefore, any descriptive, as well as affective replies can and do become distorted (Muchinsky, 1977).

Organizational climate was further defined by a multitude of slight attitude and behavioral displays. These displays have been influential in deciding how managers within organizations explain the role they play in the organization, as well as the roles others play (Falcione, 1974). The defining characteristics that work together to develop the climate within an organization have been established when individualized thoughts, feelings, and beliefs, were introduced into the organization by different employees, and mixed with the already established aspects of the organization’s culture (Hellriegel & Slocum, 1974; Ireland, Van Auken & Lewis, 1978).

According to Campbell, Dinnette, Lawler & Weick (1975), the following variables combined to shape the climate within the organization:

*Structure*: the employees’ perception of the breadth and depth of organizational rules, constraints, and regulations; *Individual responsibility*: the employees’ perceptions of the degree of autonomy extended to them by the organization; *Rewards*: the employees’ perception of the adequacy and appropriateness of organizational rewards received for exhibiting desired performances; *Risk and risk taking*: the employees’ perceptions of the extent of risk and challenge offered within the work setting; *Warmth and support*: the employees’ perceptions of the fellowship and helpfulness pervading the work environment; *Tolerance and conflict*: the employees’ confidence in the ability of the organization to accept differing opinions. (p. 303).
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Additionally, based on the combinations of the six variables previously mentioned, three categories of organizational climate have been seen: “the power-motivated climate, the affiliation-oriented climate, and the achievement-oriented climate” (Hellriegel and Slocum, 1974, p 430). In the power-motivated climate, members of an organization observed that, more times than not, the decision-making process was top-down. That is, it was developed and passed down from the top of the organizational hierarchy. Additionally, communication patterns have been very well-defined, and employees were offered little to no flexibility in their positions. This type of climate, many times likened to the climate found in the military, would seem likely to assist in the creation of a wary and defensive communication climate. When an organizational climate emphasized the importance of a warm, comfortable organizational relationship (as opposed to a formal, cold relationship), the climate was usually thought of as affiliation-oriented. In an achievement-oriented climate, different levels of management were allowed and encouraged to assist in many aspects of the process of goal setting for the organization. These types of organizations would more than likely cultivate a climate of supportive communication (Ireland, Van Auken & Lewis, 1978, p. 4-5).

**Communication climate.** A definition of communication climate that was posited by Redding (1972) emphasized the fact that the communication climate is made up of a combination of support from all levels of the organization, encouragement to participate in the decision making process of the organization, reliability, trust, and self-assuredness, as well as honesty, and the consistent reach for challenging goals. According to Redding (1973), while in the process of establishing an effective organization, the communication climate should be an extremely necessary characteristic to develop.
Dennis’s (1974) definition of a communication climate maintained that this aspect of the inner-workings of the organizational environment was experienced on an individual level. Furthermore, theorists of communication climate come to understand that members of an organization have different ways of thinking and acting, and, due to this fact, different employees’ observations and insights into organizationally-related messages are unique. Additionally, it has been suggested that an idyllic communication climate is made up of eight different dimensions, including

- supportiveness, openness and candor, participative decision making, trust,
- confidence and credibility, high performance goals, information adequacy,
- semantic information difference, and communication satisfaction” (Bartels, Pruyn, Jong & Joustra, 2006, p. 177).

Likewise, regarding the concept of communication climate and its characteristics, Dennis added to Redding’s list the necessity of information adequacy, semantic-information distance, and communication satisfaction (Krivonos, 1978). He also contended that there are five aspects responsible for the multitude of communication climate perceptions. These aspects are as follows:

- superior-subordinate communication, quality of information, superior
- openness/candor, opportunities for upward communication, and reliability of
- information (Guzley, 1992).

Therefore, communication climate can very well be defined as employees’ observations regarding the depth and breadth of the shared relationships and the overall communication within the organization as a whole (Goldhaber, 1993; Bartels, Pruyn, De Jong & Joustra, 2006).
It has been shown that the communication climate lends substantially to the organizational climate (Krivonos, 1978). Communication climate should be separate from organizational climate in that the communication climate “includes only communicative phenomena, e.g., judgments concerning such things as receptivity of management to employees or the accuracy of information being disseminated in the organization” (Dillard, Wigand, & Boster, 1986, p. 87). According to Pace (1983), communication climate was further differentiated from the organizational climate because “some perceptions directly involve the climate in which communication occurs. This is called the organizational communication climate” (p. 126).

An organization’s communication climate is an integral piece of the setting in which an employee’s job is located (Krivonos, 1978). Furthermore, Pace (1983) suggested that the communication climate of an organization is, in fact, a subcategory within the organizational climate. This statement has been supported by noting that the organizational climate, in its entirety, is made up of employees’ insights into the different characteristics of organizational life. These characteristics include whether or not the flow of information is perceived to be adequate or inadequate, as well as the whether or not the different organizational applications that involve communication are perceived to be effective (Pace, 1983).

The communication climate has the ability to greatly affect the organizational climate in many ways. For example, the written communication that is dispersed by that organization can drastically shift an employee’s perception of the organization. In many cases, it has been shown that the different outlooks and insights into an organization’s climate have been greatly inspired by the assembly, setting, and tone of the communication that was developed, written, and distributed by the management (Kulhavy & Schwartz, 1981). It is here that the topic of
organizational clarity should be mentioned in order to be included as a characteristic of organizational climate (Guzley, 1992). Clarity, as well as involvement can both be predictors of commitment within an organization. This is thought to be particularly true during periods of organizational transition and change. It has been shown that during these times of transition and change, members of the organization tend to remain committed to the organization if some sense of clarity and order is maintained (Guzley, 1992).

Two different types of communication climate have been influenced by organizational climate. These communication climates are the defensive climate and the supportive climate. In a supportive communication climate, the diffusion of messages tends to be effective and well-organized. Criticism is thought of as an attempt by the organization to help the employees reach their organizational potential, while encouragement is given to employees to form new and effective ways to solve organizational dilemmas. The use of unprompted communication (within certain parameters) allows for the transfer of authentic messages from employee to employee. Employees tend to see other employees as empathetic of them and their situation, and offer a true concern and desire for their ideas, opinions, and feelings. Despite the fact that the idea of supervisors and employees can share complete equality is a relative pipe dream, the ability to create an atmosphere of respect and trust within these two groups has been shown to lessen or remove altogether the barriers surrounding communication. Additionally, the majority of the decisions made are thought of as short-term. This mindset, combined with a desire for other thoughtful opinions, helps to create and maintain significant communication with all members of the organization (Ireland, Van Auken & Lewis, 1978).

Defensive communication climates, on the other hand, have acted as barriers to the distribution of messages. Members of the organization often times think that they are
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consistently being watched and assessed by their superiors, and the amount of criticism far outweighs the amount of rewards. Many organizations that encompass a defensive communication climate, have rarely, if ever, sought the ideas and opinions of employees, as the majority of decisions related to the operation of the organization are made by the higher-ranking, superior members.

Employees in a defensive climate tend to see messages distributed within the organization as strategic or controlling. By maintaining a neutral form of communication, members of an organization oftentimes feel that there is a general lack of care and/or consideration for others within the organization. Defensive climates have generally progressed if the idea of respect and trust between superiors and subordinates was not encouraged as an important goal within the organization. Furthermore, a major element of defensive communication is that of certainty. This characteristic allows for the diffusion of communication in a way that dissuades or disallows for any additional ideas or opinions from employees regarding an issue at hand (Ireland, Van Auken & Lewis, 1978).

The concept of a communication climate has proven to be a highly ambiguous, as well as a difficult idea to make sense of within organizations (Hill & Northouse, 1978). Despite the fact that, oftentimes, a communication climate has been thought of as being separate from the organizational climate, according to Falcione, Sussman & Herdeb (1987), “it appears that much of the research on communication climate shares considerable variance with organizational climate” (p. 203). The method in which communication is managed, and the predominant communication climate is largely determined by how an employee feels about where they work and who they work with (Ireland, Van Auken & Lewis, 1978). Organizational efficiency, financial success, and satisfaction with one’s employment position have all been results of a
positive communication climate. A positive communication climate has also resulted in lower rates of turnover, a reduction in truancy, as well as a decrease in the amount of grievances filed with the organization (Hill & Northouse, 1978). The patterns of success within an organization must be thought of as sharing a very close tie with the organizational communication climate (Ireland, Van Auken & Lewis, 1978).

**Communication climate as it relates to satisfaction.** Smith et al. (1969) suggested that a definition of workplace satisfaction should include an individual’s “affective response,” and that this response, as it relates to organizational communication, should be linked to the affective responses that relate to other aspects of the individual’s employment position. Communication satisfaction has been directly tied to an employee who maintains a relatively optimistic outlook when it comes to communication between him/her and the organization, how the employee relates to his/her superiors, the environment in which the employee works, as well as how the employees sees him/herself as part of the organization (Muchinsky, 1977). According to Kulhavy & Schwartz (1981), how an employee sees the organization in which they work (i.e., how an employee sees and relates to the communication climate) can play a deciding role in how satisfied the employee is with their employment position, the level of productivity the employee maintains, and the process of decision-making the employee participates in. It has also been suggested that job satisfaction and perceived climate may be dynamically related and still provide somewhat different sources of related information. Climate provides descriptive information, often contaminated by satisfaction, while satisfaction provides evaluative assessments (James & Jones, 1974; Muchinsky, 1977).
Being content with communication, on a personal level, relates to additional characteristics and actions within an organization (Muchinsky, 1977). According to Falcione (1974), managing on a participative level, as well as creating and maintaining a positive communication climate can be categorized into four primary areas:

(1) climate, including trust, confidence, and acceptance; (2) data flow, to include openness and spontaneity; (3) goal formation, including problem solving, permissivity, and growth assessment; and (4) control, to include group selected internal goals, with a minimum of external controls (p. 13).

Redding (1966) developed another representative categorization for the explanation of communication climate:

(1) The degree of reciprocity in superior-subordinate communication – What kind of reciprocal relationships exist between superiors and subordinates? How honest and open are these relationships? (2) The degree of feedback perceptiveness – To what degree are supervisors sensitive and aware of feedback being directed to them? (3) The degree of feedback responsiveness – To what degree does a supervisor give feedback to subordinates’ requests or grievances? (4) The degree of feedback permissiveness – To what degree does a supervisor permit and encourage feedback responses from subordinates? (p. 74).

All of these categories developed by both Gibb and Redding, taken into consideration together, can potentially represent the satisfaction an employee has regarding the organization’s communication climate (Falcione, 1974). It has been posited that the communication climate of an organization, through multiple studies, as well as scholarly articles, can potentially affect how satisfied an employee is with their organization.
In all aspects of an individual’s life, identification has involved an important progression towards how people relate to factors relevant in their community, home, and place of employment. In today’s society, it has become normal, and almost expected for an individual to identify with his or her organization. It is important to recognize that, according to Cheney (1983), identification within one’s organization is directly related to a multitude of “work attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes—including motivation, job satisfaction, job performance, individual decision making, role orientation and conflict, employee interaction, and length of service” (p. 343). Some scholars posit that, at certain points in time, identification with an organization is existent within a person; therefore, realizing the identification capacity of an individual can prove to be difficult. Individuals’ actions within their organization can better help researchers determine what makes a person identify and how (Cheney, 1983).

In order to develop identification with an organization, or a specific organizational unit, certain socialization measures need to be considered such as training; movement within the organization; the utilization of identifying pieces of dress, such as “badges, uniforms, etc.”; the ability to be a part of decision-making practices; dealings with grievances; involvement in the community; and the process of and involvement with organizational public relations (Cheney, 1983, p. 345-346).

According to Cheney (as cited in Tompkins & Cheney, 1983, p. 144), another key instance of discovering identification of an individual comes when “in making a decision, the person in one or more of his/her organizational roles perceives that unit’s values or interests as relevant in evaluating the alternatives of choice” (1983, p. 346). In other words, for a person to identify with a team or group in his/her organization, that person needs to take into consideration
the welfare of a particular group or team while making an organizational decision. When an individual believes that they are a part of something, or belong to something, that individual obtains a multitude of organizational identities. Additionally, in terms of how management and/or superiors affect an individual’s identification with an organization, it has been posited that a person who is prone to identifying with their place of employment will be more likely than not to take into consideration any type of influential communication from a variety of different people in the organization.

It has been suggested that there exists a positive relationship between the climate of communication within an organization and organizational identification. Some studies surrounding this relationship have looked at the communication climate of an organization as a whole from the standpoint of organizational commitment. The element of communication climate comes into play primarily with organizational members who identify and interact with a work team on a daily basis.

Communication climate has a weaker relationship with organizational members who identify with just the organization as a whole (Bartels, Pruyn, De Jong & Joustra, 2006). Guzley (1992) has stated that “five organizational climate variables (communication, decision making, leadership, motivation, and goal setting) were significantly, and positively related to organizational commitment” (1992, p. 379). Additionally, how a new employee relates to the culture of an organization, as well as the part they play in the overall communication climate of the organization has been thought to differ greatly with how a veteran employee identifies with their organization (however, this issue has not been studied in great length). Furthermore, how an organizational member looks at both the communication climate and the organizational climate positively relates to that member’s commitment level (Guzley, 1992). Therefore, as Bartels,
Pruyn, De Jong, & Joustra (2006) posit, “a clearly positive relationship between communication climate and organizational identification (commitment) thus appears to exist” (p. 173).

Researchers have constantly struggled with identifying the cause of individual participation, satisfaction, motivation, and productivity within organizations. It has long been assumed that the process of socializing an individual into an organization has a direct effect on how an individual identifies with an organization and, therefore, how an individual’s motivation is affected, and the level of productivity from that individual.

Furthermore, with the above research in mind, in regards to public school teachers, it is expected that an individual who has strongly identified with their school, their classroom, and their students will remain tied to their position, even in times of uncertainty, due to the previous socialization efforts that have been made. Despite the multitude of modifications made to Wisconsin’s education system, teachers will remain committed to their job, in order to benefit their students as well as their peers.

The overall climate of an organization, and the communication climate within an organization, have been two important factors which have the ability to greatly affect an employee’s morale, attitude, behavior, satisfaction, and commitment within the organization. These climate factors should be taken into consideration at all levels of an organization for the potential increase in productivity, decrease in turnover, and improvement of overall employee satisfaction. Additionally, if organizational members are aware of how the organizational climate and communication climate can potentially affect their work, they should strive for open, trusting, respectful climates.

As Redding (1973) has posited, as an organization develops and strives to become effective, the communication climate is an attribute that is extremely necessary to develop.
However, with this in mind, it will remain extremely important to realize that not all organizations strive for the establishment of a communication climate. This could be detrimental to an organization, in that employees may not feel tied or committed to their organization, which may lead to a high turnover rate. Likewise, employees may not feel motivation to successfully complete their work-related tasks to a high quality, as well as take on any additional tasks or extracurricular duties.

Much of the research that was reviewed, recognized and expanded upon organizational climate and communication climate from the employee’s perspective. However, there has been little research that recognizes the managerial bias in communication climate. It has been suggested that people act and react based their perception of what has to be done in their positions of employment, as well as in life in general. Individuals act based on their perception of the moment and the environment. Nothing is done that is not couched in the perception of the environment in a singular moment. Likewise, how management perceives their role within an organization affects management’s behavior, therefore affects employees’ perception of the organizational and communication climate. For instance, when management is aware of a task to accomplish and delegates that task to their subordinates, how the task is delegated, as well as the amount of managerial support that is given to the employees has a drastic impact on the development and perception of communication climate within the organization.

It has been suggested by Lawler et al. (1974), and it is important for the purpose of this study that the many patterns of communication have a direct and immediate effect on an employee’s life within an organization. Additionally, it remains important to recognize that these patterns of communication offer some insight into an important, yet virtually uncharted, feature of organizational climate. It has been suggested by Muchinsky (1977) that the focus of any
further research on an organization’s climate should be on elements that impact an employee’s organizational life, and not on elements such as the structure of the organization.

One such factor that has a long-lasting effect on the organizational life of many public sector employees in the state of Wisconsin is the ability to unionize. Wisconsin has had a long and storied history of labor unions. These unions have played an integral role in the state by assisting the public sector workers in gaining a firm foothold in the ever changing politics in Wisconsin, as well as allowing their voice to be heard. Public sector unions, through collective bargaining, have diligently worked to ensure that Wisconsin workers obtain fair wages, regulated work hours, and working conditions that live up to the standards of the unions. For the purpose of this study, it is important to address the background of teachers’ unions, as well as collective bargaining in order to gain a more well-rounded understanding of one of the most important issues in the passage of the Budget Repair Bill.

**Background of the Budget Repair Bill**

For the purpose of this study, it is necessary to discuss the background of the Budget Repair Bill and the events that led up to the passage and protest of this bill. It has been thought by many that this bill was the first of many attempts by the Wisconsin Legislature to drastically transform the state in the name of business and economy.

**The Budget Repair Bill.** The Budget Repair Bill, upon introduction in February 2011, carried with it the power to separate and unite, enrage and satisfy the citizens of the state of Wisconsin. According to the Office of the Governor (2011), “Emergency measure is needed to balance the state budget and give government the tools to manage during economic crisis.” Additionally, Governor Scott Walker went on to state that “We must take immediate action to
ensure fiscal stability in our state. This Budget Repair Bill will meet the immediate needs of our state and give government the tools to deal with this and future budget crises.”

According to Governor Scott Walker, the changes that were proposed in the Budget Repair Bill were mandatory in order to avoid massive public-sector layoffs. The Office of the Governor supplied various data in support of the bill. Many people, both residents and non-residents of the state of Wisconsin, as well as those who were directly affected and those who were not touched by the Budget Repair Bill, challenged the basis and need for the proposed changes, as evidenced by historic protest levels. General Counsel of the Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission (WERC), the state agency that would primarily administer and enforce changes impacting public-sector employees, stated that the bill could impact as many as 200,000 public-sector employees in 2,000 collective bargaining units across the state.

Despite the statements made by the Office of the Governor, and regardless of an individual’s political stance, it was without question that this bill would greatly impact public-sector employees in the state of Wisconsin. This bill, in the early phases, at minimum, forced covered employers and employees to make the modifications required by the Budget Repair Bill; however, when the bill was made law on March 29, 2011 the covered employers were required to quickly enact some of the bill’s mandates.¹

The Budget Repair Bill was first proposed on February 14, 2011. This bill was legislation proposed by newly elected Republican Governor, Scott Walker, and passed by the Wisconsin State Legislature to address a projected $3.6 billion budget deficit. The Budget Repair Bill included sections that limited any and all collective bargaining rights for public sector employees in the state of Wisconsin. It was this last item which led to massive, Union-inspired protests at

¹ Some may dispute the actual date of publishing of the bill that made it into a law, but this will be covered in some detail later on.
the Wisconsin State Capitol. In the beginning, democrats in the legislature, as well as union representatives were willing to accept the increase in the cost of benefits for public sector employees, but they were not willing to accept the disintegration of any and all collective bargaining rights. According to Don Walker (2011) of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, the governor opposed this idea because these rights hindered many school districts, as well as local governments from balancing their budgets, due to his budget cuts.

Following the Budget Repair Bill’s introduction in February of 2011, the 14 democratic senators in the state legislature left Wisconsin and crossed the state-line into Illinois, vowing on February 20th that the length of their stay there was undetermined. This tactic was used to protest the Budget Repair Bill, as well as potentially delay a vote on the bill in order to prevent its passage. With the 19 Republican members of the senate remaining, there would not be enough members present for a quorum to vote on the bill. According to Matthew Boyle of The Daily Caller (2011), due to the fact that the Budget Repair Bill was a fiscal bill, 20 members of the senate were required for a quorum. However, the collective bargaining aspect of the Budget Repair Bill could still be passed in the senate as a separate bill in the absence of the Democrats, because it was not considered a fiscal bill.

Governor Walker, as well as Republican members of the legislature tried several tactics in an attempt to lure the 14 Democrats back to Wisconsin. For instance, there was an effort to pass a bill that Democrats strongly opposed. According to Steve Schultze of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (2011), this bill (which is now a law) would require all Wisconsin residents to obtain some form of voter identification in order to vote. According to the Government Accountability Board (2011):
Starting in 2012, voters will be required to show a photo ID such as a driver license or state-issued ID in order to receive a ballot and vote. At the recall and special elections in 2011, voters will be asked to show a photo ID for a ‘soft implementation’ of the new law. Voters who do not have the required ID will be able to vote, but will also receive a document explaining the requirements of the law for 2012 and how to receive a free ID.

However, since this voter ID bill would require money to be spent for the free IDs required to comply with federal constitutional requirements, a legislative quorum would have been required, just as with the main Budget Repair Bill (Schultze, 2011).

Besides the proposed voter ID bill, Governor Walker consistently threatened to terminate the employment of at least 1,500 state workers. However, the announced deadlines for any terminations passed without incident. In fact, following the March 11th signing of the Budget Repair Bill, Governor Scott Walker released an official statement that rescinded the termination notices for the 1,500 public employees. Walker, in Stephanie Condon’s article for CBS News (2011), it was stated that the passage of the Budget Repair Bill “helped us save 1,500 middle-class jobs…The state will now be able to realize $30 million in savings to balance the budget and allow 1,500 state employees to keep their jobs.”

In addition to the tactics of the governor, State Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald took aim at the democratic senators’ staff members. Fitzgerald prohibited staff members from using copy machines if their boss was missing from work, without leave, for two days or more. This measure forced staff members to pay out of pocket for printing (Terkel, 2011).

Furthermore, senators were not permitted to obtain their paychecks through direct deposit methods if they were absent from their office for two days or more. According to an Associated
Press article in the Green Bay Press Gazette (2011), this measure forced the senators to collect their salaries in person from the senate majority leader. Senator Jon Erpenbach was able to sidestep this issue by granting his staffers power of attorney.

On March 2nd, it was decided in a vote by senate republicans that absent members of the senate were to be fined $100.00 per missed day. Furthermore, on March 3rd, the republicans in the senate called for the “forcible detention” of the 14 democratic senators for being in contempt of the senate and for behaving in a disorderly fashion. This accusatory decision by the senate republicans authorized the senate Sergeant-at-Arms to obtain the assistance from law enforcement personnel and to use force in order to return the democratic senators to Madison and the Capitol. However, the Wisconsin state constitution does not allow for the arrest of state legislators while they are in session. It was insisted by an attorney for Scott Fitzgerald that “detention” could not be considered the same as an “arrest” (Spicuzza & Hall, 2011). This was due to the fact that the senators were not suspected of any crimes. However, according to an article in the Wisconsin State Journal on March 4, 2011, for a pair of Madison area attorneys, there was little difference between the two terms, “arrest” and “detention.” In their letter addressed to the Wisconsin Senate, attorney Susan Crawford, along with attorney Lester Pines said, "None of the fourteen absent Senators has been charged with a crime. Nor has any crime occurred. The Wisconsin Senate has absolutely no authority to order any of its members arrested or taken into custody in order to compel their attendance" (WSJ, madison.com, 2011).

As for the senate’s request for law enforcement officials to return the missing democratic senators, James Palmer, the head of the Wisconsin Professional Police Association, referred to the action as a desecration of the Wisconsin state constitution, as well as an irrational exploitation of police authority (Sargent, 2001). Additionally, some members of the police force
in the state of Wisconsin - many of whom marched with protesters against the governor’s plan to end collective bargaining rights for public sector workers - objected to the arrest resolution (Spicuzza & Hall, 2011). Despite the multitude of tactics used by the republican governor, as well as the republican senators, the 14 democratic senators refused to leave the state of Illinois. In their absence, there were many efforts made by other Wisconsin democrats to delay the passage of the Budget Repair Bill.

In the end, on February 25th, after the final amendments had been defeated, the republican leadership of the Wisconsin State Assembly swiftly acted to pass the Budget Repair Bill in a sudden vote. The final vote occurred without warning, and ended in a vote of 51 in favor and 17 opposed (this included the dissenting votes of four republican representatives), with 28 representatives not voting at all. It was also suggested that less than half of the democratic representatives were able to vote.

