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The Emotional Experience of Representative Bureaucrats in a Contested Public Policy Environment

Shaun Damien Heckstall
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Walden University

College of Health Sciences and Public Policy

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Shaun Damien Heckstall

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Walden University
2023

Abstract

The Emotional Experience of Representative Bureaucrats in a Contested Public Policy

Environment

by

Shaun Damien Heckstall

MDiv, Luther Rice Seminary and University, 2006

BS, Georgia State University, 1990

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

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Abstract

The problem this study addressed was the documented emotional distress among the State of Georgia's educational leaders-bureaucrats serving majority-minority students in the hyper-politicized public policy environment instituted with the codifying of O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Georgia's General Education Divisive Concept law. The purpose of this study was to explore the emotional impact of the policy on K-12 public educational leaders serving majority-minority students whose academic growth was known to necessitate culturally relevant curriculum at odds with the "Divisive" law using a general qualitative methodology. The theoretical foundation was shaped at the intersection of two salient public policy theories: representative bureaucratic theory and the narrative policy framework. The research focused on identifying the State of Georgia's educational leaders' emotional experiences based on their personal stories about implementing controversial student curriculum frameworks and instructional practices based on the State of Georgia's Divisive Concept law. Analysis of narrative data obtained using semi-structured interviews with 12 educational leaders revealed that the public policy environment of the Divisive Concept law led to feelings of threat and dislike with an associated passive-aggressive emotional and behavioral response. The positive social change implication is wider than including the opportunity to develop more equitable responsive bureaucratic workforces even while considering equitable public policymaking.

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December 2023

Dedication

To Revered Albert E. Love

August 2, 1945- December 23, 2019

“KEEP STRONG AND GOD BLESS!”

No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing, but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

—John 15:15-25 *NKJV Bible*

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In friendship, Mr. Curtis Douglass, the principal's principal, I don't get this far without your everyday morning call joyously affirming, "'Blackman!' How's it going? I know well because you are prolific!"

In pride, courage, and leadership rank, Colonel John L. Smith, Army-Ret. I would dare call you "friend" or "brother," yet your service to me and this country, particularly in our times of need, deserve more honor than these words can convey, so I will say what you have trained me to say, "Hooah!"

In family, Donnay Abernathy, my sister whose reverence of me I hold dear, and especially affirmed when you frequently blurt out, "I'm so proud of 'my Big Brother'!" You have gone on in wealth and maturity despite what you have faced, which is allowing me to know a "Shero"! Andre- "TheWhiz" and Travis "TrapCee" Heckstall-my- my brothers who always made "room" for me in their successes and achievements, looking to me as I looked to them for so much of "Philadelphia"! Rene- you and your story "affirm God's glory"-though through another mother and father, you are my loving sister for whom I am grateful just the same!

By way of family, Mom for your heartfelt sandwiches, counseling sessions, and that "regal, style defining-trend setting baby carriage!"; Dad for your well-fought political fights, all the books you read, and your shoulder you provided at the Jackson 5 concert and Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade when you were still yet so young.

In Uncle Fatherhood, Amber Dawn and Ariel Demi, my nieces, you have brought so much joy and love into my life. Watching you both grow into such amazing,

talented, and beautiful human beings, I can only imagine how proud your father must feel. I admire and appreciate you both for being such a wonderful part of Sharon's and my life. And Reese, I smile just hearing your name!

In, by, and because of love, Sharon! In eternity, Sharon, I will always look to you and for you because it's not heaven if you are not there. It is only heaven because you are here!

In Christ, Jesus, I stand in faith.

But God. "God did!"

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Many researchers in public administration and policy (PPA) have explored the relationship between bureaucrats and policy implementation and outcomes in the United States (Alexander & Stivers, 2020; Caban, 2022; Capers, 2018; Carroll, 2017; Edlins & Larrison, 2018; Humphrey, 2022; Lessard, 2008; Levitats, 2023; Levitats & Vigoda-Gadot, 2020; Levitats et al., 2019; Lyles, 2020; Meier et al., 2019; Roch & Edwards, 2017). The topic of my study was understanding the emotional experience of Georgia's educational leaders while leading in the policy climate established by the codification of Georgia's 2022 Divisive Concept law (as a side note, it was important to clarify at the onset of this study that educational leaders are representative bureaucrats who were studied using representative bureaucratic theory; additionally, the terms are used interchangeably, denoting the same conceptualization). By extension, Georgia's codification of the Divisive Concept law and this policy-oriented study evolved during what the New Times summed up as a United States-wide conservative intrusion into educational policymaking and the school board electoral process (Schuessler, 2021). Moving within the policy process, laws such as Georgia's Divisive Concept law are widely considered to be a direct political repudiation of liberal-oriented curriculum and instructional processes (Schuessler, 2021).

Further, in the fall of 2022, Gaunt (2022) reported that the State of Georgia's 2022 codification of O.C.G.A. 20-11-1, the General Education Divisive Concepts law, has created a hyper-politicalized educational environment, producing documented ideological differences among Georgia's educational leaders desiring to deliver critically

responsive K-12 curriculum outcomes (Apple, 2019; Giroux, 2009, 2021; K. Gray & Wegner, 2011; Roch & Edwards, 2017). In the wake of these impacts, Carroll et al. (2019) and Vigoda-Gadot and Meisler (2010) found that ideological differences support emotional differences and subsequently affect policy implementation in public organizations. By extension, the Southern Poverty Law Center, on November 4, 2022, filed a lawsuit explaining that Georgia's newly codified law has infringed upon the Constitutional rights of educators and made it challenging to advocate according to the cultural needs of students for whom they adopt curriculum and lead instructional practices (Gaunt, 2022).

Similarly, Capers (2018), Meier et al. (2019), Carroll (2017), Roch and Edwards (2017), Grosland and Matias (2022), and Grosland and Roberts (2021) conducted the most recent scholarship highlighting the effect of political environments are known to have on bureaucratic educational leaders. Nevertheless, the limitation of Roch and Edwards and Grosland and Roberts's researches was that they offered only a general conceptualization of the emotional development of educational bureaucrats in a policy context, suggesting a need for more research to develop more viable, emotionally intelligent, and culturally responsive educational bureaucrats who can thrive through adverse policy contexts (Grosland & Roberts, 2021; Roch & Edwards, 2017). The phenomenon of interest was the emotionally intelligent repertoire of Georgia bureaucrats (educational leaders) practicing in the educational policy environment.

This study was needed due to the limited amount of literature available to understand better bureaucratic leaders' emotional intelligence under stress from political

imperatives associated with Georgia's Divisive Concept law mandates (Baumer & Van Horn, 2014; Chapman & Anderson, 2011; K. Gray & Wegner, 2011; Grosland & Roberts, 2021; Levitats et al., 2019; Roch & Edwards, 2017). Additionally, this research will contribute to the public policy and administration literature supporting the development of bureaucratic leaders who lead equitable school environments while navigating the pressure of policy demands (Carroll, 2017; Carroll et al., 2019; Marvel & Resh, 2015; Roch & Edwards, 2017; Wright, 2022).

The social implications of this study unfold within the State of Georgia's Divisive Concept public policy context; it was essential to note that the ability of Georgia's educational bureaucrats to deliver equitable curriculum and instructional experiences among Georgia's 1,693,971 K-12 student population was at stake. By developing more emotionally and culturally responsive educational bureaucrats who support all students despite political adversity, Georgia will be positioned to offer more graduation opportunities for Georgia's K-12 students, making the students more economically viable democratic citizens (Bishu & Kennedy, 2020; Capers, 2018; Hill, 2020; Humphrey, 2022; Xu & Flink, 2022).

Chapter 1 establishes a coherent foundation by reviewing the background of this general qualitative research project. It also includes the problem statement, the purpose of the study, and two inextricably tied research questions. Finally, the limitations and significance of the project are addressed.

Background

This study grew from the public administration literature examining representative bureaucracy, specifically regarding bureaucrats' discretion to act as emotionally intelligent actors amid the policy environment cast by the State of Georgia's 2022 codification of O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 (Divisive Concept law). By extension, I sought to understand how bureaucrats' organizational performance was shaped by their emotional repertoire in a region where educational bureaucrats have been so maligned because of the Atlanta Public School's (APS) cheating scandal of 2009 (Aronson et al., 2016; Bishu & Kennedy, 2020; Capers, 2018; Cuevas, 2022; Grosland & Roberts, 2021; Xu & Flink, 2022). Many of the bureaucratic fissures during the APS cheating scandal have been traced to the emotional ineffectiveness of the bureaucrats involved (Aronson et al., 2016; Levitats et al., 2019). The following was a sociopolitical context and literature gap informing this project.

With the rise of emotional tension, pre- and post-codification of Georgia's Divisive Concept Law of 2022 that closely parallels the severe emotional trauma experienced by Georgia's stakeholders as a result of the 2008 APS cheating scandal, there was a gap in the representative bureaucratic literature, as, to my knowledge, no scholar has examined the emotional repertoire of educational bureaucrats using their discretion responding to the pressures of a specific policy in the State of Georgia (Bishu & Kennedy, 2020; Levitats & Vigoda-Gadot, 2020; Levitats et al., 2019; Xu & Flink, 2022). Additionally, researchers have become increasingly interested in what allows some educational bureaucrats to sustain their emotional efficacy in the face of policy

pressures (Aronson et al., 2016; Capers, 2018; Grosland & Roberts, 2021; Levitats et al., 2019; Robinson & Simonton, 2019; Trujillo et al., 2021; Xu & Flink, 2022).

By extension, Borst et al. (2019) and Giauque et al. (2013) signaled a significant gap in the current understanding of how emotional perspectives influence the job performance of bureaucrats. Also, Levitats et al. (2019) and Aronson et al. (2016) signaled a significant gap in the current understanding of the emotional effects of educational bureaucrats attempting to work in competitive political environments. The link between the APS fallout and the more recent policy environment of the Divisive Concept law was that both public policy settings create emotional responses that representative bureaucratic leaders must navigate to ensure equitable public services.

Although some literature exists that shows the correlation between policy outcomes and representative bureaucratic output, none of the literature has attempted to address the issue of how so many APS bureaucrats were subjected to the same emotional pressure as the cohorts convicted of engaging in cheating and yet did not succumb to the emotional stress, thereby honoring public trust (Blaik Hourani et al., 2021; Borst et al., 2019; Brinia et al., 2014; Derrington & Larsen, 2012; Giauque et al., 2013; Holzer, 2022; Levitats, 2023; Levitats & Vigoda-Gadot, 2020; Levitats et al., 2019). Additionally, research suggested the need for greater understanding concerning educational bureaucratic leaders' emotions as these leaders navigate adverse policy environments and lead schools as emotionally intelligent representative bureaucrats (Brezicha et al., 2022; Capers, 2018; Carroll, 2017; Edlins & Larrison, 2018; Kennedy, 2014; Marvel & Resh, 2015; Xu & Flink, 2022).

Consequently, this study was needed because of what needed to be known about how emotionally intelligent, representative bureaucrats use their discretion to navigate adverse policy environments (Aronson et al., 2016; Borst et al., 2019; Capers, 2018; Grosland & Roberts, 2021; Kennedy, 2014). Understanding how emotionally intelligent educational bureaucrats in Georgia navigate the pressure of potential professional termination or other adverse legal outcomes by not adhering to Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 supported the development of an emotionally intelligent, culturally responsive educational leadership preparation program (Ford et al., 2020; Levitats et al., 2022; Vigoda-Gadot & Meisler, 2010). Representative bureaucrats have been documented to be more proactive in socially just service delivery, leading to a high quality of life for their clients (Marvel & Resh, 2015; Roch & Edwards, 2017; Xu & Flink, 2022).

Problem Statement

The problem this study addressed was that the State of Georgia's 2022 codification of House Bill 1084 now known as O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Georgia's General Education Divisive Concepts law has created a hyper-politicalized educational leadership environment producing documented job-related emotional distress among some Georgia's educational leaders desiring to lead culturally responsive K-12 learning environments (Capers, 2018; Carroll et al., 2019; Edlins & Larrison, 2018; Kennedy, 2014; Marvel & Resh, 2015; Xu & Flink, 2022). Georgia educational policy reporter Rebecca Gaunt denoted the social problem as an infringement upon Georgia's educators and their students' Constitutional rights. Further, the Southern Poverty Law Center asserted that this law has caused job-related emotional distress to Georgia's educational

bureaucrats because of the limited discretion to act on the behavior of all children clients (Capers, 2018; Edlins & Larrison, 2018; Gaunt, 2022; Marvel & Resh, 2015; Xu & Flink, 2022). Additionally, Gaunt (2022) reported that many have found that the law was rooted in partisan politics, ignoring the pedagogical needs of some of Georgia's K-12 students (see also Boyles, 2000; Giroux, 2021; Hammond, 2015; Wright, 2022). In short, the law in Georgia has been cited for creating inequity for many of Georgia's K-12 students by limiting the discretion to advocate on behalf of educational bureaucrats (Edlins & Larrison, 2018; Grissom et al., 2015).

Additionally, substantial educational statistics for Georgia help clarify the context of the problem. In 2015, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) executives launched an equity initiative responding to a strong recommendation by the federal government to create more equitable pathways for minority and poor students to excel (Tio, 2017). By extension, Georgia's educational bureaucratic leadership was to carry out the initiatives mandated by the GaDOE. Some data supporting their proposed commitment were as follows: 50% of the educational leaders were White and had no culturally sensitive training. As a counterpoint, however, more than 68% of Georgia's student population identified as a race other than White. Further highlighting inequity among Georgia's student population was the Black student cohort graduated at 78%, whereas their White counterparts graduated at 84%. Implicit in this data was the GaDOE's expectation that increasing minority bureaucratic leadership would coincide with increased graduation rates among minority students (Tio, 2017).

Moreover, in 2021, the data points showed little change regarding Georgia's ability to slow inequity among its K-12 students. For example, 57.8% of the educational leadership force in Georgia remained White and still received no state-sponsored cultural sensitivity training. By extension, Georgia had a K-12 student population of 1,686,318 in 2021, with only 37.4% of that cohort White and 36.5% Black. Ultimately, even more disconcerting, Georgia's Black students are still reported to be almost 5% less likely to graduate from a Georgia high school than their White cohort members (Tio, 2017).

Against this backdrop, in 2022, the Southern Poverty Law Center delineated the problem under investigation in this study by filing a lawsuit on behalf of Georgia's educators against the State of Georgia, asserting that the constitutional rights of Georgia's educational bureaucrats are being violated post the codification of O.C.G.A. §20- 1-11. The Divisive Content Law limits the bureaucratic discretion of educators in Georgia, preventing them from engaging in client-oriented curriculum adoption or pedagogy practices (Apple, 2019; Giroux, 2021; Khalifa, 2020). The law has placed an emotional burden upon Georgia's educational-bureaucratic leaders attempting to do their jobs democratically (Capers, 2018; Marvel & Resh, 2015; Xu & Flink, 2022).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this general qualitative study was to explore the emotional impact upon the State of Georgia's educational bureaucrats working in the policy environment created by Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law codified in 2022. The reason for exploring this topic was to further the work of O'Connor (2013), Meier et al. (2019), Capers (2018), Xu and Flink (2022), Aronson (2020), and Aronson et al. (2016)

who examined bureaucratic politics and the policy-related impediments experienced by bureaucrats. An in-depth examination of educational bureaucrats' emotional dispositions in adverse policy conditions was noticeably absent from the literature. The findings of this study may provide the basis for developing leadership preparation programs emphasizing emotional intelligence among educational bureaucrats seeking to represent clients amid highly contested political environments.

Research Question

The research question of this study was as follows: What are the State of Georgia's educational leaders' emotional experiences as told through their personal stories about implementing controversial student curriculum frameworks and instructional practices based on the State of Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law?

Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks for the Study

This study focused on the experiences of Georgia K-12 educators in a contested policy environment using two theoretical frameworks: representative bureaucratic theory (RBT) and narrative policy framework (NPF). The RBT and the NPF served as the central theoretics for inquiry. RBT, based on the work of administrative theorist Donald Kingsley in 1944, with the associated propositions, establishes a correlation between bureaucratic professionals, the ideologies they share with their clients, and the responsibilities that come with their role (Bishu & Kennedy, 2020; Capers, 2018; Meier, 1975; Xu & Flink, 2022). Meanwhile, NPF, based mostly on the work of scholar Mark McBeth, treats narrative data as empirical data and views narratives as information-rich

constructions that can inform the human experience. Scholars established a logical connection between RBT and NPF in much of the literature, which is further considered in Chapter 2 of this study. Both theoretical frameworks were relevant to the research question of this study, enabling the researcher to analyze the stories of those working in the specific policy atmosphere (G. Gray & Jones, 2016; Mcbeth et al., n.d.-a, n.d.-b; O'Connor et al., 2020; Shanahan et al., 2011).

The conceptual frame of this study is related to the chosen qualitative approach. I used this approach to conduct a systematic inquiry into the experience of representative bureaucrats under policy stress while going beyond quantitative data to understand human experiences (Meier et al., 1999, 2000). This study leveraged the conceptualization through semi-structured interviews and subsequent emotional coding instrumentation to understand the qualitative experience missing in the current public policy literature that frequently has a quantitative perspective (Capers, 2018).

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study supported a rationale for selecting a general qualitative research design to study the emotional repertoire of State of Georgia representative bureaucrats advocating for culturally responsive and more democratically informed curriculum and instruction practices while using their discretion to serve Georgia's K-12 students within the policy context of Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law (Capers, 2018; Roch & Edwards, 2017; Xu & Flink, 2022). A description of emotionally engaged Georgia representative bureaucrats was civil servants in Georgia schools who advocate for and with culturally responsive curriculum and instructional practices against

a policy that restricts such engagement (Aronson, 2020; Bishu & Kennedy, 2020; Carroll et al., 2019; Grosland & Roberts, 2021; Jackson & Knight-Manuel, 2019; Khalifa, 2020; Levitats & Vigoda-Gadot, 2020). Similarly, Lyles (2020) and Caban (2022) used a qualitative phenomenological design to study a subject population similar to the one in this study. The rationale for this study was to provide a space in the literature for more documentation of the emotional experiences of bureaucratic leaders in the context of sociopolitical pressure known to give a priori rise to the emotional experience (Kouamé & Liu, 2021; Lazarus, 1991; Levitats et al., 2019; Ortony et al., 2022; P. A. Smith, 2019). By extension, studies added to the literature by allowing a greater understanding of the experiences of urban African-American bureaucrats serving in various contexts (Crowley & Smith, 2019; P. B. Smith & Bond, 2022). Although many studies have helped understand what was going on with some bureaucrats, for this study, I revised the emphasis on empirical dynamics or noninterpretive aspects of the quantitative methodology by leveraging the insights from qualitative studies (Caelli & Ray, 2003; Herland, 2022; Kerrigan & Johnson, 2019; Kim & Kim, 2017; Kouamé & Liu, 2021; Levitats, 2023; Levitats & Vigoda-Gadot, 2020; Levitats et al., 2019; Rudel et al., 2021; Udod et al., 2020).

Along the same lines, although the methodology of quantitative-oriented studies such as Berkovich and Eyal (2015) and P. A. Smith (2019) neither aligns with nor provides appropriate methodological analysis tools necessary to address the research question for the current study. The rationale for the current study aligned more with O'Connor (2013), who used a general qualitative methodology to explain the different

levels of bureaucratic engagement in a contested public policy environment. Most important was that O'Connor's study supported this dissertation's rationale that emotional experiences and ideologies primarily associated with sociopolitical differences have a determining presence within the experiences of Georgia's educational leaders.

By extension, Caelli and Ray (2003), Kerrigan and Johnson (2019), Kouamé and Liu (2021), Rolfe (2006), and Sandelowski (2000) explained that descriptive qualitative studies capture salient aspects of an experience, including opinions and perspectives. For the current study, I collected data from representative bureaucrats in majority-minority student body-populated Georgia K-12 schools. By collecting descriptive data from Georgia's educational leaders through the interview process, I accessed a rich data set to begin understanding the current unknown elements of their emotional experience (Annamma, 2018; G. Gray & Jones, 2016; Herland, 2022; Knapp, 2017; Kobakhidze et al., 2021; Seideman, 2019). Additionally, I leveraged the step-by-step qualitative data analysis protocol by Nyanchoka et al. (2022) and Ortony's (2022) coding system to perform a more accurate analysis of the transcript data. Effective data management and analysis increased the opportunity to understand the subjects' emotional dispositions better, subsequently adding to a gap in the literature towards developing more culturally representative educational bureaucrats in Georgia.

Definitions

The following definitions support the examination of the research question of this study, which arose from the public administration literature: What were the State of Georgia's educational, representative bureaucrats' emotional perceptions and experiences

about implementing controversial student curriculum frameworks and instructional practices based on the State of Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law?

Appraisal or psychological appraisal: Appraisal is people's cognitive action when encountering events, agents, and objects. Assessment occurs through the internal values system of the person, where events are appraised through the person's goals, agents through the person's standards, and objects through the person's taste (Ortony, 2022; Ortony et al., 2022).

Bureaucrat, educator, educational leader, educational administrator, leader, principal, or superintendent: In this study, any non-elected civil servant serving in an academic leadership space in the State of Georgia who works under fiduciary responsibility to respond ethically to the State of Georgia's policies and procedures as codified in the Official Code of Georgia Annotated subsequently must be accountable to and responsible for policy implementation according to organizational norms (Carroll et al., 2019; GaPSC, 2023; O.C.G.A.1-1-1, 2023; Roch & Edwards, 2017; Wilson, 1989;).

Cognitive structure of emotions: It is the implicit or explicit psychological appraisal of persons and objects through one's value system that gives rise to psychological responses known as emotions. Within this cognitive structural schema, 40 different emotions are documented to be available to persons (Ortony et al., 2022). In the current study, I examined the cognitive structure of a dynamic field in which codes, categories, and themes were placed to explore the data gathered from the participating Georgia's educational bureaucrats.

Discretion: It is the psychological process representative bureaucrats use to navigate policy demands based on their clients' or ideological-cultural needs (Marvel & Resh, 2015).

Educational organizations, local school districts, local schools, K-12 schools, or schools: Georgia public educational organizations have the fiduciary responsibility to deliver a government-funded product (the education of the State of Georgia's K-12 students) according to the Official Code of Georgia Annotated (O.C.G.A.1-1-1, 2023).

Emotions: They are psychobiological entities shaped by the individual's values system (see value system in this lexicon) and observable in and known to affect the individual's behaviors in a specific directional pathway (Goleman, 1995; Ortony et al., 2022)

Emotional intelligence: It is recognized as a high degree of emotional self-regulation when measured or modulated against fear paradigms (Goleman, 1995; Marie & Milad, 2018).

Emotional self-regulation, or regulation. It is the person's exchange of one emotional response for another based on changes within the person's value system (goals, standards, and or tastes; Ortony, 2022; Ortony et al., 2022).

Policy context or policy environment: It is a highly political, public space where policy outcomes stimulate people's emotional responses (Shafritz et al., 2017).

A representative bureaucrat: Refers to a civil servant who acts passively or actively within the public administration duty model concerning their clients' ideological and emotional perspectives (Kennedy, 2012).

Valenced feelings: Refers to feelings that arise from emotional appraisals of events, objects, or persons as positive or negative, with each designation leading to a branch of systematically associated emotions (Ortony et al., 2022). Additionally, valenced feelings are known to be culturally nuanced among persons within society (Ortony et al., 2022). Most notable for this study was that valenced feelings are psychologically translated into observable emotional outcomes with specific recognizable psychological behavior patterns.

A value system: It is a person's psychological system comprised of explicit and implicit goals, standards, and tastes upon which the person's appraisals arise, leading to the person's emotions (Ortony et al., 2022).

Assumptions

The following assumptions arise out of or revolve around public policy and administration theory. By extension, this section of the study contains the salient assumptions and concise explanations of the necessity of holding the assumptions intact to pursue the research question of this project. The first assumption of this study arises from the clash between two analytical policy lenses, rational and post-positivist theories, around the one salient question within the public policy analyst field: "What should we do?" (K. B. Smith & Larimer, 2013). Rationalists theorize that policy practices proceed as a linear process of rational choice of policy insiders or elites. In contrast, post-positivists theorize the nature of value-centered, rational beings as being counterintuitive to strictly linear functions and democratic policy-making, given that all actors affected by policy use their preferences and positions to shape the policy environment, whether

inside or outside actors (K. B. Smith & Larimer, 2013). By extension, without choosing sides, an assumption in this study was that representative bureaucrats practicing in an emotionally charged political policy context seek to make rational choices that are nevertheless informed by their values. With this assumption, how emotionally intelligent educators act rationally could be examined, given the emotions that arise during their client advocacy in disagreeable policy environments.

This study's second assumption was that bureaucrats use emotional-value-driven strategies as policy tools (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Fambrough & Kaye-Hart, 2008; Grosland & Roberts, 2021; Kouamé & Liu, 2021; Levitats et al., 2019; Ortony et al., 2022; Wang, 2021). Accordingly, I assumed that representative bureaucrats use their emotional intelligence, explicitly or implicitly, to influence outcomes within their work environments. This assumption was pertinent to this study because as bureaucrats use their emotional-policy tools/emotional intelligence to navigate the policy environment of the State of Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept" environment, the dynamic ways of being can be empirically documented or in the context of this study qualitatively examined.

Also, I assumed that bureaucratic discretion was a policy tool representative bureaucrats use to achieve perceived rational outcomes for their clients (Capers, 2018; Marvel & Resh, 2015). Bureaucratic discretion was an emotionally informed tool because it was value-informed (Levitats et al., 2019; Schneider & Ingram, 1990). By documenting the emotional repertoire of Georgia's educational bureaucrats, this study adds to the public administration literature on RBT and praxis (Caban, 2022; Capers, 2018; Carroll,

2017; Edlins & Larrison, 2018; Kennedy, 2014; Lessard, 2021; Lyles, 2020; Marvel & Resh, 2015; Nafukho, 2009; Xu & Flink, 2022).

Moreover, an additional aspect of this discretion assumption was that representative bureaucrats who deem the Divisive Concept law an encroachment used their discretion to make rules that are politically opposed to the intended outcomes of Georgia's legislative branch—moving with differences created emotional outcomes (Levitats et al., 2022; O'Connor, 2013). Similarly, I collected data to understand these bureaucratic emotional experiences. In short, assuming that an acted-upon value difference held by a bureaucrat produces observable psychological outcomes was essential to the investigative platform.

I assumed that although most of the relevant literature arises out of public administration literature, the field of public administration was open to interdisciplinary literature paralleling the thought in leading public administrative journals. This assumption was necessary to this study because although the significant tenets of the study (representative bureaucracy, NPF, policy outcomes, etc.) arise from public administrative thought, interdisciplinary research was legitimate epistemology to inform public administration research (Capers, 2018; Kennedy, 2014; Roch & Edwards, 2017). The final assumption relates to the social equity contribution this study will make toward developing more equitable representative bureaucrats operating in an educational policy context. I assumed that emotional intelligence was a policy tool used by bureaucrats effectively or not (Fambrough & Kaye-Hart, 2008; K. Gray & Wegner, 2011; Humphrey, 2022; Ortony, 2022; Vigoda-Gadot & Meisler, 2010; Wang, 2021). Subsequently, like

any policy tool, it can be documented as behaviorally practical and transferable through pedagogical practice. In sum, noting what emotionally intelligent bureaucrats do well in situations counterintuitive to their values can lead to developing more emotionally intelligent bureaucrats who function similarly in similar policy environments.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study was limited to Georgia bureaucrats serving in K-12 urban educational leadership positions whose assigned work site included serving a student population consisting of more than 51% minority (Tio, 2017). Since being codified in 2022, the State of Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 has been known to produce an emotional strain on educational bureaucrats charged with advocating for non-White K-12 Georgia students leading in the policy context (Gaunt, 2022). Understanding representative bureaucratic, emotionally intelligent responses is necessary to inform the drafting of more equitable policy and to ensure that bureaucratic advocates of all of Georgia's K-12 students are empowered by policy to lead school environments where all students are valued and learn.

Similarly, Georgia bureaucrats serving in majority White K-12 school settings are under no representative obligation to lead against the policy directives arising out of O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept Law. Moreover, representative bureaucrats are known to advocate for values important to their clients. Although valued, the bureaucrats' emotional responses were not part of the research problem examined in this study. Therefore, this research was delimited to urban Georgia's educational leaders serving majority non-White student populations. I hope that the document can be transferable to

other politicalized policy contexts seeking to develop more emotionally mature and equitable performing bureaucratic leaders. I verified the educational leaders' demographic information on the GaDOE's College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) reports webpage.

Limitations

An initial limitation was associated with my conducting research through interviews. Seideman (2019) explained that researcher bias is an assumed unavoidable factor when using the interviewing data collection model. In other words, before, during, and after the interview analysis used in this research methodology, this project reflects some of my subjective input or bias (see Caelli & Ray, 2003; Creswell, 2013; Lichtman, 2013; Ravitch & Carl, 2021; Sandelowski, 2000; Yin, 2016).

Also, a limitation of the study resided in the assumption that most K-12 educational bureaucrats who advocate for minority and poor children are emotionally encumbered by educational policies that are perceived to harm said students. Just because an educator leads minority and poor children does not mean they are emotionally moved by the passing of Georgia's Divisive Concept law O.C.G.A. 20-11-1. In contrast, emotional intelligence researchers have documented that whether an educational leader agrees or disagrees with a policy, an emotional response is still present. Consequently, the aim of this study was to understand the emotional reactions of Georgia's educational bureaucrats in the O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 political context.

Additionally, the participants in this study were employees of Georgia school systems. Each school had nuanced policy requirements to guide employees'

sociopolitical engagement within the policy environment. This study was limited to determining how local district nuances affect emotional experiences while investigating the salient understanding that the greater Georgia policy had an effect (Barnidge et al., 2018; O'Connor, 2013).

Similarly, L. Fowler and Fox (2023) suggested that the political nature of public policy processes, particularly in regions such as the State of Georgia, which was the setting for this study, could bias the researcher's perspective, causing less reliable and objective research. In contrast, I acknowledged the potential bias and limited it by structuring the data-gathering interviews to recognize the political climate surrounding the State of Georgia's codification of O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law (Gaunt, 2022). I asked participants questions to elicit their perspectives without my input (see Eller et al., 2018; Maxwell, 2013; Seideman, 2019). In sum, the political bias of this project was negotiated with solid structuring of the interview questions and interview strategies consistent with effective qualitative social science practices (Ravitch & Carl, 2021; Seideman, 2019). Overcoming the abovementioned limitations positions this study's nuances to be transferable to additional public administration studies.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the literature examining RBT, which is necessary to design educational leadership preparation programs focusing on developing emotionally intelligent educational leaders advocating for K-12 curriculum and instructional equity while responding to educational policy mandates in the State of Georgia, USA (Caban, 2022; Grosland & Roberts, 2021; Issah, 2018; Lessard, 2021;

Lyles, 2020; Nafukho, 2009; Udod et al., 2020). More than five years after the APS 2010 cheating scandal, researchers are still assessing its effects (Sass & Apperson, 2015; Trujillo & Renée, 2015). The youngest students affected by the educators' crimes have completed their K-12 public education studies, and some of the imprisoned educators are now on parole. However, even though APS has redeemed itself through ethical and highly competitive scholastic practices, thereby becoming a competitive educational district in Georgia, many people still ask why highly effective educators participated in such a widespread threat to children's education (Saultz et al., 2016).

In a recent interview, a former teacher, Shani Robinson, discussed in her book her experiences as an educator entangled in the historic APS cheating scandal. She shared the impact that the event had on the children, the community, and herself (Robinson & Simonton, 2019). The toll was a significant and long-lasting emotional experience by a representative bureaucrat. Robinson's insights highlight the importance of acknowledging the human impact of public policy. Robinson tied her participation in the event to the emotional pressure associated with educational policy mandates (Robinson & Simonton, 2019). Accordingly, while analyzing Robinson's narrative, researchers have been reminded of the emotionally charged context of education in the United States leading up to the cheating scandal (Aronson et al., 2016; Robinson & Simonton, 2019; Sass & Apperson, 2015; Saultz et al., 2016). In Robinson's recollection, the No Child Left Behind policy and other educational policy mandates put many educators on edge as they attempted to keep up with the policy requirements while avoiding the ramifications (Robinson & Simonton, 2019). In short, many scholars have substantiated Robinson's

claim that a correlation exists between educators' emotions and educational policy context (Grosland & Roberts, 2021). Additionally, within the last five years, salient public policy and dissertational administration studies have substantiated the importance of representative bureaucrats on the social sustainability of minorities within the United States community (Caban, 2022; Lessard, 2021; Lyles, 2020).

Consequently, the question remains whether enough is known about the emotional responses of educational leaders who desire to advocate for students yet must do so in the context of educational policy with which they disagree while responding in emotionally intelligent dispositions. Some people have argued that most APS leaders were not involved in the cheating scandal even though they worked in the same policy environment as the educators who committed those crimes. In sum, amid the criminal reporting, no one has researched how these emotionally intelligent educators did not succumb to the vortex of corruption amid the treacherous educational policy that befell their cohorts. This study contributes the pivotal insights necessary to develop emotionally intelligent educational leaders who remain ethical despite the pressure to advocate for diverse students in a disagreeable policy context.

Summary

In recent public administration research, Caban (2022), Lyles (2020), Lessard (2021), Xu and Flink (2022), Bishu and Kennedy (2020), Capers (2018), Edlins and Larrison (2018), Gains and John (2010), Marvel and Resh (2015), O'Connor (2013), Walton (2005), Wade-Olson (2019), and many other scholars examined the impact of policy environments, representative bureaucratic engagement, and the viability of public

organizations to achieve equitable, democratic outcomes for citizens. Further, upon concluding their studies, Capers (2018), O'Connor (2013), and P. A. Smith (2019) identified a salient gap in the public administration literature, affirming the need for more research to understand the emotional dispositions of bureaucrats engaged in the policy environment. D. Stone (2012), in a new introduction to her salient text, also explained that public policy was a paradox that keeps bureaucrats navigating between emotional-political choices and pragmatic procedures. In alignment with recent research, the following research question guided this study: What are the State of Georgia's educational, representative bureaucrats' emotional perceptions and experiences about implementing controversial student curriculum frameworks and instructional practices based on the State of Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law?

Chapter 1 included the introduction to the study, background of the study, problem statement, purpose of the study, research question, and theoretical framework. This chapter also contained a description of the methodological nature, definitions of keywords, salient assumptions, scope and delimitations of the study, limitations and implications, and social significance of the study. Chapter 2 includes a review of the literature that informed this study and supported interrogating the research question, particularly within public administration.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem this study addressed is that the State of Georgia's 2022 codification of House Bill 1084 as now O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Georgia's General Education Divisive Concepts law has created a hyper-politicalized educational leadership environment producing documented job-related emotional distress among some Georgia's educational leaders desiring to lead culturally responsive K-12 learning environments (Capers, 2018; Carroll et al., 2019; Edlins & Larrison, 2018; Kennedy, 2014; Marvel & Resh, 2015; Xu & Flink, 2022). In this general qualitative study, I explored the emotional impact upon the State of Georgia's educational bureaucrats working in the policy environment created by Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law codified in 2022. This literature review is a synthesis of accessible and relevant literature in support of public administration research considering the nuanced political engagement of U.S. bureaucrats amid the rise and fall of various hyper-politicalized public policy environments within the United States operating according to what public administrative researchers call traditional American political values: individualism, freedom, private property, democracy and equality (Baumer & Van Horn, 2014).

Contrasting traditional American ideals concerning the role of the bureaucracy, Baumer and VanHorn (2014) observed that some bureaucrats' actions, based on their value-laden assessment of specific policies, put them in a conflicting position with the policymakers' intent. The literature review revealed that researchers have investigated the political nature of bureaucracy; however, this same literary corpus establishes that no

public administration scholar presently has sought to understand the emotional experiences arising from representative bureaucrats' value systems.

In this chapter, I delve into the current literature to establish the relevance of the problem under study, which was the need for an adequate analysis of the experiences of Georgia's educators as they navigate the newly codified Divisive Law. I searched at the intersection of the work of Levitats (2023), Capers (2018), and O'Connor (2013) and the works on NPF by scholars such as G. Gray and Jones (2016) to highlight the gap from which this study arises.

The following research question guided this study: What are the State of Georgia's educational, representative bureaucrats' emotional perceptions and experiences about implementing controversial student curriculum frameworks and instructional practices in the political context of the State of Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law? This research question grew out of the public administration and interdisciplinary literature investigating the RBT, bureaucratic policy analysis, political policymaking-implementation, emotional intelligence of civil servants, and contested public policy environments within government organizations (Balla et al., 1985; Baumer & Van Horn, 2014; Carroll et al., 2019; Meier, 1975; Meier et al., 2019; Meier & Nigro, 2010; O'Connor, 2013; D. Stone, 2012). The above concepts are the overarching theories and themes examined and synthesized in this literature review.

The rationale for this inquiry was sparked by Gaunt (2022), the Southern Poverty Law Center (2022), and Robinson and Simonton's (2019) varied arguments concerning the same general theme: Georgia's educational bureaucrats have been emotionally injured

by government power elites through policymaking and implementation. The major sections of this chapter include the Literature Search Strategy, Theoretical Foundations, and Key Variables in public policy and administration. The chapter begins with a literature search strategy followed by a description of the theoretical conceptualization and additional literature related to critical concepts. Finally, this chapter concludes with a summary that aligns the literature review with Chapter 3 Methodology. By exploring these areas, I hope to understand better the challenges educators face in Georgia and how public policy and administration can address these issues.

Literature Search Strategy

Although strategic planning is necessary for scholarly research, many researchers do not trivialize the methods of numerous scholars who use randomness as their salient approach to literature review research work (Bramer et al., 2018). Silva Júnior and Dutra (2021) observed that randomness, as a literature search method, was inappropriate and produced an inconsistent literature analysis. In the current study, I overcame the flaw of randomness using a systematic investigation process based on two research teams' work (Bramer et al., 2018; Silva Júnior & Dutra, 2021). In this section, I describe the literature search process, listing the databases and salient search terms and describing how the barrier of shallow availability of current research was overcome. The ultimate objective of this section is to enable future researchers to engage in similar research using the methods listed here.

I considered the research question in reproducing the search process used in this study. The research question arose from public administration literature informing a

praxis problem within the public administration field. Therefore, specific databases and academic journals were more appropriate for public administration research. The primary databases used for this study were ProQuest Central, Public Administration Abstracts, SAGE Journals, Research Gate, and JSTOR. Also, the salient search engine I used was Google Chrome. I also used other databases sparingly, with insufficient resources obtained to warrant reporting.

The iterative research search process began with the general question arising from reading the work of Capers (2018) in concert with that of Robinson and Simonton (2019). Capers empirically examined RBT to understand the difference between passive and active bureaucrats' actions in policy environments. Along the same lines, Robinson and Simonton argued that the criminal actions committed in 2010 by some of the State of Georgia's educational bureaucrats during the APS cheating scandal could be attributed to the emotional pressure the bureaucrats experienced resulting from the burdens placed upon them by public policies. At the intersection of these works are the concepts of public administration and representative bureaucracy. Additionally, the emotional dispositions of bureaucrats were salient even though implicit in these works.

Consequently, I began the literature search at the Walden University Library database, where I selected the Research by Subject button followed by Public Policy and Administration option. In addition, I searched databases in the Public Policy and Administration databases list from which I chose some of the databases listed earlier. Moreover, the top search terms used to identify proper research associated with the arising research question were *representative bureaucratic theory*, *bureaucratic*

emotions, and *discretion*, terms used in ProQuest Central, Sage, and JSTOR.

Additionally, *bureaucracy* and *politics* were the systematic terms I used in surveying the reference pages in the same database. The following terms are greatly aided by the search process: *representative bureaucracy*, *narrative policy framework*, and *emotional intelligence*. Initially, I used ProQuest to identify relevant scholarship, but I found that Sage was much more supportive of my investigation. Sage not only helped me organize my search according to the terms mentioned above but also allowed me to progress with my search according to what relevant scholars have done their research in these areas. Overall, Sage proved to be a better resource for my research needs. Accordingly, the literature strategy greatly benefited from continuously examining article reference pages and appendices.