Following a three week standoff, on March 9, 2011, Wisconsin republicans held a committee meeting between the assembly and the senate. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the specific requirements for a quorum surrounding the portion of the Budget Repair Bill that attacked collective bargaining. However, there was some dispute as to the legality of this meeting of the senate, as the meeting was announced less than two hours in advance of its start (the notice was posted via email and on a bulletin board in the Capitol at 4:06 p.m. and the meeting convened at 6:00 p.m.). Following this meeting, republican members of the Senate voted, and passed the collective bargaining legislation 18-1.

On Thursday, March 10, 2011, according to the Wisconsin State Journal (2011), the collective bargaining portion of the Budget Repair Bill passed in Wisconsin State Assembly by a 53-42 vote. On March 11, 2011, Governor Scott Walker signed the Budget Repair Bill.
Following his signing of the Budget Repair Bill, Walker released a statement that repealed the layoff notices for roughly 1,500 Wisconsin public workers and went on to state that the passage of the Budget Repair Bill was responsible for preserving "1,500 middle-class jobs" (Condon, 2011).

March 12, 2011 saw the return of the fourteen senate democrats. When the Wisconsin 14 returned to Madison, they were greeted by crowds of approximately 100,000 people. One of the returning senators, Spencer Coggs, in an article by the New York Times (2011), said that "We are back to unite and fight with our supporters. We gave them hope. They gave us inspiration." In contrast, Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald said that the returning senators were "the most shameful 14 people in the state of Wisconsin [...] an absolute insult to the hundreds of thousands of Wisconsinites who are struggling to find a job, much less one they can run away from and go down to Illinois" (Coggs, 2011).

On March 18, 2011, Dane County Circuit Court Judge Maryann Sumi issued a stay on the bill. This was due to the fact that the Budget Repair Bill had been passed without the 24-hour notice that is required in order to comply with the state’s open meetings law. The ruling was subsequently appealed by Wisconsin Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen. Regardless of Judge Sumi’s stay, and Van Hollen’s appeal, the Legislative Reference Bureau effectively bypassed the Secretary of State's office and proceeded to publish the collective bargaining law, with republicans saying that it was, in fact law, and they would carry out any necessary enforcement of it. In the end, despite all the attempts, on June 14, 2011, the Wisconsin State Supreme Court overruled Judge Sumi, and declared that the collective bargaining law was passed legally and was therefore fully constitutional (Maley, 2011).
Effects of the Budget Repair Bill. Education in the state of Wisconsin experienced a drastic reduction in state aid that was felt in all 425 school districts in the state of Wisconsin. The Wisconsin State Journal (2011) stated that teacher organizations had to tell their members to look out for an expected $900 million decrease in general aid during 2011 and 2012 (two years was the length of the bill’s life). This $900 million cut effectively reduced the financial backing of the state by approximately $500 per student. The state’s general aid was responsible for about 75% of the public schools’ funding. Education officials in the state suggested that the $500 loss could be reduced to only $200 per student if teachers contributed more to their pensions (teachers would need to cover roughly half of their own contributions to their pensions), as well as, at a minimum, 12% of the premiums tied to their health care plans (Wisconsin State Journal, 2011).

It was thought by supporters of the bill that with its passage, teachers would be held accountable in their jobs; that there would be no more wasted sick time, vacation leave, and personal time; no more wasted state dollars. Additionally, the requirement for teachers to pay more into their pensions and health-care plans was seen as “only fair” by the supporters of the bill, as it was time for the teachers to start contributing to the state economy. However, according to teachers and superintendents in the state, notwithstanding furloughs and freezes, teachers have given the state of Wisconsin important public services with less people, while enduring extended hours, and diminishing paychecks (T. Evers, personal communication, February 14, 2011). In fact, Wisconsin educators in the public sector have seen few salary increases in the past in order to maintain the many benefits they collectively bargained for.

With the implementation of the Budget Repair Bill, teachers experienced changes in their pension contribution, as well as health-care benefits. Taking into consideration the average salary
of a Wisconsin educator, these added costs were considered to be enormous (for example the proposed pension contribution amounted to approximately 5.8% of a teacher’s salary, effectively reducing their take-home pay by 8% to 15%). Additionally, with the elimination of collective bargaining, teachers’ unions (actually, all public sector unions, with the exception of the unions representing public safety officers) in Wisconsin lost all ability to bargain for benefits (salary negotiations, health-care benefits, sick leave, vacation leave, and personal leave just to name a few), as well as raise dues. All things considered, following the implementation of the Budget Repair Bill, unions in Wisconsin were no longer able to offer their members any value or benefits; they were without any means to modify the rules so members could receive any benefits or value from their union.

Collective Bargaining

“Collective negotiation is a tool – an invention of men to do a task considered worth doing. It is a tool which, if used properly can guarantee that education will remain the cooperative enterprise of teachers, curriculum workers, administrators, boards of education, and citizen advisory groups. Negotiations can be the instrument to help make schools more responsive and effective in meeting pupil needs – which, after all, is the role of education.”

-Miller and Newbury (p. 228)-

A major aspect of the Wisconsin Budget Repair Bill was the elimination of any and all collective bargaining rights for public sector employees. As soon as Governor Walker’s bill became law, all unions representing the public sector (with the exception of unions representing public safety officers) experienced the elimination of their collective bargaining rights on all matters, with the exception of basic wages. These state employees lost their rights to bargain with regard to their pensions, the conditions of the workplace, or their healthcare benefit plans. Even though the collective bargaining aspect was not a specific issue for the purpose of this research, due to the fact that educators in the public school system were of primary concern, it
was important to cover the basics of unions and collective bargaining by educators in the state of Wisconsin.

**Public sector unions.** The undercurrents of American politics were forever changed by the advent of public sector unions. The necessity of these unions to be active in politics was due to the fact that their members’ lives depended on government legislation (Moe, 2009). The five key goals developed for unions are as follows: (1) increasing the pay of their members, (2) increasing the size of their membership, (3) increasing the segment of the represented public school population, (4) preventing performance or skill based pay for their members, and (5) reducing the amount of competition from nonunion groups (Coulson, 2010).

Some researchers have posited that productivity may be influenced by unions in terms of lowering turnover rates, increasing the chances for further training, and cultivating better communicative relationships between superiors and subordinates (Eberts & Stone, 1987). Additionally, in many instances, members of unions have experienced a substantial and constructive effect on their wages (Grimes & Register, 1990). In order for unions to strive for higher wages for their members, collective bargaining has been utilized (Coulson, 2010).

**Teachers’ unions.** Unions have a long and storied history in the education profession. Teachers began grouping together as far back as 1799 in order to address the problematic issues surrounding wages and working conditions (Braun, 1972). Even though the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) can trace its roots back to 1897, it was only within the last half of the 20th century that unions came to play a large role in public education (Grimes & Register, 1990). According to Hazard (1967), the first teacher unions, while considered highly professional, were greatly controlled by school administrators. Furthermore, the sole purpose was to meet once a year to share information and research by superintendents and professors. It wasn’t until the
beginnings of the First World War that the advent of trade unions generated a great amount of interest among teachers. Directly following World War One, the combination of low teacher wages and high consumer prices caused a jump in membership with the AFT. By 1920, the membership of the AFT was well over 11,000 (Hazard, 1967).

Unions representing the public sector came from the inside of these public organizations, as they were to represent the special concerns and interests of the employees of the government (Moe, 2009). Faced with the multitude of shared fears, strains and burdens, educators grew increasingly aware of the political and ethical issues of the time. These interests and concerns were dealt with directly through union organizations such as the AFT and the National Education Association (NEA) (Hazard, 1967).

With increasing power, the American Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO) and the NEA attempted to develop collective compromise in local school districts, and guarantee the passage of state legislation that would ensure teachers of their rights to recognition and to bargain. The essential goal of this energy was to ensure, through the cooperation of school boards, school administrators, and the various teacher organizations, that teacher salaries, and the conditions of the workplace would all be agreed upon, and would all be fair and satisfactory (Wildman, 1964). In the 1960s and 1970s, teachers unions became an integral part of the public education system following the introduction of collective bargaining throughout much of the United States. Due to the introduction of collective bargaining, the wages of educators, as well as their benefits, conditions of employment, and the education programs of school systems were greatly influenced. Additionally, the organizational and financial resources allowed unions to have a powerful influence over politics at a local and state level (Coulson, 2010).
Effects of collective bargaining. Public employees, through collective bargaining, have had the opportunity to hold a great deal of power while pursuing their own interests, and, additionally, have the power to greatly impact their organization, policy, and government performance (Moe, 2009). With the introduction of teachers unions, the basic goal of educators was the ability to participate in the decision making process surrounding their wages and their working conditions (Hazard, 1967). Public school policy has been directly impacted by the process of collective bargaining (Lindy, 2011). Through their lengthy education process, as well as their continued training and education, teachers have adopted the professional mindset that is owed to them; now they insist that the general public, as well as the government adopt this mindset as well. The concern of the public to develop quality schools as well as teacher excellence has brought into the spotlight the importance of teachers to society.

To teachers, collective bargaining is simple. It means that they can and should have the opportunity to participate in educational decision making. Educators need to play an active and responsible role in the progression of their professional life. Likewise, they should not have to accept the role of “employee” when it comes to the creation of policy while simultaneously being professionally responsible when it comes to the implementation of policy (Hazard, 1967). One of the goals of unions has been to ensure that the ability for teachers to contribute to budgetary and program decisions become and remain a part of their contracts (Levine & Lewis, 1982), while the basic goal of many teachers has been to participate in the decision-making process surrounding wages and working conditions (Hazard, 1967). Due to the fact that, in the past, educator bargaining power was insufficient on an individual level, teacher unions and organizations have played a growing role in educational policy and politics (Hazard, 1967).
However, with this thought in mind, it is important to consider the controversy surrounding unions, specifically teacher unions.

Why is it that teachers’ unions have occupied such a controversial place when considering discussions surrounding education policy? According to Lindy (2011), as evidenced by growing amounts of research, unions representing educators have been known to exert a great deal of power over government, as well as the educational processes in America’s public schools. Unions have the ability to require that school districts participate in collective action surrounding a multitude of issues including, but not limited to wages, dismissal and grievance actions, the size of a class, how long the school day and year are, the amount of personal free time and professional free time the teachers have during the day, transfer and dismissal procedures, as well as the amount of required after school meetings a teacher needs to attend and the duration of these meetings. The teachers’ unions have stated that the ability to bargain over these issues guarantees fair and ethical treatment for all teachers; however, critics of unions have stated that the process of collective bargaining advances the needs and interests of the teachers while ignoring those of the students. These differences of opinions between unions and critics have amounted to massive confrontations between unions, districts, and governments across the United States (Lindy, 2011).

Membership in professional teacher organizations has had a tendency to heighten and advance interest, awareness, experience, and professional competence in the field of education. This is due to the idea that that when a teacher participates in union organizations, they develop higher professional achievements, as well as qualifications (Wildman, 1964). The tool of collective bargaining has brought dignity to the education profession, which, in turn enables teachers to do their job more effectively. Additionally, unions, through collective bargaining
practices, have granted teachers the ability to strive for their own, personal self-interests in ways that are beneficial to all students. Collective bargaining has also allowed educators to be proactive in pushing for reformative measures (Lindy, 2011). Even though, in this day and age, strikes are not encouraged, early strikes by teachers earned such basic dignities such as having a lunch break where they were free from any supervisory duties, the avoidance of any duties such as bathroom or hallway supervision, and the ability to be ill and not have to provide a doctor’s note upon return. Through the efforts of unions and teachers working together, it has been proven through the years that when our educators are treated like the professionals that they are, there is an increased level of care and responsibility in their work. This, in turn, benefits the entire education system (Lindy, 2011).

Teachers’ unions have, throughout history, been the largest supporters of school reform, and have been known to pressure school districts to implement procedures of peer review, mentor programs for teachers and students alike, as well as high academic standards and extended school years. In some cases, unions have also encouraged public school choice within a district. It is evidenced by these factors that teachers’ unions tend to strive for necessary reform in some districts blind to change (Lindy, 2011). Despite all of the evidence to the contrary, many conservatives, and republicans have often pointed their fingers at unions for the constant increase in the cost of public education, as well as delaying improvements to educational quality (Coulson, 2010).

Teachers today can and should be considered professionals on all levels, as they are required to obtain (and maintain) the level of training most often found on the managerial level. However, despite their extensive credentials, teachers have not been given the rights of other professionals, such as controlling the amount of additional training and certifications required to
maintain their license, the ability to dismiss incompetent staff, determine their own worth, or become an influential voice in setting organizational policy (Levine & Lewis, 1982). Through the utilization of unions, teachers have found that the tool of collective bargaining gives them the powerful voice that is necessary in decision making on an educational level. Collective bargaining has been the route that teachers have taken to obtain their professional goals (Levine & Lewis, 1982).

In the state of Wisconsin, the elimination of any and all collective bargaining rights through the legislation of the Budget Repair Bill was thought to be a step in the wrong direction, and, additionally, was thought to be a measure that was purely unnecessary. It has been suggested that the elimination of collective bargaining was not necessary for balancing the state budget, and should not have been eliminated from this bill, as it was simply a disruptive and direct method that was thought to have dealt with the supposed disparities in bargaining (T. Evers, personal communication, February 14, 2011). In fact, it has been posited that the elimination of collective bargaining would not necessarily benefit the state of Wisconsin, but, rather, the Republican Party. When asked why it was important to eliminate collective bargaining in the state of Wisconsin, Senator Scott Fitzgerald stated, “If we win this battle, and the money is not there under the auspices of the unions, certainly what you’re going to find is President Obama is going to have a much more difficult time getting elected and winning the state of Wisconsin” (Gandelman, 2011). This is thought to be due to the fact that many public unions support the campaigns of democratic candidates; therefore, if unions are weakened or eliminated altogether, they will not be able to spend money on democratic elections.

Additionally, the elimination of collective bargaining rights effectively demoralized the population of public school teachers. Teachers no longer have a say in many aspects that made
Wisconsin’s education system what it has always known for: excellence in education. With the elimination of collective bargaining, the government in the state of Wisconsin successfully stripped the public school teachers of their professional identity. However, the elimination of collective bargaining wasn’t the only thing that had an effect on Wisconsin teachers.

The Budget Repair Bill is thought to have weakened current improvements surrounding compensation to teachers, development, and assessment in public schools. According to State Superintendent of Public Schools Tony Evers (personal communication, February 14, 2011), this bill had the potential to “shatter relationships among educators and school leaders…It will have a chilling effect on teacher recruitment and sends a terrible message about the value of public service.” Furthermore, the Budget Repair Bill will have significant and lasting damage on Wisconsin’s “classrooms, its children, and the people who educate them” (T. Evers, personal communication, February 14, 2011).

From the information that has been provided surrounding the communication climate within organizations, it can be suggested that when a group of people is disrespected and treated with indifference, the employee morale within an organization, as well as the atmosphere of an organization, can suffer greatly. From the evidence that has been gathered regarding collective bargaining and teachers’ unions, as well as background information surrounding the Budget Repair Bill, it can be suggested that the personal and professional lives of many public school teachers in the state of Wisconsin have effectively been altered. However, it is yet unknown as to the extent of the effects felt by the teachers, as well as the effects the general atmospheres of the public schools have experienced. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the following research questions have been proposed:
Communication Climate and Morale in Public Schools

1. Was the communication climate in public schools affected by teachers’ reactions to the Budget Repair Bill?
2. Were public school teachers’ identification with their job and identification with their school affected by the Budget Repair Bill?
3. If teachers report a change in job duties as a result of the Budget Repair Bill, did those changes result in or affect such factors as teachers’ job identification and relationships with students and other faculty in the school?
Chapter 2: Methodology

Government legislation, of one type or another, has been affecting groups of people, large and small, for ages. The Budget Repair Bill that was introduced and passed in the state of Wisconsin in 2011 was no different. This bill, aimed primarily at implementing new rules and eliminating certain aspects of public sector employment standards, was no different than other pieces of legislation throughout history. However, the fact that this bill targeted an already underpaid, undervalued segment of the population in the state allowed for dispute, protest, and continued unrest.

This research aims to identify how the Wisconsin state Budget Repair Bill has affected the public school teachers in the state of Wisconsin. Because this bill had an effect on a large group of individuals in the state, the phenomenological perspective was taken to examine the effects on public school teachers and the manner in which the teachers are dealing with the effects. This research utilized interviews in order to determine the effects of the Budget Repair Bill on public school teachers and if and how the effects have altered their employment positions in any way.

Research Design

As Creswell (2007) succinctly stated, “A phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon.” (p. 57). Phenomenological research sets out to examine an individual’s experience with an issue, or a “phenomenon,” in order to develop a more broad explanation for others who experience the same phenomenon. “The inquirer…collects data from persons who have experienced the phenomenon, and develops a composite description of the essence of the experience for all of the
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individuals. This description consists of ‘what’ they experienced and ‘how’ they experienced it.” (Creswell, 2007, p. 58).

As far as the potential research questions were concerned, specifically, a phenomenological question (or questions) is effective based on how much or how little the experienced phenomenon affects the lives of the participants in the study (the sample obtained), as well as those outside of the study (the readers of this study, individuals interested in the potential ramifications of the Budget Repair Bill, individuals conducting research on economic change, etc.).

The combination of the phenomenological research design and interview questions was preferred over other designs and methods that utilized focus groups, surveys, and scales. This was due to the assumption that focus groups could lead to the participants “feeding” off of one another. For example, while working in a small group and sharing ideas with one another, individuals may feel less secure in their ideas and opinions, therefore, may hold back or “flip-flop” in a group setting. Surveys and scales were not used due to the potential lack of detail gained from responses. For the purpose of this study, detailed explanations were needed in order to obtain a more well-rounded description of the effects felt by the Budget Repair Bill.

Participants

As educators in the public school system in the state of Wisconsin have been impacted by the measures this bill undertakes, the participants in this study consisted of Wisconsin educators at a small high school in the public school system. This high school was thought to be a typical, mainstream public high school. For the specific purpose of this study, high school teachers were targeted because of the multitude of extracurricular activities and meetings this group has consistently been asked to participate in without any extra merit or pay. Additionally, all of the
teachers interviewed for the purpose of this study varied in the subject areas that they taught. They were also unique from each other in terms of their ages and length of time in the public school system in the state of Wisconsin.

The only criterion used for inclusion in this study was that participants must be a currently employed member of a public school system in the state of Wisconsin. This particular criterion was used because the individuals to be included were those who were directly affected by the Budget Repair Bill. Additionally, for the purpose of this research, the fact that some of the individuals who were to be interviewed would be potential supporters of the bill was recognized, but was not previously screened out. This was due to the fact that the interviewer did not want to be biased in any fashion.

It is important to acknowledge the fact that the researcher had spent a great deal of time at the public high school where the interviewees were obtained, as the researcher was a graduate of this school. Additionally, one of the researcher’s immediate family members was an employee of this public high school (this family member was not included in the interviews). Due to the researcher’s status, through previous interaction with many of the individuals involved in the study, a personal familiarity was developed between the researcher and many of the school teachers involved in this study. Despite this personal familiarity, for the purpose of this study, it should be stated once again that the political beliefs of the participants were not known beforehand, nor were they of any interest during the interview process. Due to the sensitive nature of this study in terms of the prospect of discussing personal issues surrounding a government decision, it was thought that familiarity with the interviewees would allow for a more open, and unhindered discussion surrounding the effects felt by the Budget Repair Bill by
these individuals. It was also thought that, as the Budget Repair Bill was a relatively sensitive subject, the comfort of the individuals involved in this study must be considered a priority.

**Instrument**

For the purpose of this study, interviews were used as the sole means for collecting data. These interviews were conducted with a group of thirteen high school teachers of varying backgrounds. Since public education teachers were one of the public sector groups affected by the Budget Repair Bill, the interview questions pertained specifically to teachers and the bill. Only one set of interview questions was used while interviewing these teachers (Appendix A).

This body of research employed interviews in the hopes of providing a better understanding of how teachers reacted to and dealt with the ramifications of the Budget Repair Bill as it related to the atmosphere and morale within their public high school. The stories that emerged from these interviews were a result of the semi-structured interview process that consisted of predetermined questions, as well as sub-questions that developed from the responses.

The interview process was designed in a way that did not mask the overall objective of the researcher. However, the researcher was very careful at all times during the interview process not to influence the responses of the participant in any way that could potentially encourage a specific answer or dissuade the participant from being open and honest with their thoughts, feelings, and opinions. This was done for the simple fact that the Budget Repair Bill was introduced and passed a year before this research was conducted; therefore, it was presumed that the participants would need some time to think about how they and their colleagues reacted to the bill.
All of the interviews began with questions that were designed to break the ice, and put the participant at ease. These questions also served to provide a general background from each teacher. Examples of these questions include, “What type of employment position do you hold in the public school system?” and, “How long have you worked in this position?” Following these questions, the researcher began to ask the participants more in-depth questions that pertained specifically to their employment position, their motivation behind teaching, and their reactions to the Budget Repair Bill.

While it goes without question that each interview was unique, they all followed the previously mentioned structure and formula. These interviews were initially tested on two educators in the Wisconsin public school system that were not involved in this study; one educator had been teaching in the state for over 40 years, and the other educator had been involved in the Wisconsin public school system in one manner or another (teacher, school psychologist, head principal, and assistant principal) for over 25 years. This pilot testing of the interview questions allowed the researcher to make certain that they could all be answered in the allotted time period, and would garner evocative responses. For the purpose of this research, none of responses from the pilot testing were included in the analysis of this study.

**Procedure**

As a primary starting point, the researcher utilized personal contacts who were currently employed in positions in Wisconsin public schools, specifically the small public high school where the study took place; therefore, it can be stated that this was a “convenient sample.” This location was primarily chosen because of the convenience to the researcher, as well as the familiarity with the participants. It was thought that if the familiarity was heightened, the comfort level would also be heightened. When individuals feel comfortable talking and sharing with one
another, more information can be obtained. Additionally, the town in which this study took place had experienced drastic city-wide financial transitions throughout the past fifteen to twenty years; specifically, major job loss from a paper mill, as well as new businesses establishing themselves in the city.

Through the snowball procedure, the researcher obtained the contact information for individuals who met this study’s criteria for inclusion. Those individuals who met the criteria were contacted directly in order to acquire their consent to be interviewed for the purpose of this study. After the participants’ background information (specifically concentrating on their employment position in the public school system) was obtained and recorded, individual interviews commenced.

Individual interviews with the participants were conducted in the early months of 2012, the period of time leading up to the potential recall of Governor Scott Walker, as well as a number of Wisconsin state legislators. These individual interviews were conducted at a comfortable, public location agreed upon by the researcher and the participants. These interviews lasted between fifteen minutes to an hour, and consisted of a series of questions surrounding the effects of the Budget Repair Bill. The questions were general and broad in nature, with more probing questions as follow up (for a list of the interview questions, see Appendix A). These initial interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed word-for-word. Following the interviews, the participants were encouraged to review their recordings thoroughly for the sake of accuracy. Any additional notes that were taken in the margins were also transcribed so as to provide more thorough, detailed, personal information. Any of the margin notes that were transcribed were reviewed with the participant for accuracy immediately following the interview.
Following the interviews, and after the transcripts from the interviews were typed up and proofread, all of the participants were given the opportunity to read their interview transcripts thoroughly to ensure accuracy and tone. Absolutely no additional information was added to the transcript once it was typed up, unless a mistake was found in the transcription, or if the initial interview notes were inaccurate.

Analysis

For the purpose of this study, the basic outline of analysis and representation was laid out by Creswell (2007). This “simplified version of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method discussed by Moustakas (1994)” (p. 159) allowed for the collection and analysis of the data, looking specifically for significant words and phrases that may (or may not) be similar throughout the different groups that were studied through the interview process. Different meanings were then attached to the gathered data, breaking the responses down even further. Following the discovery and attachment of the various meanings, the data was grouped, yet one more time, into different themes based on the meanings found.