On the other hand, in support of the need for this study, I searched for literature regarding the public administrative, qualitative understanding of representative bureaucratic emotions. The literature review showed that most RBT research was empirical, with mere suggestions for more qualitative research to be done that considers what this study endeavors to undertake. As a result, this study navigated the barrier of limited public administrative RBT research that examined the emotional repertoire of bureaucrats by leveraging some educational policy research. Using Sage and an interdisciplinary perspective, I leveraged educational policy and the search terms *educator emotions and policy*, *policy effects*, and *educators* to identify research that paralleled the salient topic embedded in the public administrative-oriented research question under investigation. By contrast, where literature vis-à-vis public policy

emotional literature investigated through an NPF lens was lacking, this study met this challenge by understanding the dearth of literature as a gap in the literature, justifying the necessity of the study.

Theoretical Foundations

Introduction to the Two Theories of the Study

In this section, I name the two theories used and clarify the term *theory* as used in this study. Additionally, in this study, I sought to contribute to the growth of public policy and administrative theoretical literature by building on RBT, the first of the two theories leveraged in this study. By extension, within the qualitative research design from which this study arises, Ravitch and Carl (2021) observed a salient amount of confusion regarding the use of terms *conceptualization*, *theory*, and *the role of literature*. In this study, theory refers to the framework of thought housing a group of related conceptualizations to present a logical, widely accepted, but academically disputable perspective on a given phenomenon in nature (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). In short, this study leverages two theoretical frameworks: RBT, the salient conceptual lens of the study, and the NPF, the central methodology for inquiry. The remainder of this section also provides the origin and source of both representative bureaucracy and the NPF.

Additionally, in the following subsections, I describe the propositions and assumptions appropriate for applying both theories within this public administration study. I then provide a literature analysis of the previous applications of the theorems, leading to similarities between them and this study. I also present a rationale for the appropriateness of choice to use the theorems in this study, concluding with how and why

this study builds on the current representative bureaucracy and the NPF theoretical scholarship.

Historical Origins of Theory 1: RBT

A number of researchers, including Bradbury and Kellough (2011), Gains and John (2010), Marvel and Resh (2015), O'Connor (2013), Schröter (2019), Walton (2005), Watkins-Hayes (2011), Xu and Flink (2022), have examined how bureaucrats act as policymakers by leveraging their positional power within public organizations to shift policy burdens and benefits to minority stakeholders. Capers (2018) and Davidovitz (2022) added to public administrative theoretics by explaining how bureaucratic practices shape policy outcomes for various groups across policy domains. In other words, Capers's and Davidovitz's insights are relevant to this study because the academic knowledge has been expanded to determine that bureaucrats act in political ways not specified in each policy. The challenge, however, was when as Bishu and Kennedy (2020), Bradbury and Kellough (2011), Capers, Carroll (2017), O'Connor et al. (2020), Roch and Edwards (2017), Schröter (2019), Wade-Olson (2019), Wright (2022) and Xu and Flink established that the salience of the political environment was not deeply analyzed, relegating the inherent effects of politics to the periphery of public policy theory and conceptualization. As explained later in this section, RBT accounts for the political nature of bureaucrats while explaining the why and how of conceptualization (Capers, 2018; Carroll et al., 2019; Kouamé & Liu, 2021; Meier et al., 2019; Meier & Nigro, 2010; P. A. Smith, 2019).

RBT originated in the work of administrative theorist Donald Kingsley in 1944 (Bishu & Kennedy, 2020; Meier, 1975). The conceptual enterprise has been held together by primarily empirical studies informing the correlation between bureaucratic professionals, the ideologies they hold in common with their clients, and the responsibilities accompanying the role in which they serve (Bishu & Kennedy, 2020; Capers, 2018; Carroll et al., 2019; Edlins & Larrison, 2018; Kennedy, 2014; O'Connor, 2013; Wright, 2022). By extension, arguing that female doctors are more responsive to females' public health care needs, Wright (2022) used the RBT as a lens to understand the phenomena of the study. Interestingly, an analysis of Wright's research held the salient representative component in tack some 70 years after Kingston conceptualized representative theory. However, unlike Capers (2018), Marvel and Resh (2015), O'Connor (2013), Schröter (2019), P. A. Smith (2019), and Xu and Flink (2022), and in contrast to the holistic emergent theoretical perspective of RBT, although Wright correctly leveraged a mature understanding of the varied and emerging uses of RBT in an interdisciplinary context, Wright's narrow healthcare focus as understood through the meta-analysis of representative bureaucracy done by Bishu and Kennedy (2020) was too shallow to inform this public administratively inquiry primarily conceptualized upon said theory (Capers, 2018; O'Connor, 2013; Wright, 2022). In other words, many recent studies leveraging RBT needed to add a firm description of the theory's propositions to the literature. Consequently, in support of using RBT in this study, it is necessary to describe the significant theoretical propositions missing from Wright's work.

Propositions Within RBT

This section includes a description of RBT based on an analysis of the literature that announces its two central pillars or propositions: the democratic representational mechanism of bureaucracy and bureaucratic political behavior. The first proposition of RBT was bureaucracy as a democratic representational mechanism (Capers, 2018; Kennedy, 2014; Xu & Flink, 2022). In describing RBT, it was essential to note that the representative bureaucratic policy implementation enterprise was associated in the literature with essential questions such as “How do bureaucrats in contested spaces execute policy/legislation?” (O’Connor, 2013). Along the same lines, Kennedy (2014) admitted that a larger body of literature exists determining the theoretical underpins. The breadth of research, however, needed a depth of creativity to explain relevant questions such as the critical question (Kennedy, 2014). Also, Kennedy implicitly observed the above question and, by extension, the research question of this study as the chief impetus among public policy scholars engaged in amending RBT.

By synthesis, Lipsky (2010) and Wright (2022) implicitly explained the theory by addressing the administrative-oriented question: Bureaucrats only sometimes enact policies as precisely as the legislature’s drafts or executive’s authorizations stipulate. In addition, Baumer and Van Horn (2014), Capers (2018), and Lipsky (2010) theorized that bureaucratic policy engagement usually takes place well beyond the normative expectations of other government officials and is highly informed by the behavioral perspectives of these bureaucrats. This diverse behavioral policy-implementation perspective was one of the salient evolving propositions of RBT.

Moreover, Capers's (2018), in their study, described more definitively the theoretical tension between scholars who narrowly acknowledge representative bureaucracy as a passive enterprise and those who seek to build a comprehensive framework capable of generating empirical data points necessary to account for the power wielded by bureaucrats who advocate specifically for minority clients. In short, the academic conversation has grown into an acknowledgment of the relevance of representative bureaucracy, even as many salient questions of demarcation within the theoretics remain to be answered (Capers, 2018; Gains & John, 2010; O'Connor, 2013; Walton, 2005; Xu & Flink, 2022). Specifically, Bishu and Kennedy (2020), seeking to overcome what scholars have argued was a narrow set of conceptual and methodological applications such as race and gender, called for more research that expanded the theoretical understanding and leveraged more qualitative methodological usage of RBT. On the other hand, Roch and Edwards (2017) contended that race or gender within the school context was a valid ideological domain from which to examine the levels of engagement of representative bureaucrats' willingness to act on behalf of minority students to potential harm from specific policy implementation. Additionally, Xu and Flink (2022) leveraged the racial context in schools to affirm a significant insight into the theoretical proposition in this study: bureaucrats' ideological persuasions create advocacy opportunities on behalf of minority clients while navigating turbulence from the policy environment that decreases the effectiveness of said advocacy.

So then, were Bishu and Kennedy (2020) descriptively wrong that RBT should expand to consider a more diverse research context and methodologies? Or were Roch

and Edwards (2017), Xu and Flink (2022), and many others too numerous to cite in this space misguided by adding to RBT literature through a racialized or gendered context? Considering that this study was dependent on the necessity to add to the theoretical disposition of RBT, these questions were necessary during this phase of the literature investigation.

Consequently, Kennedy's (2014) meta-analysis of RBT literature presents a reasonable solution to the tension described here. Kennedy emphasized that although scholars are correct that demographics shape bureaucratic engagement, the theory could have been better aligned with bureaucrats. In contrast, the focus was needed on the why and how of representative bureaucratic engagement. Similarly, Capers (2018) conducted an empirical study to advance the understanding of RBT. The scholar was quick to describe and sum up this proposition tension by calling for more qualitative research that builds the theory not by bantering over context but by seeking to understand more about the values and biases of the representative bureaucrats in different demographical contexts. With this descriptive analysis of the first primary proposition of RBT, it was appropriate to describe the second proposition of RBT: representative bureaucrats are political powerbrokers within the United States governmental enterprise.

To understand how RBT informed this study, describing the second salient proposition that has held the theory intact for more than 50 years of development within public administration research was essential. Representative bureaucrats as political advocates are the second central axiom of RBT. Indirectly considering the political context of RBT, while appealing for a reimagining of the public policy-making

environment beyond the institutional rational choice theory, C. Stone (1995) observed that policymakers intend to be rational yet create a paradox for many citizens. Instead of solving problems with policy solutions, policymakers create unintended political environments that limit some clients from achieving their goals. In substantiation of this notion, O'Connor (2013), Walton (2005), and Lipsky (2010) defined a framework of bureaucratic politics in the political environment of policy.

Bureaucratic power is the ability to act in one policy-outcome direction or another toward a desired administrative end. Bureaucratic authority is the degree of positional power a bureaucrat can leverage while enacting responsibility and bureaucratic discretion, allowing the latitude to move within given administrative guidelines was observed in the literature as mutually exclusive-interdependent parts within the bureaucratic political matrix (Balla, 2000; Edlins & Larrison, 2018; Gains & John, 2010; Lipsky, 2010; Marvel & Resh, 2015; Meier et al., 2019; O'Connor, 2013; Watkins-Hayes, 2011; Welch, 1992). Schröter (2019) summarized the literature concerning bureaucratic politics as follows: bureaucratic politics was bureaucrats' attempt to match policy to their shared ideological expectations of a clientele. Additionally, the most substantial claim by Schröter that bureaucratic politics was an attempt to give citizens power within the policymaking-implementation paradigm was relevant to this study as this study sought to understand the emotional experiences of bureaucrats advocating for minority students against the politics created by the codification O.C.G.A. 20-11-1, Divisive Concept law (Schröter, 2019).

In contrast, although a most accurate assessment of bureaucratic politics, Schröter (2019) mistakenly saw RBT's political and representative aspects as two distinct markers within the RBT enterprise. On the other hand, in most of the literature, the second pillar of RBT has been more accurately described as a political dynamic that was inextricably tied to representative actions (Meier et al., 2019; Walton, 2005). In other words, to be a political-oriented bureaucrat was to be a representative bureaucrat. The totality of the theoretical literature, except for Schröter, holds this dynamic. Schröter, however, emphasizes a needed insight: government entities must be understood in their political context. The emphasis on political behaviors by bureaucrats that Edlins and Larrison (2018) conceptualized, Meier et al. (2019) attributed as the cause of the failure of many policy outcomes and Marvel and Resh (2015) and Watkins-Hayes (2011) racialized as descriptive of the second pillar of RBT: representative bureaucrats are inherently political and active in political ways. In sum, this section included a description of RBT through the two associated pillars of the theory; thus, it was appropriate to provide a literature analysis of how RBT has been applied in studies similar to this study.

RBT Within Previous Studies

This section contains an analysis of how RBT has been applied in previous studies similar to the current study. By extension, it was appropriate to state the opportunity available to this study. A study to investigate the emotional responses of bureaucrats was needed because only a few researchers have explicitly investigated the values-centered emotional responses of bureaucrats within the last five years. Conversely, studies by Lyles (2020), Caban (2022), Lessard (2008), Lipsky (2010), Capers (2018),

Meier et al. (2019), Carroll (2017), and Roch and Edwards (2017) achieved two key objectives like this study did.

Lyles (2020), Caban (2022), Lessard (2008), Lipsky (2010), Capers (2018), Meier et al. (2019), Carroll (2017), and Roch and Edwards (2017) substantiated a similar conclusion assumed in this study that representative bureaucrats are active or explicit political actors within the policymaking implementation schematic. Considering Kennedy's (2014) meta-analysis that indicated that many previous representative bureaucratic studies failed to add to the literature because they focused more on the debate concerning whether representative bureaucrats are passive or active participants, Lyles, Lessard, and Capers offered tangible empirical evidence that representative bureaucrats are active participants in the public policy process. At the same time, Lipsky and Caban used qualitative methodology to determine whether representative bureaucrats have an active participatory effect in the policy space.

Secondly, studies by O'Connor (2013), Lipsky (2010), Lyles (2020), Caban (2022), Lessard (2008), Capers (2018), Meier et al. (2019), Carroll (2017), Roch and Edwards (2017) are comparable to the current study in that their research indicated that external policy environments have a profound and direct effect on representational bureaucratic behavior towards minority groups. Particularly, what was interesting concerning Capers's second conclusion for this study was that a survey of the literature before their study implicitly demonstrated external pressure as a driving factor determining bureaucratic behavior, yet few researchers (Caban, 2022; Carroll, 2017; Lessard, 2008; Lipsky, 2010; Lyles, 2020; Meier et al., 2019; O'Connor, 2013; Roch &

Edwards, 2017), if any, certainly investigated and subsequently established the claim as a definitive conclusion as Capers did. In other words, the current study relied deeply on definitive conceptual and conclusive evidence of these and other previous studies. Moreover, few scholars have attempted to investigate bureaucrats' explicit emotional disposition per a specific state policy. Pivoting beyond the recognized gap in the literature reviewed herein, the current study leveraged the opportunity to continue to add to RBT literature by investigating the following research question: What are the State of Georgia's educational leaders' emotional experiences as told through their personal stories about implementing controversial student curriculum frameworks and instructional practices based on the State of Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law? The next sub-section contains the rationale for choosing RBT, a description of how RBT relates to the present study, and a clarification on how addressing the research question adds to RBT literature.

Connecting RBT and the Current Study

This section includes the rationale for choosing RBT, a description of how RBT relates to the present study and a clarification on how addressing the research question adds to RBT literature. First, against the contemporary rationalist-oriented public policymaking praxis like those of Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, RBT scholarship has evolved empirically to explain how bureaucrats advocate for minority persons or persons not in power and who are not policy elites (Bishu & Kennedy, 2020; Capers, 2018; Hartocollis & Fawcett, 2023; Kennedy, 2014; Kingdon, 2003; Lessard, 2008; Meier et al., 2019). In 2023, Governor DeSantis led his state to pass policies that prohibited

educational leaders from implementing advanced African-American-oriented placement history courses (Hartocollis & Fawcett, 2023). Some researchers observed affronts like the DeSantis-led Florida course to be a direct political affront against African-American students and a direct return to the pre-Civil Rights movement of late 1950 to mid-1970 public policymaking schemes leveraged on notions of intellectual inferiority of the minority (Cobb, 2023). Scholars have explained that rationalist policymaking lacks the depth of minority representation necessary for all persons affected by said policies (Bishu & Kennedy, 2020; Capers, 2018; Kennedy, 2014; Lessard, 2008; Meier et al., 2019). Consequently, surveying the RBT literature, was that rationalistic policymakers' argument that scholars understand enough about RBT to support all persons affected by public policies implemented by state governments such as Florida and Georgia true? Or, were Capers (2018), Lyles (2020), Caban (2022), and others who requested additional understanding, particularly regarding RBT, right?

I chose RBT to answer scholars such as Bishu and Kennedy (2020), Bradbury and Kellough (2011), Capers (2018), Carroll (2017), Marvel and Resh (2015), Meier (1975), Meier and Nigro (2010), Wade-Olson (2019), Wright (2022), Xu and Flink (2022) and other RBT theorists who asserted that more needed to be known regarding bureaucrats serving a particular constituency rather than prescript policy obligations. Further, in describing how the research of this study relates to RBT, more needs to be understood about the emotional disposition of educational leaders who reject Georgia's Divisive Concept law in favor of the interest of the local children they serve. This was the

rationale for choosing RBT, as answering this question would add to the literature. No scholar has explicitly examined the emotional repertoire of representative bureaucrats.

Historical Origins of Theory 2: NPF

This section of the study includes a review of the literature concerning the second theory, informing the methodological perspective used to investigate the research question by highlighting the origin of the theory and describing the major theoretical propositions relevant to the investigation. Similarly, the NPF was the methodological theory used to investigate the research question. The research question was as follows: What are the State of Georgia's educational leaders' emotional experiences as told through their personal stories about implementing controversial student curriculum frameworks and instructional practices based on the State of Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law?

NPF developed from the basic public administrative debate between public policy theorists such as Paul Sabatier, who advocated for rational, empirical tools to examine public policy processes and products, and others such as Deborah Stone, who used post-positivist methodology as a path toward understanding public administrative phenomena (Jones & McBeth, 2010; McBeth et al., 2005). At the intersection of the debate was the compound notion that persons are important actors within the policymaking schema, and these actors must be empirically examined. Therefore, in the early 2000s, arising from this notion, scholar Mark McBeth led several doctoral graduate students who later became practicing public policy and administrative professors in leveraging analytical,

empirical, and literature narrative tools to study policy subjects, becoming the origins of NPF.

In addition, I found a description of NPF in a study widely regarded as the first NPF research to be included in public administration literature. Jones and McBeth (2010) responded directly to rationalist-oriented public policy theorist Sabatier's retort that NPF lacked an empirical structure by defining foundational propositions of NPF policy narratives that have examinable structures via the content. The structures can be empirically examined via tools used in narrative methodology existing outside of public administration, and narratives are symbolic of the beliefs and values of the subjects under consideration. Further, beyond enunciating the literary aspects of narrative prose use in policy analysis, Jones and McBeth established key hypotheses that are presently leveraged in NPF studies.

Propositions of NPF

The salient propositions of NPF are that narrative data can be analyzed as empirical data, narratives are information-rich constructions that can inform the human experience, and narratives of actors have shaped the public policy environment at various stages within the power occurrence. Analyzing the power literature through narrative policy studies joins NPF studies to PPA literature (Jones & McBeth, 2010). By extension, McBeth et al. (2022) leveraged the NPF to understand shared empathy among political actors with shared values. In contrast to these most important NPF propositions, NPF has had mixed success with qualitative inquiry, and studies such as O'Connor et al. (2020) and G. Gray and Jones (2016) have proven that although the empirical propositions listed

here are relevant qualitative pillars are necessary and should be further investigated in future studies. Consequently, the current study affirmed the work of Dematthews (2018), Grosland and Matias (2022), and McBeth et al. (2022) but moved forward to add to the lessor-investigated qualitative propositions of NPF.

NPF Within Previous PPA Research

In this section, I analyze the more recent NPF literature of studies within PPA literature that have used the theory similarly to this study. Accordingly, evaluating these studies using the rubric developed in the original NPF study was appropriate. Historically denoted as the first NPF study published in a PPA journal, scholars Michael D. Jones and Mark K. McBeth's study established three significant transferable conceptualizations that hold together NPF work studies, including the more recent studies analyzed here (McBeth et al., 2022). Jones and McBeth (2010) established coherence for all NPF studies around three pillars: political narratives have content capable of being documented, the documented content has an empirically measurable structure of meaning occurring within the narratives, and once empirically analyzed, the policy narratives can be used to predict political landscapes and outcomes. By extension, all subsequent studies, such as the current study, have pivoted around these foundational axioms.

For example, several recent Walden University doctoral students have used NPF with one or more hypotheses necessary to hold theoretical coherence in their dissertation studies to examine many persons affected by policy environments like the representative bureaucrats investigated in this study. Mangin (2021) used NPF to understand the policy narratives of single mothers within a politically charged higher education paradigm.

Similarly, Austin-Lucas (2021) determined from the narratives of females serving in nongovernmental organizations that a policy addressing equity was needed. In addition, Andrew (2023) and Hall (2021) determined that government officials of one kind or another can be understood through narratives of and about policy. These narratives are detailed data in determining public policymaking and policy environments.

By contrast, though important, these and other NPF studies leveraged by this study have an unexamined nuance that could have been examined using the NPF, constituting a research opportunity for this study. Much of the NPF literature, regardless of whether the scholars acknowledge this fact, takes place within the equity argument of policymaking (D. Stone, 2012). D. Stone (2012) explained values as an essential informing variable in describing persons' understanding of policy as equitable or inequitable. Accordingly, in most, if not all, of the recent NPF studies, the researchers considered explicitly or implicitly understood values of involved subjects to be salient in the schema of the study. To my knowledge, however, unlike the current study, these studies do not focus on understanding the emotional representations of said value systems as documented in the narratives of the studies (Andrew, 2023; Austin-Lucas, 2021; Hall, 2021; Mangin, 2021). Consequently, in this study, which is similar and indebted to the use of NPF in these studies, I pursued an understanding of the emotional repertoire of representative bureaucrats in pursuit of how these value systems are related to policy implementation. In sum, though similar to previous studies, this study focused on the knowledge gap in the existing literature.

Connecting NPF to the Current Study

This section contains an explanation of the rationale for choosing NPF, a description of how NPF relates to the present study, and a clarification on how addressing the research question adds to the NPF literature. First, as a reaction to the total positivist-rationalist inquiry of the late 1900s, NPF arose during the early to mid-2000s to support the empirical investigation of post-positivist units of analysis similar to the emotional experiences of representative bureaucrats vis-a-vis the unit of analysis of this study (G. Gray & Jones, 2016; McBeth et al., 2022). The research question of this study was triggered by a salient notion in the 2022 expose of former incarcerated ex-APS teacher Shani Robinson. Robinson was incarcerated after being found guilty of engaging in the APS cheating scandal. Robinson shared her story of how the work pressures, mostly stemming from the responsibilities required by federal and state public policies, cause emotional distress, leading to poor public service delivery (Robinson & Simonton, 2019). Robinson also explained in her book the need to understand her story and those of the other educators involved in the scandal (Robinson & Simonton, 2019). Although Robinson's account was not a contribution to public policy and administration literature, it implicitly raises an explicit historical question associated with an ongoing, salient argument within the academic genre: Do persons affected by policy products derive from having their narratives understood and the meaning therein used as one determining factor in the border policymaking schematic?

Since 2010, numerous NPF theorists, including Jones and McBeth (2010), McBeth et al. (2005), and Shanahan et al. (2013), have designed NPF to answer this

question in the affirmative. It was, however, not until G. Gray and Jones (2016) questioned whether NPF could be used as a reflective lens within a qualitative study like done in this present study that an affirmative answer legitimately became ground in a post-positivist ethos -persons' stories to obtain relevant forms of data from which to understand public policy structures. From this notion, the rationale arises for using NPF as the methodological lens.

Consequently, narrative data can be analyzed as empirical data. Narratives are information-rich constructions that can inform the human experience, and the actors' narratives shape the public policy environment at various stages within the power occurrence. Along the same lines, for example, Capers (2018) explained how the values of representative bureaucrats are salient factors in the service-delivery outcomes of said bureaucrats. In other words, the literature reveals an association between what educators do because of policy and the educators' ideological interpretation of the policy. No scholar has, however, used NPF to investigate the emotional experiences that arise from the educators' value system while enacting the policy, particularly when it may injure their constituency. This study builds on the NPF literature synthesized herein to address the research question, thereby adding to the whole of the NPF literary corpus.

The Key Variable: Emotional Intelligence Within PPA Literature

Emotional intelligence within the PPA literature was the key variable of emphasis within this study that leveraged the above theories. Some scholars have argued for a broader inquiry into the historical evolution of emotional intelligence and its use in other disciplines away from PPA research. Although since the first works of scholars such as

Salovey and Mayer emerged, emotional intelligence scholarship has increased, many qualitative effects still need to be discovered. Similarly, PPA has leveraged the broader emotional intelligence research to establish its unique literary territory, as analyzed below. Consequently, the current PPA study stayed within PPA emotional intelligence research limits without necessitating a recapitalization of the well-documented broader emotional intelligence literature pursued by previous studies (Goleman, 1995; Mayer et al., 2016).

A Synthesis of Studies Consistent with PPA EI Research

The preceding sections of this chapter included a synthesis of the theories that provided the lens to examine the study's research question. Subsequently, describing studies related to the salient construction of interest consistent with the conceptual dynamics within the research question and how researchers in PPA have approached the salient conceptualization was appropriate. This study's research question was as follows: What are the State of Georgia's educational leaders' emotional experiences as told through their personal stories about implementing controversial student curriculum frameworks and instructional practices based on the State of Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law? Deconstructing the research question determines the emotional intelligence of representative bureaucrats or educational leaders as the salient conceptualization that binds the study to the public policy and administrative literature.

Along the same lines and by way of description, although PPA literature focusing on the association among civil servants, emotional intelligence, and public service delivery of various sorts exists, though informative and necessary, a great deal of this

literature is empirical, leaving salient qualitative gaps in the literature (Ali, 2019; Bishu & Kennedy, 2020; Campbell, 2012; Capers, 2018; Cobb, 2023; Lessard, 2008; Levitats et al., 2019; Meier et al., 2019;). Moreover, Levitats et al. (2019) are the most prominent scholars in this area. Levitats et al. proposed the first theory of bureaucratic emotional intelligence in the context of public organizations.

In contrast, as explained in an early section of this literature review, much of the PPA studies before Levitats et al. (2019) leveraged rationalist theorizing with empirical data and depended on scholars such as Mayer et al. (2016) to determine the emotional intelligence landscape. Additionally, most emotional intelligence research was thought by public policy scholars to be counterintuitive to the rational understanding of public policy outcomes, which the research question of the study addressed (Birkland, 2011; Sabatier, 2007). Consequently, Levitats and Vigoda-Gadot (2017), Levitats et al., and Levitats et al. (2022) expanded public policy and administration literature and emotional intelligence literature in general by developing a theoretical framework specifically to investigate the emotional experiences of civil servants. As a result, beyond a recapitulation of Goleman (1995), Issah (2018), and Salovey and Grewal's (2005) definitions of emotional intelligence, which distilled down to the proper recognition and use of appropriate emotion within a given situation and was not a synthesis of a public policy literature, led to a researchable gap for the current study. Levitats et al. created a major inroad for the current study by finding an association between civil servants' emotional intelligence and their social responsibility.

Further, how researchers in PPA have approached the salient conceptualization was appropriate to consider. Again, an excavation of representative bureaucrats' literature referred to in the theoretical section of the current study shows that the work experiences of representative bureaucrats are shaped by the emotions they experience while serving in the environment. Although the study by Levitats et al. (2019) was empirical, the scholars admitted that there was room for qualitative analysis. In other words, PPA studies, including a recent study by Levitats (2023), have contributed to empirical investigations, signaling the necessity of qualitative study like the current research. Upon concluding their study, Levitats requested more research to understand what drives the emotional responses while attending to responsibilities. As a result, the current study began its investigation at this research junction.

Also, Humphrey (2022) explained race as among the emotional triggers for the bureaucratic difference within the political context created by specific organizational policy. This notion was helpful to the current study in that it confirmed that representative bureaucrats serve the responsibility required by the policy according to their preconceived ideological notions (Capers, 2018; Humphrey, 2022). By contrast, my investigation in the current study was not limited to specifically why a representative bureaucrat may have ideological differences; I merely sought to understand the emotional responses associated with the difference according to their operational value system within a given policy environment (see Levitats, 2023).

Similarly, Ali (2019) was consistent with the scope of the current study in how the scholar approached emotional intelligence with PPA literature. The strength of Ali's

study was that it contributed two salient polemics that informed the current study: bureaucrats respond emotionally to the power dynamics of the environments in which they serve, and the emotional experiences of these bureaucrats can be documented through interviews (Ali, 2019). In contrast, a potential weakness of Ali's findings is that bureaucrats emotionally avoid the political environment, which is inconsistent with the representative bureaucratic literature previously analyzed. Much PPA literature documents that bureaucrats are value-centered, politically engaged actors within the public policymaking schema (Capers, 2018; Levitats, 2023). The conceptual-theoretical lens of the current study helped investigate the emotions of bureaucrats and understand the educational leaders' documented emotional responses to signal their political engagement within the policy environment. Considering this difference again, however, Ali's study was valuable for pointing to the gap in the literature, necessitating the current qualitative study to understand more about bureaucratic emotional responses serving in contested policy environments.

A Justification for Using PPA-Emotional Intelligence Research

This section of part 4 of the Chapter 2 literature review contains a justification from the PPA literature and the rationale for selecting the emotional intelligence of representative bureaucrats to investigate the State of Georgia's 2022 codified O.C.G. A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law. A recapitulation of the problem within the bureaucratic praxis that gave rise to the research question begins a valid justification. In a historical narrative regarding the APS cheating scandal in which the State of Georgia's educators were convicted of racer tee by altering student tests, Robinson and Simonton (2019)

explained that the educators' emotional distress because of the workplace policy environment as the salient contributing factor to the educators' adverse behavior. Additionally, as presented in preceding chapters, numerous studies established that bureaucratic emotional intelligence was a product of the external environment (Capers, 2018; Levitats et al., 2019, 2022).

It has also been established in previous sections that less was known about how some representative bureaucrats-educational leaders in Georgia were exposed to the same policy environment that was supposed to trigger emotional immature but acted in emotionally intelligent ways (Bishu & Kennedy, 2022; Capers, 2018; Cobb, 2023; Lessard, 2008; Meier et al., 2019). It was the preceding notion of the necessary to understand emotional intelligence in civil servants amid emotionally contested policy environments as initiated in the works of Levitats et al. (2019) and Capers (2018) as the established narrative of Robinson and Simonton (2019) and contextualized the State of Georgia's 2023 Divisive Concept policy environment that becomes a justification for a rationale for studying bureaucratic emotional intelligence within P.P.A. context.

The Scope, Known and Unknown Limits of PPA-EI Research

Accordingly, having justified the rationale of selecting representative bureaucratic emotional intelligence from PPA. The literature evaluated in the preceding sections of Chapter 2 was expedient to synthesize PPA studies related to this conceptualization to describe what PPA literature has currently established, what was controversial, what remains for this study to investigate, and why this approach was meaningful. First, the prominent PPA literature regarding bureaucratic emotional intelligence shows that

representative bureaucrats act according to their ideological perspectives more than the responsibilities dictated by the policy (Capers, 2018; Humphrey, 2022; Levitats, 2023; Levitats et al., 2022). A synthesis of these studies' common implicit claims necessitated the unifying question that points directly to the gap filled by this study. The question is as follows: How do passive bureaucrats (Capers, 2018), civil servants-educational leaders (Levitats, 2023) who act passively regarding their policy responsibilities as measured according to the stated obligations of a given policy become ideological-oriented, value-centered engaged bureaucrats responding to the needs of minority constitutes instead of policy expectations(Capers, 2018; Levitats, 2023; Levitats et al., 2022)?

Considering many prominent representative bureaucratic studies over 30 years, Capers (2018) observed that much was known about bureaucratic behavior. For example, Capers explained that contrary to rationalist policymaking beliefs, bureaucrats act in ideological ways that deviate significantly from rationalism. In other words, Capers established bureaucratic values as an active mechanism within the policymaking-implementation schematic. None of the PPA rationalists directly stated that their earlier studies gave the impression that policymaking, particularly at the bureaucratic implementation stage, was clinical or an a priori as-is versus enterprise devoid of ideological orientations (Birkland, 2011; Sabatier, 2007). By contrast, researchers such as Bradbury and Kellough (2011), Capers (2018), Catalano and Gatti (2017), and Yun (2020) thoroughly explained the value aspects evident in their works on bureaucrats, thereby identifying gaps in the literature that necessitate more research.

Capers's (2018) study highlights a contemporary controversy contextualized by Levitats (2023). Levitats (2023) made the explicit connection directly associated with bureaucratic praxis and emotional intelligence as responding within a policy environment. Moreover, how did Capers and other highly capable scholars miss documenting this connection? Admittedly, Capers added to the literature by firmly documenting the ideological perspective of representative bureaucrats before suggesting that more must be known. Capers, however, confirmed the study to investigate empirical data, thereby addressing early criticisms by rationalist policy scholars who argued that representative bureaucratic literature lacked empirical depth and associated frameworks. Levitats, understanding Capers's research purpose and delimits, addressed the controversy by conducting a study that focused on the emotional aspects of bureaucratic praxis.

As a result, what remained to be known was how bureaucrats respond emotionally intelligently in perceived policy environments. Nevertheless, rationalist and emotional intelligence scholars may cite empirical or out-of-PPA studies to argue that the studies synthesized herein offer too shallow an analysis to warrant investigation without including their genre or frameworks. To rationalists and other scholars outside of PPA, Capers (2018) established two points: rational-empirical frameworks support representative bureaucratic studies, and values-ideologies raise emotional intelligence issues. For scholars who object to the literature synthesized in this study, however, a thorough study by Levitats (2023) established that the scholars investigate out-of-field rationalist and emotional intelligence literature. Beyond redundancy, this study leveraged

Levitats's study to go forward with what was unknown to add to the PPA literature. This approach was meaningful because, ultimately, what was at stake here was understanding why bureaucrats act emotionally intelligently when there was a clear delineation between what they believe in doing for their constituents and what they do according to the guidelines of public policy of which they are custodians.

Summary and Conclusions

In closing, Chapter 2 of this study presented a summary of the major themes in the literature, reiterated what was known and what remains to be known, and described how the present study fills in a prominent currently uninvestigated gap in the literature observed while completing this synthesis thereby extending the literature before transitioning to Chapter 3: Research Method.

When considering the research question of this study: What are the State of Georgia's educational leaders' emotional experiences as told through their personal stories about implementing controversial student curriculum frameworks and instructional practices based on the State of Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law and equally important question to consider at this summative junction was what themes emerged from the literature review that holds together the entrails of the research question? The emergent themes of this study are organized into two categories: the content and theoretical-conceptual. The formulating content arises from PPA literature considering bureaucrats' role in policy implementation. Many studies were analyzed and synthesized, establishing representative bureaucrats as valid subjects for inquiry. Along the same lines, it has been established that more qualitative narrative

research was necessitated while investigating representative bureaucrats. The narrative of representative bureaucrats was a salient theme holding the elements of the research question together. Still and most meaningful, the literature review calls for the emotional intelligence of these persons to be investigated; the emotional intelligence of representative bureaucrats was the most prevalent theme within this study.

By extension, as stated in Chapter 2: Literature Review, scholars such as Levitats (2023) and Capers (2018) exposed the gap. They defined the opportunity for future research as a study that pursues an understanding of how representative bureaucrats or, in the case of this study, educational leaders respond emotionally intelligently within policy environments in which they disagree. Because of the gap identified during the literature review and, subsequently, the research question crafted to guide the study, Chapter 3 details the research design, strategy, and method necessary to achieve the purpose of the study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this general qualitative study was to explore the emotional impact upon the State of Georgia's educational bureaucrats working in the policy environment created by Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law codified in 2022. Capers (2018) and O'Connor (2013) documented that educational leaders functioned as ideologically informed representative bureaucrats and concluded that more literature was necessary to understand the emotional intelligence-informed responses of said subjects. This chapter highlights the methodology used to investigate the emotional intelligence of representative bureaucrats in contested policy environments that go against the ideological dispositions of the educational leaders vested to administrate the policy implementation. Addressed in this chapter are the participant selection logic, instrumentation of usage, published data collection instrument, procedure for recruitment, data analysis plan, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

This study's research question is as follows: What are the State of Georgia's educational leaders' emotional experiences as told through their personal stories about implementing controversial student curriculum frameworks and instructional practices based on the State of Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law? The central concept of this study was RBT, which was defined as bureaucrats exercising the opportunity to perform in benefactor postures on behalf of clients that share sociopolitical ideological predispositions. The research tradition adopted for this study was a qualitative methodology associated with post-positivist assumptions-human-oriented subjectivity

(Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015). Additionally, as discussed in Chapter 2, Creswell (2013) and Patton (2015) held that this tradition was useful for objective investigation, leveraging the theories developed in related public policy studies with established techniques known to be useful for investigating sociopolitically oriented research questions such as in this study.

In contrast to the positivist-oriented public policy theorist, as expressed in Sabatier's (2007) scholarship, I selected the qualitative tradition for this study to benefit from the numerous post-modern scholarship that has proven useful to explore gaps in the literature and add understanding to sociopolitical human phenomena similar to the representative bureaucratic emotional experience in policy-contested environments, such as was investigated in this study (Anyon, 2014; Brewer, 2021; Davidovitz, 2022; Kingdon, 2003; Lejano et al., 2018).

The research design for this study was a general qualitative design leveraging semi-structured interviews of Georgia's educators who serve minority K-12 students. I chose this design by back planning from similar salient studies (e.g., Bishu & Kennedy, 2020; Caban, 2022; Capers, 2018; Levitats, 2023; Lessard, 2021; Lipsky, 2010; O'Connor, 2013). The semi-structured interview method used in the execution of the qualitative design yielded valuable information on the challenges these leaders face and the strategies they use to navigate this complex landscape. The study's findings highlight the critical role of emotional ideologies at the intersection of public policy and education and emphasize the need for ongoing research in this area. The studies reviewed in Chapter 2 are foundational because they added to the understanding of how bureaucrats

function within the public policy-making and implementation schematic. Also, the NPF theory underpinned this study, which was a useful framework for documenting and analyzing narrative data of persons engaged in public administration practices such as those of the educational leaders examined in this study. NPF's early tradition was grounded in empirical or quantitative design. As discussed in Chapter 2, the NPF research tradition was calling for more qualitative research with which this study aligns.

Moreover, as stated in Chapter 1, the rationale for exploring this topic was to further the work of Levitats (2023), Bishu and Kennedy (2020), Capers (2018), O'Connor (2013), Xu and Flink (2022), and (Aronson, 2020), who examined bureaucratic politics and the policy-related impediments experienced by bureaucrats. By contrast, through a synthesis of these studies, I identified a gap in that no scholar has investigated the emotionally intelligent dispositions of bureaucrats who disagreed ideologically with the policy they were entrusted with implementing. The current study extended existing studies through an in-depth examination of educational bureaucrats' emotional dispositions in adverse policy conditions.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher was as an observer-participant and data analyst (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). In this role, I documented the narratives of educational leaders working within a policy environment that also affects me as an educational leader. Additionally, I coded and made value judgments regarding the meaning of the raw data gleaned from the narrative prose (Miles et al., 2014). Essentially, as an observer-participant who works within the same industry as the participants, I was exposed to and stimulated by the same

educational policy environment I examined (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Thus, I brought an inherent sociopolitical perspective to the research process (Babbie, 2017). I may have experienced many of the emotional experiences reported. My role was to withhold my personal emotional experiences and validate the participants' right to experience the policy dynamics, using a semi-structured interview instrument and systematic coding structure and publishing the results for scrutiny by the greater social science community. Moreover, no power issues or supervisory relationships existed between the participants and me. Consequently, the relationship was free of ethical concerns that could prohibit the accurate collection and reporting of reliable and trustworthy data.

Controlling for Researcher Bias

As acknowledged above, in this qualitative study, I was an instrument of the research process with inherent bias and sociopolitical preconceptions that I brought to the research process in general and, more narrowly, to the interviewing of educational leaders as a veteran educational leader myself (see Babbie, 2017; Burkholder et al., 2020; Ravitch & Carl, 2021; Yin, 2016). I identified myself as Georgia's educational leader to the participants and admitted that I understood the policy stimulus considered during this study (see Yin, 2016). Further, through the disclosure process, I explained that I had not divulged my preconceived notion before, during, or after the interaction, nor was it relevant to my understanding of their perspectives (see Yin, 2016). I also bracketed my role as an observer-participant and data analyst by debriefing myself after every interaction with participants and by keeping a detailed journal guided by a self-reflection rubric (see Appendix E; Burkholder et al., 2020; Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

My aim during the self-reflection debriefing process was to critically self-reflect to expose my political orientation and distance myself from what I thought I knew and discovered during the research process (Babbie, 2017; Burkholder et al., 2020). The research site was my online meeting room in the Zoom platform (<https://zoom.us>), where I had virtual meetings with State of Georgia K-12 school leaders who served majority-minority students. As a career-long educator in Georgia, I may have had a general casual knowledge of some persons who participated as subjects; however, I only included leaders over whom I had no direct supervision or immediate common workspace.