For the purpose of this study, this analysis method was followed closely. All of the transcripts from the interviews were carefully read over several times in order to develop a general feeling or tone for the responses. From each of the participants’ transcripts, noteworthy statements that directly related to the effects of the Budget Repair Bill were identified and broken down into sentences. These sentences were then analyzed in order to identify potential meanings. The meanings were attached and then formed into themes, which was expected to allow for the further development of themes common in all of the interview transcripts. The outcome of the common theme development was then assimilated into a full and complete
description of the phenomenon at hand. For the purpose of this study, the phenomenon at hand was the effects felt from the different aspects of the Budget Repair Bill.

Verification in this research was achieved through a multitude of means. First and foremost, peer-reviewed journal and literature searches were performed, and articles and documents were gathered. These documents and articles assisted the researcher in the well-rounded development of the proposed research, as well as gave the readers background information. An attempt was also made to follow as closely as possible the different aspects of the phenomenological method. Additional methods of verification were accomplished by the taking and maintaining of detailed notes throughout the entire research process, using an adequate participant base, and interviewing the participants until all possible themes were found and exhausted.

The initial research questions were subject to constant refinement as the study advanced. This was necessary because at the time the questions were drafted it was unknown as to what data was to be presented and what data would prove to be useful. There was also some uncertainty as to how the gathered data could potentially alter the scope of the research.

There was a constant attempt to clarify any biases held at the beginning of the study. It has been widely believed that if readers are aware of the researcher’s stance at the beginning of the study, they will be able to better understand how or if the orientation(s), potential prejudices, and experiences helped to shape the interpretation of the collected data.

An attempt was consistently made to write with detailed description, so as to let readers experience the same things the researcher experienced. As stated in Creswell (2007), “[w]ith such detailed description, the researcher enables readers to transfer information to other settings and to determine whether the findings can be transferred…” (p. 209) because of any similarities.
Most importantly, the participants were allowed to, and encouraged to review their statements and interviews following the transcription for accuracy sake, as well as review any drafts of the research prior to finalization. This method of validity was absolutely essential for the purposes of credibility and correctness. Also, the participants were an integral part of this research; therefore it was important to allow them to be as involved as possible. It should be stated that even though all of the 13 interviewees were encouraged to review their interview transcripts, only two of the participants actually did so. Following these reviews, no alterations were made to the transcripts.

This study will thus examine how the 2011 Budget Repair Bill affected the public school teachers at one high school in the state of Wisconsin. By thoroughly interviewing the participants from this high school, a better understanding of the effects felt from the passage of the Budget Repair Bill should be obtained.
Chapter 3: Findings

In order to obtain an understanding of the effects of the Wisconsin Budget Repair Bill on public school teachers in the state, thirteen interviews were conducted at a typical public high school located in central Wisconsin. As a result of these interviews, five different themes were found that helped form a better understanding of how the Wisconsin Budget Repair Bill has and is still affecting public school teachers in the state. These themes include positive and negative aspects of teaching, teachers’ feelings and reactions surrounding the Budget Repair Bill, effects on the communication climate in the school, effects on teachers’ job-specific duties, and effects on teachers’ identification with their job and their school. These themes, combined with the subthemes that emerged assisted in the development of an understanding of how the Budget Repair Bill has affected and is still affecting public school teachers in the state of Wisconsin, specifically, how this bill has affected morale in the public schools. The first theme that was discovered was the positive and negative aspects of teaching.

Positive and Negative Aspects of Teaching

As with any employment position, there are many different aspects to teaching that make it either desirable or unbearable. In an effort to acquire a better understanding of who these teachers were and the reasoning behind their dedication to the field of education, some of the first interview questions explored the different characteristics of teaching that the interviewees enjoyed the most. These questions also helped the interviewees reveal certain aspects of their job that they did not particularly care for.

Positive aspects of teaching. In order to accurately identify the motivational factors behind teaching, first and foremost, it was important to discuss the reasoning behind why the participants were teaching in the first place; what initially drew them to teaching, and what they
liked the most about their positions. These discoveries would also help to form an understanding of the teachers’ morale in the public school where these interviews took place.

It was not difficult to uncover how the teachers felt about their positions. All thirteen of the participating teachers felt that the best part of their job was working with the many different students on a daily basis. An instructor in this high school stated “I love the kids. Every day I see changes in them. Some good and some bad, but in the long run, the changes that you see just overwhelm you…it’s like, ‘they did it,’ you know? So it’s that part that I love about it.” Another teacher in the school stated,

I love it when I don’t know the answer, and we, as a group, have to solve it. Every once in a while I can structure that and make that work well, and it’s happening right now. When it’s all done, there’s something in the dynamic of (the students) knowing that I don’t know that makes them comfortable or something.

A different instructor stated,

I like interacting with kids; I like seeing their enthusiasm when they learn new concepts; I like it probably the best…when I hear all the success stories when they leave high school and they come back and they can say ‘I applied these skills or these pieces of information that you taught me.’

These responses in particular help to show that a teacher’s interaction with the students is what continues to challenge them, and is also what makes them want to come back to their job day after day, and year after year.

In addition to the students, many of the teachers felt that another positive aspect of their job were the challenges they faced on a daily basis, as well as the fact that no two days were ever the same. Many of the teachers also stated that they enjoyed working with their colleagues on a
daily basis. One teacher stated, “What I like most is the opportunity to do something different each day. I like working with people. I like being with my colleagues. I think that part of my best teaching is with the other people.” A statement made by another teacher helped to clarify a recent misconception surrounding the teaching profession: “…you know, teachers are not in it for the money…we have to get paid, we have to make a living; of course we’re in it for the students.” However, as with any career, along with the positive aspects of the position come some negative characteristics.

All of these statements pertaining to the positive aspects of teaching help to clarify that when it comes to the morale of the teachers in the public school system, their love for the students, their love of the challenge, and their love for their colleagues keep these teachers going. These aspects of their job are what help to assist in the maintenance of a positive attitude and overall morale in the school.

**Negative aspects of teaching.** Although the teachers that were interviewed for this study were primarily positive and engaged in their positions, they were also forthcoming about what they did not like about their chosen career. For the purpose of this study, it was not apparent or specifically stated that these negative aspects were a direct result of the Budget Repair Bill. When asked whether or not the teachers had any dislikes regarding their position, all thirteen teachers gave a response; however this provided for many varied replies.

Four of the participants in this study stated that one of the most significant negative aspects of their job was grading. One teacher in the high school stated that “…the bane of my existence if grading papers; its mind numbing. If I have 100…students, I read the same thing 100 times…in order to really know what they’re thinking you have to read what they wrote.”
Additionally, a few of the teachers that were interviewed alluded to the amount of work done outside of the classroom, during non-school hours.

These teachers helped to make their positions on this topic clear by expressing how this work encroached on their personal and family time. An instructor at this high school stated “I guess the thing I probably don’t like is all the correcting, work outside of the class…I have a (young child), so now it’s just harder to do that sort of thing.” Another participant in this study stated:

What I like the least about it? Grading essays. Sitting for hours and hours outside of school, grading is really…if somebody would’ve told me that that’s what I would be doing every evening, and every weekend…The majority of my evenings and weekends. I’ve been keeping track this year, in a log, of all my hours outside of the regular school day. I can tell you that as of February 27th (2012), I’ve logged 509 hours outside of the school day. So that’s a lot of grading papers…preparing for class, and reading the books that they’re reading, and that kind of thing…I stay (at school) usually most nights until 4:30 or 5:00 p.m…I’m able to stay here and get as much done as I can so I don’t have to take it all home every night. I can’t get to it until about 8:30 or 9:00 when (my daughter) does to bed, and by that time I don’t have the energy to do it.

When this particular teacher was asked why she began keeping a log of her out-of-school hours, she responded by stating:

The whole Walker thing just really bothered me. People were saying that we’re lazy, and that we don’t work hard, and we get our summers off…I thought, for my own piece of mind, I want to know how much time I really put in…
This statement shows that, due to the negative opinions of a few people, teachers are feeling that they now need to prove their value and worth to the general public. Additionally, this singular statement helps to shed light on how the Budget Repair Bill, its supporters, and certain government officials have the potential to effectively alter the morale and attitudes of individuals in educational employment positions in the state of Wisconsin.

In addition to the amount of work done outside of the classroom, another teacher indicated that his primary concern with his job surrounded the growing emphasis and importance of standardized exams. He expanded on this by stating:

I believe the public pressures of the standardized tests are probably my number one concern in terms of education. I think we’re losing the creative environment and enhancing students’ ability to be creative and innovative; I think we’re stifling that with the method of instruction when we’re forced to adhere to…standardized tests.

The lack of discipline and lack of motivation regarding the students was also another concern for the teachers. In addition to the negative aspects directly related to academics, many teachers relayed some negative aspects of their job that were not related specifically to their students or their classroom.

Three teachers who were interviewed alluded to the fact that one of the most negative aspects of the job was the politics that are attributed to teaching. Specifically, one teacher in the high school stated that his dislikes surrounding teaching were accredited to “the politics that go along with it. A lot of meetings; a lot of things that really don’t have a whole lot to do with education that you’re forced to do.” Along these same lines, a different teacher stated that “The
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worst part can be the politics that come into play with teaching. The stuff you don’t expect.” One
more teacher in the high school contributed to this thought by stating that

What I don’t like about teaching is that it’s being treated as a business rather than
a service, and I think that if you are constantly counting dollars, you eventually
get a group of people who start to think of themselves and their value only in
dollars.

Although it is possible that these sentiments were felt prior to the introduction and passage of the
Budget Repair Bill, these statements allow some insight into how attitudes and the face of public
education may be changing in the state of Wisconsin due to a piece of legislation.

In terms of the negative aspects of teaching, many teachers also expressed a feeling of
unease for how the public perceives teachers and the public school environment. These teachers
felt that the general public and the state government seem to have a mixed awareness of what
teachers actually do on a daily basis. It is important to clarify for the purpose of this research that
teachers in this high school are no longer working under a contract, as the old contract has
expired for this particular public school. Additionally, there will no longer be a contract at this
school; in its place will be an employee handbook. This is primarily due to the fact that teachers
are no longer able to collectively bargain for a contract.

A significant number of teachers articulated some concern regarding how, in recent
months, they have become an object of public scrutiny. Many teachers encountered individuals
who seem to be unclear about a teacher’s typical day, and operate under the impression that a
teacher’s job operates under set hours and encompasses nine months of the year. According to
the teachers that were interviewed, their typical day begins at 7:00 a.m. and ends between 3:00
p.m. and 3:15 p.m. However, it was noted that, more times than not, teachers would arrive early;
most between 6:30 a.m. and 6:45 a.m. and would leave the building between 3:30 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.

All of these misconceptions surrounding the field of teaching and teachers, in general, can and do weigh heavily on these educators. It has been widely felt in the field of education that teachers have always been an undervalued group of individuals. However, since the passage of the Budget Repair Bill, and the awareness that this bill has drawn to the field of education, teachers are feeling the pressures of the spotlight, and are concerned that, with the blame being put on them for the current budget crisis, their image and the image of public education may have been ruined forever. With this in mind, it may be a bit clearer as to how attitudes, climate, and morale in public schools have also been effectively and permanently altered.

**Teachers’ Feelings and Reactions Surrounding the Budget Repair Bill**

Following the passage of the Budget Repair Bill, it was to be expected that teachers in the public schools around the state of Wisconsin would have strong reactions to the bill and the legislation surrounding it. These feelings and reactions have been seen to contribute significantly to the communication climate and morale in this public high school following the passage of the bill.

Following a line of questioning surrounding whether or not the teachers agreed or disagreed with the bill, the participating teachers in this study highlighted some of their reactions and the reactions of their colleagues surrounding the passage of the bill. The feelings regarding the bill and reactions of the teachers and their colleagues varied, as some expressed an understanding that certain actions needed to be taken to repair the state budget, while others expressed extreme anger surrounding the contents of the bill and how it was passed.
Reactions to the bill. When asked to what degree the teachers either agreed with or disagreed with the Budget Repair Bill and their reactions to the bill, many teachers gave very graphic and detailed answers. All of the thirteen teachers who were interviewed disagreed with the bill, in general. Two teachers lent insight into how, in their experience and in previous conversations, the majority of teachers would have been willing to compromise in terms of benefits and pensions. Two other teachers expressed an understanding that things in the state of Wisconsin needed to change for the benefit of the entire state and in order to fix the budget.

Notable negative reactions. When asked about her reaction to the passage of the Budget Repair Bill, a teacher in the high school stated that during the time period the bill was being legislated was “…hectic, to be honest. I was hardly sleeping because I was up until 2:00 in the morning writing letters to the editor….we were just trying to do whatever we could do to stop it from happening.” Regarding the reactions of her colleagues, this teacher went on to state that

Everybody (was) obviously upset and concerned by it because nobody knew what the outcome would be and it was a big uncertainty…People started realizing that this was going to be a financial burden to them first, and then after realizing that, realized that this is going to change a lot of the way that we do business. We have no say in workplace issues, we have no say anymore…it gives a lot more power to the administration…

Another teacher in this particular public high school stated:

I took a personal day off of school once and went down to Madison…I didn’t have to take any school time off. I did not call in sick, because I wasn’t sick. I was sick of it, but…my personal reaction was disgust, frankly, and anger…pick any negative word you want…it was probably there, and it still is there.
This response, in particular, helps to show that although reactions to the bill were, in most cases, strong, some teachers found it necessary to maintain their level of professionalism and responsibility to their job.

Three other teachers had more extreme responses to the bill. For instance, one teacher at the high school answered this interview question by stating that “…spiritually, emotionally, intellectually, it is the dumbest piece of legislation that has ever been written in the history of mankind.” Another teacher went on to state that “to the however much disagree you can, I think it’s terrible. On the scale, I’m way over on that side where I don’t think there’s anything good in it.” When asked to what degree she agreed or disagreed with the Budget Repair Bill, a different teacher answered the question very succinctly by stating, “To the Nth degree, I disagree,” and further expanded her answer to include her reaction and feelings regarding how the general public and the media responded to the contents of the bill. She stated:

…right now what’s coming to mind is that the press and the…political advertisements on television that completely misrepresent teachers and, ‘Finally teachers are paying their insurance and their retirement.’ Are you kidding me?

You know we have always paid. The percentages, yes are different, but we have always negotiated contracts with our local school boards who were never operating with a gun to their head as to what they could negotiate for and they were not operating with a gun to their head from the state…We always negotiated knowing that we are not the highest paid professionals and never will be, and it’s not that important to us as long as we have a living wage, we have benefits that will take care of us and our families, and we have a secure retirement to look forward to…and now when I hear that there are people out there that are saying
‘Really? All these years teachers have never paid for their health insurance?’ or
‘They’ve never paid for those big retirement checks they’re getting?’…I’m just
angry that people believe what sound bites they hear, and they don’t look. They
don’t learn what’s gone on in their community, and what has worked in their
communities for years and years and years. And it just pains me to talk to
teachers…you know, first and foremost, in regard to what I was just
saying…families are wondering how they’re going to (deal) with the $8000 to
$10,000 hit that teachers have taken in salary, and I know that we’re talking
teachers here, but instructional aides, support staff, same deal…everybody’s
working as hard as they always did for less money and it makes no sense.

While these statements may be viewed by some as extreme or an exaggeration, the responses
give some insight into the deep-seated nature of the teachers’ feelings and reactions to the
passage of this controversial bill.

In addition to the previous statements, one instructor at this high school expressed her
reaction by saying that “I was really disappointed. I felt like education was completely
undervalued and…you say that…you want education to improve, but…you would cut that kind
of money from it? That just felt like an oxymoron to me.” When asked how she felt that her
colleagues reacted, this particular teacher stated:

We were all very disappointed….because we personally took pay cuts as well, we
all just felt…personally undervalued. It’s not like we heard our representatives
saying to us, ‘you know you guys are doing a great job. This is just an unfortunate
situation. We have to balance things. This isn’t personal.’ But that’s not what we
heard. It was ‘education is poor. We need to improve it. Teachers aren’t doing a
good enough job. You make too much money.’ We just felt like we were a scapegoat for a budget crisis that we didn’t create.

While fairly consistent in their reactions to the bill, this response in particular sheds some light on another interesting finding: as a profession whose members are highly educated, they report that they are still greatly misunderstood and undervalued by the majority of the general public, as well as teachers’ own family and friends. One teacher expanded on this notion by stating that the majority of teachers at his school and at other schools in the state were “all pretty much on the same page…” He went on to state that

(We) didn’t see it coming, kind of blindsided, really put it at the mercy of the public. Even personal friends that know that I’m a teacher, they started attacking all the things we have, and it kind of pitted the business people against the public sector people, and (that’s) something we’ve never had in Wisconsin ever…it really affected all aspects of my life, including even my own family.

This statement lends some understanding into how the Budget Repair Bill and the reactions to the bill have had an effect on all aspects of the life of a teacher in the state of Wisconsin.

Following this particular portion of the interview process, it became apparent that the teachers involved were in the process of dealing with more than just the implications that the Budget Repair Bill posed. These teachers were also dealing with the social aspect of the bill. The misconceptions surrounding teachers and the teaching profession, combined with the reactions of the general public to the bill and the reactions of the teachers, themselves, helped bring light to a new question: In the face of new legislation that effectively stripped educators of their self-worth, can it really be a question as to whether or not the attitudes and morale in public schools
have been affected? It was found that the teachers in this particular public high school were faced with attitude changes from the very introduction of the bill.

Reactions to the collective bargaining aspect of the bill. When discussing the bill and its specific characteristics, nine of the teachers who were interviewed expressed their reaction and feelings surrounding the elimination of collective bargaining. This aspect of the bill hit teachers very hard, and, through the interview process, it was seen as a facet of the bill that had a large impact on the communication climate of the school. It was effectively shown that teachers’ relationships with other teachers were affected. It was also reported that some of the teachers who were interviewed for the purpose of this study noticed a change in their relationships with the administration, both in the school and the district.

Specifically regarding the issue of collective bargaining, one teacher stated that “we don’t have the ability to collectively bargain with our employers anymore. It almost seems as if we pit our teachers against each other in some aspects…” Another teacher at this high school stated that

We had consensus bargaining. That is, basically, in order for anything to go into the contract, all people on the bargaining team…teachers and administrators all have to agree to that change, and they do…when you get the contract settled, it’s something everybody feels good about and…everybody feels valued and respected. Now you’ve taken that away and…It’s had a big impact; it’s had a HUGE impact.

Yet another teacher focused her reaction to the bill on the collective bargaining aspect of it. She stated that her reaction was

Angry, angry, angry!!! Very angry! (I)t’s been collective bargaining. Collective is the word, where parties get together and hammer out a plan that works for both of
them. There’s never been a time in my teaching career that…the perceived animosity continued after negotiations. That’s what collective is all about…you work on what’s best for the whole body involved here, and so to lose that, was just dumbfounding to me because I don’t know who was asking for it other than the asshole in Madison who thought that there was some money to be gained…And the way it was railroaded through was absolutely outrageous.

A different teacher stated that he disdained the fact that collective bargaining was taken away from the teachers. He went on to state that

We had good things going with collective bargaining. We were able to have open dialogue about things, and it was good for kids…The school board? They don’t know sometimes. And no offense to people in politics, they don’t know either. And now we’re going to have people that really have no clue about education making decisions about it without our input, and that concerns me for the students.

One more teacher stated that he disagreed strongly with the bill, but did understand that the state’s budget needed some help. He also went on to state that “I feel (that) mainly the bill was there to wreck the teachers’ union…I’m just not comfortable with the way that it was shoved at us, not wanting any discussion on it. That was offensive.” A different teacher also expressed his disagreement with the bill by remarking that

I basically, completely disagree with it, and not…with the fact that they’re making me pay more money. I understand that. What I do disagree with is the power grab, and the fact that they destroyed the union, or attempted to destroy the
union. That’s the part that I think people need to understand, and that people are willing to listen to.

This particular teacher further expanded on the efforts to put the union back together at this high school. He noted that

When they got rid of the union, when they said we don’t have collective bargaining anymore, the question arose, ‘if we don’t have collective bargaining anymore, what do we have? What’s left?’ and the answer is well, not a whole lot of anything…if you look ahead and see the recall coming and you see these things coming, you realize that this isn’t going to last forever. It may have a lasting impact, but it’s not going to last forever…They thought it was going to kill the union to do what they did…you can’t take union dues out, well we found our way around that. And it was a lot of me walking around the halls, knocking on people’s doors, and talking to people that I didn’t really know that well. That I considered important…They all understood what was going on, and they wanted to be a part of…they understood it was a power grab…they saw that the solidarity of teachers was a good thing. Not everybody understood that, but they realized you’ve got to have something in place. I think they also realized that the union wasn’t for the people who were in it now…it’s for the future.

Additionally, when asked about the degree to which he agreed or disagreed with the Budget Repair Bill, an instructor in the high school stated

I pretty strongly disagree with it. I often use the examples in class about bills that are named things just to make them sound better. ‘Budget Repair Bill’ sounds wonderful, but it’s a bunch of shit. ‘Stripping Public Employees of Collective
Rights Bill’ is a better name…that’s how they sold it to the public, but that wasn’t necessary. Very early in the process the unions agreed to all the financial concessions; money was there and it was taken care of. I disagree strongly with the way it was brought about, the veiled secrecy to what the intent was.

A different instructor further stated that

I’m a big union supporter, and I’m not ok with curtailing our worker’s rights. I guess I understand that maybe something needed to happen, but I don’t think it needed to happen that way. Of course, that’s part of what a union does, they bargain; there’s give and take. I think that teachers’ unions would have been willing to bargain, but…when it’s railroaded through, and the way it was handled was just not ok. It was just ridiculous. So no, I’m not ok with the Budget Repair Bill.

In addition to these accounts, another teacher at this school made the poignant statement that teachers are just “dancing the dance that (Walker’s) got for you.” She went on to say that

We worked really hard to bargain for what we have. It’s not like we took advantage of anything. I really felt that that was not a fair thing to take away from us. It’s not the fact that we have to pay more on our insurance…anybody would’ve done that…or our retirement. Is that fair? Sure it’s fair. I don’t think any of us disagree with that. The real issue here is our bargaining rights getting taken away.

These testimonials helped to clarify the fact that the majority of teachers interviewed may have had different reactions about the bill if the passage was handled differently, and if it was not a direct attack on unions, and the teaching profession. Additionally, it is becoming easier to see
that when specific aspects of a teacher’s job is eliminated, and when it is completely out of the teacher’s control, the sense of devaluation and unimportance can take a heavy toll.

The importance of obtaining an understanding of the bill. Although the majority of the teachers interviewed had very negative responses to the Budget Repair Bill, some of the teachers, upon introduction of the bill, were confused as to the repercussions and possible effects of this piece of legislation. It was important to these teachers to immediately find out what this bill meant, and how it would pertain to them.

Due to the fact that the Budget Repair Bill was introduced and passed relatively quickly, there were a lot of people who were confused by some of the contents, as well as the potential ramifications of the bill. Three of the teachers who were interviewed spoke to the fact that, upon introduction, they did not completely grasp the contents of the bill or the potential implications. One teacher stated that

The first thing I did was went in and talked to other teachers because I knew that it happened, but I didn’t know what the implications were. Then I went in and talked to (another teacher)…and she said ‘here are the implications.’…Most of the people that I associate with felt exactly the same way, and it’s one of those things that not only you talk about when you’re in school, and you’re angry about it in school, but it’s one of those things that wherever you went where there were teachers, that’s the topic of conversation, and that’s the only thing people talked about.

This sentiment of initial confusion was also felt by another teacher at this school. He stated that he strongly disagreed with the bill, but “I don’t know that I know everything that was in the bill.
I know when I heard rumors of things I went and looked and found a lot of really scary stuff when you read close.” Yet one more teacher stated:

Initially, I didn’t know a lot about it until one Sunday morning I got up early, downloaded the bill, read it, and obviously filtered some of that stuff through what people had talked about and checked those things out. I was very infuriated, very frustrated that this was not talked about during our governor’s campaign. He did not talk about how he was going to fix this budget, and, specifically, he left it vague…

These statements all suggest that even though many teachers knew that the bill was going to affect them, they didn’t know to what degree. However, by accepting the fact that they did not know all of the different aspects of the bill, combined with the potential repercussions, all of these teachers took it upon themselves to become educated either through reading factual materials surrounding the bill or by talking to union representatives and other teachers.