Accounting for Other Ethical Issues

Considering the highly politically contested public policy environment cast by the policy stimulus of this study, I did not share the leaders' real names and schools of service in this study or even the school district in which they serve, grade levels led, race, or gender, thereby protecting the leaders' ability to share their real feelings-emotions about their work in the O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept policy environment. Consequently, I managed the power dynamics between persons of the same rank and profession through professional communication and formal interview procedures. At the same time, as stated above, I withheld my personal bias toward the policy in question; I focused on conversations, commentary, and directions necessary to support the interview questions used to generate the narrative data (Lichtman, 2013; Seideman, 2019). I also ensured that all interviews between the individual subject and me were kept confidential. I did not appraise any other participant, parent, student, or stakeholder regarding the content of an individual interview beyond the anonymous data in this study.

Methodology

Participation Selection Logic

The population under study was Georgia K-12 educational leaders (representative bureaucrats) serving minority students emotionally connected to their student's well-being by advocating for culturally relevant education (Hammond, 2015; Khalifa, 2020). For this study, I used a purposeful sampling strategy, which Udod et al. (2020) also used to examine middle managers' emotional-intelligent responses that led to a more effective workspace. I considered this approach to be the most appropriate method for this study type, as Patton (2015) explained. I selected participants from a population similar to that of Udod et al.'s study, which helped ensure that my results would be accurate and reliable. It is widely understood in qualitative research that sample size depends on when data saturation was reached, meaning enough participants have been included where additional participant data needs to give additional insight into the phenomenon under investigation (Nyanhoka et al., 2022). Like Udod et al., who selected 15 middle managers to get an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under consideration, the selection in this study of 12 to 15 Georgia school leaders serving minority students is justified to get an in-depth understanding of the emotional intelligence of educational leaders leading under policy difference. Further, Patton substantiated the sampling strategy used in this study, explaining that the small sample size fits the logic of a general qualitative design by allowing detailed exploration not offered by the quantitative methodology that generalizes from the sample to the population. The rationale for a sample size of 12 to 15 also aligns with the purpose of the study, understanding that the

ethical, emotional response of educational leaders would have to fall within acceptable ethical standards as monitored by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission.

To support the purposeful sampling strategy of this study, I recruited educational leaders serving in Georgia public schools who met the following inclusion criteria: (a) at least 50% of the student population served by the leader should be a minority other than White (this demographic was documented through the GaDOE's CCRPI website); (b) the leader must not have identified themselves as a proponent of O.C.G.A. 20:11:1; (c) they should have been an educational leader in Georgia for at least three years before being a participant in the study; and (d) they should be in good standing with the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (this demographic information was public knowledge, was checked by me, and was kept private due to the nature of this study as explained below).

The participant recruitment strategy was as follows: I obtained and verified a school leader's demographic information and emails from the GaDOE Public and Public Schools websites (see Appendix D). I generated a recruitment email list of Georgia's educational leaders who served at schools that fit the above criteria. According to the verifiable demographic information, I emailed the educators using their public addresses. I sent email invitations to 50 school leaders who served a student population of at least 50% minority students to participate in this study. The first 12 to 15 to respond were scheduled for an interview.

After the last interview had been conducted, all 50 initial invitees received a thank-you note for their consideration, even if they did not respond or were not asked to

be interviewed. This strategy ensured the confidentiality of those participating (Miles et al., 2014; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Also, the relationship between the sample size of 12 participants from the saturated population of approximately 50 persons was consistent with similar qualitative studies (Annamma, 2018; Caelli & Ray, 2003; Colorafi & Evans, 2016; G. Gray & Jones, 2016; Kahlke & Hon, 2014; Kouamé & Liu, 2021; Udod et al., 2020). As stated in the consent form of this study, the end of the interview constituted the debriefing and exit from the study. I informed participants that the information would be kept in a secure cloud vault for five years. Also, after participating in the study, each participant received a thank-you email. I did not conduct further follow-up, and I encouraged the participants to request the final published dissertation.

Instrumentation

The data collection instruments included a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix A), the Zoom app (with all cameras off and unidentifiable monograms assigned to each participant during one-on-one interviews), an iPhone recording app, a Trint transcription app, a coding protocol (see Appendix C, Table 1, and Figures 1–3), Transana 4.0 (a qualitative coding program), and pCloud, a security storage app. These instrumentation collection methods have been used for their purpose in numerous studies substantiating the trustworthiness of each within social science research (Garcia et al., 2016; Howlett, 2022).

Table 1*Coding Framework Associate Emotional Reactions to Policy Events*

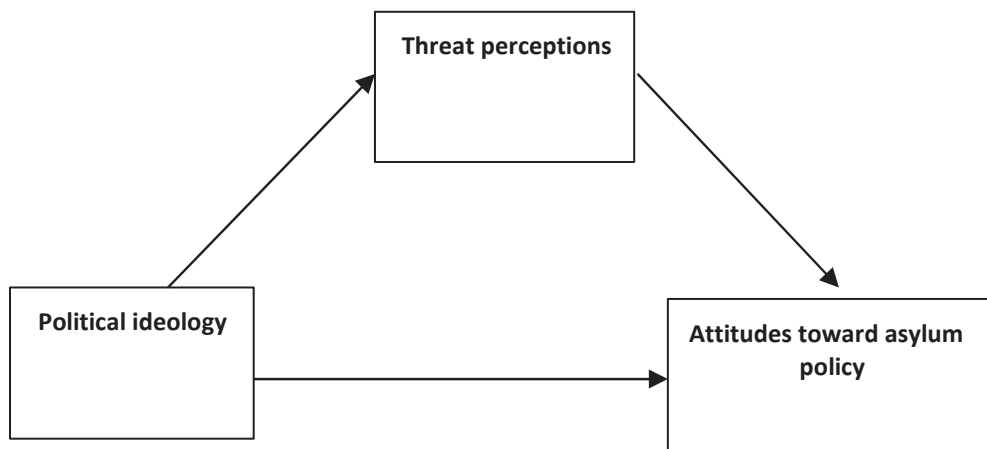
Characterization	Like emotions	Dislike emotions	“Like-for” emotions	“Dislike-for” emotions
Specification in narrative text	A positive feeling about an event	A negative feeling about an event	A positive feeling about an event that was good for someone else	A negative feeling about an event that was undesirable for someone else
Tokens of the emotion as seen in narratives about events	Cheerful, contented, delighted, ecstatic, elated, glad, happy, overjoyed, pleasant, etc.	Angry, depressed, despair, displeased, grieved, miserable, sad, troubled, uneasy, upset, etc.	Pleased-for, happy-for, delighted-for	Sorry-for, compassion, feel-bad, sympathy, etc.
Variable affecting intensity	The degree to which the event was desirable	The degree to which the event was undesirable	The degree the event was desirable for the other(s)	The degree the event was not desirable for the other(s)

Note. Adapted from *The Cognitive Structure of Emotions* (2nd ed.), by A. Ortony, G. L.

Clore, and A. Collins, 2022, Cambridge University Press.

Figure 1

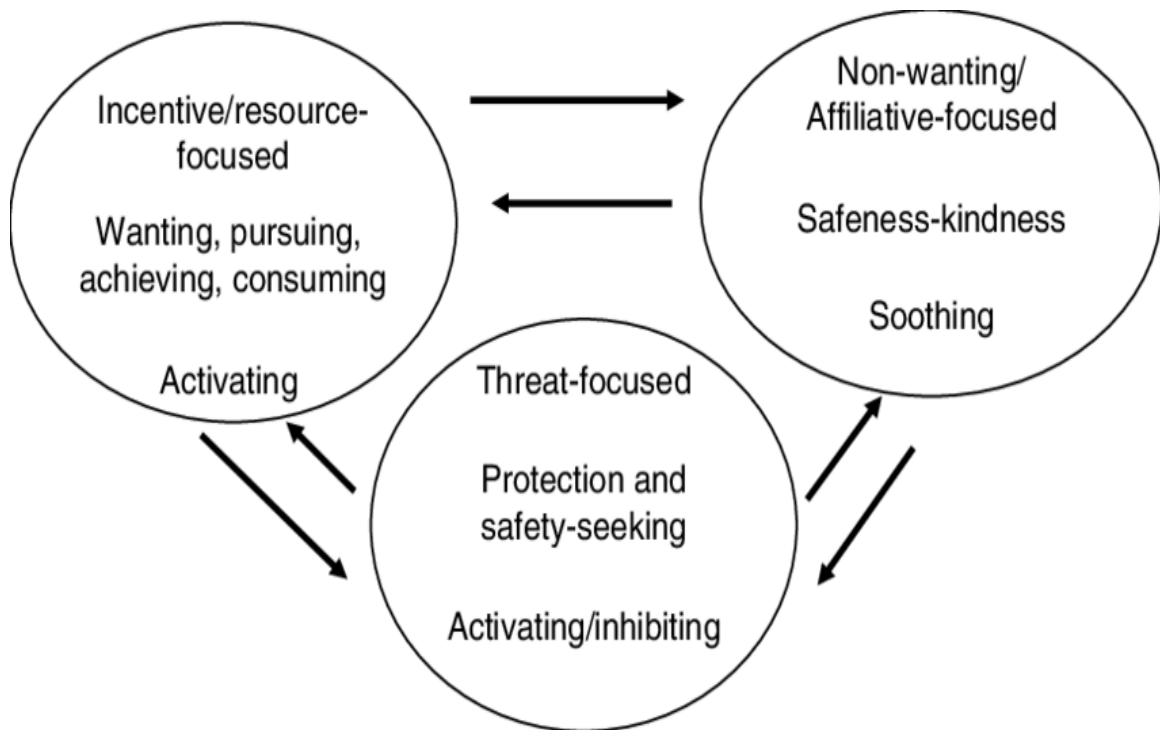
Association of Threat Perception, Ideology, and Attitudes Towards Policy Leverage to Understand and Code Threat



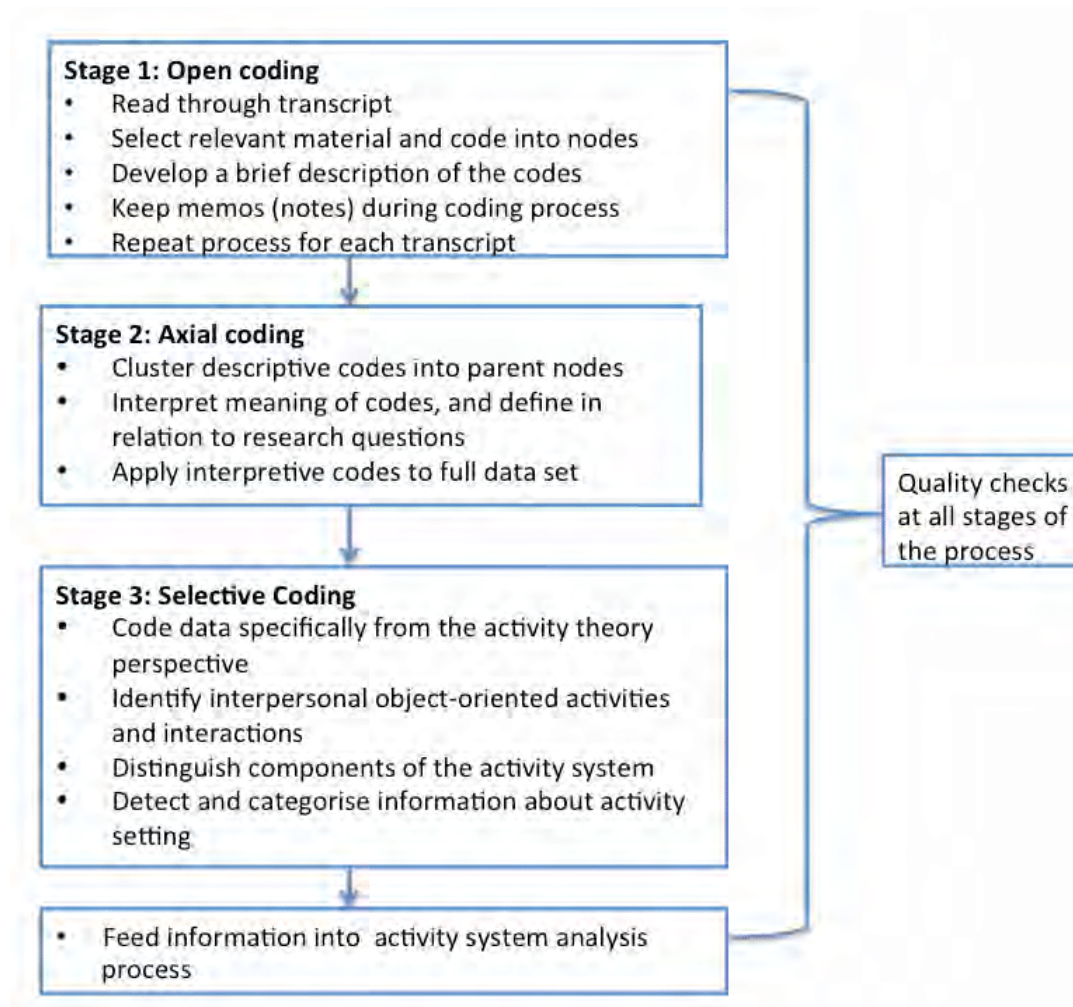
Note. This figure demonstrates the known association between a bureaucrat’s political ideology, their attitudes toward a particular public policy (e.g., Asylum here should be transposed with the State of Georgia’s O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 the “Divisive Concept” law), and the bureaucrat’s perception of that threat. This associative model was used to conceptualize the educational leaders’ feelings associated with the law in question based on their ideologically shared attitudes with their majority-minority student populations based on said law. This conceptualization, along with that in Figure 2, was helpful because Canetti et al. (2016) determined that threat was known to be present resulting from a particular policy implicitly determined in narratives. Adapted from “Threatened or threatening? How ideology shapes asylum seekers’ immigration policy attitudes in Israel and Australia,” D. Canetti, K. Snider, A. Pedersen, and B. Hall, 2016, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 29(4), 583–606, (<https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/few012>).

Figure 2

Emotions Arising in Narratives According to Three System Model: Threat, Driven, and Soothing Systems



Note. This model, along with that conceptualization in Figure 1 of this study, was useful to recognize words in narratives known to be associated with the threat. Adapted from the *Three Systems model*, by Balanced Minds Group, 2023, (<https://balancedminds.com/three-system-model/>).

Figure 3*Data Analysis: Coding Stages of Narrative Analyzation*

Note. Adapted from *Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (4th ed.), by J. Saldana, 2021, Sage.

I used Zoom as the meeting forum (as stated above, all cameras remained off, with participants' chosen monograms in place of their names used to protect the participants' anonymity due to the political nature of the study) and the Trint transcription app to capture participants' responses word-for-word from audio recordings. I coded and analyzed the data using Transana 4.0 qualitative analysis software (Saldana, 2021). Also, Sun et al. (2014) reported that data security has consistently been a major issue in information technology. In response to this vital research nuance, I stored the audio and electronic written materials (emails, human resource evaluation documents, etc.) data files in pCloud. pCloud is known to ensure digital data security with a 256-bit AES method of encryption with an extra layer of file protection specifically for sensitive data collected during this study. I also secured the data in this secure cloud for five years, after which I will destroy it and notify Walden University's IRB department of its destruction. Finally, at the beginning of the interview, as a segue into the interview session, I showed each participant a less than 2-minute video establishing the context of the policy environment under discussion (see Appendix A).

Previously Published Data Collection Instrumentation

I developed the interview questionnaire from a previously published data collection instrument. The rationale for using this published data collection instrumentation rationale was its use of the semi-structured interview guide as the data-collection instrument, similar to this study, and the presence of details regarding who developed the instrument and the date it was published. It also contains an explanation of

the appropriateness of using the instrument in the context of this study and a description of how the validity of the instrument was established.

In their study on the emotional intelligence of middle managers, Udod et al. (2020) used a highly effective data collection instrument that yielded valuable insights previously unknown in the literature. Their semi-structured approach was a great success, prompting the adoption of a similar method for the current investigation on the same topic (see Udod et al., 2020). Moreover, Gates et al. (2018) determined that relying on previously published instrumentation was a reliable method to validate the content validity of current research instrumentation. Given the success of Udod et al.'s study, it seemed appropriate to use a similar method in pursuing my investigation into the emotional intelligence of Georgia's educational leaders practicing the difference between a public policy and a political environment.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The procedure for recruiting and gaining the participation of Georgia's educational leaders, known to lead according to ideological perspectives of Georgia K-12 minority studies, is described in this section. First, I obtained and verified the school leaders' demographic information and emails from the GaDOE public and public school websites. I generated a recruitment email list of Georgia's educational leaders who were serving at schools that fit the above criteria. According to the verifiable demographic information, I emailed the educators at their public addresses. After receiving 50 appropriate responses establishing the potential participants as ideologically predisposed to represent minority students' interests (educational leaders who acknowledged their

disagreement with anti-minority educational policy), I picked 12 persons randomly from this group and scheduled them for interviews (see Udod et al., 2020). If any of the 12 dropped out or were not interested in going further with the study, I planned to choose additional names from the broader 50-person pool until appropriate educational leaders were available to be scheduled for an interview. Moreover, the data collection was through one-on-one private Zoom meetings with the cameras off and participants' identities held in private. I was the only person who collected the data for this study.

Additionally, each interview session lasted less than 60 minutes. I provided a general meeting agenda before each semi-structured interview session (see Appendix A). Considering the inherently political nature of the study and to protect the participants by assuring that they were able to share their real feelings about the policy that set the context of the study, only the person's voice was recorded via Zoom and iPhone directly into the Trint program with the respondent's real names are not used during the interview. I assigned each participant a pseudonym and briefed and debriefed them according to the potential emotional nature of the study. I included ethical support materials as referenced above. I informed the participant that no follow-up interview was necessary. Finally, at the end of the interview, I advised the participants to continue to work closely with their district leadership if any further engagement should need to occur. I sent them a thank-you note for their participation.

Data Analysis Plan

The data analysis plan of this study included listening to recordings and an inductive coding method to organize the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). The research

question for this study focused on understanding the emotional experience of Georgia's educational leaders/representative bureaucrats in contested policy environments. Ravitch (2014) concluded that narrative policy research and subsequent narratives are appropriate for understanding subjects' emotional experiences. By extension, participants' narratives are collected, coded, and analyzed by inventorying them into descriptive themes placed in tables for review by the academic community (Saldana, 2013). Discrete cases can be considered along a spectrum within a typological, open code schematic condensed into categories and subsequent themes and documented within the table (Saldana, 2013). I used the licensed version of Transana 4.0 to code, categorize, and theme the data, as shown in Appendix C and Figures 1, 2, and 3.

I used a systematic coding approach to thoroughly analyze the emotional experiences of educational leaders in Georgia amidst a contested policy environment. The coding steps I followed were inspired by the work of Braun and Clarke (2006) and outlined by Maguire and Delahunt (2017). I began by familiarizing myself with the data in Step 1, and in Step 2, I developed initial codes and a broader categorical set. In Step 3, I searched for themes, and in Step 4, I defined and reviewed the emerging themes. Finally, in Step 5, I produced a comprehensive analysis that has been explained as reliable because of the insight gained by doing the previous steps with fidelity (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017; Saldana, 2021).

Additionally, to enhance my coding framework, I paid particular attention to the structural arc or pattern of emotions that emerged while sharing emotional experiences. By recognizing this arc and heightened emotions, I gained valuable insights into the

intensity of the emotions expressed. As Saldana (2021) explained, this coding framework provides a crucial lens for deriving meaningful insights from the collected data (see Figure 3).

Issues of Trustworthiness

The validity framework helped establish the trustworthiness of this study (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008; Lichtman, 2013; Yin, 2016). Validity is the sameness between the researcher's data and the subjects' reported experience (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008; Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Validity standards leveraged in this study are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). I used data triangulation of the educational leader's narratives to ensure multiple perspectives regarding subjects' emotional experience while leading within the policy environment of the State of Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law.

Credibility

To ensure credibility, I used the triangulation of narratives via purposeful sampling of Georgia's educational leaders leading in K-12 educational environments serving minority students (Ravitch & Carl, 2019). Each subject was valued for their perspective within the policy environment. By comparison of these differentiating perspectives, this study ensured credibility through the description and content-rich internal dynamics across the narratives documented here (see Miles et al., 2014). Additionally, achieving credibility was synonymous with internal validity (see Ravitch & Carl, 2019).

Also, this study leveraged two questions to ensure internal validity: How do the methods of this study align with my guiding research question? How do I understand and engage with patterns I see in the data? (see Ravitch & Carl, 2019). As explained above, credibility was vested in understanding educational leaders' emotional experiences as individuals within a group, which was the unit of analysis necessitated by the study's research question, answering the first salient credibility question. Similarly, collecting the narratives from individual subjects and then coding, categorizing, theming, and publishing the results in Chapter 4 (see Table 3) of this study answered the second salient question, thereby ensuring internal validity/credibility(see Garvey & Jones, 2021; Kouamé & Liu, 2021; Ravitch & Carl, 2021; Sandelowski, 2000).

Transferability

I ensured the transferability of this study by leveraging the literature to discern public policy theory similar to the unit of analysis of this study (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). As established in Chapter 2, educational leaders are considered representative bureaucrats documented in the literature to behave in specific ways within the public policy and administration environment (Aronson, 2020; Bennett, 2012; Boyles, 2000; Brinia et al., 2014; F. C. Fowler, 2013; Grissom et al., 2015; Grosland & Roberts, 2021; Miller et al., 2022; Wang, 2021). This study aimed to fill a gap in the academy's understanding of this phenomenon and organized a research question to support this inquiry. This study is transferable to a greater theoretical understanding of the phenomena. Ultimately, Capers (2018), Levitats (2023), O'Connor (2013), and Williams and Kuzma (2022) determined that more needed to be understood about bureaucrats' qualitative experiences and that

studies that invest in the said inquiry are value-transferable within the public policy and administrative context.

Dependability

I achieved dependability within this study by evaluative validity or analyzing the language used to analyze and explain the narratives documented (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). By situating this study within the greater theoretical interpretations of key NPF studies as examined and synthesized in Chapter 2 of this study, dependability was ensured by leveraging progenitive studies focusing on similar public policy phenomena. Similarly, scholars such as G. Gray and Jones (2016) determined that the NPF was useful for ensuring dependability because it allows research to benefit from an established framework that has been documented to present trustworthy and reliable content-rich public policy data.

Confirmability

I established confirmability or the quantitative equivalent of objectivity in this study by challenging myself with the following question: How did I suspend my personal bias, challenge my thinking, and remain a curious contributing member of the public policy research community? (see Ravitch & Carl, 2021) To meet the standard posed by this inquiry, I analyzed and synthesized the relevant public administration literature, staying consistent with the theories, concepts, and thesis of the related ongoing academic conversation to which this study contributed (see Ravitch & Carl, 2021). By extension, as cited in Chapter 2, researchers have recommended thinking within and yet beyond some of the accepted or rejected reasoning from which this study has arisen. Also, I kept

detailed self-reflection notes presented using a rubric to support the consistency of data during personal study and reflection (see Appendix E; Lichtman, 2013; Miles et al., 2014; Ravitch & Carl, 2021; Saldana, 2021).

Ethical Procedures

This study adhered to the highest ethical standards of social science research; all decision agreements to gain access to The State of Georgia K-12 education leaders were consistent with the policies of Walden University and public access to state employees. All participants were adults who spoke on their behalf rather than on behalf of the State of Georgia or their local school districts. The experiences of anonymous participants did not affect them or their schools directly or indirectly. There was minimal physical or psychological risk to the participants. The participants shared their emotionally intelligent experiences for leading in educational environments while only sometimes agreeing with the State of Georgia policy.

Although the participants might not have agreed with the policy, I assumed that ethical state employees adhere to the policy by doing the job to which they are appointed regardless of the personal feelings they may hold and share while participating in the study. The participants were fully informed volunteers acting within the parameters of transparent academic research. I asked participants interview questions after taping their narratives. I informed the participants that the interview was being taped and that the taping process was halted. Before the interview session, the participants signed individual consent forms from the Walden University research website, understanding they could withdraw from participation at any point within this research process. I kept the data

collected in a secured cloud site. Data were only collected after all Walden University IRB protocols had been met and permissions granted (IRB approval no. 08-30-23-0294489). After being kept in an encrypted cloud vault for seven years, I will destroy all transcripts and notes post-publication of this study. I am the only individual with access to the data kept in the secure cloud before the destruction date.

Additionally, due to the political nature of the research and the participants' proximity to the contested policy environment, the participants remained anonymous and were identified by a pseudonym. In this study, I examined educators sharing their experiences within an educational setting but did not consider data regarding students or student learning. This study was scripted to understand adult ethical behavior that does not directly or explicitly affect children (it was understood that disagreeing with does not mean disregarding a policy). Also, I conducted the interviews via Zoom after work hours and did not interfere with the State of Georgia or district-paid time. Additionally, I removed any reference to students, other persons' names, or school names (other than the "student(s)," "school," "district," "Mr." or "Ms." etc.) in the data.

I served as an educator in one of the districts where some of the research participants served. The district is, however, a large urban district with over 2,000 employees. Participants work within a different building or department than the researcher. There were no power relationships that affected the outcome of this study.

Summary

The focus of this study was the emotional experience of educational leaders in a particular policy environment. This chapter included the rationale for the study, the role

of the researcher, participation selection logic, the instrumentation-data collection tools, data collection as an appropriate method for this study, the data analysis plan, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures for ensuring the confidentiality of the participants and trust within the academic community. All activities post-submission of the methodology of this study were directly aligned with Walden University's IRB guidelines and Post-Proposal Check-in rubric. Chapter 4 of this study contains the results of the data analysis and transitions to Chapter 5, the interpretation of the findings.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this general qualitative study was to explore the emotional impact upon the State of Georgia's educational bureaucrats working in the policy environment created by Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law codified in 2022. The reason for exploring this topic was to further the work of O'Connor (2013), Meier et al. (2019), Capers (2018), Xu and Flink (2022), Aronson (2020), and Aronson et al. (2016) who examined bureaucratic politics and the policy-related impediments experienced by bureaucrats. Through semi-structured interviews, I sought to gain insight into how such leaders cope with the emotionally demanding work environment created by the O.C.G.A.20:11:1 law or the so-called Divisive Concept legislation of the State of Georgia formally enacted in January 2022 (see Kobakhidze et al., 2021; Nyanchoka et al., 2019; Roberts, 2021; Seideman, 2019).

As reviewed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, three salient components regarding RBT emerged from mostly quantitative research: public policy affects bureaucratic actions, and frequently, post-policy enactments by bureaucracies are known to be ideologically informed if not indifferent to the ideological intent of the drafting legislators (Ali, 2019; Bradbury & Kellough, 2011; Grissom et al., 2015; Kennedy, 2014; Meier, 1975; Schröter, 2019; Webeck & Lee, 2022; Wilson, 1989; Wright, 2022; Xu & Flink, 2022). Additionally, bureaucrats who are known to have a similar ideological disposition to those of their clients enact policies in representative ways understood to be amenable to their clients' ideological desires (Capers, 2018; Lipsky, 2010; Marvel & Resh, 2015). Robinson and Simonton (2019) elaborated on the connection between

public policy outcomes and the State of Georgia's educational K-12 bureaucratic praxis. The information gained from the literature review informed the present investigation concerning the highly politicalized public policy environment that shaped the now-historical APS cheating scandal. During my review of the literature, I noticed that the emotional experiences of educational leaders- bureaucrats who operate in contested public policy environments while working on behalf of their clients and students who have different ideological expectations than those supposed by the policymakers were lacking in the literature.

Considering the gap in the literature, rationalist public policy theorists, as cited earlier in this study, could argue that excluding qualitative narrative analysis of educational leaders serving in politically contested environments, such as that of Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20:11:2 law, from the study would hold intact more pragmatic and known bureaucratic theoretics. The lack of further knowledge about the specific persons serving as bureaucrats, however, leaves the RBT qualitatively shallow and underdeveloped. In other words, the quantitative RBT literature helped understand what representative bureaucrats are statistically apt to do in a politically charged environment. More knowledge about who the bureaucrats are and how they are in the same charged environment is needed. Capers (2018) and other scholars specifically left room for qualitative research in this regard, even if the scholars do not explicitly suggest a study of this type. Consequently, it was important to consider not only the quantitative data but also the personal experiences of those affected by the policy. By incorporating former RBT quantitative research and leveraging qualitative methodology, this study yielded a

deeper understanding of the ideological responses among representative bureaucrats and how policy differences influence them.

Research Question

The research question used to examine Georgia's educational representative bureaucratic conceptualization was as follows: What are the State of Georgia's educational leaders' emotional experiences as told through their personal stories about implementing controversial student curriculum frameworks and instructional practices based on the State of Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law? Ultimately, the primary focus was to leverage and add to existing quantitative RBT research to understand what the numbers could not inform the experiences of K-2 educational leaders leading majority-minority students in a policy environment that poses a barrier against the curriculum known to support said students

Chapter Organization

To fully understand the results presented in Chapter 5, a comprehensive understanding of the study's background, demographics, and data collection procedures is essential. Also, Chapter 4 includes a detailed summary of the study's results, methods of data analysis-coding framework, and evidence of trustworthiness. Furthermore, this chapter highlights the outcomes that correspond to the research question, thereby emphasizing an implicit outlining of the main points within the study's context.

Setting

Physical Setting

The setting of this study comprised two inextricable contexts, physical and sociopolitical context, to support a general qualitative study. The physical setting was the Zoom virtual meeting platform after school hours, where 12 State of Georgia K-12 educational leaders determined to be leading in public schools whose student bodies are majority-minority population (greater than 51%) participated in one-on-one confidential semi-structured interviews. The physical setting was appropriate and helpful to the project for several reasons. First, in agreement with the university's IRB, the confidentiality of the participants was affirmatively maintained due to the independence of the individual interviews. Also, the interview meeting time of day was after work hours, allowing the educators to be available without necessitating local school district approval. It was observed that the participants acknowledged the ability to be more transparent away from the worksite due to the political implications associated with the study. Further, with the participants' cameras off and names changed, Zoom allowed for confidential recording within the physical space, leading to more effective coding of transcription, as explained in the Data Analysis section of this chapter.

Sociopolitical Setting

Concerning this study's sociopolitical setting, scholars such as Werts and Brewer (2015), Capers (2019), and many other researchers cited in this study asserted that the political-experiential nature of representative bureaucrats during policy implementations is salient and necessitates further study. As established in Chapter 2 of this study, the

research question focused on the experiences of representative bureaucrats and K-12 educational leaders serving in a politically contested public policy environment. Several research has asserted that RBT, the theory from which this study emerged and which this study sought to enlarge, is a public policy theory that allowed greater insight to be gained into how educational leaders react downstream to upstream policymakers' output (Capers, 2018; Carroll, 2017; Marvel & Resh, 2015; Meier, 1975; Webeck & Lee, 2022). In short, this study's setting was a highly politically charged context understood to be entered into by individual ideologically predispositioned bureaucrats who brought to the interviews their experiences, interpretations, and feelings, leading to investigable data arising within the study's sociopolitical setting. Ultimately, during the data-gathering phase of this study, all 12 participants acknowledged their awareness of the political events taking place because of the public policy generated environment established by Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20:11:1 Divisive Concept law. The sociopolitical setting greatly reflected the sentiments shared by the participants.

Demographics

The participant demographics were appropriate to support the unit of analysis warranted by the study's research question: What are the State of Georgia's educational leaders' emotional experiences as told through their personal stories about implementing controversial student curriculum frameworks and instructional practices based on the State of Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law? Moreover, the participant demographic was Georgia's educational leaders serving a majority of K-12 minority students. The ratio of minority students to majority students required for a participant to

be eligible for inclusion into the pool was varied through the State of GaDOE Career and College Readiness website, providing relevant and publicly available demographic data on all State of Georgia K-12 schools (see Table 2). In addition to the 50% plus minority demographic necessitated, the participating leaders were accepted if they had three years or more educational leadership experience to ensure there existed an acceptable experiential educational environment knowledge on which inquiry by the study's research question depended (Rolfe, 2006).

Table 2

Participant's Relevant Demographics

Participant's role at the time of the interview	K-12 school level	Total no. of students	% of minority students	Years of education leadership experience
Principal	Middle	1,303	98.8	10
Principal	Middle	1,193	81.6	12
Principal	High	260	100	22
Assistant principal	Middle	851	96.9	12
Principal	Elementary	502	99.2	15
Assistant principal	High	260	100	7
Program administrator	Middle	1,705	69.92	5
Assistant principal	High	544	98.2	20
Principal	Elementary	539	99.7	28
Assistant principal	Elementary	539	99.7	5
Assistant principal	High	1,594	86.2	10
Principal	High	550	100	14
Dean of Students	High	550	100	11
Principal	High	2,150	99.1	21

Note. The demographic information was verified for accuracy through the Georgia

Department of Education Career and College Readiness webpage.

Data Collection

The Walden University IRB approved the data collection plan constructed and reported in Chapter 3 of this study before the data collection began. The population under

study was Georgia K-12 educational leaders (representative bureaucrats) serving minority students emotionally connected to their student's well-being by advocating for said students in a contesting public policy environment (see Andersen, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2003; Webeck & Lee, 2022). The phenomenon under consideration justified the selection of 12 Georgia school leaders serving minority students to get an in-depth understanding of the emotional intelligence of educational leaders leading under policy differences. The rationale for a sample size of 12 aligned with the study done by Udod et al. (2020), who examined middle managers' emotional-intelligent responses that led to a more effective workspace. I considered this sample size the most appropriate method for this study type, as Patton (2015) explained. Leveraging the sample mentioned earlier size, I randomly selected 12 participants from a responding population of 50 responding Georgia's educational leaders who met the following criteria:

- At least 50% of the student population served by the leader had to be a minority other than White (as documented through the GaDOE's CCRPI website).
- The participant had to be an educational leader in Georgia for at least three years before being a participant in the study.
- They had to be in good standing with the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (this demographic was public knowledge, was checked by me, and was kept private due to the nature of this study, as explained below).

All 12 individual interviews occurred after school hours via Zoom with the assumption that each of the participants was in a private space of their choosing, where

their confidentiality remained unadulterated. Each interview lasted less than 60 minutes, and the interview data collection spanning over four weeks. Further, as agreed upon in the IRB application for approval of the study's data collection, I recorded the semi-structured interviews on the Zoom platform and the Trint app on my iPhone. I stored all digital information in a secure cloud vault to which only I have access. The data collection process was consistent with the original plan presented in Chapter 3 and approved by the IRB. Ultimately, the only unusual circumstance encountered was the participants' willingness to be interviewed via Zoom. I observed that if the interviews had been conducted in a face-to-face venue, as the educational leaders mostly indicated, participating in the data collection phase of the study would have been a challenge for the leaders.

Data Analysis

Report the Coding Process

The emotional experiences of Georgia's educational leaders in a hotly contested policy environment were subjected to a systematic data analysis using a coding framework based on the work of Saldana (2021) and Braun and Clarke (2022), as summarized by Maguire and Delahunt (2017). I employed several coding steps, which included becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, developing a grander categorical set, conducting a search for themes, reviewing and defining arising themes, and finally, writing up the analysis (Saldana, 2021; see Figure 3). An additional step not considered in Chapter 3 was the use of proactive inductive coding analysis (PICA) arising from Saldana's (2021) coding scholarship; PICA depends heavily upon the

applicable literature to leverage a more coherent excavation of narrative data gathered from semi-structured interviews of demographical homogenous participants. In other words, the additional PICA step of leveraging known knowledge derived from the literature allowed me to develop a coherent bridge between the theoretical literature and the language in the participants' transcripts. In consideration, two themes emerged from the above steps, moving from inductive to specific, and are described below.

Description of the Two Code Categories

The following is a description of the coding schemes used to analyze the study's data (see Table 1, Figures 1 and 2). The first coding scheme to arise from literature and seen in the educational leaders' narratives was Georgia's O.C.G.A. Divisive Concept law in the context of threat rigidity response theory, which provides that educators known to serve in times of high policy accountability like the sociopolitical environment of the Divisive Concept environment experience the environment to some degree as a threat (Brezicha et al., 2022). By extension, though not explicitly stated in Brezicha et al.'s (2022) educational policy study, when persons agree with a policy, the notion of policy accountability and the associated implications means that all policy stakeholders vis-à-vis the educational leaders of this study could be under threat. This theoretical proposition is significant for this study because the narratives were coded-themed along a scale of 0 (*no threat*) to 10 (*the worst possible threat known to arise*) in the narratives as words associated with those in Figure 2 (Canetti et al., 2016). The words leveraged to identify the threat present were correlated with the educators' words observed in the narrative bodies. Additionally, beyond the use of direct words within the body of the narratives,

Roy (2019), studying the need for psychological safety in the K-12 school workplace, reported the proactive behaviors that are thought to correlate with the threat rigidity response theory explained above, giving rise to recognizable data-words within the narratives leading to the expressible coding-theming matrix listed in Table 1 and Figure 1. Additionally, this conceptualization was helpful because Canetti et al. (2016) determined that a particular policy implicitly determined in narratives, presenting a threat.

The second coding schematic allowed me to document foundational emotions known to be experienced by representative bureaucrats. During my analysis of the study's data, the use of the associated emotional reaction to events model (Ortony et al., 2022; see Table 1) proved to be a valuable a priori schema. This model enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of the emotional experiences of educators in response to the event, ranging from positive emotions like joy to negative emotions such as distress.

I first analyzed the narrative on two different scales above and then charted the data and subsequently compared the data from the participants to determine whether there was a correlation between a person's perception of an event as a threat and their feeling of the event as joyous or not (Bigham, 2023). Although this study was not quantitative in intent, the apparent consistent correlation between the two variable scales (threat and like/dislike scales), qualitatively observed, indicates that this study has a high degree of dependability, as pointed out in the Dependability section of this chapter. Also, beyond this research, more needs to be known about the emotional disposition of educational leaders serving in contested policy environments.

Considering Discrepancies

I ensured the trustworthiness of the data by relying heavily on literature and theories, which allowed me to benefit from previous successful studies. Additionally, the coding schema used was appropriate, which leaves room for future investigations into the analyzed data. However, I noticed a minor discrepancy in the data, which the study should have accounted for. Therefore, a question arises regarding whether qualitative descriptive factors are enough to provide clarity on the nature of experiential responses to the Divisive Concept of law. By extension, the data imply that there is room for future quantitative research testing for empirical differences noticed in the data. Ultimately, even with implicit discrepancy observed in the data, this study contains a valid-triangulated analysis of the feelings of educational leaders serving in contested policy environments.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

I ensured the trustworthiness of the study through the implementation of a validity framework that encompasses credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability standards (see Lichtman, 2013; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). The primary objective of the framework was to uphold and promote consistency and standardization in the data collected by researchers as compared to the data collected by other public policy scholars who were investigating similar phenomena to the unit analysis that was embedded within the research question of this study (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Fambrough & Kaye-Hart, 2008; Fox et al., n.d.; K. Gray & Wegner, 2011; Grosland & Roberts, 2021; Horberg et al., 2011; Kouamé & Liu, 2021; Lazarus, 1991; Levitats et al., 2019; Ortony et al., 2022;

Wang, 2021). Additionally, the framework included consideration of the experiences reported by the subjects, which served to establish coherence and uniformity in the research findings. These efforts aimed to enhance the quality and reliability of the research outcomes (Caelli & Ray, 2003; Colorafi & Evans, 2016; Creswell, 2013; Garvey & Jones, 2021; Kerrigan & Johnson, 2019; Kobakhidze et al., 2021; Lichtman, 2013; Maxwell, 2013; Nyanchooka et al., 2019; Ravitch & Carl, 2021; Roberts, 2020; Rolfe, 2006; Sandelowski, 2000; Yin, 2016). To achieve this goal, I used the technique of data triangulation of educational leaders' narratives, including comparing the narratives to known bureaucratic emotional responses found in public policy literature discussed in Chapter 2 to provide multiple perspectives on the emotional experience of leading within the public policy environment constituted with the codification of the state of Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law (Annamma, 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Craig et al., 2021; Kerrigan & Johnson, 2019; Nyanchooka et al., 2019; Rolfe, 2006; Toolis & Hammack, 2015). Through this approach, my goal for this study was to provide an all-encompassing and precise understanding of the subject matter.