**Support from colleagues.** In addition to the teachers that had strong, adverse reactions to the Budget Repair Bill, many teachers spoke to how certain individuals in the school were able to come together to assist and support each other. These specific responses help to show how certain individuals, during stressful times of anger and unrest, persevere and unite. Additionally, these actions do a great deal in terms of increasing the morale in the workplace by creating a sense of community and support.

In many cases, teachers referenced the fact that while they strongly opposed the bill, they did not believe that the students should suffer. While many teachers traveled to Madison to protest the bill, three teachers in particular mentioned that they stayed behind to cover classes, and fill in where needed. One teacher stated that
I think we did something I felt really proud of...When people were getting ready to head to Madison, and all the talk of...doctors writing excuses for people...I wasn’t really comfortable with that, and I think there were a lot of people that weren’t...we actually had some people that I thought did a good thing and talked to our administration and just said ‘you know, how about we find a way to cover for people and fill in times...we can load up a bus and send people down and we’ll cover for them.’

Another teacher acknowledged the fact that she did not travel to Madison to protest because “I wanted to be here for my students.” When asked about colleagues’ reaction to the bill, a different teacher in the high school stated that

It was a very tense time around here, you know? I don’t feel that this is something that the students should pay for. Did I attend in Madison? I did not because there were other people that really knew the issues a lot more than I did. Was I supportive of them? Yes. If I needed to teach one of their classes so they could go, I would definitely do that. I felt that my place needed to be here. I really didn’t want our school to close because of it. It’s not the kids’ issue, it’s our issue and it’s our issue with our governor, so I really don’t want the kids...I don’t think they should have to lose anything from it.

These statements help to prove the fact that even in times of crisis and turmoil, optimism can and will emerge.

Expanding more on the positive outcomes surrounding the Budget Repair Bill, in terms of assisting teachers to learn about what was going on at the time, as well as allow teachers the opportunity to network with each other, one teacher in this particular high school relayed that
Last year, I started a website and a blog for the building…so that we could communicate quickly…that was a very important way for people to interact and communicate. I felt that we had to get the information out; we had to have a way for people in our district to find stuff quickly. On the blog, they would announce when busses were leaving; I would have articles that they could read, places they could go to find additional information so we were always on the same page, and people could talk to one another…I tried to build some ties between other teachers in other areas in other states.

This statement solidifies the notion that in this instance, the teachers at this high school used whatever means necessary to assist others in the education of issues surrounding the bill, as well as to show support for one another.

**Teachers’ willingness to compromise.** During the passage of the Budget Repair Bill, many supporters stated that it was about time that teachers started contributing and paying their fair share. In response to these types of statements, two teachers expressed their willingness to compromise and negotiate for a different system. For instance, one teacher detailed her response by stating that

I didn’t think it was fair, the way that it happened…I felt that it was not in anybody’s hands but Governor Walker’s. I felt like he really didn’t research it to see what would happen, didn’t care what would happen, and you know, I don’t think that there was any reason to do what he did. You know, ok, the state needs to save money, I understand that. Teachers were more than willing to take their part of that. But so much more of that was taken away…
This response was not the first made by the teachers that gave insight into how the teachers were willing to compromise in terms of the budget.

A different teacher in the high school further expanded on this idea and clarified an issue that had been dealt with in this particular school district for years. She stated that

I understand that we should pay our fair share. I get that. I think that we would’ve been willing to pay our fair share; I think that so many teachers were saying that we understand the state budget; we understand that other people are responsible for their health insurance and that kind of thing. I guess the bitterness comes in when we have taken a hit to our pay for so many years, and we kept saying ‘you know what? Ok, we’ll take that hit to our pay because we are being compensated.’

She went on to say that

I went into this job knowing that I would have a good retirement, good pension, and I would have good health care. And so I’ve said that ‘ok, I’m not going to make a lot of money up front for my family, but at least I’ll have those things.’ Now we’re being told that we don’t deserve that either and they’re just going to take it away.

With the passage of the Budget Repair Bill, supporters made frequent statements indicating that for years, teachers did not pay their fair share or pull their weight. Although the public response in support of this bill has contributed to the downfall of morale in this public school, the statements above shed light on the fact that teachers were always willing to negotiate and bargain for the benefits that they had.

**An understanding of necessity.** Even though the majority of teachers had negative, and even, in some cases, extreme reactions to the bill, two teachers did agree with certain aspects of
it; namely the fact that certain measures did need to be taken to assist the state in the repair of the budget, as well as measures that could potentially improve education in the state of Wisconsin.

One teacher in particular stated that

There are some pieces that I thought were good. One of those being how teachers are evaluated…who gets to be hired and fired, and that kind of thing. I do agree with that piece; I do think it was needed, because we do have teachers that shouldn’t be teaching. Typically, they were able to stay in as long as they had seniority, which wasn’t necessarily right, because you might have a younger teacher come in, a top-notch teacher, and they got bumped out because of the process.

While not as positive about the bill and its contents, another teacher stated that

I do believe that our budget in Wisconsin needed some help. I don’t believe that I agree with the way we have gone about trying to get it some help, because I do believe that a certain select few were targeted to try to repair the budget in Wisconsin. I also know that some of the things in the bill did absolutely nothing to help balance the budget. They were just…I can do it, therefore I will. They didn’t do a thing financially, fiscally, for the state budget. And frankly they didn’t even help local budgets. So I don’t agree with it. Let’s put it that way.

These responses help to shed light on the fact that, in some instances, teachers realized that there was a need to make some necessary changes in the state of Wisconsin to fix the budget; however, the legislation was thought to be severe and certain aspects of the bill, unnecessary. It is also hoped that these statements could also potentially provide the supporters of the bill with
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important information surrounding teachers and their willingness to negotiate for change for the
greater good and for the betterment of the state of Wisconsin.

**Effect on the Communication Climate of the School**

The communication climate and overall organizational climate in the workplace can drastically affect how an employee does his or her job, whether or not the employee is satisfied in their position, and can even determine the level of commitment an employee has to their position, as well as to their organization as a whole. During the time period that encompassed the introduction and passage of the Budget Repair Bill, teachers at this high school responded in varying ways to a question regarding any observed changes in the atmosphere of their school. Five of the thirteen teachers expressed a noticed change in the morale of the teachers in the school. Four of the teachers who were interviewed gave insight into the role the administration at this high school had in the modification of the school’s atmosphere. Two teachers expressed an observed change in the school’s climate, but clarified that most teachers were attempting to keep the negativity out of the classroom so that students did not suffer. Additionally, two teachers who were interviewed pointed out that the passage of the bill made teachers feel even more undervalued that they already were.

**Effects on morale.** During the course of the interviews, when asked if any changes in the atmosphere of the school had been noticed, the most poignant response addressed the decline in the overall morale of the teachers. In response to this question, one teacher at this high school responded to this particular question by stating:

I have noticed differences in the atmosphere. People longing for the good ole days, let’s put it that way…most of the people that I know here sill have kind of the same attitude that I have where they still love their job…I also do notice that
people just don’t have the same level of happiness with being here that they used to have.

She went on to say that while all of the discussions surrounding the bill were going on,

It got to the point sometimes where I didn’t even want to walk into a room where other people were because it’s all they talked about. When that’s all you’re doing is talking about it…all you’re doing is compounding all of the negative feelings, and it’s not doing any good because we all agree…there’s just so much that I can take because there’s just negative…and we still have to do our job…it’s hard to turn that off when you walk through the doorway and into your classroom, if all you’ve heard is negative stuff, and you get your blood boiling and then you have to turn around and be decent. It’s too hard to do. There was a lot of that for a while. It wasn’t overwhelming, but it was disturbing for a while because it was pervasive.

Another teacher in the school recognized the fact that “the biggest impact of all of this…is morale, is attitude.” She continued this thought and said,

It’s not that teachers are walking around grumpy and ‘I’m not going to do anything,’ and doing a crummy job, but I can also see that there’s a definite change in their mood…I still love teaching, I still love my job. I don’t like the feeling I get a lot of times when I’m here though because of the politics, because of the way things are being run, because of the impression that perhaps the public feels about us.
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Although fairly self-explanatory, these statements give insight into how teachers perceive the new atmosphere of the school in which they teach. Additionally, these testimonials also reveal how the climate of the school has been altered since the passage of the bill.

Many other teachers felt these same sentiments. There were many comments that related directly to the morale of the teachers in the school since the passage of the bill. Also speaking to the morale of the staff at this high school, one teacher made the comment that “when it first came out, we were really disappointed.” She further stated that

…our morale was really down. We felt really stressed. We felt like what’s going to happen next? What’s the next shoe to drop? You know, there’s all this uncertainty to how much money we were going to have, if we were going to have a job, if art was going to be valued or not valued. So all those concerns all hit at once.

Similar to this statement, a different teacher likened the atmosphere of the high school to a “dark cloud.” This individual expanded on this by stating that

I think a lot of us are just doing what we can to try to help each other stay positive, and at the same time, do what we can to try to recuperate some of the respect that we’ve lost from people. It’s just not good and it’s not right, and so we just kind of want to get a little bit of that respect back because we deserve it!

Another clarifying statement made by an instructor at the high school gave a better understanding to the morale of the teachers in the school. This teacher said that

…while they might feel discouraged about what’s going on, people are maintaining a professional atmosphere and they’re doing the job…of course morale is definitely lower and I think people feel a little discouraged about that.
This testimonial provides a well-rounded observation of the teaching climate at this high school. It helps to show that although the teachers are feeling disheartened and the level of optimism is down, teachers are remaining professional and committed.

**How the Administration’s Response Affected the Communication Climate.** Six of the teachers who were interviewed reported that, following the passage of the Budget Repair Bill, changes in the administration of their high school were observed. While describing some of these changes, these teachers alluded to how the modifications further altered the climate of the school, and, in turn, affected the morale of the teachers.

In an effort to explain the new climate of this high school, one teacher stated that the atmosphere in the school had an impact on how she worked with others in the building. She went on to say that

…it’s changed the balance of power. Before, in a school, and especially in (the district) there was a very good, positive feeling about the administration and teachers working together. There was a long history of that happening…now you’ve taken that away and that definitely changes the relationship…I see administrators who now look at this as an opportunity to get a little bit more power.

Another teacher described his concern surrounding the combination of the lack of collective bargaining, teachers operating under no contract, as well as how all of this may change the attitudes and behavior of the administration at the school. He stated

When the Budget Repair Bill came out…not having that ability to really talk my feelings out about what I was doing was pretty shocking…now in our school, I think people are leery about sharing their weaknesses or strengths in that area
with people in positions of leadership, because they’re concerned. How is that
going to look? Is that going to go on my evaluation? Am I going to get fired
because I told my vice principle that I’ve been having difficulties dealing with a
student and I need some ideas? You don’t know how they’re going to twist your
words now.

In addition to this teacher’s response, a different teacher made a statement that gave insight into
the school’s administration. This teacher clarified this further by stating that “our principal sees
things differently than our staff does. I think our leadership might see things differently than our
staff does.” Likewise, a teacher who had once retired from this high school, but was now back
teaching full-time stated:

In my absence from (the high school), I’ve had…some pretty regular contact with
a number of colleagues still on staff…things have changed since I’ve been
gone…two out of three administrators are different and that is certainly a different
atmosphere…administrators are inaccessible. Not easily ‘let’s sit down and talk
about this issue or that issue.’ Unavailable, pretty much. The principal at our
school…has not yet visited my classroom…to see how the program is running.
It’s a brand new program! Among teachers, a lot of tongue in cheek kind of
stuff…the one observation that I have is that I think teachers are less social and
when there are groups of teachers at lunch, it’s not about ‘how are the kids?’ and
‘what are you guys doing for Spring Break?’ it’s all about finances,
budgets…legal issues in the education system and out. I think there are still
people still reeling, but interestingly enough, they’re not afraid to talk about it.
Usually people are not sharing their personal finances and stuff like that or their
own personal trials and tribulations, and now they are...It used to be a much happier group of people; more social.

Additionally, one teacher in the building made reference to the change in the administration by reporting that “…administration has become very petty…(the vice principal) actually tried to hang me…he had a teacher keeping track of me; whether I was late or not.” While this statement may be seen as an extreme instance, it describes how the bill has not only affected the teachers at this school, but how it’s affected the individuals in positions of leadership. Furthermore, these statements provide some insight into how the leadership and administration at this high school have contributed to the change in the climate and atmosphere.

While taking the above testimonials into consideration, one teacher in this high school had more positive things to say about the school’s administration. He relayed an instance where the principal of the high school called a series of “principal discussion meetings” to help clarify some issues and questions for the teachers. This teacher went on to say

…he (the head principal) would sit and field questions and we would have conversations…some teachers are really unwilling to ask a tough question openly so we talked about writing questions on cards and pass the card in…we asked all kinds of things that I know people were thinking about and they wanted to ask, so we asked them….most of his answers were ‘I don’t know,’ but at least they were an honest ‘I don’t know,’ and they weren’t trying to deceive us. I thought it was a real positive thing. The principal was at least willing to make that step.

This statement allows for a different perspective regarding the actions of the administration at this high school. Additionally, although there are some teachers in this school that disagree with the actions and attitudes of the individuals in leadership roles,
other teachers are learning how to deal with the issue of the Budget Repair Bill by allowing the administration to play a more positive role.

**Effects on the classroom and the students.** Two teachers expressed the changes in the atmosphere and how these changes could potentially have an effect in the classroom and on the student body. One teacher at this school stated that “At the staff level, I think our morale…we portray that everything is good, and we’re ok…that’s what we want to put to the students. We’re not going to show the negative side...” Another teacher in the same department expanded on this statement by identifying that “most people here are finding ways to be positive about it…because we’re dealing with kids, and the kids didn’t do anything wrong.” These statements provide awareness into how the new climate of this high school could potentially have an effect in the classroom, therefore, affect the students.

**Effects on teachers’ perceived value and worth.** During the interview process, when asked if any changes had been observed in the atmosphere of the school, one teacher commented on how the bill further devalued teachers. He responded to this question by saying:

Yes. You know, teachers have had a history of not being valued. They’re professionals, but they’re not being valued. Teachers are the people that are the scapegoats, and the whipping boy…that kind of stuff. To be a teacher, you always have to put up with that otherwise you can’t teach. This bill is one of those things that…made teachers the problem, and devalued anything that a teacher’s ever done…

Furthermore, another teacher stated that “morale in general is lower. I think a lot of it is because of the bill itself; because it devalues educators.” These two statements lend
clarity into how this group of professionals, who already felt undervalued, feel even more so now due to the passage of the Budget Repair Bill.

Throughout the interviews, all of the teachers had a great amount of insight into how the communication climate at this high school has been affected by the Budget Repair Bill. Although the responses varied in certain areas, it was clear that the teachers had experienced a change in the climate, and, likewise, the morale of the high school. An interesting finding, however, was the role the administration had in these changes, as well as the awareness of the teachers in terms of not letting any recognized changes affect their classrooms and their students.

**How the Budget Repair Bill Affected Teachers’ Job Duties**

From the above discussion surrounding how the Wisconsin Budget Repair Bill affected the communication climate and the morale in the high school, it should be relatively easy to understand that certain teachers also felt a change when it came to their specific job duties. However, much to the researcher’s surprise, even though there was change, it was not as varied as expected. Additionally, it should be noted that at the time of the interviews, the district that encompassed this high school was experiencing budget cuts totaling approximately $2 million.

In terms of extracurricular activities, all of the teachers interviewed had, at one time or another led or assisted in extracurricular activities (i.e., school athletics, academic clubs, scholarship committees, etc.) at their school. Additionally, of the thirteen teachers interviewed, two teachers stated that they had noticed a change in other staff members in terms of their availability to help each other out, both in and out of the classroom. All of the teachers who were interviewed noted that the biggest change that was felt in terms of job duties was the increase in class sizes.
Extracurricular activities. Out of the thirteen teachers who were interviewed, all of them had, at one point in their teaching career, led or assisted in extracurricular activities. However, at the time of the interviews, eight of the teachers currently led or assisted in extracurricular activities at the school. Of the teachers who were still involved in extracurricular activities, no one had stopped their after-school activities as a result of the Budget Repair Bill. In fact, it was a common statement among all of the teachers interviewed that they, as a group of professionals, keep taking hits to their livelihood, but remain working as hard as ever. One teacher expanded on this thought by stating:

So teachers are, again, working their butts off for less pay, less incentive, fewer materials because of the budget; you’re working with less…teachers are that crazy group of people that, regardless of how many hits we take, we’re going to make it work.

Another teacher stated that, as far as teachers go, “…you make it work. We’re maybe our own worst enemy in that way, no matter what happens, we make it work, and that’s not always a good thing.” These two statements combined show that, even though teachers and the education profession in the state of Wisconsin are seemingly under attack, they continue to work as hard as ever for less incentive. Additionally, an interesting finding was that no teacher quit their extracurricular activities solely based on their feelings surrounding the Budget Repair Bill.

Despite the fact that, in the past, a teacher’s participation in extracurricular activities was a personal choice, one teacher in the school made reference to how things could be changing with regards to the administration at this particular high school since the passage of the Budget Repair Bill and the elimination of any bargaining rights. She stated:
I think there will be some administrators who pretty much want to micromanage things and now will be able to. There are examples here too where administration at the high school basically thought that they should maybe assign us to do extracurricular sporting events that we had to chaperone and things like that. There are things where you see that administrators are slowly trying to take a little bit more power, and that makes the teachers feel less valued, obviously. I think that that’s the biggest thing; that teachers tend to feel less valued because basically when you’re told to do more things without any extra compensation, it gives the impression that you weren’t doing enough before.

Additionally, a different teacher in the school discussed how the sporadic change in rules by the administration could impose more mandatory, after-school meetings on teachers in the entire district. He revealed that

one of the rules that changed was the 20 meeting rule. In the old contract, teachers were required to attend as many as 20 after-school meetings…the teachers could quantify the number of meetings and, at some point, there was a cutoff where you couldn’t ask any more meetings of the teachers. That rule was tossed and it was replaced with teachers need to attend all required meetings.

This thought expresses a concern for how the individuals in leadership positions at a school could potentially use their new-found power to institute more mandatory activities for the teachers with little to no added incentive.

In the above instances, the administration and the budgetary implications have been seen as affecting a teacher’s after-school life in a negative fashion. However, one teacher at this high school lent her own insight into how the school’s administration was attempting to alter her
curriculum in the classroom that happened to coincide with her school-related activities outside of the classroom. She stated:

Well, interestingly enough, I’m in a “fight” right now about outdoor activities for severely emotionally and behaviorally disabled students. You know, in the past, I’ve been able to teach technical rock climbing to my kids. In the past, we’ve been able to go biking, canoeing, hiking, camping... The number of outings that we can do that students earn through appropriate behavioral and social skill sets has been limited by administrators who are worried about lawsuits, who are worried about funding, who are worried about supervision because... the ratios are up, students to staff. And so, what I teach has been impacted by what, at first when I came back to (the high school), I didn’t think was going to be, wouldn’t affect me and my program, and it does.

This statement helps to clarify how the administration has attempted to curtail a teacher’s methods of instruction. When these different methods are hindered, the route to a successful, well-rounded education can also be damaged.

In a different instance, one teacher in the school who also advises a year-round club told the interviewer that his extracurricular activities had been hindered by the budget cuts the high school was experiencing. He communicated that:

Another thing is my (club) pay also took a big cut. I used to get paid 10% of base, which I felt was okay because it is a 12-month position, and you do so many varied things with kids. It’s not like football where you do the same drills with kids. You’re doing so many different things; it’s speaking contests, proficiency awards, judging stuff, and then social events too; all the overnighers and field
trips that you have to do. They cut my pay from 10% to 8%, which, that 2%
doesn’t seem like a lot, but when they do 2% of base (salary), it can add up. When
you think about that, it’s kind of a big loss.

This teacher’s experience highlights how the administration’s choices, when it came to budget allocations, had an impact on the activities of the extracurricular advisor. Once again, these statements make clear the notion that, contrary to popular belief, a teacher’s job is not just nine months out of the year, and pay cuts can have a drastic effect not only on the teacher’s livelihood, but also on their extracurricular organizations and the students who are involved.

Additionally, the last statement lends insight into how teachers are continuing to do more work for less incentive. Therefore, it can be seen that even though attitude, climate, and morale may have been severely altered in this school, teachers are maintaining their level of professionalism and dedication to their job and their students.

**Budget cuts.** It remains important to remember that the district in which this high school was located was expected to absorb a $2 million cut to its budget during the 2011-2012 school year. This budget cut provided many implications to the school; however, four teachers lent insight into these budget cuts and stated specifically how their positions and their students would be directly affected by this financial loss.

One teacher began to detail how her employment position and her students have already been effected by the budget cuts by relaying a story regarding temperature issues in her classroom. During the time of the interviews, central Wisconsin was experiencing record high temperatures, and this teacher began her story by telling the researcher that the high school had made the decision not to turn on the air conditioning during this school year. She went on to state:
I have a coffee maker in the room. Besides buying my own coffee maker, it costs $20.00 to have that coffee maker there to offset our electrical usage; not a month, but $20.00 a year. Any other appliances that we would like to have in there will cost us between $20.00 and $30.00. If it’s a refrigerator, then we’re on to $30.00 a year for the cost. Today in my classroom…it looked to be about 88 degrees when I walked in this morning, and that’s before the sun came up and in my windows…I brought a fan in from home. (Another teacher) asked me if it said (name of school) on it, if it was a (department) fan. I said no, it was mine. She said that it would cost me $20.00 to have it here. I said ‘bullshit it will. I’m working in heatstroke conditions and it’s going to cost me $20.00? I don’t think so. No. I’m not paying it.’ And I had that fan running all day long; I had 3 kids sitting in front of it reading because it’s so hot in there, but no it’s not time for A/C yet. If any of the administrators or secretaries catch wind of this, they’ll charge me $20.00.

This statement allows some insight into the struggle between teachers, the administration, and the district to maintain a quality learning environment, while, at the same time, keeping costs down.

One teacher in this school, who also assists in the coordination of the school’s literary magazine, stated that

...our (department) budget was cut 15% last year…I’m putting off ordering an enlarger…until next year so we can cover the items we need this year…so, we’re going to be falling behind on our replacement schedule…the original schedule used to be that we were supposed to get one per year, that way the oldest enlarger
would be 12 or 13 years old…one would get replaced each year, but we have not
been able to keep up with that changeover.

In terms of the literary magazine that this teacher supervises, a school legacy for 33 years, this
teacher expanded on the budget implications and how these shortfalls created a ripple effect of
its own. She went on to say that

…we do a literary magazine out of the art department, and we were told that we
were going to have to come up with like $1300.00 just out of our budget to pay
for that. And so what it’s done is we’ve had to change our printing with it; we had
to go to a cheaper printer, which is saving us $1000.00, so we can continue to do
it, but it’s also affecting the local business that normally depended on that order
every year.

This statement, specifically, lends some insight into the fact that not only are the school and the
individual departments struggling to deal with these cuts, but the community also stands to suffer
financially through a ripple-type effect.

In addition to how individual teachers and departments are dealing with the budget cuts
and the ramifications, some teachers provided some insight into how the students in various
departments would be directly affected by these cuts, and the shortage of teachers. One teacher
stated:

Again, this year was $2 million that we had to cut. What I’m really afraid of, like
I said, I teach special ed.; special ed. kids normally don’t fit in your little box of
the core classes; they’re very difficult for them; they struggle with them…If they
don’t find something else to buy into, they’re not going to make it here at school;
they’re not going to be successful. And what they have to buy into is the art
classes, and the music classes, and the sports, and the tech. ed. classes…those people work very hard with them, open armed work with them, and I think it’s so important. If those options are taken away, I think our kids are going to really fail. I think these courses will be taken away from us more and more, so that makes me very afraid.

Another teacher expressed his concern with how the cuts in the budget are affecting his classes and the school in general. He detailed his response by saying

…since the passage (of the Budget Repair Bill) class sizes have gotten bigger…I have four special needs kids…I have an autistic kid, I have an LD (learning disabled) kid, I have and ED (emotionally disturbed) kid, and I have a CD (cognitively disabled) kid all in the same class with no assistance. None. They have an advisor and I will go and talk to them, but I don’t have an aide in the classroom…my physics classes are so big that there is no room in the classroom. I’ve actually got one kid in a desk sitting next to the wall because the room was designed for 24 kids and I have over 25 in there. So that’s been a big thing…also, just in terms of support staff, way, way less than we’ve had in the past. There’s nobody in the computer labs to assist, we’ve lost one person in the office who worked with kids with truancy issues…those are the sort of things that make a big difference.

These statements provide clarity into how the budget cuts that were a result of the Budget Repair Bill are not only inhibiting a teacher’s ability in the classroom, but also how these changes are slowly affecting the students at this particular high school.
Change in class sizes. It was found that, across the board, every teacher interviewed had experienced an increase in class size. Depending on the course, it was found that class sizes had gone from approximately 18 to 20 students to 25 students or greater. In some of the two-hour block classes, student enrollment had gone from approximately 52 students to 64 students. It was also revealed by one teacher that the projected class sizes for the 2012-2013 school year were to be even larger. As stated above, the school district that encompassed this high school was to absorb a $2 million cut to its budget during the 2011-2012 school year. It was postulated by another teacher that with the cuts to the school budget, layoffs were inevitable. With the same amount of students in the school, but less teachers, class sizes were bound to increase. With these budget cuts, as well as the increase in class sizes, many teachers were worried for a variety of reasons.

Attention to students and curriculum. During the interview process, one teacher provided initial insight into how an increase in class size would affect the students directly in terms of the amount of time a teacher could dedicate to each student. He stated:

I’ve told other instructors that I’ve had my class sizes go up to 20, 23, 24. They’re like ‘oh, that’d be nice. Mine are at 30, 35’…We’ve all kind of gone up together…one of the other instructors put it into pretty good perspective; you know, if we have 50 minute class periods, and you have 25 kids, you get two minutes a kid. That goes up, less time…

Another teacher also expressed concern regarding the increase in class sizes. The increase for this school year (2011-2012) and the projected increase for the next school year (2012-2013) would pose a problem for this teacher due to the amount of classroom equipment he was working with. This teacher stated:
already this year our class numbers are up in classes. I look at our number as projected for next year, (and) the average in our (department) will be 27 in a class. When you say 27 in a class, that means in (specific class), when we can only have 20 because we have 10…work stations and 10 (task specific) stations, and kids rotate…if they’re at 20, that means in my (specific class), we’re up higher; we’ll have to shift students so they can get their required credits. Next year…when we look at numbers…they say ‘ok, 66 kids have signed up for (specific class),’ until this school year, that would have been three sections of 22. Now they’re saying ‘two sections of 33.’ I say, ‘well, we have 26 computers in there. What do we do?’ Administration says that the students will share computers. Every day? Our…work is done on the computer; that is their work station. So they’re telling me a quarter of my kids every day can’t do what we normally do. So what I teach is going to change because I can’t just let them sit…

A different teacher in this high school also had concerns about the increase in class sizes and how that would not only affect how much time he could dedicate to each student, but also how his curriculum and class structure would be affected. This teacher specified that

There are more kids in the classes that I teach, for sure. (Name of class) used to have about 52 kids in it; it’s got 65 in it this year, so it’s unbelievably larger…in the other classes that I teach, there’s an average of about 32 kids in classes.

When asked if these numbers affected the amount of time he could devote to his students, this teacher answered, “Absolutely. Also the structure of the class; what you can accomplish in class and what you can’t accomplish.” He also stated that, due to the increase in class sizes, he had to rewrite his curriculum “a little bit.”
While sharing this sentiment, one teacher helped to clarify the issue of modifications to the structure of classes. She stated:

I think, also, as class sizes get larger, it’s more difficult to continue to do the same things in the classroom; you have more students that you have to give attention to and more grading. I can say as far as my colleagues, some of them that have seen increased class sizes have had to change maybe the way they do an assignment or activity so they can get it graded in a timely fashion.

Another teacher expanded on this further and revealed that, due to the increase in class sizes, she has had to decrease the amount of materials that she assigns in class because, even with extra hours spent outside of school, she simply does not have the time to get all of her work done. This teacher stated that

Because of the class sizes, because of more students, I have had to pare down what I assign, because I just simply cannot, even with the 509 extra hours, get through all of it. The more students we get in our classroom, the less we’re going to be able to do with them and the individual work too. You know, if you have a class of 25-30 students, and some people have more than that, you just cannot get to all of those kids in a class period when you’re teaching an essay or things like that. So we have had to really pare down.

This issue proves to be worrisome for a few different reasons. First and foremost, with the reliance on standardized test scores to determine the success of the students, teachers cannot afford to deny students pertinent course materials. Secondly, with the eradication of collective bargaining, and the implementation of an evaluation system based on student success to determine the worth of teachers, instructors are worried that, by eliminating necessary course
Information and materials, students would not do as well on the standardized tests. The teacher who was quoted above elaborated on this specific issue by pointing out that

We did a lot less grammar, things in the beginning where we used to be able to do a little more review…we’re not getting all of the standards taught, and so we leave things behind that they haven’t mastered yet. And now when I see their WKCE scores and they’re lower in the language arts area than they have been in the past…the fact that they are going to be looking at test scores to dictate what I should be paid…my paycheck is dependent upon that. That worries me a lot.

As evidenced by the above statement, not only does an increase in class size have an effect on how and what an instructor teaches, but creates a ripple effect on attention to students, student performance and success, teacher evaluations, and also, a teacher’s livelihood.

**Safety in the classroom.** Teachers in one specific department in this high school expressed concern for the safety of their students as their class sizes steadily increase. One teacher stated quite succinctly that “Bottom line, our class sizes are bigger, even down here in (department), which, typically, we’ve been able to kind of get around because of the safety stuff, but not really anymore.” He expanded on this further by stating that his class sizes went from 18 to 20, up to 25, 26, and maybe even 27 in some classes. I know when I started this last semester, my general electricity class had 31 kids in it, and that typically has no more than 22…in a technology setting, that’s just too many kids.

Additionally, another teacher in this department expressed his concern surrounding the increase in class sizes by mentioning that not only is the safety of the students at risk, but the increase in elective class sizes could potentially force teachers to compete with each other to fill their classes. This teacher went on to say that
...we are concerned about class size because that means that instead of having 19 kids in a two hour class, now we have to get 30, so you have to recruit, so that can pit teachers against teachers, so that’s not good. But one concern that I have is safety. We can’t have 30 kids in a class. I had that this semester; I have (class) and I have 28 kids. I’m supposed to go out (of the classroom with two dangerous pieces of machinery), and I have all these kids that I have to be with. It’s going very well, but I also have an aide. If it was me, alone, it would be a lot to juggle. It does concern me that they’re not taking safety into consideration. The amount of time you can spend one-on-one with a kid when you have that many kids…it becomes management instead of teaching.

These statements provide ample insight into a new concern for some teachers: due to the rising numbers in the classroom, an issue that becomes pertinent is the safety risk posed to the students and teachers in these classrooms.

It is important to discuss these findings because, as it was previously shown, the teachers that were interviewed for the purpose of this research were primarily motivated by their students’ successes both in and out of the classroom; the teachers involved in this study come back to school day after day in order to provide their students with the best education possible. When there are safety risks in the classroom, teachers are not fully capable of providing their students the quality education that they deserve. This issue helps to highlight one more cause of the decreasing morale in this high school. If the teachers are not allowed to do their job, and are hindered from remaining motivated, it goes without question that their motivation to teach could be drastically altered.
Workplace support from colleagues. When asked if the Budget Repair Bill had affected the way the teachers worked with their colleagues, again, many varied responses were given. However, an interesting finding that had been affecting three of the teachers’ specific job duties in the school is the comfort level the teachers have with one another in the building in terms of “sharing the burden” of their daily life. Specifically, one teacher stated:

I don’t ask other teachers for anything, basically. And I used to, again, because I really was a part of the school community when I taught here before, you know, ‘can you fill in for me here,’ or ‘I’m going to step out of my classroom.’ Well, now that other teacher has his own 40 kids to deal with. He doesn’t have time to watch my classroom too when I have to run to the bathroom because I don’t have a prep time. I don’t have any time off in the morning; I have no break time at all…But I don’t ask because people have their hands full. In the past I’ve said ‘hey! Your biology class is going out and doing tree stuff. I want to bring my kids along to just hang out.’ Their response would always be, ‘yeah! No problem.’ I wouldn’t ask that stuff now; I just wouldn’t.

Another teacher responded to this interview question by revealing that

…people aren’t as friendly, they’re not as cheerful, they’re not as nice…there are still very nice people, but they’re not nice when they’re in a group…everybody is looking out for themselves. I’m the only idiot that keeps wandering around helping people. People come to me; I’m not going to turn them down.

These two statements lend some insight into how the changing atmosphere of the school has resulted in a more closed-off support system among teachers. In addition to this outcome, with the implementation of the Budget Repair Bill, teachers need to maintain a level of camaraderie.
and support to maintain a positive attitude and morale. However, if teachers continue to feel uncomfortable utilizing one another, their level of optimism is bound to steadily decline.

In addition to a more disjointed support network, some teachers have directly felt the impact of the shortage of teachers in their own departments and classrooms. One teacher told the interviewer that, due to the events surrounding the Budget Repair Bill, her department has not only had to deal with a shortage of teachers, but has also had to deal with inexperienced teachers, as well. This teacher went on to state:

I teach mostly (class) here…because of all of the stuff that happened last year (2011), there’s a teacher who’s teaching one section of a…class that has never taught it before…I’m really happy to help him because he does the same things I do; we’re teaching the same class…the small impact that it has on me is this: if things were the way they used to be, there’d be a different teacher teaching the…class who’s taught it before. I’m fine helping somebody else, but I wouldn’t have to if it would have been one of the other teachers who have taught it before…my other opinion on that is this: the more often I teach any course, the better I am at it…when you disrupt teaching by, you know, such constant changing, I don’t believe that anybody’s as effective.

This teacher’s response helps in the understanding that some teachers may still be willing to help out for the greater good. However, with the recent turnover in this school, combined with the increased number of students, many teachers are beginning to feel the pressure from all sides. Additionally, this statement lends more proof to the idea that teachers remain working harder than ever for less incentive and gratitude.
How the Budget Repair Bill Affected Teachers’ Job Identification

With the passage and implementation of a piece of legislation such as the Wisconsin Budget Repair Bill, it should be easy to understand that many public sector positions were significantly altered. From the above instances, it has been made clear that teachers in the state of Wisconsin were among those who have had to modify their positions of employment in many ways. However, from the interviews with thirteen teachers at a high school in central Wisconsin, they have also had to modify their own mental and emotional outlook. All thirteen teachers, during the course of their interviews, were asked the question “Has your reaction to the Budget Repair Bill affected the way you think of yourself as a teacher?” and all of them gave very astute responses. Again, the responses were varied; however, it was found that with the passage of this bill, all thirteen teachers were forced to reassess their positions in the public school system at some point in the past year.

Negative effects on identity in the workplace. When asked the above interview question, nine of the thirteen teachers interviewed alluded to the fact that the contents of the Budget Repair Bill and the bill’s passage had a negative effect on how they perceived themselves as teachers, and, therefore, had a negative impact on the morale in the high school. It goes without question to say that when a person’s personal and professional character is called into question, as well as their career motives, that individual’s personal and professional outlook in their place of employment could be affected severely and, more times than not, negatively. By recognizing this, it is easier to understand how the morale in this public high school was so easily affected.

When asked this particular interview question, one teacher at this high school responded by saying, “Yes. I feel like everything that I do is on public display, and that every mistake that
is perceived as a mistake has not only an impact on me, but on everybody else who’s a teacher.”

This teacher went on to state

I work for UW-Madison, I work for the University of Texas at Austin…dealing with people outside of Wisconsin, people treat me differently. They’re interested in how we’re able to deal with that, what it’s like being in this environment. In addition, it’s like we’re the ugly stepsister that nobody wants to talk about…there’s a bit of trepidation in how they talk to me because they don’t want to say stuff that may make me uncomfortable…they don’t talk to me in the same way they did before.

This statement shows how teachers have not only had to reevaluate their position in their school, but also how every aspect of their position has undergone change. Once again, when teachers are placed under the social microscope and are faced with the challenge of proving themselves to their peers and the general public, their outlook regarding their job, and their attitude in their place of employment is at risk.

Other examples of how teachers’ identification with their jobs has been transformed in a negative way can be seen in statements pertaining to their perceived value as educators. One teacher noted that his view of himself as a teacher has been changed by the bill, and went on to clarify this response by saying

Well, basically, it said we’re not important. I mean that’s what, when it came down to it, that ‘we can give you pay cuts,’ and all of that, and it doesn’t matter. I don’t know how the governor, or the people who voted for this bill for that matter, would’ve thought that this is going to keep teacher morale high.
In addition to this statement, a different teacher reflected on this question, and answered by saying

I almost would say no, to be honest. I still think I’m a good teacher and I think, in some ways, it’s made me a better social studies teacher because now I’m living the talk…You just hear the constant bashing of teachers because they have to win that battle of the public mind. That’s how they’re going to win it, by convincing you that teachers are awful. That’s the biggest outcome right now, is the low morale…you can’t turn on the TV without hearing how awful we are, and how we’re overpaid. It’s constantly being devalued…teachers don’t have that high of self-esteem at this point, and I think it has had a big impact on most teachers.

As in any aspect of our daily life, when an individual is told repeatedly that they are not good enough, that they have taken too much, and that they have not done enough to prove themselves professionally, it is only a matter of time before the morale of that individual is effected, as well as the entire atmosphere and climate within an organization.

Another teacher in this high school responded to this interview question by speaking to the image of teachers held by supporters of the bill. This teacher also expressed concern surrounding the methods of communication used to address this issue. Additionally, there was a sense of unease when this teacher spoke of the future of education. When asked this particular interview question, he stated:

You’d like to say no, but the reality of the situation is that social media has opened up a new constraint within the communication spectrum, and what people say to you via social network compared to face to face, are two opposite things. I’ve seen a lot of comments on those networks that have really been troublesome
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to me as an individual; attacking my character, attacking the profession, etcetera
….I think the career is changing quite a bit. Where it goes? I don’t necessarily
believe it’s going to be in the best interest of the student; I think it’s going to be
cost driven. I think with the rise of Wal-Mart and the reason they’re so popular,
the writing is on the wall, that a more cost effective mode to instruct children is
inherited.

These statements help to better clarify how, not only the bill, but the thoughts and statements of
the general public have assisted in the low morale of teachers, the recent modifications to the
profession, and teachers’ outlook on their jobs.

Taking a somewhat different perspective to this question, yet remaining with the same
theme, one teacher responded by identifying that, initially, the bill did have a negative impact on
how she thought of herself as a teacher. She went on to clarify this statement by saying

I felt like…no matter what I did, it wasn’t good enough…I had to do a lot of self-
talk about who I am as a person, how valuable my job is. For a while, I was
feeling guilty because I had benefits…I make a better wage than some of my
family members do…So I had to deal with this guilt…just feeling like I was
asking too much…I had to grapple with all of these emotions about how well I
thought I was doing, or if I thought I was worthy of getting paid that much…I felt
like I worked hard, I paid for my won masters…I had a parent that came in on a
conference…and they started talking about the ridiculous benefits package we
have and I make too much money, and…it was very difficult because I’m trying
to deal with the behavior issues and the work issues with their child, and it turned
into a personal attack on who I am as a teacher even though they don’t know me,
they don’t know how I run my classroom, then to say that I get overpaid and have no idea how many hours I put in during my summers, the classes I take and the thousands of dollars I’ve spent on my education…I think of all these things that I do, and to have people come in and personally attack me was very difficult.

This response gave insight into how teachers have reacted to the many criticisms surrounding his or her career. This statement also draws awareness to how teachers are processing all of these changes, and are attempting to deal with the multiple emotions that come along with the change. These thoughts also show how teachers do not only have to deal with their own personal issues, but also the personal issues of the public, specifically, parents of students. This statement also highlights the many causes of low morale, as well as the foundation for the alteration of the communication climate within the public schools in the state of Wisconsin.

When asking this question of the interviewees, it was expected by the researcher that teachers would respond with statements pertaining to their own future in education. One teacher revealed that, originally, the bill did affect the way he thought of himself as a teacher. He continued his response by stating:

I didn’t know if I wanted to continue to do it, but I love what I do. I don’t want to do anything else. I’ve been doing it for 24 years…here’s what I didn’t want to happen. I didn’t want somebody else…to make the decision when I quit, and tell me ‘well, you can’t do this,’ and ‘you can’t do this because of financial reasons.’ Well that’s bull shit. You know, when I quit, I’ll quit on my own, and I’ll quit because of the reasons that I want to quit…at the beginning though, it was like ‘why am I doing this?’ ‘What do I want to teach for?’ ‘If this is the way I’m going to be treated, who in their right mind would do this?’
Another teacher also responded to this question by stating:

…I know some people retired and they’re happy they did, and some retired, but did it grudgingly. And me, I decided not to last spring, even though I could have…I need an income to supplement some stuff…I’m really stubborn, and what? Am I going to prove a point to the governor and walk out because he was really nasty? Am I going to give up something I really love and go do that to make a point? There are days that the depression kicks my hind end and I just need to get out and go do something else…just step away for a while. With the Budget Repair Bill…I didn’t know that there were that many people out there that looked that far down their noses at teachers. So yeah, it’s had an impact.

When asked the same question, a different teacher replied:

I know this may sound weird, but I won the Herb Kohl Fellowship, I sit on several state boards, I coach, I advise, I do a lot. I consider myself one of the top teachers, and I got a $10,000.00 pay cut, so I don’t know how that’s going to keep me here. So, you know, I feel that my skills, if it stays the way it is, I will take my skills somewhere else so I can use them better, but I don’t see it changing in the next couple of years, I just don’t…I’m in that kind of ‘oh boy, do I need to switch careers?’ I’m 34, and I’m kind of…do I need to make a change now or not? So, it has affected a lot.

These three statements show that not only had the Budget Repair Bill affected the way that teachers thought of themselves in the workplace, but also how the bill forced teachers to reconsider the remainder of their career. With these two thoughts in mind, it is easier to see how the morale in this school was affected through a multitude of factors, specifically, the substantial
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pay cuts that have been experienced by teachers, and the overwhelming opinion of the supporters of the bill. It was refreshing, however, to see that although some individuals were rethinking their profession, they were not willing to allow the state government or this piece of legislation dictate their final decision.

Another poignant response to the question of whether or not the Budget Repair Bill affected their own identity as teachers came from an individual who had been teaching in the state of Wisconsin for 37 years. She responded to this question by saying

Maybe this is unfair…but not myself, personally, as a teacher, but teachers as a whole. You know, my colleagues, my friends, my professional cohorts of which I am a part; we are not doing enough to protect our profession and protect our students.

This statement highlights how some teachers, on an individual level, may not feel that their personal morale has been affected by the bill itself, but that morale, in general, has definitely been affected by other teachers in the public school system. The candidness of this response does a great deal to clarify the fact that some teachers may, on the individual level, feel secure in their place in the public school system, but disagree with how teachers as a whole have handled this situation. Therefore, it seemed apparent that there may be some concern surrounding how teachers’ responses and their “new” identity could have potentially affected morale in this particular school. These “new” identities may possibly have a drastic and permanent effect on the face of teaching in the state of Wisconsin. This testimonial also sheds light on the idea that when a group of people cannot seem to band together under one, unified cause, the group can become disjointed, and risks dissolution. Although there is a good chance that there will always be public education in the state of Wisconsin, currently, with all of the activity still surrounding
the Budget Repair Bill and the recall of Governor Scott Walker, this statement shows that there remains a risk to public educators, their job satisfaction, and the future of public education if teachers cannot find a way to unite for the common cause.

Neutral effects on identity in the workplace. As expected, it was found that there were more negative effects on teachers’ identity within this public high school. However, it was refreshing to find that there were some teachers who were able to maintain their positive identity in the aftermath of the Budget Repair Bill. Of the thirteen teachers interviewed, three made positive statements regarding how they perceived themselves in their position in this high school.

When asked whether or not her identity as a teacher had been affected by the Budget Repair Bill, one teacher responded confidently by stating:

No. I’ve never depended on somebody else to judge me or value me. I know what I do. I know that I do the best that I can; if somebody else recognizes that, great. If somebody else doesn’t recognize that, I don’t really care because I’m satisfied with myself.

Likewise, another teacher responded by saying that she thought she was a good teacher, and her reaction to the bill had not changed the way she thought of herself in her position. She went on to state:

There’s always room for improvement. Every year I think ‘I should’ve done this…’ or ‘I should’ve done that…’ And so every year I strive to be better and do more. Does it always work? No. I’m going to be totally honest about it, but, all in all, I think the kids that are in here learn a lot from each other and from us…

While answering this same interview question, a different teacher stated that the bill did not affect the way he perceived himself as a teacher “…because I know I do a good job. I come in
every day meaning to do my very best. I have fantastic kids and I’m proud of what they do.” He expanded on this statement by saying:

I think the reason why I teach is more for the personal reasons…I teach because I want to get that feeling…last week, (a student succeeded in a difficult task), and afterwards he was so proud of himself. He came up to me and shook my hand and said ‘thank you for this opportunity.’ I was like ‘holy smokes! This is so cool.’ So that one little comment will keep me going for months…I don’t think it’s changed the way that I feel, but it has opened my eyes about the way other people perceive the job that I do.

This revelation in particular helps to restate the majority of educators’ motivation to teach in the first place. This statement shows that the students, more than anything, are influential to teachers’ maintenance of a positive outlook in the classroom, and in the school in general. This statement also helps to show that even after being repeatedly attacked by members of the state government, members of the general public, as well as the media, some teachers are still able to maintain their optimism and find the positive aspects of their work.

The statements from these three teachers help to show that although teachers in the state of Wisconsin have experienced an enormous setback in the past year, the self-confidence that is needed to maintain their identity, combined with their dedication to the students, can potentially help teachers stay positive and focused on their job on a day-to-day basis. Although it was found through the interviews that, lately, teachers are struggling with various facets of their job, there are still many aspects that remind them why they continue to remain invested in their students and their career.
The concept of communication climate and atmosphere within an organization is extremely important when discussing how a group of people are affected by something, large or small. Certain theorists of communication climate have come to understand that members of an organization have different ways of thinking and acting, and, due to this fact, different employees’ observations and insights into organizationally-related messages are unique. Furthermore, everything seems to carry with it a ripple effect of sorts; in that respect, a piece of governmental legislation is no different, especially when it comes to the effect of that legislation on a targeted group of people.

When the Wisconsin Budget Repair Bill was introduced and passed in 2011, the group of people who were targeted was the public sector employees in the state; this included public school teachers. From the beginning, it was said that the Budget Repair Bill had the potential to destroy relationships between teachers and administrators. After reading the accounts of the educators involved in this study, it is clear that this bill has, in fact, altered the association between teachers at this high school, as well as the relations teachers have with the individuals in positions of leadership. Additionally, for a group of individuals who have constantly strived to be valued in the eyes of the general public as highly educated professionals, with the elimination of collective bargaining instituted by the Budget Repair Bill, the government in the state of Wisconsin successfully stripped the public school teachers of their professional identity. Taking into consideration the testimonials of the thirteen teachers involved in this study, it becomes easier and easier to see how and why the atmosphere of this particular high school, as well as the morale of individual educators and teachers, as a whole, have been so drastically effected by this one piece of legislation.
Throughout the thirteen interviews, all of the teachers highlighted their motivations behind teaching, what they did not particularly care for in terms of their profession, how they and their colleagues reacted to the different aspects of the Budget Repair Bill, and how this reaction affected their relationships within the school, their job-specific duties, and their own perception of themselves as professionals. It was found that this bill drastically affected the teachers, the school, and the district in many ways, and these effects successfully assisted in the alteration of the climate of the high school, as well as the morale of all of the teachers in this school.