Credibility

Many qualitative methodologists have observed that qualitative research is more credible when it is not conducted in a vacuum but in consideration of similar studies under the direction of scholars who have investigated similar phenomena (Bansal et al., 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Craig et al., 2021; Garvey & Jones, 2021; Kerrigan & Johnson, 2019; Kobakhidze et al., 2021; Ravitch & Carl, 2021; Rolfe, 2006; Sandelowski, 2000; Toolis & Hammack, 2015). This study leveraged this broad yet

substantive presupposition and triangulated the collected data within itself and the results reported by similar studies. My objective in this study was to ensure that all methods employed were consistent with the guiding research question while also comprehending and engaging with the patterns observed in the data (see Braun & Clarke, 2006; Craig et al., 2021; Creswell, 2013; Kahlke & Hon, 2014; Sandelowski, 2000). My primary focus was exploring the emotional experiences of educational leaders as individuals within a group, which was the unit of analysis required to address the research question at hand (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Rogers-Ard & Knaus, 2021; Trujillo et al., 2021; Wang, 2021). I collected data through narratives obtained from individual subjects and then conducted a meticulous process of coding, categorizing, theming, and presenting the findings in Chapter 4 (see Table 3) of this study (Brewer, 2021; Dematthews, 2018; G. Gray & Jones, 2016; O'Connor et al., 2020; Saldana, 2021; Shanahan et al., 2011). These efforts assisted in addressing both salient credibility questions and establishing the internal validity of the study.

Transferability

The following is a description of how transferability was achieved in this study. The findings from this study are highly transferable across various social science research areas, especially in the field of public policy and K-12 educational policy (Andersen, 2017; Apple, 2019; Baltodano, 2017; Bishu & Kennedy, 2020; Capers, 2018; Craig et al., 2021; Creswell, 2013; Ford et al., 2020; Garvey & Jones, 2021; R. B. Johnson & Christensen, 2020; Knapp, 2017; Kouamé & Liu, 2021; Lichtman, 2013; Marvel & Resh, 2015; Maxwell, 2013; O'Connor et al., 2020; Rolfe, 2006). Transferability can be

attributed to the study's extensive reliance on theoretical and conceptual foundations that were thoroughly examined and discussed in the literature review, which revealed a significant gap addressed in the current study (see Gates et al., 2018; Rolfe, 2006). The study's outcomes will contribute substantially to the advancement of related public policy theories, as presented in Chapter 5. Additionally, I identified areas that require further exploration, ensuring that the connectivity between past, present, and future research has been carefully considered. Overall, this remarkable level of transferability has been achieved in the current study by effectively leveraging the knowledge.

Dependability

I attained dependability within the study through evaluative validity, or the analysis of the language used to document and explain the narratives (see Ravitch & Carl, 2021). By situating the study within the theoretical interpretations of key NPF studies as examined and synthesized in Chapter 2, dependability was achieved by leveraging progenitive studies focusing on similar public policy phenomena. Similarly, scholars such as G. Gray and Jones (2016) determined that the NPF was useful for ensuring dependability because it includes an established framework for obtaining trustworthy and reliable content-rich public policy data.

Confirmability

Similar to dependability, I attained confirmability within this study through evaluative validity, or the analysis of the language used to document and explain the narratives (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Contextualizing this study within the theoretical interpretations of key NPF studies, as examined and synthesized in Chapter 2, helped

achieve confirmability by leveraging progenitive studies focusing on similar public policy phenomena. Similarly, scholars such as G. Gray and Jones (2016) determined that the NPF was useful for ensuring confirmability because it provides an established framework that presents trustworthy and reliable content-rich public policy data.

Results

Research Question

The research question for this study arose out of the need to understand what accounted for the proactive response while serving in contested policy environments. Previous representative theory research suggested that a correlation exists between how a bureaucrat felt about a policy and how their clients felt about the same policy. From a qualitative inference, however, the correlation between how educators and their clients felt was mostly an assumptive presupposition and largely under-investigated. According to the necessity of the research question above, I gathered, analyzed, and displayed the narrative data from semi-structured interviews and subsequently arrived at interesting and informative findings.

The research question of this study was as follows: What are the State of Georgia's educational leaders' emotional experiences as told through their personal stories about implementing controversial student curriculum frameworks and instructional practices based on the State of Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law? The need for this research arose from the desire to understand the emotional responses of these leaders in contested policy environments, thereby signaling appropriate praxis for their students. Previous research suggested a correlation between

the feelings of bureaucrats about a policy and how their clients felt about the same policy. This correlation was, however, mostly an assumptive presupposition and needed to be thoroughly investigated. Addressing this gap in knowledge, I gathered and analyzed narrative data from semi-structured interviews. The findings were interesting and informative, revealing the emotional experiences of educational leaders in the State of Georgia as they navigated this controversial policy landscape.

Present the Data Supporting the Research Question

Based on my research, I discovered two categories of findings. The results of this study can be found in Table 3).

Table 3*Narrative Results From the Semi-structured Interviews of Georgia's Education Leaders Serving Majority Minority Students*

Descriptor for the pattern observed in the participant's responses	Profile of the descriptor as observed in narrative data	No. of participants (<i>N</i> = 12) who registered a response coded in category	Example of data from the narratives (Participants' Pseudonyms are used to protect confidentiality)
Dislike	It is usually accompanied by withdrawal from or avoidance of the objectionable stimulus (an aversion reaction).	12	The divide [created by the policy] takes place when we talk about poverty levels because the system that our students are forced to live in, the system that they are forced to live ~Mr. Duncan
Perceived as a threat	The conscious or unconscious estimation that something or someone is dangerous - is a basic mental faculty. Political science has long acknowledged that perceived danger can motivate politically relevant behavior and attitudes	12	For too many years, people [the persons including policymakers assumed to belittle the teaching profession] felt like anyone could be an educator. But as an educator, I can't run a law firm. I can't become CEO after I retire from education just because, well, I was a leader in the school system.... conversation to say that this isn't about divisiveness. ~Dr. Rodriguez
Known emotional defense responses to threat and dislike	Profile of the descriptive as observed in narrative data	No. of participants (<i>N</i> = 12) who registered a response coded in category	Example from the narrative set
Suppression	The situation in which important and relevant facts and conclusions that are in the public interest to be disclosed are concealed or withheld from the public domain.	4	We just don't make it an issue...our parents are too busy [to care]...so we don't [go] down that[road] ~Mr. Curtis
Intellectualization	An emphasized focus on facts, logic, and abstract reasoning allows a person to assert control over and reduce unpleasant emotions associated with internal or external events.	12	How do you deal with that? Is it [the "Divisive Concept" law] an innocent academic or humanitarian issue...? Or [political] manipulated by a political domain or social-political construct by the government or a person [in power to make policy] ...? Who was in on all of this at that time [in the history of the U.S., it is taken for granted the county's genesis is rooted in rebellion] and wanted to overthrow...? The fact is somebody has a different viewpoint. ~Dr. Maxwell
Displacement	An unconscious defense mechanism whereby the mind substitutes either a new aim or a new object for things felt in their original form to be dangerous or unacceptable.	4	We promote inclusion and equity and access and diversity. So, we don't [experience a direct effect from the "Divisive Concept" law]. ... There are no events or experiences that we were not able to put on going against somebody's culture or who they are. We support it [to the degree that it does not immediately directly affect us-our school]. ~Dr. Lamont

Known emotional defense responses to threat and dislike	Profile of the descriptive as observed in narrative data	No. of participants (<i>N</i> = 12) who registered a response coded in category	Example from the narrative set
Devaluation of the other-thing	It's used when a person characterizes themselves, an object, or another person as completely flawed, worthless, or as having exaggerated negative qualities.	10	Considering the policymakers who historically have made policy without regard to equality or equity now making the Divisive Concept law prosed to provide equity for all So why do they change so much? ~Dr. Angus
Idealization of other-thing	It's used when a person characterizes themselves, an object, or another person as mostly intake, or as having exaggerated positive qualities.	2	It is a barrier. But we can't be concerned with it...we just teacher the standards...I actually think it is a good thing... ~Dr. Adams
Passive-aggression	Is a pattern of indirectly expressing negative feelings instead of openly addressing them.	12	They hold these students to this code-switching, and they punish and diminish and demean them. [Faced with policy environments like that of the "Divisive Concept" law] ~Dr. McFarland
Rationalization	An apparently logical reasons are given to justify unacceptable behavior that is motivated by unconscious instinctual impulses.	6	Most of our kids come so far behind that they are not concerned or affected by the "Divisive Concepts." You want to teach the curriculum every day... It's not easy, but this is work that you send up for. ~Dr. Curtis

Note. This two-part table combines the experiential threat-dislike and subsequent emotionally driven behavioral results of Georgia's educational leaders serving majority minority K-12 students in the contested public policy environment of O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 "Divisive Concept" Law. Adapted from "The Hierarchy of Defense Mechanisms: Assessing Defensive Functioning with the Defense Mechanisms Rating Scales Q-Sort," by M. Di Giuseppe and J. C. Perry, 2021, *The Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, (<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.718440>).

The first category is related to the emotions experienced by the participants, as observed using two informative, emotional categories: like-dislike and perceived threat (Berkovich & Eyal, 2015; Côté & Miners, 2006; Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021; Fambrough & Kaye-Hart, 2008; Grosland & Roberts, 2021; Horberg et al., 2011; Kouamé & Liu, 2021; Levitats et al., 2019; Ortony, 2022; Ortony et al., 2022; Wang, 2021). The second category of findings is related to the subsequent emotional practices observed to follow the primary emotions of feeling threatened and disliking the effects of the policy outcome. These results are important in understanding the impact of policies on individuals and their emotions and can help inform future decision-making processes.

In the narratives, the educational bureaucratic leaders experienced the Divisive Concept of law as a threat. Most interesting was the associated feelings of confidence. All of the leaders used words like “barrier” or “harm to ‘our’ children, along with voice intonation that signaled their ability to navigate the policy environment despite the threat. The leaders often exhibited a sense of confidence that was accompanied by a perceived need to justify future outcomes. Although in this inquiry, I did not delve deeply into this particular aspect, it is thought-provoking for future researchers to contemplate how leaders who perceive a given policy as a challenge also feel compelled to demonstrate their ability to manage the situation efficiently.

The second category of emotions was along the like-dislike spectrum. The participants’ responses to the contested policy were characterized by varying levels of aversion, which manifested upon perceived threat. Understanding the findings through RBT, the major conceptual lens of this study, shows that dislike is assumed to be

associated with their clients' dislike of the same policy. Future quantitative research is expected to validate the notion that all participants harbor a shared dislike for the policy, as evidenced by the absence of positive responses in their narratives. These findings constitute a valuable contribution to the discourse on policy evaluation and serve as a foundation for further inquiry into the potential impact of perceived threats on individuals' attitudes toward contentious policies.

The findings showed that various kinds of forward progress-proactive behaviors follow feelings of threat and dislike. Levitats (2023) documented that those representative bureaucrats displayed emotional intelligence through specific practices thought by the bureaucrats to be beneficial to their clients. In other words, when bureaucrats have emotional responses to policy environments, they subsequently engage in particular behaviors to counter the perceived threat occurring because of the environment. Capers (2018) quantitatively documented bureaucrats' active responses operating in policy environments. These studies helped understand the responses as specific strategies of praxis to which the participants of this study engaged as a response to the policy being a threat or a disliked barrier occurring within said policy environment. For example, one participant reported participating in code-switching behaviors when in the presence of persons whom they perceived to have an affinity for the Divisive Concept policy (Di Giuseppe & Perry, 2021; Hernández, 2022). Code-switching is a practice of projecting one's values and self-hood based on the perceived values external to oneself over and above those values of self-held intrinsically (Hernández, 2022). Code-switching, as documented in the current study, is a practice strategy that is a passive-aggressive

response to the Divisive Concept of law, feeling threatened or disliked (see Brezicha et al., 2022; N. J. Johnson & Klee, 2007). This finding is salient in that all of the participants had shared explicit and implicit code-switching strategies because of their feelings of threat and dislike.

An additional emotional practice resulting from the experience of the policy as a threat and dislike was intellectualizing or educating oneself about the law and subsequently creating a self-acceptable plan to achieve one's value-centered goals. A good example from the participants' narrative was Dr. Malcom's explanation of her understanding of why an educator from another district had been terminated because of the law. Dr. Malcom, clearly threatened by the ramifications of breaching the law, was able to articulate the nuances that dictated the terminated teacher's fate. With a personal understanding of the law and its parameters, Dr. Malcom shared how she would navigate the policy environment, avoiding a similar fate as the terminated teacher. In other words, the participants were threatened and in a state of dislike; however, they educated themselves. This informative finding indicated how bureaucrats feel and subsequently respond within the contested policy environment.

The results of the study revealed another practice adopted by participants in response to feeling threatened and disliked, which I coded as a devaluation of the policy. Participants who faced threats and dislike demonstrated a willingness to adapt and persist because, to them, the Divisive Concept law was going to be around for a while, and its effects would not be noticeable in a few years. Notably, the participants exhibited socioemotional maturity in their narratives, recognizing that policies are temporary and

that their primary role as educators is to continue to educate all students according to established standards. One participant, Dr. Malcom, succinctly captured this sentiment, stating, “Policies come and go! Our job is to keep educating students, all students, according to the standards. I was an educator before the ‘Divisive’ concept stuff, and I was one when it is gone!” Despite feeling threatened and disliked, the participants maintained a sense of hope for the future and persevered through the present Divisive Concept law environment.

Considering Discrepancies in the Data

Ravitch and Carl (2021) explained that discrepancies in qualitative data do not signal an invalid data set. On the contrary, scholars such as Miles et al. (2014), Saldana (2021), and Braun and Clarke (2022) explained that locating discrepant data (disconfirming data) in a wider political context through discourse analysis or socially negotiated statements versus the more normative descriptive analysis (the salient analytical method used in this study) the total data set can be better understood. In other words, by way of contrast, the disconfirming data observed within this study’s data set established the homogenous product as valid and consistent (see Miles et al., 2014).

Moreover, the educational leaders’ narrative was homogenous in the sense that all of the participants’ stories enunciated the Divisive Concept of law as a threat and unlikeable. Accordingly, the discrepant data observed in the narratives testified to the subsequent emotional behavior resulting from the primary feeling concerning the contested political policy. In the greater representative bureaucratic theoretical literature,

there was no indication that the emotional data as passive-aggressive behavior would be present (N. J. Johnson & Klee, 2007).

As suggested in the literature that informed this study's research question, more needs to be known concerning how bureaucrats feel while operating in a contested policy environment (Andersen, 2017; Bishu & Kennedy, 2020; Capers, 2018; Kouamé & Liu, 2021; O'Connor et al., 2020; Roch & Edwards, 2017; Schröter, 2019; Webeck & Lee, 2022). No scholar has established the discrepant observation of data as passive-aggressive behavior. Included in the table is an example from the educational leaders' narratives indicating feelings of threat and dislike produced passive-aggressive behavior. Consequently, as the aim of this study was not to seek to address passive aggression, yet only observed it as a bi-product of the order feeling variable set, more representative theory research is suggested in Chapter 5.

Summary

In addressing the question of what the State of Georgia's educational leaders' emotional experiences as told through their personal stories about implementing controversial student curriculum frameworks and instructional practices based on the State of Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law, representative bureaucratic theorists like Capers (2018) and Levites and Vigoda-Gadot (2020), before this study, observed that RBT could account for the relationship as shared values and desire for specific policy outcomes between bureaucrats and their clients. Nevertheless, as discussed in Chapter 2: Literature Review, previous studies have not accounted for the experiences of Georgia's educational leaders serving in a contested policy environment.

The gap in the literature and the unfolding public policy terrain necessitated the development of the research question for this study.

Accordingly, through collecting, coding, and analyzing the narratives from semi-structured interviews with Georgia's educational leaders serving majority minority K-12 students during the political melee of O.C.G.A. 20:11:1 Divisive Concept law, this study helped answer the above question. In agreeing with numerous RBT scholars in existing research that representative bureaucrats tend to navigate and implement public policies in symbiotic value-centered ways on the behavior of their clients over and above the policymakers' expectations, I observed that these same bureaucrats experience threatening and dislike feelings. I also observed that representative bureaucrats articulated their feelings of being threatened by the Divisive Concept of law in unique experiential behavior outcomes: suppression, intellectualization, displacement, devaluation, idealization, and passive aggression response to the Divisive Concept of public policy environment.

In Chapter 5, I interpret the findings, consider the limitations, and offer recommendations and social efficacy implications of the study. Chapter 5 also establishes how the study is grounded in and contributes to RBT literature considered in Chapter 2. Finally, a conclusion that highlights the major findings from this study is provided to conclude the chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The context of the discussion in this chapter is informed by the purpose of the study and the public policy environment from which the study arose. In the aftermath of the nationally known APS cheating scandal, Robinson and Simonton (2019) grounded the actions of the educational bureaucrats in corporate greed undergirded by public policy. In other words, the scholars asserted that the policy environment created an environment where educators felt pressure to deliver business results over and beyond the needs of their student clients. Within the broader public policy scholarship, this study expands the logic within Robinson and Simonton's thesis that bureaucrats have feelings about policy and act according to the said feelings.

In contrast to this synopsis of the expositors' thesis and understanding of how public policy is instituted through the United States' three-branch government system, this study began to unfold its purpose curiously: Does the policy have such an effect beyond the legislative policymakers' intent? If so, how do bureaucrats, sometimes called the "four branches of government," come to practice according to their feelings, values, and conclusions? Likewise, and more narrowly, how did APS educators who may have felt at odds (emphasis on their feelings) with the public policy of the day not "cheat" and serve their students despite a dislike of the policy?

Restatement of the Study's Purpose

The purpose of this general qualitative study was to explore the emotional impact upon the State of Georgia's educational bureaucrats working in the policy environment created by Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law codified in 2022. The

reason to explore this topic was to further the work of O'Connor (2013), Meier et al. (2019), Capers (2018), Xu and Flink (2022), Aronson (2020), and Aronson et al. (2016), who examined bureaucratic politics and the policy-related impediments experienced by bureaucrats. An in-depth examination of educational bureaucrats' emotional dispositions in adverse policy conditions was, however, noticeably absent from the literature. The findings of this study may provide the basis for developing leadership preparation programs emphasizing emotional intelligence among educational bureaucrats seeking to represent clients amid highly contested political environments.

Moreover, in 2021, as the global COVID-19 pandemic ended, in the State of Georgia, United States, a similar policy made its way through the state's legislature and was eventually signed into law in 2023, resulting in a highly contested and political public policy environment known to polarize Georgia's educational leadership force that was reported to be mostly against this law. Consequently, reflecting upon Robinson and Simonton's (2019) exposé of a conversation with representative bureaucrats, theorists have observed that bureaucrats' values and feelings are known to be more consistent with the needs of their clients (students) than with the intent of the legislature's policy. Accordingly, educational curiosity evolved into the purpose of this study. This study delved into the emotional impact of the O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law on educational bureaucrats in the State of Georgia. The purpose was to extend the work of previous researchers who have examined bureaucratic politics and policy-related obstacles faced by bureaucrats, such as O'Connor (2013), Meier et al. (2019), Capers (2018), Xu and Flink (2022), Aronson (2020), and Aronson et al. (2016). The literature

lacked a detailed examination of how educational bureaucrats cope with adverse policy conditions on an emotional level. The results of this study could be the foundation for developing leadership preparation programs that focus on emotional intelligence for educational bureaucrats who represent clients in highly contested political environments.