From these thirteen interviews, a variety of themes and subthemes emerged. The themes that were found were the positive and negative aspects of teaching, teachers’ feelings and reactions surrounding the Budget Repair Bill, effects on the communication climate in the school, effects on job-specific duties, and effects on identification with the job and the school. These themes helped to put a face on the public school teachers in the state of Wisconsin, while, simultaneously, assisted in obtaining a better understanding of how these teachers have been effected by the Wisconsin Budget Repair Bill, and, more specifically, how the atmosphere of the school and teachers’ morale have been affected by the bill. Throughout the course of the interviews, and during the transcription process there was no finding of variation in the responses in terms of age or gender of the participants. Having explored these five significant themes, an analysis of the findings can be accomplished.
Chapter 4: Analysis

The literature that exists surrounding the communication climate of an organization attempts to understand how members of an organization can be affected by many factors surrounding specific issues pertinent to the climate. The communication climate and overall organizational climate in the workplace have the ability to drastically affect how people do their job, how people identify with their organization, whether or not they are satisfied in their position, and can even determine the level of commitment that people have to their positions, as well as to their organization as a whole.

There has been a great deal of speculation surrounding whether or not the morale or productivity of the workforce is affected when organizations experience events that directly affect the entirety of the business such as modifications to the budget and massive restructuring. During organizational shifts, the organizational culture and climate in an organization is affected. However, it should be recognized that these shifts can affect each individual employee in different ways, such as motivational changes and changes in morale.

The overarching purpose of this body of research is to identify how the communication climate of public schools has been affected by the Budget Repair Bill. However, more specifically and more importantly, it was the goal of the researcher to uncover how the morale of the teachers in public schools in the state of Wisconsin has been affected. Furthermore, this particular high school and the teachers employed there were of particular interest as the district that this school is in was facing a significant budget cut at the time that this research took place. Therefore, this school and its teachers were not only experiencing the ramifications of the Budget Repair Bill, they were also waiting to see how the budget cuts would affect them, their school, and their students in terms of the potential for the restructuring of staff, departments, and classrooms.
In order to examine how the Budget Repair Bill has affected the communication climate of the school and the morale of the public school teachers, it was crucial to highlight the different motivational issues, as well as details that factor into commitment to gain a better understanding of the effects on the organizational climate and communication climate in the school. It has been suggested that when organizations undergo drastic change, the motivational tools that were previously used by the employees could eventually be considered null and void, as the restructuring of an organization can be all encompassing. However, despite the amount of speculation surrounding this issue, there is little concrete research exploring how employees handle drastic organizational changes in their individual employment positions, as well as how employees’ organizational life is affected on the broader scale. This analysis clarifies how the public school teachers in one school in the state of Wisconsin have been affected by the restructuring that has had to occur as a result of the Budget Repair Bill.

It was already seen in this high school that, as a result of the Budget Repair Bill and the budget cuts that ensued, teachers’ job duties had, in fact, been affected. This modification to the teachers’ daily life was felt primarily in the increase in class sizes throughout the school. With an increase in class sizes, it was found that the teachers’ were spending more of their personal time out of school grading course materials. Additionally, with an increase in class sizes, teachers had to modify their curricula, as well as readjust their teaching methods to accommodate more students. With this in mind, it can be said that the teachers’ job duties have in fact been altered by the passage of the Budget Repair Bill.

For the purpose of this study, the first research question to be explored states: “Was the communication climate in public schools affected by teachers’ reactions to the Budget Repair Bill?” Following the thirteen interviews that took place, it was found that all of the participants
had a great amount of insight into how the communication climate at this particular high school, as well as the morale of the teachers has been affected by the Budget Repair Bill and the many ramifications of this bill. Therefore, it can be said that the communication climate in this particular high school has, in fact, been affected by the teachers’ reactions to the Budget Repair Bill.

Although the responses were very different in certain areas, it was quite apparent that these individual educators had experienced a change in the climate of their school, and, likewise, their own morale. An interesting finding, however, was the role the administration had in these changes, as well as the awareness of the teachers in terms of not letting any recognized changes affect their classrooms and their students. Furthermore, for this study, specifically, the teachers in this particular public high school have been able to maintain their primary motivational tool: their dedication to their students. Therefore, it can be stated with certainty that although morale has been drastically affected in this public school, as well as the teachers’ job duties, the teachers report that these changes did not impact the students or the relationships with colleagues. However, some of the teachers did report that their relationships with administration were impacted. With these findings in mind, it can be seen that although the communication climate of the school has been effectively altered by the Budget Repair Bill, the teachers’ job and workplace identity has not been affected.

From the findings of this research, it can be seen how the communication climate in public schools in the state of Wisconsin has been effectively modified by the Budget Repair Bill, introduced and passed in 2011. However, up until this point, the perspectives, thoughts, and feelings of teachers, specifically, have not been well publicized. The time spent conversing with these thirteen public school teachers helped to give valuable insight into the current public school...
environment in the state of Wisconsin. The information found throughout the thirteen interviews of the public school teachers at a high school in central Wisconsin was thought to be pertinent in order to put a face on one of the public sector groups experiencing the ramifications of this bill, as well as highlight the many ways that the communication climate of an organization can be effected through the specific actions of certain individuals both inside and outside of the organization.

This body of research began with questions relating to the basic motivational issues surrounding teaching; the basic factors that drew the teachers to their jobs day after day, and year after year. However, it was shown that with this introductory topic, a ripple effect occurred. This analysis hopes to provide a better understanding as to how these individuals in the Wisconsin public school system have dealt with their newly altered environment.

**Motivational Factors behind Teaching**

In all organizations and in all careers there are certain motivational factors that assist in the overall attitude and morale of employees. When drastic changes are felt in an organization, an effort needs to be made by all parties to maintain a positive working environment and, likewise, happy, satisfied employees. Taking into consideration all of the changes that teachers in the state of Wisconsin have experienced in 2011 and 2012, it is understandable that attitude and morale may have been altered. However, first and foremost, it is important to discuss the primary motivational factors behind teaching, as well as issues that directly relate to and effect teachers’ motivation in the schools.

**Positive aspects of teaching.** At the beginning of all thirteen interviews, the teachers involved in this study were asked what they liked and disliked the most about teaching. This question was asked as an attempt to uncover teachers’ primary motivation behind their career
choice. All of the teachers stated that what they liked most about their jobs was working with and assisting in the successes of their students. Therefore, it can be assumed that the primary motivation for these teachers is the teacher-student relationships that are developed through the actual interactions in their classrooms. In addition to the students, many of the teachers felt that another positive aspect of their job were the challenges they faced on a daily basis, as well as the fact that no two days were ever the same. Many of the teachers also stated that they enjoyed working with their colleagues on a daily basis.

All of the responses that pertained to the positive aspects of teaching helped to provide a better understanding of the morale of the teachers in the public school system. It was shown that their love for the students, their love of the ongoing challenges, and their love for their colleagues were what kept these teachers going. These aspects of their job helped to assist in the maintenance of a positive attitude and overall morale in the school. Likewise, through the examination of the motivating factors behind teaching, when teachers care so deeply about their students, their colleagues, and their profession, it becomes easier to understand how and why their morale was so drastically affected by the Budget Repair Bill, as it is human nature to fight for and protect the things that are important facets in our lives. When there is no opportunity or means for protection or resistance, people become desperate and their entire being is affected.

**Negative aspects of teaching.** When it came to the negative aspects of teaching in this public education setting, many of the participants responded by stating that what they disliked the most about their job were the endless hours spent grading course materials both in and out of school. These teachers helped to make their positions on this topic clear by expressing how this work impinged on their personal and family time. This issue was considered a problem, especially when it related to morale, when the teachers alluded to the idea that they were
continually asked to do more and more, but, since the passage of the Budget Repair Bill, they were receiving fewer incentives. Additionally, no single individual can maintain a high level of consistent work as it pertains to their career. Therefore, it is necessary for any employee to take some time off from their duties at work in order to maintain a positive outlook and avoid burnout.

An issue that seemed to relate to the hours teachers spent outside of their classrooms and the school building was the scathing opinion of the supporters of the bill. All of the misconceptions surrounding the field of teaching and teachers in general, can and do weigh heavily on these educators. It has been widely felt in the field of education that teachers have always been an undervalued group of individuals. However, since the passage of the Budget Repair Bill, and the awareness that this bill has drawn to the field of education, teachers are feeling the burden of the spotlight, and are concerned that, with the blame being put on them for the Wisconsin budget crisis, their image and the image of public education may have been ruined forever. Due to the negative opinions of the supporters of the bill, teachers are feeling that they now need to prove their value and worth to the general public once again. Additionally, the Budget Repair Bill, its supporters, and certain government officials have had the ability to effectively alter the morale and attitudes of individuals in educational employment positions in the state of Wisconsin permanently. As in any aspect of our daily life, when an individual is told repeatedly that they are not good enough, that they have taken too much, and that they have not done enough to prove themselves professionally, it is only a matter of time before the morale and attitude of that individual is effected, as well as the entire atmosphere and climate within an organization.
Teachers’ Feelings and Reactions Surrounding the Budget Repair Bill

Following the passage of the Budget Repair Bill, it was to be expected that teachers in the public schools around the state of Wisconsin would have strong reactions to the bill and the legislation surrounding it. In fact, it was found that the feelings and reactions of the teachers contributed significantly to the communication climate and morale in this specific public high school following the passage of the bill. Although the majority of the responses to this particular line of questioning were strong and negative, the replies helped to show that the teachers found it necessary to maintain a high level of professionalism, as well as responsibility to all aspects of their job.

Many of the participants in this study reacted to the Budget Repair Bill with extreme disappointment; they felt that education in general was completely undervalued, as well as their personal commitment to their career. Because of this bill, public school teachers were required to contribute more to their personal benefits, including health insurance and pensions. Additionally, many teachers around the state absorbed significant personal salary cuts. With these facts in mind, it can be easily seen how the teachers’ morale was affected by the simple fact that educators in the state of Wisconsin have never been told that they were appreciated or that they were doing a good job. Instead, beginning in 2011 and continuing into 2012, teachers have been continually told that education in the state needs to be improved upon, they are not doing a satisfactory job, and they make too much money. Despite these criticisms surrounding the state of public education in Wisconsin, in 2011, legislators still felt the need to cut significant funds from school districts around the state. The teachers felt that this bill and the implications that it posed to public education was a complete oxymoron.
Continuing with this theme, many of the teachers felt that they were used as the scapegoat for a statewide budget crisis that they did not help to create. These types of responses help to highlight another interesting finding: as a profession whose members are highly educated, and are required to maintain this level of education throughout their career, teachers report that they are still greatly misunderstood and undervalued by the majority of the general public. Teachers also felt that they were put at the mercy of the general public, and, in some cases, the teachers’ personal friends and family members. All of these statements provided significant understanding into how the Budget Repair Bill and the reactions to the bill have affected all aspects of the teachers’ lives.

In addition to the above findings, teachers expanded their reactions to include a feeling of surprise following the passage of the Budget Repair Bill. In the past, budget adjustments have been seen and felt in other areas of the public sector, as well as in the private sector. These groups of people continually saw salary freezes and mandatory furloughs. However, in the public school districts in the state of Wisconsin, due primarily to the influence of the teachers’ unions, public educators were untouched by these types of budgetary modifications. In the school district examined in this study, any salary freezes that were experienced were collectively bargained for in order to maintain the teachers’ benefits packages.

**Compromise.** During the passage of the Budget Repair Bill, many supporters stated that it was about time that teachers started pulling their own weight, contributing more and paying their fair share. In response to these types of statements, some of the participants in this study expressed their willingness to compromise and negotiate for a different system. The teachers that were interviewed felt that the specific aspects of the bill were not under anyone’s control but
Governor Walker’s. These teachers felt that the bill and its potential ramifications were not thoroughly researched in terms of the possible outcomes.

Additionally, the teachers who were interviewed for the purpose of this study acknowledged the fact that there was a budget crisis of sorts occurring in Wisconsin, and the state was in need of some assistance as far as finding something proactive that could be done that would help to fix these problems. However, the participants did not agree with the way the state government went about fixing the budget, as the majority felt that the state legislators did what they did simply because they could. Overall, it was found that teachers were more than willing to compromise in order to help with the cause; however, with the implementation of the Budget Repair Bill, these teachers felt that a certain select few were targeted in order to accomplish the end goal. In the end, teachers were made to be the scapegoat, and much more was taken away from them. Besides the financial constraints of this bill, teachers were further stripped of their personal worth, and any respect that they had garnered throughout the years.

Once again, with the passage of the Budget Repair Bill, supporters made frequent statements indicating that for years, teachers did not pay their fair share or pull their weight. Although the public response in support of this bill has contributed to the downfall of morale in this public school, the responses from teachers should provide some insight into the fact that teachers were always willing to negotiate and bargain for the benefits that they had.

It is apparent that the teachers involved in this study have had to deal with more than just the implications that the Budget Repair Bill posed. These teachers have also been forced to deal with the social aspect of the bill. The misconceptions surrounding teachers and the teaching profession, combined with the reactions of the general public to the bill and the reactions of the teachers, themselves, helped to provide a better understanding of the feelings and emotions
surrounding the Budget Repair Bill. Additionally, in the face of new legislation that effectively strips educators of their self-worth, it is much easier to comprehend how and why the attitudes and morale in public schools have been affected. In fact, it was found that the teachers in this particular public high school were faced with attitude changes from the very introduction of the bill.

Furthermore, it should once again be stressed that in any aspect of daily life, when an individual is told repeatedly that they are not good enough, that they have taken too much, and that they have not done enough to prove themselves professionally, it is only a matter of time before the morale and attitude of that individual is effected, as well as the entire atmosphere and climate within an organization.

**Collective bargaining.** When discussing the bill and its specific characteristics, extreme concern was conveyed surrounding the elimination of collective bargaining. This aspect of the bill hit teachers very hard, and, through the interview process, it was seen as a facet of the bill that had a large impact on the communication climate of the school, as well as the teachers’ own morale. It was effectively shown that teachers’ relationships with other teachers were affected, as well as teachers’ relationships with the administration, both in the school and the district itself. Concern was expressed surrounding the fact that with the elimination of collective bargaining, it almost seemed as if people in leadership positions were trying to pit teachers against each other.

Teachers also articulated unease in terms of the very concept of collective bargaining. In past negotiations, *collective* was the main operative. This meant parties gathered together and worked out the details of a plan that functioned equally for both sides of the bargaining table. Additionally, when contract negotiations were settled prior to 2011, the result was something that everybody could feel good about because parties from all sides felt valued and respected.
Now, with the implementation of the Budget Repair Bill, those aspects have been taken away. The loss of collective bargaining has proven to be a devastating blow to the teachers involved in this research.

The testimonials of the participants assisted in the clarification surrounding the fact that the majority of teachers may have had different reactions about the bill if the passage was handled differently, and if it was not a direct attack on unions, and the teaching profession. Additionally, it is becoming easier to see that when specific aspects of a teacher’s job is eliminated, and when it is completely out of the teacher’s control, the sense of devaluation and unimportance can take a heavy toll.

**Support.** Although many teachers had strong, adverse reactions to the Budget Repair Bill, a few of the participants in this study spoke to how certain individuals in the school were able to come together to assist and support each other. In many cases, teachers referenced the fact that while they strongly opposed the bill, they did not believe that the students should suffer. While many teachers traveled to Madison to protest the bill, three teachers in particular mentioned that they stayed behind to cover classes, and fill in where needed. These specific responses help to show how certain individuals, during stressful times of anger and unrest, persevere and unite, as the teachers at this high school used whatever means necessary to assist others in the education of issues surrounding the bill, as well as to offer support for one another. These actions also do a great deal in terms of increasing the morale in the workplace by creating a sense of community and support. Additionally, these responses helped to highlight the fact that the teachers’ primary concerns have always been and still are their students, upholding their high standards for a quality education, and maintaining their professional identity, rather than the
assumptions made by the supporters of the bill; that the teachers in Wisconsin are only concerned about money, salary, and benefits.

**Effects on the Communication Climate and Morale**

During the time period that encompassed the introduction and passage of the Budget Repair Bill teachers at the high school that was studied responded in varying ways to questions regarding observed changes in the atmosphere of their school and in the morale of the teachers in general. When asked if any changes in the atmosphere of the school had been noticed, the most poignant responses addressed the decline in the overall morale of the teachers. In fact, many of the participants stated specifically that the biggest impact of all of the budgetary changes had been felt in the morale and attitudes of the teachers. In the past year, it was acknowledged by the interviewees that teachers are not walking around with a chip on their shoulder, but there was noticed a distinct change in the moods of their colleagues. In fact, one teacher referred to the new atmosphere of the school as a “dark cloud.” Due to this shift in mood, many of the teachers who were interviewed stated that they did not like the feeling that they got when they were at their school.

**Uncertainty as affecting morale.** Many of the teachers who were interviewed for the purpose of this research expressed concern surrounding what may happen to them next. There was and still is a great deal of uncertainty surrounding school budgets, personal salaries, and even the security of the teachers’ employment positions. In any organization, when uncertainty surrounds an individual on a daily basis, especially when it pertains to how one carries out their daily tasks, and whether or not their livelihood is at stake, there can be drastic effects to individual morale and the general atmosphere of the organization. Even more concerning is when the superiors in an organization cannot foresee how the uncertainties are to play out, there is no
source of reassurance, or sense of safety for anyone involved. This matter requires people on an individual level to strive to maintain a positive outlook. Despite the uncertainty in the schools, it was highlighted by the teachers that many of them are continuing to do whatever is necessary to help one another stay positive, while, at the same time regain some of the respect that they have lost from the general public in the past year.

In addition to the above sentiments, the teachers that were interviewed had noticed that many teachers seemed to be craving the “good ole days.” Although it was observed by the majority of the participants that most of their colleagues had been able to maintain a passion for their job, it seemed that many of these individuals were having difficulty when it came to the maintenance of their own level of happiness with being in the school on a daily basis. The responses to interview questions that targeted atmosphere and morale provided an understanding into how teachers perceived the new atmosphere of the school in which they teach. Moreover, these testimonials also revealed how the climate of the school had been altered as a result of many factors since the passage of the bill.

Public’s role in affecting morale. During the interview process, it was expressed how members of the general public and specifically the supporters of the Budget Repair Bill were an overpowering influence on the morale of the teachers. It was highlighted by many of the teachers that the bill and its overwhelming support assisted in the continued devaluation of teachers. Although they belong to a profession that is made up of a group of highly educated individuals, as previously stated, teachers have had a history of not being valued in the eyes of the public, and they are still not being respected. In Wisconsin, with the passage of the Budget Repair Bill, and in light of the budget crisis, teachers were made to be the problem.
Administration’s role in affecting morale. Throughout the interviews, all of the teachers had a great amount of insight into how the communication climate at this high school has been affected by the Budget Repair Bill. Although the responses varied in certain areas, it was clear that the teachers had experienced a change in the climate, and, likewise, the morale of the high school. An interesting finding, however, was the reported role the administration had in these changes.

During this line of questioning, it was shown through multiple accounts that the individuals in roles of leadership played an influential part in the negative modification of the atmosphere of the school, as well as the teachers’ morale. Due to the implementation of the Budget Repair Bill the balance of power in public schools has been effectively altered. Additionally, many teachers have already seen administrators look at this new situation as an opportunity to get a little bit more power.

In addition to the new power dynamic at this high school, many teachers expressed a concern for the new teacher evaluation process that has been implemented since the passage of the bill. With no collective bargaining, and no contract, teachers will now be held to a different set of standards when it comes to their employee evaluations. Due to this new situation, the teachers who were interviewed expressed concern surrounding their potential need for classroom assistance or mentoring; they are afraid of looking bad in the eyes of the administration. When the communication climate of an organization is limited primarily by apprehension and fear, it can go without saying that the morale of the employees, as well as the overall atmosphere can be drastically and negatively affected.

Morale’s impact on students. Although many of the teachers responded to the questions that pertained specifically to morale and atmosphere by relaying their experiences with other
teachers and the administration, there was an awareness of the teachers in terms of not letting any recognized changes affect their classrooms and their students. These teachers expressed a desire not to reveal the negative outcomes of the Budget Repair Bill to their students. It was understood that the teachers in this public high school continued to portray to their students that everything was good, and that the teachers as a whole are doing okay. Most of the teachers have managed to find a way to remain positive because they recognize the fact that they are dealing with kids, and the kids did not do anything wrong.

Despite the teachers unwillingness to allow the atmospheric changes in the school affect the students, there are specific issues posed by the Budget Repair Bill and the ensuing budget issues in this particular school district that are out of the teachers’ control. Specifically, this particular high school, at the time of these interviews, was experiencing a drastic increase in class sizes. These increases were due to a number of factors that were out of the teachers’ hands. However, it was already being seen, that due to the increases in class size, the teachers’ jobs were being affected, as well as the quality of education that was being given to the students.

**How an increase in class size has affected morale.** With one of the biggest motivating factors for the participants in this study being their students, issues that directly impacted the classroom and the quality of education need to be discussed. With the introduction and passage of the Budget Repair Bill, one of the biggest changes that occurred in this school transpired as a result of a combination of factors: the retirement and resignation of a large amount of teachers, severe budget cuts, and an increase in class sizes. The ripple effect that occurred as a result of these issues was fascinating. With the passage of the bill, many teachers thought that this was their time to leave education if they were at the end of their career. Likewise, with the budget cuts, a few of the teachers were either terminated from their position of employment or
transferred to a different school in the district. Furthermore, due to the shortage of teachers in the high school, an increase in class sizes was experienced.

The increase in class sizes posed a new problem, unique to this high school, and it was also seen to have a direct impact on the morale of the teachers. When considering the fact that all of the teachers that were interviewed considered their students to be their biggest motivational factor in their career, it becomes easier to understand how morale could be affected by this issue. First and foremost, with an increase in class sizes, less time can be dedicated to each individual student, putting the quality of their education at risk. Secondly, with the number of students in individual classes rising, the amount of equipment in the classroom comes into question. For example, when there are not enough computers for students in a particular class, or not enough work stations in another class, the quality of the course decreases, therefore, the quality of the education the students can receive is drastically diminished. However, it was shown that the lack of materials in a classroom is not the only matter that can potentially decrease the quality of education provided to the students.

Another issue that comes into question with the increase in class size is the modification to the course curriculum. With an increase in class size, more time must be spent grading the students’ work. However, teachers only had so much time in a day, and could only spend so much time on school-related matters outside of school. Therefore, teachers have had to pare down on the amount of work they assign to their students. This issue creates yet another ripple effect. In today’s public education system, there is an extreme reliance on standardized test scores to determine the success of the student. With this in mind, it should go without question that teachers are concerned about denying their students pertinent course materials. Secondly, with the eradication of collective bargaining in public education, and the implementation of an
evaluation system based on student success to determine the worth of teachers, instructors are worried that, by eliminating necessary course information and materials, students would not do as well on the standardized tests, consequently, putting the teachers’ careers at risk. Therefore, it can be seen that not only does an increase in class size have an effect on how and what an instructor teaches, but creates a ripple effect on attention to students, student performance and success, teacher evaluations, and also, a teacher’s livelihood.

Additional problems are posed in terms of class size when there are safety matters to consider. In certain classes in a high school, a set amount of students is necessary in order to avoid any unnecessary accidents or mishaps due to lack of supervision. Although the use of teacher aides are utilized at this particular high school, due to budget cuts and teacher shortages, not enough aides are always readily available. It is important to discuss the issue of safety because, as was previously discussed, the participants in this study were primarily motivated by their students’ successes both in and out of the classroom; the teachers involved in this study come back to school day after day in order to provide their students with the best education possible. When there is a risk to the safety of the students in the classroom, teachers are not fully capable of providing their students the quality education that they deserve. This issue helps to highlight one more cause of the decreasing morale in this high school. If the teachers are not allowed to do their job, and are hindered from remaining motivated, it goes without question that their motivation to teach could be drastically altered.

**How the Budget Repair Bill Affected Teachers’ Job Identification**

With the passage and implementation of a piece of legislation such as the Wisconsin Budget Repair Bill, it should be easy to understand that many public sector positions were significantly altered. From the interviews with thirteen teachers at a high school in central
Wisconsin, it is clear that they have also had to modify their own mental and emotional outlook. All thirteen teachers, during the course of their interviews, were asked the question “Has your reaction to the Budget Repair Bill affected the way you think of yourself as a teacher?” and all of them gave very astute responses. Although the responses were varied, it was found that with the passage of this bill, all thirteen teachers were forced to reassess their positions in the public school system at some point in the past year.

The introduction of the Budget Repair Bill and the bill’s passage brought about many negative effects as to how the thirteen teachers perceived themselves in their place of employment. This, in turn, had a negative impact on the morale in the high school. It should go without question that when an individual’s personal and professional character is called into question, as well as their career motives, that person’s personal and professional outlook in their place of employment could be affected severely and, more times than not, negatively. By recognizing this, it is easier to understand how the morale in this public high school was so easily affected.

The interviews also helped to reveal that teachers have not only had to reevaluate their employment positions in their school, but have also had to undergo change in every aspect of their position. Once again, it should be understood that when teachers are placed under the social microscope and are faced with the challenge of proving themselves to their peers and the general public, their outlook regarding their job, and their attitude in their place of employment is severely at risk.

For the purpose of analyzing this body of research, it is important to highlight that a small number of teachers did not feel that the impact of the Budget Repair Bill affected their own perceptions of themselves or their own morale. However, when it came to the atmosphere of the
school and morale in general, it has been posited that teachers as a unified body have done the greatest amount of harm. It was shown in a few responses that some teachers may, on the individual level, feel secure in their place in the public school system, but disagree with how teachers as a whole have handled this situation. Therefore, it is apparent that there is some concern surrounding how teachers’ responses and their “new” identity have affected morale in this particular school. These “new” identities have been shown to have had a drastic and permanent effect on the face of teaching in the state of Wisconsin. These statements also lend an understanding to the idea that when a group of people cannot seem to band together under one, unified cause, the group can become disjointed, and risk dissolution altogether. Although there is a good chance that there will always be public education in the state of Wisconsin, currently, with all of the activity still surrounding the Budget Repair Bill and the recall of Governor Scott Walker, it has been shown that there remains a risk to public educators, their job satisfaction, and the future of public education if teachers cannot find a way to unite for the common cause.

**When All Is Said And Done, What Does This Mean?**

Following the introduction and passage of the Budget Repair Bill, a piece of legislation that placed public sector employees at the mercy of the state government, it was expected that many changes would take place in the affected organizations. However, for the purpose of this study, the organization that was of interest was the public school system in the state of Wisconsin. The public schools were of primary concern because, in the past, budget adjustments have been seen and felt in other areas of the public sector, as well as in the private sector. These groups of people continually saw salary freezes and mandatory furloughs. Conversely, in the public school districts in the state of Wisconsin, due primarily to the influence of the teachers’ unions, public educators were untouched by these types of budgetary modifications. However,
since the Budget Repair Bill took effect, the public schools and public school teachers in the state of Wisconsin have been forced to undergo drastic changes.

It has been shown through previous research that in all organizations and in all careers there are specific motivational factors that assist in the overall attitude and morale of employees. When drastic changes are felt in an organization, an effort needs to be made by all parties to maintain a positive working environment and happy, satisfied employees. Taking into consideration all of the changes that public school teachers in the state of Wisconsin have experienced in 2011 and 2012, it is understandable that attitude and morale has been altered in the public schools around the state.

Furthermore, following the passage of the Budget Repair Bill, it was to be expected that teachers in the public schools around the state of Wisconsin would have strong reactions to the bill and the legislation surrounding it. It was found through the course of the thirteen interviews that the feelings and reactions of the teachers contributed significantly to the communication climate and morale in this specific public high school following the passage of the bill. Although the majority of the responses to this particular line of questioning were strong and negative, the replies helped to show that the teachers found it necessary to maintain a high level of professionalism, as well as responsibility to all aspects of their job.

Referring back to the literature pertaining to this study, the communication climate of an organization seems to greatly affect how satisfied an employee is with their organization, as well as effect, on many different levels, an employee’s relationship with that organization. Through the thirteen interviews, the participants revealed that the atmosphere of the public high school in which they teach has, in fact, been effectively altered by the passage of the Budget Repair Bill.

It was also shown through this analysis that during the time period that encompassed the
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introduction and passage of the Budget Repair Bill teachers at the high school that was studied responded in varying ways to questions regarding observed changes in the atmosphere of their school and in the morale of the teachers in general. When asked if any changes in the atmosphere of the school had been noticed, most of the participants stated specifically that the biggest impact of all of the budgetary changes has been felt in the morale and attitudes of the teachers. In the past year, the interviewees acknowledged that teachers have not been walking around expressing their emotions and frustrations outwardly, but, through private, after-school interactions with colleagues, there has been a noticed change in everyone’s moods. Due to this shift in attitude, many of the teachers who were interviewed stated that they did not like the feeling that they got when they were at their school. Therefore, the first research question posed for the purpose of this study can be answered in the affirmative.

Additionally, the introduction of the Budget Repair Bill and the bill’s passage brought about many negative effects as to how the thirteen teachers perceived themselves in their place of employment. This, in turn, has had a negative impact on the morale in the high school. It should be completely understandable that when an individual’s personal and professional character is called into question, as well as their career motives, that person’s personal and professional outlook in their place of employment will be affected severely and, more times than not, negatively. By recognizing this, it is easier to understand how the morale in this public high school has been so easily affected by the Budget Repair Bill.

Furthermore, the noticed change in atmosphere at this particular high school has occurred through many avenues: the teachers’ reactions to the bill, the administration’s response to the ramifications that the bill has imposed, as well as the general public’s reaction to the bill. Although the teachers who were interviewed for the purpose of this study expressed an
unwillingness to allow the implications of the bill to affect their classrooms and their students, these teachers revealed that the Budget Repair Bill and its supporters further devalued teachers in the state of Wisconsin, and, in turn, made them question their purpose and position in the public school system. Additionally, how the school’s administration has handled the outcomes of the bill, namely the district-wide budget cuts, has brought these teachers a great deal of apprehension and anxiety surrounding their classroom curriculum, and, more significantly, their employment positions. These findings assist in answering the second research question posed for the purpose of this study in the affirmative.

When taking into consideration the implications that the Budget Repair Bill posed to the teachers in this high school, it can be stated with certainty that the teachers’ job duties have been effectively altered. Because of these budget cuts, an increase in class sizes across the board has had to be dealt with; due to the increase in class sizes, course curricula have had to be modified; also, certain academic-related extracurricular activities have had to be reconfigured. However, it should be restated that, despite the drastic cuts to the school’s budget and the modifications that have had to be made to teachers’ job duties as a result of these cuts, the teachers are adamant that these changes not affect the students’ education or the teachers’ relationships with their colleagues. Therefore, the third research question posed for the purpose of this study can be answered negatively.

Once again, referring to the literature surrounding this body of research, it has been posited that, “a clearly positive relationship between communication climate and organizational identification (commitment)…appears to exist” (Bartels, Pruyt, De Jong, & Joustra, 2006, p. 173). With this in mind, it should be relatively easy to understand that if the communication
climate has been affected in a negative manner, an employee’s identification or commitment to that organization is also affected negatively.

As previously identified through the interview process, since the passage of the Budget Repair Bill, a negative change has been experienced in the atmosphere of the public school where the interviews took place. It was suggested by the participants in this study that the alteration in the morale of the teachers had caused the “dark cloud” in this particular high school. Although this cause and effect situation was unintended by the teachers, it was stated that when they were repeatedly attacked by the government, the supporters of the bill, and the media, it was very difficult for them not to be effected. Therefore, it can be stated with confidence that the teachers’ identification with their job and identification with their school was affected by the Budget Repair Bill.

Throughout the thirteen interviews, all of the teachers had a great amount of insight into how the communication climate at this high school, as well as the morale of the teachers has been affected by the Budget Repair Bill. Although the responses varied in certain areas, the teachers reported that they had experienced a change in the climate, and, likewise, their own morale. An interesting finding, however, was the role the administration had in these changes, as well as the teachers being adamant about not letting any recognized changes affect their classrooms and their students. It was also found that although morale has been drastically affected in this public school, the changes did not impact the students or the relationships with colleagues; however, the relationships with administration were impacted, as was the teaching profession as a whole, and the future of teaching.

From the findings of this research, it is relatively easy to see how the communication climate in public schools in the state of Wisconsin has been modified by the Budget Repair Bill,
introduced and passed in 2011. However, up until this point, the perspectives, thoughts, and feelings of teachers, specifically, have not been well publicized. The time spent conversing with public school teachers helped to give valuable insight into the public school environment. The information found throughout the thirteen interviews of the public school teachers at a high school in central Wisconsin was pertinent in order to put a face on one of the public sector groups facing the ramifications of this bill, as well as highlight the many ways that the communication climate of an organization can be effected through the specific actions of certain individuals both inside and outside of the organization.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

As the child of two educators who have made their careers in the state of Wisconsin, it was quite clear that, following the passage of the Budget Repair Bill, the stories of public school teachers needed to be told. Additionally, as a scholar who is interested in both politics and the many factors that affect the organizations, the researcher sought to understand how this bill has altered the public schools in the state of Wisconsin. The primary concentration of this study was on how this bill affected the atmosphere of the schools and the overall morale of the teachers.

This research helped to show how a piece of legislation that was supposedly passed with the overarching intention of fixing a statewide budget crisis has, in turn, caused a great deal of confusion, unrest, and anxiety amongst public school teachers throughout the state. The findings of thirteen interviews with public school teachers at a high school in central Wisconsin helped to demonstrate that not only has the atmosphere of the school been drastically affected by this bill, but the morale of the individual teachers has been effectively altered in a negative fashion.

This research has also helped to develop the many factors that come into play when examining the climate of an organization and the morale of the employees. These factors include motivational elements behind teaching, personal reactions and reactions of colleagues to this piece of controversial legislation, the effects of the Budget Repair Bill on teachers’ job-specific duties, and the effects of the bill on teachers’ identity in the workplace. This research also discovered a number of factors that play a significant part in effecting the climate of the school and the morale of the teachers; however, these issues were completely out of the teachers’ control. These factors included the budget cuts the school district was experiencing and how the administrators in the district were handling the ramifications of the bill.
By establishing the existence of the many factors that cause a negative shift in the communication climate of the school as well as the morale of the teachers, this has been a successful study. In the final step, this chapter will highlight a number of unintentional outcomes if the communication climate and morale in public schools are ignored. Additionally, the strengths of this study will be outlined. Finally, a number of research limitations, as well as directions for future research on the subject of communication climate and morale in organizations will be discussed.

**Unintentional Fallout from the Budget Repair Bill.**

As it has been discovered through the interviews of thirteen public school teachers at a public high school in central Wisconsin, the Budget Repair Bill has had the ability to effectively alter the face of public education in the state. This research has also developed many interesting findings surrounding the future of public instruction. Many of the teachers that were interviewed for the purpose of this study continually stated that Wisconsin has had a long-standing reputation of being recognized for its high quality teachers, superior schools, and excellence in education. However, with the enforcement of the Budget Repair Bill and its many facets, there is a new fear that public instruction in the state of Wisconsin is severely at risk. In fact, as it pertains to their own classrooms, the participants in this study expressed concern that this bill may ultimately cause schools to produce students who are not as well prepared for life after high school.

Many of the teachers who were interviewed shared their fears as they pertain to their schools, and the future of education in the state. With the introduction and passage of a piece of legislation such as the Budget Repair Bill, teachers expressed some anxiety surrounding schools’ ability to recruit new, quality educators. Due to the resounding opinion that this bill efficiently devalued teachers and their profession, many participants wondered who would still be interested
in making teaching their career. Many of the teachers who were interviewed stated specifically that they would not encourage anyone to go into public education in the state of Wisconsin at this point in time. Up until 2011, public educators in the state of Wisconsin were able to acquire the benefits provided to them by their ability to collectively bargain for their contracts, their salaries, and their superior benefits packages they received. However, when the incentives that came along with teaching were decreased or eliminated altogether, it has been seen that the motivation to teach has also been effectively diminished.

Likewise, the participants in this study referred to the fact that the majority of teachers did not choose their profession because of the potential to make a lot of money. Although a career in education has always been known to provide teachers with a certain amount of job security, it was shown that people chose education as a career because it is a profession that they enjoyed doing. Additionally, all of the participants in this study stated that their primary motivation behind teaching was their students; however, as the quality of education in the state of Wisconsin declines, it becomes harder and harder for teachers to accomplish their goals in the classroom, for the benefit and success of their students. Once again, with the passage of the Budget Repair Bill, there is a new fear that this bill may ultimately cause schools to produce students who are not as well prepared to take on the challenges of life after high school.

Furthermore, as the Budget Repair Bill pushed many high quality teachers to either resign or retire from their positions, there is a new fear that the public schools around the state of Wisconsin may experience a shortage of exceptional teachers. Due to this unintentional result of the bill, the teachers that were interviewed for the purpose of this study expressed concern that the public educators who are going to leave the school system are more than likely going to be
the best teachers. Likewise, it was a concern of the participants that the mediocre teachers are the ones who are going to stay in the profession.

In addition to the teachers’ concerns about losing quality educators as a result of this bill, they all shared their feelings about how much longer they themselves can feasibly stay in their current employment positions. Each and every one of the participants referred to the fact that they all have other career opportunities that they can transfer into. Taking into consideration that, since the passage of the Budget Repair Bill, there is an increasing potential for a drop in the number of quality teachers from school year to school year, as well as the potential for a decrease in numbers of new, incoming teachers, the state of Wisconsin could be facing an impending disaster.

Once again, one of the most significant fears that were expressed by many of the participants in this study was that people wanting to be teachers have observed the developing effects of the Budget Repair Bill, witnessed how public school teachers are currently being treated, and have backed out of the profession. It has been said that in the state of Wisconsin, due primarily to the ramifications of this one piece of legislation, teachers and potential teachers need to develop a “strong backbone and thick skin.” Additionally, with the passage of this bill, it was stated that teachers feel like they have a “firing squad” at them. This sentiment, combined with the fact that teachers have no protection anymore in terms of union representation, has put public school teachers, their students, and public education in the state of Wisconsin in danger. Although this is a significant concern, it should also be noted that although the participants in this study are feeling like they are under attack, they have made the point repeatedly that they will do anything and everything in their power to not let this bill affect their students.
Suggestions

From the findings of this body of research, it can be assumed that the atmosphere in public schools and the morale of the public school teachers in the state of Wisconsin have been effectively altered following the passage of the Budget Repair Bill. More importantly, it was shown through the interviews of thirteen public school teachers at a high school in central Wisconsin that the atmosphere and morale have been negatively affected.

As it was stated previously in this body of research, the teachers interviewed for the purpose of this study made it clear that although the atmosphere of the school and their own morale had been negatively impacted by the passage of the Budget Repair Bill, they were not going to let these changes impact their classrooms, and, more importantly, their students. Additionally, the teachers reported that there was no alteration in their relationships with their colleagues. However, the relationships that were altered the most because of this bill were the relationships with the school administrators.

As a result of these reports that explained how the administration has changed at this particular high school, and due to the fact that no one can say what the future holds for the state of Wisconsin or its education system, this research has helped to generate some suggestions for both teachers and administrators in this particular public school. As this bill has essentially placed school administrators in the role of business managers and teachers in the role of the subordinate, both parties need to shift their personal behavior to better facilitate communication within the school building.

During the interview process, many teachers reported that they were worried about the implications of the $2 million cut to the district’s budget, the school’s new evaluation system for teachers, and how they were afraid of speaking with administrators about classroom issues, as
this may reflect poorly on them as teachers. Additionally, it is important to mention that one of the teachers who participated in this study reported that the administration at this school had taken the initiative to hold “Principal Discussion Meetings.” The purpose of these meetings was to clarify any issues surrounding the Budget Repair Bill and the bill’s implications. These meetings consisted of a question-and-answer-type format between the school’s head principal and members from individual departments. These discussion meetings encouraged the teachers to ask any questions that pertained to their concerns surrounding the Budget Repair Bill.

For the administrators taking on this new managerial role, the development of new communication skills is needed to better facilitate relationships with the teachers in this public high school. It has been suggested by Ireland, Van Auken, & Lewis (1978) that in a supportive communication climate, the diffusion of messages tends to be effective and well-organized. Once again, it needs to be remembered that since the passage of the Budget Repair Bill, school administrators are being faced with the task of restructuring their own positions within the schools. This requires them to transition out of a position where they were once constrained by the implications of collective bargaining, and into a position where they are responsible for developing their own sets of school policies and guidelines. If the same negative impacts to the atmosphere of the school and the morale of the teachers have been felt in public schools throughout the state of Wisconsin as they have in this particular public high school, there are a number of suggestions to make the transition easier for the administration and, therefore, the teachers. In order to improve the communication climate of the school and expedite the progress of the relationships with the teachers, the administrators should consider the following suggestions:
• Provide the teachers with an environment that encourages openness and honesty. By reinstating an “open-door policy” in this high school, administrators can show teachers that the smooth functioning of their classrooms and their students’ education is of top priority.

• When conversing professionally with teachers, demonstrate an active interest in their input, and show a willingness to receive honest negative feedback.

• Encourage the development of trusting relationships between administrators and teachers by showing teachers that the administrators are in the school to act as educational resources and not merely disciplinarians. According to Ireland, Van Auken, & Lewis (1978), having the ability to create an atmosphere of respect and trust between managers and employees has been shown to lessen or remove altogether the barriers surrounding communication.

• Continue holding meetings and gatherings such as the “Principal Discussion Meetings” in order to clarify any recurring issues of confusion and concern for faculty and staff at the high school.

• Show interest in the teachers and students by making routine visits to various classrooms on a weekly basis and becoming involved in the daily lessons. By visiting classrooms and participating in class activities, administrators can establish a working relationship with the teachers and an active role in their school.

• Offer criticism as an attempt by the administration to help teachers reach their organizational potential, and offer encouragement to teachers in order to form new and effective ways to solve organizational dilemmas (Ireland, Van Auken, & Lewis, 1978).

• Show gratitude for the efforts of all teachers in the high school.
By utilizing these suggestions, the administrators of public schools have the opportunity to improve the negatively affected atmosphere of their school since the passage of the Budget Repair Bill. Additionally, by employing these suggestions, the morale of the teachers in the public school stands to be improved upon.

Furthermore, it was revealed by some of the participants in this study that in the place of a contract for the teachers at this particular high school, an “Employee Handbook” will be distributed to all faculty and staff. With this thought in mind, it should be noted that the written communication that is dispersed by an organization can drastically shift an employee’s perception of the organization. In many cases, it has been shown that the different outlooks and insights into an organization’s climate have been greatly inspired by the assembly, setting, and tone of the communication that was developed, written, and distributed by the management (Kulhavy & Schwartz, 1981). Additionally, it is here that the topic of organizational clarity should be mentioned in order to be included as a characteristic of organizational climate (Guzley, 1992). Clarity, as well as involvement can both be predictors of commitment within an organization. This is thought to be particularly true during periods of organizational transition and change. It has been shown that during these times of transition and change, members of the organization tend to remain committed to the organization if some sense of clarity and order is maintained (Guzley, 1992). Therefore, the “Employee Handbook” that the faculty and staff receive from the administration should be clear and concise, and should encourage involvement from all members of the school’s faculty and staff in terms of improving the handbook’s contents.

Despite the need for administration to accept their new position in the school and modify their behaviors accordingly, the fact that teachers themselves need to adjust to their new role
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does not go unnoticed. That being said, it is equally as important for the teachers to play an active role in the development of their relationship with administration and the improvement of morale in their school. The following are suggestions for the public school teachers:

- Show a willingness to receive truthful, sincere feedback from administration, and respond to such feedback in a positive, proactive manner.
- Make sure the expectations of the administration are clearly understood, and follow through and achieve these expectations as often and as quickly as possible.
- Be candid with ideas, opinions, and suggestions that could assist in the improvement of the communication climate of the school and the morale of the teachers.
- Express a desire for administrators to embrace an “open-door” policy when it comes to specific classroom concerns.

By utilizing these suggestions, teachers may have the opportunity to improve the relationship with administration at the school. Additionally, by improving these relationships, and therefore the communication climate of the school, the teachers’ morale also stands to be improved upon.

Through the thirteen interviews that were conducted with public school teachers at a high school in central Wisconsin, a number of suggestions have been developed for utilization by both administrators and the teachers themselves. These suggestions are meant to assist in the improvement of the relationships between teachers and administrators, and facilitate an enhancement in the communication climate of this school, as well as the morale of the teachers. These suggestions strongly considered the perspectives and opinions of the teachers who were interviewed for the purpose of this study. Additionally, these suggestions took into consideration the concerns that these teachers expressed surrounding the newly instated budget cuts in the district, the new role of the administration, and the implementation of an evaluation system to
determine the worth of teachers. Following the establishment of these suggestions, this research proceeds to consider its own limitations and suggestions for future research.

**Strengths, Limitations, and Suggestions for Future Research**

Any body of research carries with it its own strengths, while also allowing for the potential of limitations and suggestions for future research; this study is no different. While effective in identifying the effects of the Wisconsin Budget Repair Bill thus far, it is important to identify this study’s strengths. By identifying the strengths of this research, it may be easier to identify the limitations and how they provide direction for future research. Most prominently among the strengths, is the fact that while the researcher had a rough idea of what was to be discovered throughout the interviews, one piece of information was found that was not anticipated.

Through the thirteen interviews with the public school teachers, it was found that although the teachers’ morale in the school had, in fact, been negatively affected by the Budget Repair Bill, this decrease in no way affected productivity in the school. This was shown by the teachers’ willingness to work on course curricula and grading outside of school, during their personal time. This maintenance in productivity was also shown by the fact that out of the thirteen teachers, not one of them gave up their extracurricular activities as a result of this bill. In fact, it was seen that some teachers even increased their level of participation.

One of the strongest limitations related to this research is the fact that this was a pilot study. However, moving on from this issue is the ever-present risk of researcher bias, the amount of time that has lapsed since the passage of this bill, the number of interviewees sought to participate in this study, the utilization of a restricted area for obtaining the interviewees, and the inclusion of only currently employed educators, as opposed to current teachers, retired, resigned,
and recently terminated teachers. By discussing these limitations in further detail, direction for potential future examination of this subject matter can be identified.

When discussing the effects of the Wisconsin Budget Repair Bill, it is important to identify that this piece of controversial legislation affected more than just the state’s public school teachers. This bill was aimed at all public sector organizations, and, since its passage, has had a drastic effect on all public employees in the state of Wisconsin, with the exception of the public safety organizations. Therefore, to fully examine the different outcomes of this bill, a thorough and complete study that included members from all areas of the public sector should be completed.

At stated at the beginning of this chapter, it was acknowledged that the researcher is the daughter of two educators employed in the state of Wisconsin. It is also important to identify that these two educators were highly involved in the protests that occurred in Madison, Wisconsin in the early months of 2011, and were also involved in the recall efforts surrounding Governor Scott Walker and numerous state senators. It was through discussions with the researcher’s parents and their personal acquaintances, as well as the researcher’s own political involvement that inspired the development of this study. It has been posited that any bias may influence potential findings and analysis of a body of research; however, despite the researcher’s own political opinions surrounding the issue of the Budget Repair Bill, as well as personal connections, every effort to keep political and personal bias out of this study was made. Additionally, given the investigative nature of this study, any biases that existed were not thought to have weakened the findings. In fact, it became evident that due to the “insider bias” of the researcher, more honest responses were given during the interview process. Additionally, due to the fact that the researcher was personally familiar with many of the participants, there was
more of an authentic, conversational tone was set during the thirteen interviews. Despite this strength, potential suggestions for future research surrounding the topic of researcher biases could include a researcher from a state other than Wisconsin, and/or a researcher who is not in any way affiliated with public sector organizations in the state of Wisconsin.

Another factor that could be seen as both a strength and a limitation to this study was the amount of time that had lapsed since the passage of the Budget Repair Bill. When the interviews for this study took place, it had only been one year since the introduction and passage of this bill. This aspect could be seen as a strength because the activity surrounding the introduction and passage of the bill, as well as its newly implemented ramifications were fresh in the teachers’ minds.

As a limitation, the timeframe of the interviews in relation to the passage of the Budget Repair Bill allows for the fact that some effects had been felt, but the full fallout from this piece of legislation cannot be expected to happen in such a short amount of time. Due to the elimination of collective bargaining rights, the teachers who were interviewed for the purpose of this study are still anticipating an increase in number and magnitude of these changes that are thought to still be coming. It is thought that the full effects of the bill will not occur until after the recall election takes place, and are fully dependent upon the results from this election; specifically, whether or not the collective bargaining aspect of this bill is reinstated. It would be suggested that future research explores this issue again in one year from the time of this current study, and in subsequent years to follow. By revisiting this research year after year, the effects are sure to become clearer as the individual school districts are allowed more time to adjust.

Two more limitations to this study were the amount of interviewees who participated, as well as the small, localized area that the participants were gathered from. First and foremost, it
should be noted that the interviewees who were gathered to participate in this body of research was obtained from a small public high school in central Wisconsin. This was primarily due to the fact that the researcher had personal contacts at this particular school, as well as the fact that, in terms of proximity to the researcher, it was convenient for travel to and from. Additionally, a concerted effort was made by the researcher to recruit fifteen teachers to participate in the interviews that this body of research was comprised of. However, it was thought that, due to the sensitive nature of this study, as well as the small school that the participants were gathered from, many of the individuals who were contacted were hesitant to participate for various personal and professional reasons. Due to the fact that only thirteen public school teachers were interviewed from a small public high school in central Wisconsin, and considering the amount of school districts and teachers that are currently being affected by the Budget Repair Bill, future research should make a concerted effort to gather a representative sample of all public educators throughout Wisconsin; teachers from all grade levels, and from districts scattered across the state.

Despite the convenience surrounding the gathering of the interviewees utilized for this study, the participants consisted of only currently employed teachers in the public school system. For the purpose of this exploratory study, these particular participants worked well. However, for future research, a concerted effort should be made to contact educators who have retired, resigned, or have had their employment terminated since the passage of the Budget Repair Bill. By rounding out the participant base with these individuals, a better understanding of the implications of the bill could be gathered, as they have already left the public school system for various reasons.
While this study was successful in uncovering if and how teachers in the state of Wisconsin have been affected by the Budget Repair Bill, there were inherent limitations connected to this body of research. Among these limitations was the fact that this was a pilot study that took place approximately one year following the introduction and passage of this bill. Other limitations included the potential for researcher bias, the number of interviewees obtained to participate in this study, the small, localized area utilized for obtaining the participants, and the inclusion of only currently-employed public school teachers. Despite these limitations, suggestions for future research have been provided and should be referred to.

The Budget Repair Bill, introduced by Governor Scott Walker in 2011, stirred many emotions in the hearts and minds of Wisconsinites, as well as individuals, organizations, and governments across the country. This bill affected many people, regardless of their employment status. The bill, in sum, was “An Act relating to: state finances, collective bargaining for public employees, compensation and fringe benefits of public employees, the state civil service system, the Medical Assistance program, sale of certain facilities, granting bonding authority, and making an appropriation.” (2011-2012 State of Wisconsin Legislature, 2011, p. 1).

There has been a great deal of speculation surrounding whether or not the morale or productivity of the workforce is affected when organizations experience events that directly affect the entirety of the business, such as modifications to the budget, and massive restructuring. During organizational shifts, not only is the organizational culture and climate affected, but, additionally, these shifts can affect each individual employee in different ways, such as motivational changes and changes in morale.

The overarching purpose of this body of research was to identify how the communication climate of public schools has been affected by the Budget Repair Bill. However, more
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specifically and more importantly, it was the goal of the researcher to uncover how the morale of the teachers in public schools in the state of Wisconsin has been affected. Furthermore, this particular high school and the teachers employed there were of particular interest as the district that this school is in was currently facing a $2 million budget cut at the time that this research took place. Therefore, this school and its teachers were not only experiencing the ramifications of the Budget Repair Bill, they were also waiting to see how the massive budget cuts would affect them, their school, and their students.

In order to examine how the Budget Repair Bill has affected the communication climate of the school and the morale of the public school teachers, it was crucial to highlight the different motivational issues, as well as details that factor into commitment to gain a better understanding of the effects of organizational climate and communication climate. Despite the amount of speculation surrounding this issue, there is little concrete research exploring how employees handle drastic organizational changes in their individual employment positions, as well as how employees’ organizational life is affected on the broader scale.

This study has effectively explored how the Budget Repair Bill has affected public school teachers in the state of Wisconsin. In order to obtain a better grasp of the issues surrounding the potential effects on public educators, thirteen interviews took place that attempted to highlight the many factors that contributed to potential changes in the school’s atmosphere, specific job duties, and job identification. Throughout the thirteen interviews, all of the teachers had a great amount of insight into how the communication climate at this high school, as well as the morale of the teachers has been affected by the Budget Repair Bill. Although the responses varied in certain areas, it was clear that the teachers had experienced a change in the climate, and, likewise, their own morale. Interesting findings from this study included the role the
administration had in these changes, as well as the awareness of the teachers in terms of not letting any recognized changes affect their classrooms and their students. It was also found that although morale has been drastically affected in this public school, the changes did not impact the students or the relationships with colleagues; however, the relationships with administration were impacted, as was the teaching profession as a whole, and the future of teaching.

From the findings of this research, it is relatively easy to see how the communication climate in public schools in the state of Wisconsin has been modified by the Budget Repair Bill, introduced and passed in 2011. However, up until this point, the perspectives, thoughts, and feelings of teachers, specifically, have not been well publicized. The time spent conversing with public school teachers helped to give valuable insight into the public school environment. The information found throughout the thirteen interviews of the public school teachers at a high school in Central Wisconsin was thought to be pertinent in order to put a face on one of the public sector groups facing the ramifications of this bill, as well as highlight the many ways that the communication climate of an organization can be effected through the specific actions of certain individuals both inside and outside of the organization.
References


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*Prakseologia, NR/39/49/ROK.*


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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. What type of employment position do you hold in the public school system?

2. How long have you worked in this position?

3. What do you like most/dislike most about teaching?

4. What is your typical day like?
   a. What time do you arrive at your school on a daily basis?
   b. What time do you leave your school on a daily basis?
   c. Have you, or do you currently lead or assist in any extracurricular activities at your school?
      i. Which activities are you involved in?
      ii. Were you ever involved in any extracurricular activities?
         1. Which activities?
         2. Why are you no longer involved?

5. What kind of changes have occurred in how/what you teach?
   a. Have you noticed any of these changes in terms of your colleagues?

6. How did you react to the Budget Repair Bill?
   a. How did your colleagues react?

7. Since the passage of the Budget Repair Bill, have you noticed any significant changes in the atmosphere of your school?
   a. Can you explain these changes?
   b. Has this changed the way you work with others?
8. Has your reaction to the Budget Repair Bill affected the way you think of yourself as a teacher?

9. To what degree do you agree with the Budget Repair Bill?
Protocol for Original Submissions

A complete protocol must be submitted to the IRB for approval prior to the initiation of any investigations involving human subjects or human materials, including studies in the behavioral and social sciences.

For all research protocols, please submit the following:
- **1 printed copy with Faculty Mentor and Department Chair signatures** of (1) the completed protocol; (2) project abstract; and (3) samples of informed consent forms. PROTOCOLS LACKING ANY ONE OF THESE THREE ELEMENTS WILL NOT BE APPROVED.
- **A second copy of this page, with signatures.**
- **Electronic copies of all submission materials (multiple files are acceptable)** emailed as attachments to Jason R. Davis, IRB chair: jrdavis@uwsp.edu AND Libby Raymond, Grants Office: lraymond@uwsp.edu

PLEASE TYPE

Project Title:  Effects of the State of Wisconsin Budget Repair Bill

Principal Investigator:  Megan M. Holbrook

Department:  Communications  Rank:  Graduate Student

Campus Mailing Address:  2608 Dixon Street, Stevens Point, WI  54481 (currently residing off-campus)

Telephone:  608.628.0268  E-mail address:  mholb371@uwsp.edu

Faculty Sponsor (if required):  Chris Sadler
(Faculty sponsor required if investigator is below rank of instructor.)

Expected Starting Date:  December 2011  Expected Completion Date: May 2012

Are you applying for funding of this research?  Yes ________  No  XX

If yes, what agency?  NA

Please indicate the categories of subjects to be included in this project.  Please check all that apply.

XX Normal adult volunteers  ______ Minors (under 18 years of age)

_____ Incarcerated individuals  _____ Mentally Disabled

_____ Pregnant women  ______ Other  ____________________ (specify)

(Faculty Member) I have completed the “Human Subjects Protection Training” (available at http://www.uwsp.edu/special/irb/start.htm) and agree to accept responsibility for conducting or directing this research in accordance with the guidelines.

________________________________________________________

(Signature of Faculty Member responsible for research)

(Department Chair or equivalent) I have reviewed this research proposal and, to the best of my knowledge, believe that it meets the ethical standards of the discipline.

________________________________________________________

(Signature of Department Chair or equivalent)
IRB approval________________________________________________ Date____________________

(Signature of IRB Chair)

Approval for this research expires one year from the above date.
If research is not completed by this date, a request for continuation must be filed and approved before continuing.

Revised form: September 2010
Communication Climate and Morale in Public Schools

Proposal Abstract

Write a brief description of the purpose of the proposed research project. (100-200 words)

This proposed research, through a series of recorded and carefully transcribed interviews, will attempt to explore the effects of Governor Scott Walker’s Budget Repair Bill (introduced in February of 2011), on employees in the public school system in Wood County, Wisconsin. Effects are expected, but not limited to any possible change in the communication climate of the school, any effects on an individual’s non-professional life, and any effects on an individual’s professional life.
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Please complete the following questions for all research.

1. Describe the characteristics of the subjects, including gender, age ranges, ethnic background, health/treatment status and approximate number.

This study is expected to include approximately 15 individuals.

The criteria I plan to use for inclusion in this study will be as follows: (a) must be currently employed member of the public school system in Wood County, Wisconsin, (b) must be 18 years of age or older, and (c) must be able to communicate fluently in English. This particular sample will be used because the individuals involved are those who will be directly affected by Governor Scott Walker's Budget Repair Bill, including the elimination of all collective bargaining rights. The criteria used for inclusion in this study are primarily for ethical purposes (i.e., 18+ years old), as well as for the ease of the interview process (i.e., fluent in English).

2. Indicate how and where your subjects will be obtained. Describe the method you will use to contact subjects.

As a primary starting point, I will utilize my personal contacts who are currently employed in positions in the Wisconsin public education system. I believe that these individuals will be important to this study because they have already felt the initial impacts of the bill.

Through the snowball method, I hope to obtain the contact information on additional individuals who meet this study’s criteria for inclusion. Those individuals who meet my criteria will be contacted directly in order to acquire their consent to be interviewed for the purpose of this study. After the participants’ background information (specifically concentrating on their employment position in the public school system) is obtained and recorded, individual interviews will commence.

3. What are you going to ask your subjects to do (be explicit) and where will your interaction with the subjects take place?

Individual interviews with the participants are expected to be conducted early in 2012. These individual interviews will be conducted at a public location agreed upon by the researcher and the participants, alike. These interviews are expected to last for thirty minutes to an hour (some are bound to be longer, and some are bound to be shorter), or until no new themes are developed. They will consist of a series of questions surrounding the effects of the Budget Repair Bill.

4. Will deception be used in gathering data? Yes          No   XX

If yes, describe and justify.

5. Are there any risks to subjects? Yes ______ No    XX

If yes, describe the risks (consider physical, psychological, social, economic, and legal risks) and include this description on the informed consent form.

6. What safeguards will be provided for subjects in case of harm or distress? (Examples of safeguards include having a counselor/therapist on call, an emergency plan in place for seeking medical assistance, assuring editorial rights to data prior to publication or release where appropriate.)

Due to the fact that there will be no risk of harm or distress to the participants in this study, and all interviews will only commence prior to obtaining informed consent, there is no need to provide any safeguards.

However, for the sake of validity, these initial interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed word-for-word. Following the interview, the participants will be allowed to, and encouraged to review their recordings for the sake of accuracy. Any additional notes that are taken in the margins will also be transcribed. Any of the margin notes that are transcribed will be reviewed with the participant for accuracy immediately following the interview.

7. What are the benefits of participation/involvement in this research to subjects? (Examples include obtaining knowledge of discipline, experiencing research in a discipline, obtaining course credit, getting paid, or contributing to general welfare/knowledge.) Be sure to include this description on the informed consent form.

After participating in my study, my participants will be able to take away a sense of pride and gratification that...
comes with contributing their experience and knowledge to a valuable study on subject matter that needs further research, and that relates to a very “hot topic” in the state in which they live, as well as their personal lives. My participants will also be able to feel a sense of pride in their contribution to the field of communications. I would be more than happy to make my research accessible to all of my participants.
Communication Climate and Morale in Public Schools

8. Will this research involve conducting surveys or interviews? Yes XX No ________
   If yes, please attach copies of all instruments or include a list of interview questions.

Attached as Appendix A

9. If electronic equipment is used with subjects, it is the investigator’s responsibility to determine that it is safe, either by virtue of his or her own experience or through consultation with qualified technical personnel. The investigator is further responsible for carrying out continuing safety checks, as appropriate, during the course of the research. If electronic equipment is used, have appropriate measures been taken to ensure safety? Yes _____ No ________

There will be no electronic equipment used during the course of this study.

10. During this research, what precautions will be taken to protect the identity of subjects and the confidentiality of the data?

Each individual participating in this study will be required to sign two confidentiality agreements between me and him/herself; one signed agreement will be for the participant, and one agreement will be for me to retain in the participant’s file. Following the collection of data, the tape recordings, as well as the transcription and any related notes will be kept in a locked, fireproof filing cabinet in my home office.

11. Where will the data be kept throughout the course of the study? What provisions will be taken to keep it confidential or safe?

As stated above, following the collection of data, the tape recordings from the interviews, as well as the transcription and any related notes will be kept in a locked, fireproof filing cabinet in my home office.

12. Describe the intended use of the data by yourself and others.

For the purpose of this study, the phenomenological analysis method will be followed closely. All of the transcripts from the interviews will be carefully read over several times in order to develop a general feeling or tone for the responses. From each of the participants’ transcripts, noteworthy statements that directly relate to the effects of the Budget Repair Bill will be identified and broken down into sentences. These sentences will then be analyzed in order to identify potential meanings. The meanings will be attached and then formed into themes, which is expected to allow for the further development of themes common in all of the interview transcripts. The outcome of the common theme development will then be assimilated into a full and complete description of the phenomenon at hand. For the purpose of this study, the phenomenon at hand will be the effects felt from the different aspects of the Budget Repair Bill.

My hope is that this data will give readers and future researchers some insight into the effects of economic change at the state and/or local level. Additionally, my hope is to show how forced economic change has many potential impacts in many facets of a person’s life, and, potentially, on the lives of those not directly impacted by the change.

13. Will the results of the study be published or presented in a public or professional setting? Yes XX No ________
   If yes, what precautions will be taken to protect the identity of your participants? State whether or not subjects will be identifiable directly or through identifying information linked to the subjects.

The participants in this study will not be identifiable through any information included in this study. All attempts will be made to include only the information necessary to describe the individual’s employment position, and the effects felt in that position by the implementation of the Budget Repair Bill. No information relating to the participant’s name, gender, home town, or any other specific, identifying information will be included in this research.

14. State how and where you will store the data upon completion of your study as well as who will have access to it? What will be done with audio/video data upon completion of the study?
Communication Climate and Morale in Public Schools

Upon completion of this study, all of my data will be kept in a locked, fireproof filing cabinet in my home office. In this location, I will be the only one with access, as I am the only one in possession of the key.

A hard-bound copy of this master’s thesis will be kept for viewing in the University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point Learning Resource Center. Additionally, a hard-bound copy will be obtained and given to my thesis chair, and the two individuals who will be chosen as my “readers.”

A completed protocol must include a copy of the Informed Consent Form or a statement as why individual consent forms will not be used.

Revised form: January 2001
15. Please identify personnel assisting in conducting this research project. Include students or others who will be carrying out or directly supervising the carrying out of the research.

Name: Dr. Chris Sadler
Position: Graduate Director - Communication                     Campus Phone: 715.346.3898
Campus Address: University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point
Communication Arts Center
1101 Reserve Street, Room 320
Stevens Point, WI  54481

Name:
Position:                                                                                Campus Phone:
Campus Address:

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Position:                                                                                Campus Phone:
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Position:                                                                                Campus Phone:
Campus Address:

Please note: Everyone having contact with human subjects must have reviewed the “Guidelines for Human Subject Research” (available at http://www.uwsp.edu/special/irb/start.htm). The principle investigator assumes responsibility for insuring this requirement has been met.

16. Complete the section below if you will obtain access to all or some of the subjects through cooperating institutions not under the University of Wisconsin's control. Use the following format for each institution with responsibility for human subjects participating in this activity:

Name of official:
Title:                                                                                                 Phone:
Name and address of institution:

Subject Status: (wards, residents, employees, patients, etc)
Number of subjects:                                                              Age Range of subjects:

17. If subjects from another institution are involved, and approval was obtained from a legally constituted IRB at that institution, please attach a copy of the approval. (Please note that this does not release you from the obligation to obtain approval from the UWSP IRB for Human Subjects.)

A completed protocol must include a copy of the Informed Consent Form or a statement as why individual consent forms will not be used.
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

This informed consent form is for the following groups of people in the state of Wisconsin who are invited to participate in this research, titled “Effects of the Walker Budget Repair Bill”:

- Wisconsin public school system employees in Wood County, Wisconsin

**Name of Principle Investigator:** Megan M. Holbrook  
**Name of Organization:** The University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point  
**Name of Sponsor:** The University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point  
**Name of Project and Version:** Effects of the Walker Budget Repair Bill, Version I

This Informed Consent Form has two parts:
- Information Sheet (to share information about the study with you)  
- Certificate of Consent (for signatures if you choose to participate)

**You will be given a copy of the full Informed Consent Form**

**Part I: Information Sheet**

**Introduction**

My name is Megan M. Holbrook. I am currently a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point in Stevens Point, Wisconsin. I am working towards a master’s degree in communications, with an emphasis in public relations and organizational communications.

I am inviting you to participate in my research surrounding the effects felt by public school system employees in Wood County, Wisconsin. You are encouraged to talk to anyone you feel comfortable talking with about the research and that you are encouraged to take time to reflect on whether you want to participate or not.

You can be assured that if you do not understand some of the words or concepts included in this consent form, I will take time to explain them as I go along and you can ask questions at any time.

**Purpose of the research**

The proposed Budget Repair Bill introduced by Governor Scott Walker in February of 2011, has the potential to affect the public school teachers in the state of Wisconsin. I would like to better understand, from many different perspectives, the effects felt by educators in the state of Wisconsin. I believe that you, your opinions, and your insight can help others understand how forced economic change can not only affect the morale in the workplace, but also affect an individual’s non-professional life, and their own job performance. Your insight will also allow others to understand how individuals who are directly impacted by this bill through an employment position or union representation could potentially be affected.

**Type of Research Intervention**

This research will involve your participation in individual interviews that will take between thirty minutes and one hour.
Communication Climate and Morale in Public Schools

Participant Selection
You are being invited to take part in this research because I feel that your experience as an educator in the public school system in the state of Wisconsin will contribute much to our understanding and knowledge of the potential impacts of forced economic change, specifically Governor Scott Walker’s Budget Repair Bill.

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. If you choose not to participate at any time during this study, your decision will have no bearing on any other aspect of your life/livelihood or this study. You may change your mind later and stop participating even if you agreed earlier.

• If you decide not to take part in this research study, do you know what your options are? Do you know that you do not have to take part in this research study, if you do not wish to? Do you have any questions?

Procedures
A. I am asking you to help me better understand the effects felt by Governor Scott Walker’s Budget Repair Bill. I am inviting you to take part in this research project. If you accept, you will be asked, through a series of interview questions, to describe how you have experienced the effects of this Budget Repair Bill.

B. You will be asked to participate in at least one interview with myself. During the interview(s), I will sit down with you in a comfortable place, in a public location agreed upon by you and myself. If you do not want to answer any of the questions during the interview, you may say so and I will move on to the next question. No one else by myself will be present unless you would like someone else to be there. The information recorded is confidential, and no one else except me, my thesis advisor and thesis board will have access to the information documented during your interview. The entire interview will be tape-recorded, but no one will be identified by name on the tape. The tape will be kept in a locked, fireproof filing cabinet located in my home office. I will be the only person with access to the key to this filing cabinet. The information recorded is confidential, and no one else except for me, and my thesis advisor will have access to the tapes. The tapes will be destroyed after the thesis board has approved the research, and I have published the research.

Duration
This research will take place over a four month period of time. During that time, I will visit you for interviewing, as well as follow-up. The interview will last for approximately thirty minutes to one hour.

• If you decide to take part in the study, do you know how much time will the interview take? Where will it take place? If you agree to take part, do you know if you can stop participating? Do you know that you may not respond to the questions that you do not wish to respond to? Do you have any more questions?

Risks
There is a risk that you may share some personal or confidential information by chance, or that you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. However, I do not wish for this to happen. You do not have to answer any question or take part in the interviews if you feel the question(s) are too personal or if talking about them makes you uncomfortable.
**Benefits**
After participating in my study, you will be able to take away a sense of pride and gratification that comes with contributing your experience and knowledge to a valuable study on subject matter that needs further research, and that relates to a very “hot topic” in the state in which you live. You will also be able to feel a sense of pride in your contribution to the field of communications. I would be more than happy to make my research accessible to all of my participants.

**Reimbursements**
You will not be provided any financial or compensatory incentive to take part in the research.
• Can you tell me if you have understood correctly the benefits that you will have if you take part in the study? Do you have any other questions?

**Confidentiality**
I will not be sharing information about you to anyone outside of the research team. The information that I collect from this research project will be kept private. Any information about you will have a number on it instead of your name. Only I, the researcher, will know what your number is and I will lock that information up with a lock and key. It will not be shared with or given to anyone.

**Sharing the Results**
Nothing that you tell me today will be shared with anybody outside the research team, and nothing will be attributed to you by name. The knowledge that is received from this research will be shared with you before it is made widely available to the public. Each participant will receive a summary of the results. Each participant will be encouraged to review their interview transcripts for accuracy sake.

**Right to Refuse or Withdraw**
You do not have to take part in this research if you do not wish to do so, and choosing to participate will not affect you in any way. You may stop participating in the interview at any time that you wish without being affected. I will give you an opportunity at the end of the interview to review your remarks, and you can ask to modify or remove portions of those, if you do not agree with my notes or if I did not understand you correctly.

**Who to Contact**
If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you should feel free to contact me, Megan M. Holbrook, at 608.628.0268, or mholb371@uwsp.edu.

This proposal has been reviewed and approved by the University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point IRB, which is a committee whose task it is to make sure that research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to find about more about the IRB, contact Jason Davis by phone (715) 346-4598
• Do you know that you do not have to take part in this study if you do not wish to? You can say No if you wish to? Do you know that you can ask me questions later, if you wish to? Do you know that I have given the contact details of the person who can give you more information about the study?
Part II: Certificate of Consent
I have been invited to participate in research about the effects of Governor Scott Walker’s Budget Repair Bill.

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study

Print Name of Participant__________________
Signature of Participant ___________________
Date ___________________________
    Day/month/year

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and to the best of my ability made sure that the participant understands that the following will be done:

1. Conduct individual interview(s) with the participant lasting approximately thirty minutes to one hour, and taking place in a public location agreed upon by the participant and myself.
2. Tape recordings and transcripts of the interview(s) are confidential and will be kept in a locked, fireproof filing cabinet.
3. The interview transcripts will be reviewed with the participant to ensure accuracy.

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily. A copy of this ICF has been provided to the participant.

Print Name of Researcher/person taking the consent: Megan M. Holbrook
Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent__________________________
Date ___________________________
    Day/month/year