Concise Summary of Key Findings

I analyzed the K-12 educational narratives of Georgia K-12 educational leaders concerning their interactions with predominantly minority students in a politically charged environment through confidential, semi-structured interviews. The research revealed two distinct emotions and corresponding behaviors. The data collected during the study demonstrated that the entirety of the sample felt intimidated and opposed the Divisive Concept legislation of O.C.G.A. 20-11-1. The participants' emotions can be briefly described as feeling threatened and harboring a dislike toward the law, where the two distinct emotions constituted the crux of the study.

Furthermore, I observed because of feeling threatened and holding feelings of dislike, the bureaucrats engaged in various threat-responsive, experiential behaviors. I identified Georgia's educational leaders' secondary emotional experiences using Di Giuseppe and Perry's (2021) hierarchy of defense mechanisms framework in which these experiences are named as suppression, intellectualization, displacement, devaluation of the policy, idealization of or within the policy environment, passive-aggressiveness towards, and rationalization of the Divisive Concept law environment. The results of the study and a more in-depth interpretation of the findings are provided in the following section of this chapter, along with references.

Interpretation of the Findings

Findings Theoretically Confirmed

This section describes in what ways this study's findings confirmed, disconfirmed, and extended theory within the salient theoretical contexts examined in Chapter 2. In consideration of this plausible interpretation of the narrative data regarding the experiential feelings of Georgia educational leaders serving in the State of Georgia's Divisive Concept law contested policy environment, Shanahan et al. (2017) built a framework for how to conduct NPF studies while explaining that microanalysis or interpretation of individual responses yields insight into person values, ideological dispositions and subsequent behaviors concerning the public policy under consideration. From this perspective, through the collecting, coding, and analysis of the narratives, the findings confirmed, disconfirmed, and extended some of the theoretical assumptions of the theoretical-conceptualization grounding of the current study's RBT and NPF (see Bishu & Kennedy, 2020; Brewer, 2021; Capers, 2018; Carroll, 2017; Dematthews, 2018; G. Gray & Jones, 2016; Kennedy, 2014; Mangin, 2021; Marvel & Resh, 2015; Mcbeth et al., n.d.-a; Meier & Nigro, 2010; O'Connor et al., 2020; Roch & Edwards, 2017; Shanahan et al., 2011, 2013; Xu & Flink, 2022).

Regarding the confirmation, disconfirmation, and extension of prominent aspects of RBT, the findings necessitate a reflection upon the research of previous scholars such as Baumer and Van Horn (2014), who established that representative bureaucrats engage in political behaviors, Capers (2018), who identified that a representative bureaucratic person is an active political respondent, and Levitats (2023) who documented the

emotional ways bureaucrats express their behavior in the policy environment. To be concise, numerous scholars beyond those cited here studied and confirmed what the narrative data in this study revealed. The findings are that Georgia educational leaders serving majority-minority K-12 students during the highly politically contested public policy environment, which constituted codifying of the State of Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 "Divisive Concept" law stories, revealed that they had political awareness, feelings, and subsequent feeling-led behaviors while serving in the said environment.

In addition, through the NPF conceptualization representing this study's second conceptual pillar, similar to many NPF scholars, this study revealed the value-centered political activists observed in the narrative data (Dematthews, 2018; G. Gray & Jones, 2016; Grosland & Matias, 2022; Mcbeth et al., n.d.-a; O'Connor et al., 2020; Shanahan et al., 2011). One educational leader's story had, from beginning to end, a theme of advocacy on behalf of clients consistent with the clients' opposition to the policy in direct contrast to the ideological expectations of the policymakers of the Divisive Concept of law. Evidence from the data demonstrated that persons have valid culturally informed ideologies representing a post-positivist perspective of bureaucratic theory often missed in early broad public policy literature and more directly absent from the empirical study of bureaucratic literature. Ultimately, considering that this study's theoretical choice was appropriate, its findings elucidate the literature discussed in Chapter 2. Findings also demonstrate the necessity of professional development programs that support learning for bureaucrats responsible for the implementation of the said public policy as the policy negotiators between policymakers and the bureaucratic clients, the students.

Findings Theoretically Disconfirmed

In contrast to rationalist RBT and NPF theoretical assumptions, the findings disconfirmed the necessity of total empirical RBT and NPF research-quantitative studies as solely sufficient to investigate and subsequently understand the experiential-feeling dispositions of bureaucrats in contested environments (Holzer, 2022; Kingdon, 2003; Shafritz et al., 2017; K. B. Smith & Larimer, 2013). The salient finding is that educational leaders reported their engagement in emotionally charged praxis. The findings also established the uniqueness of persons beyond experiential numbers and disconfirmed the rationalist theoretical and methodological notions that undergird most of the previous RBT and NPF research.

On the other hand, though the findings of this study, following data analysis demonstrated that some of Georgia's educational leaders felt threatened and experienced dislike for the Divisive Concept law, some might question these findings, asserting that relying solely on qualitative research from a seemingly small sample pool is not sufficient to understand the experiences of bureaucrats in contested environments, as personal anecdotes and individual experiences may not accurately represent the broader Georgia's educational majority-minority educational leadership population (Baumer & Van Horn, 2014; Eller et al., 2018; Shafritz & Hyde, 2017; Shafritz et al., 2017).

Although the findings revealed that the total study sample, or 100%, reported feelings of threat and dislike (see Table 3), whether these findings are consistent across Georgia's educational leadership representing the majority-minority student population was not substantiated. The acknowledgment of this data-interrogating thesis, however, does not

negate that the findings from the current study were useful in adding theoretical clarity to previously underexamined theoretical conceptualizations (see K. B. Smith & Larimer, 2013). Further, as discussed in more detail in the next section of this study, the findings suggested that to comprehend the emotional experience of representatives in contested policy environments, specifically through the narrative framework, a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research methods should be employed.

Findings Theoretically Extended

Within the theoretical literature from which this study grew and contributed, the findings extended RBT and NPF theoretical understanding by closing the gap that previously existed in the literature discussed in Chapter 2. The data extended the idea that representative bureaucratic client-oriented advocacy is an emotionally charged function of the public policy exacting process. The finding extends public policy theories that bureaucrats have political agendas with ideological agendas that are implemented even if the implementation is coveted as being outside of the traditional policy-making-exacting, political power elite context.

Limitations

An appropriate evaluation of this study's limitations makes two prominent social science turns. First, it reflects on the understood limitations identified in Chapter 2 of this study (see Babbie, 2017; Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021; Yin, 2016). Subsequently, it calls into question the prominence of that same limitation in reflection of what is now known and unknown at the onset of the study. In other words, based on the limitation present within the framework of the study, are the findings

substantially trustworthy, thereby contributing to the same RBT literature from which the study was conceptualized?

Several limitations had to be overcome during this research to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. One of the initial limitations was the researcher's bias associated with conducting research through interviews. As noted by Seideman (2019), this bias is an assumed factor when using the interviewing data collection model, which is a common concern in social science research (Caelli & Ray, 2003; Creswell, 2013; Lichtman, 2013; Ravitch & Carl, 2021; Sandelowski, 2000; Yin, 2016). This project reflects some of the researcher's subjective input or bias.

Another limitation of the study was the assumption that most K-12 educational bureaucrats who advocate for minority and poor children are emotionally encumbered by educational policies that are perceived to harm the students. Emotional intelligence research has, however, indicated that whether an educational leader agrees or disagrees with a policy, an emotional response is still present. This dissertation study aimed to understand the emotional reactions of Georgia's educational bureaucrats in the O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 political context.

Additionally, the participants in this study were employees of Georgia school systems, each with nuanced policy requirements to guide employees' sociopolitical engagement within the policy environment. This study was limited in determining how local district nuances affect emotional experiences while investigating the salient understanding that the greater Georgia policy had an effect (see Barnidge et al., 2018; O'Connor, 2013). The political nature of public policy processes, particularly in regions

like the State of Georgia, the setting for this study, could bias the researcher's perspective, causing less reliable and objective research (L. Fowler & Fox, 2023). I, however, acknowledged this potential bias and reduced it through the structuring of the data-gathering interviews to recognize the political climate surrounding the State of Georgia's codification of O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law (Gaunt, 2022). I asked participants questions to elicit their perspectives without my input, which is consistent with effective qualitative social science practices (Eller et al., 2018; Maxwell, 2013; Seideman, 2019).

In conclusion, overcoming these limitations makes the nuances of this study transferable to additional public administration studies. The findings of this research have important implications for educational policymakers and administrators, particularly in understanding the emotional reactions of Georgia's educational bureaucrats in the O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 political context. Future research can build on these findings to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the emotional experiences of educational bureaucrats in other political contexts.

Recommendations

This section focuses on potential areas for future research and includes recommendations based on the findings of this study. As outlined by Capers (2018) and as referenced at the beginning of this research, the RBT highlighted a significant bureaucratic theoretical trend: the political environment affects the impact representative bureaucrats are able to have when engaged in client-oriented service delivery in the context of a contested public policy environment. Similarly, in conducting public policy-

bureaucratic theory research, yet leveraging emotional bureaucratic behaviors as the unit of analysis, Levitatz et al. (2019) emphasized the relationship between emotions, values, policy environments as work environments, and quality of bureaucratic engagement, thereby arguing the importance of emotions in the public sector- policy outcomes. Recent studies such as those of Capers and Levitatz et al., many of which were examined in Chapter 2, revealed the policy implementation responsiveness of bureaucrats, which, from a rationalist perspective, showed that the historical context of public policy research had not addressed or was discounted as not a formidable asset within the public policymaking-analytical schematic.

Conversely, even when taken together to understand how RBT could help understand how Georgia educators felt delivering curriculum services while serving in the counterintuitive, hyper-political environment of the Divisive Concept law, the research question of this study went unanswered until I collected the data, coded-analyzed them, and further explained the findings as being related to and filling a gap in the greater RBT body of literature. However, although the findings of this study revealed new insights that were previously undocumented, for example, based on the educational leaders or bureaucrats' narratives, they reported experiencing threats and dislike feelings, what could have been more explained is why these same bureaucrats engaged in passive-aggressive emotional behaviors.

This study informs future prominent quantitative and qualitative research proposals. Quantitative researchers may seek to determine the level of passive aggressiveness-oriented service delivery in which a representative bureaucrat is apt to

engage, given an increase or decrease in the number of direct oversight ramifications according to a particular policy environment. In other words, if there is a threat of job loss for a bureaucrat, yet the bureaucrat is covertly compelled to engage in client-oriented service delivery, does the level of covert effort escalate versus if the threat of job loss is not present? Qualitatively, suppose a bureaucrat is willing to name their behavior because of a policy threat as passive aggressiveness. Can more be known about bureaucratic praxis if related research questions are formed? In sum, in future research, now that RBT has been shown to help determine more about how educational leaders feel under policy stress, researchers should continue to contribute to the development of a more mature RBT literature.

Implications

Social Change Implication

These findings challenge the more traditional rationalist-oriented public policy scholarship and support the contemporary public policy theorists examined in Chapter 2 (Capers, 2018; Carroll, 2017; Kennedy, 2014; O'Connor et al., 2020; Roch & Edwards, 2017; Schröter, 2019; Xu & Flink, 2022). These theorists observed that public policy plays a critical role in the quality of service and subsequent livelihoods of clients, particularly Georgia students. Bureaucrats under stress do not deliver services as effectively in highly contested policy environments as they might in less contentious environments (Fambrough & Kaye-Hart, 2008; Grosland & Roberts, 2021; Kouamé & Liu, 2021; Levitats, 2023; Levitats & Vigoda-Gadot, 2020; Levitats et al., 2019; Wang, 2021).

Therefore, in consideration of this outcome, the logical progression from agitating, politicized public through a bureaucrat's client-oriented value-centered lens to discontented-client outcomes, a most troubling social science schematic arises; minority students who are known to lag on the most relevant student achievement scales potentially go without the bureaucratic advocacy necessarily to produce and sustain a holistic livelihood. In contrast, culturally relevant client services are crucial for producing democracy and economically viable students, graduates, and individuals who contribute to the community. In future studies, it will be possible to comprehend the emotional experiences of bureaucrats desiring to serve their clients' needs and yet being encumbered by policy, leading to two necessary social change efforts. These are drafting more minority-oriented public policy and building a more critically empowered representative bureaucracy that is knowledgeable and emotionally intelligent in navigating adverse public policy environments to deliver the most effective client services to the most valuable, dependent, and disempowered members of society.

In sum, policy generates experiences in persons that matter. The qualitative pervasive experiential dispositions of representatives give rise to the need for salient public policy environment changes towards social efficacy for majority and minority clients-students. In describing the theoretical implications of this study, I leveraged a qualitative research design to explore the emotional repertoire of Georgia representative bureaucrats in K-12 schools who advocate for culturally responsive curriculum and instructional practices despite the policy context of Georgia's Divisive Concept law. I collected descriptive data through interviews and used a step-by-step qualitative data

analysis protocol for a more accurate analysis of the transcript data. The study contributed to the RBT literature, as reported in Chapter 4. Additionally, as discussed at length in the previous sections, understanding more regarding representative bureaucratic praxis potential will lead to the development of a more responsive public policymaking system that is more amenable to equity and the sustainability of all persons along the socioeconomic status. In other words, the analysis will lead to a better theory, better public policy systems, and more agreeable life outcomes for affected clients.

Theoretical Implications

This study holds significant theoretical implications, as it contributes significantly to the literature on RBT. The findings suggest that the implementation of these theories can lead to a more responsive public policymaking system, ultimately improving the life outcomes of affected clients. This research highlights the importance of representative bureaucracy in achieving better governance and social outcomes for the community. Therefore, the study's outcomes have significant practical implications for both policymakers and practitioners and can inform future policy decisions.

Conclusion

The focus of this study was how bureaucrats in Georgia are able to act as emotionally intelligent actors within the policy environment set by the Divisive Concept law. The study also included an examination of how their emotional repertoire affects their organizational performance as service delivery to their ideologically similar clients-students, in light of the State of Georgia's 2023 codification of O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law. This research addressed a gap in the RBT literature through a

general qualitative research methodology by the NPF to understand the experiences of Georgia's educational leaders leading in the hyper-politicized environment established by said policy. The findings necessitate reflection upon the research of scholars such as Baumer and Van Horn (2014), who established that representative bureaucrats engage in political behaviors; Capers (2018), who identified that a representative bureaucratic person is an active political respondent; and Levitats (2023) who documented the emotional ways bureaucrats behavior in the policy environment.

The data demonstrated that educational leaders have valid culturally informed ideologies representing a post-positivist perspective of bureaucratic theory often missed in early broad public policy literature and more directly absent from the empirical study of bureaucratic literature. In closing and reflecting upon the findings of this study against the urgency of the public policy and politics of the moment, critical policy scholar Horsford (2019) highlighted the "oxymoronic" nature of majority-oriented policies setting the tone for an acute takeaway: "The rise of [hyper-political, majority-oriented neo-conservative government ideologies with power to control public policymaking] has marked a shift in ... policy discourses, which have abandoned equality for equity." Other scholars also concluded:

In those [public policy] environments where educators are not aptly prepared or willing to meet the sometimes-unique needs of students who represent [mostly minority clients-students] ... these matters move beyond personal and become increasingly professional when further complicated [by the responsibility-

accountability stemming from counter-intuitive policy]. (Douglass, Tanetha et al., 2011)

Finally, Brown and Hunter (2006) stated, “research on educational leadership affirms that leadership matters and sets the scope, structure, and sequence of student learning and academic programmatic delivery” and “The question facing all professional educator preparation programs is, what kind of leaders are we producing?” (Douglass, Brown, et al., 2011).

In other words, public policy matters necessitated research exploring the emotional experiences of representative bureaucracies in a contested public policy environment. In conclusion, this study indicated the necessity of bureaucratic, professional development programs founded upon the theoretical propositions of a growing RBT literature. The findings stress the value of emotional intelligence and reflect the insightful voices of representative-oriented bureaucrats who are deeply involved in equitable-oriented constituent services.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol and Interview Agenda

The structure and general outline of the interview guide were carefully crafted with the approval of Nyanchoka et al. (2019). Adjustments were made to ensure its effectiveness in analyzing the research question.

Date:

Location: ZOOM

Name of Interviewer: _____

Pseudonym of Interviewee: _____

Link to Last Name List

https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files/statistics/01surnames_tablea5.pdf

The Background Questions:

<https://www.wjbf.com/csra-news/new-georgia-law-bans-divisive-concepts-in-teaching-about-race/> (News Channel 6) (ABC). (2022). This news clip was used to introduce the interview. It was a publicly accessed video on the world wide web platform and needs no formal copyright approval for educational purposes.

Introductory

1. Tell me a little about how you came to be an educational leader.
2. **Without using any identifying information**, please give me a feel for the school and students you are serving now.
3. What percent of the students at your school identify as minority or impoverished?
4. Even if you have never served in a majority-majority demographically populated school, based on your general knowledge of that environment as compared to the majority-minority demographic you are currently serving, what are some of the differences in serving your school that affect your work that probably does not affect your majority-majority counterparts? Along the same lines, with these perceived differences and particularly in light of the “Divisive Law” policy context, how do you feel about your work of closing the gap between your school and those different from your majority-majority counterparts?

Policy Perspective Questions:

1. Much research currently explains the State of Georgia’s 2023 newly adopted so-called Divisive Concept law as an attack and barrier against Critical Theory, Critical Race Theory, or the associated Critical Pedagogy from being used in Georgia’s K-12 schools. In contrast, other research determines that Critical Pedagogy is an important benefit to minority and impoverished K-12 students by helping them learn how to navigate demeaning or debilitating power structures that would perpetuate adverse circumstances in their lives. Accordingly, if this research is accurate, given the demographic of the students to whom you are responsible, what are your feelings and thoughts about leading in a policy environment that mandates that such critical theory, pedagogy, and educational opportunities need to be withheld?

2. Why or why not is this “Divisive Law” policy controversy threatening you and your work? If it is or is not a threat, let me know your feelings as an educational leader leading and serving your students and community amid such a policy environment. Explain how this new law shapes minority students’ ability to get culturally appropriate education; how do barriers to getting an appropriate education make you feel?
3. Regardless of how people may think about this new law under consideration, your parents and other stakeholders from your school’s community have strong opinions and perspectives regarding it. How do you manage your personal feelings regarding the threat this policy is projected to pose to your students, remaining an advocate for your students without betraying your obligation to adhere to the law to which you are contracted?
4. Explain how you feel being at the crossroads of a controversial and divisive law, your children’s need to have critically relevant educational opportunities, and your obligation to follow the laws you are contracted with.

Emotional Intelligence Questions:

1. Explain what it means to be an emotionally intelligent school leader and describe what you do that could qualify you as an emotionally intelligent school leader.
2. Assuming that children are not being endangered in any way, how do you lead or lead with other educators who do not advocate for minority students in the manner you agree with?

Interview Agenda:

- I. Welcome and purpose
- II. Briefly explain the ZOOM environment and the participant’s anonymous status, verify the participant’s camera was off, and assign a pseudonym tag where the name usually was in the ZOOM environment.
- III. Remind the participant of their right to stop without further obligation and that the session be audio recorded only using computer and iPhone technology. Additionally, the audio was transcribed by the researcher, then stored securely for five years, and destroyed afterward.
- IV. Following any questions or concerns, announce that the taping has begun.
- V. Conduct the interview.
- VI. Announce that the recording has stopped.
- VII. Debrief:
 - Ask the participant if any questions or concerns exist.
 - Ask the participant if I can use the information that was saved during the interview recording.
 - Inform the participant that no further participation was needed beyond the conducted interview. Inform that the dissertation was soon to be published and that I announce its publication in appropriate spaces post-publishing. Verify email contact information. Send the thank you email.

Appendix B: Request Letter and Interview Protocol Copyright Approval Email

Greetings, Scholar Nyanchoka,

My name was Shaun Heckstall. I am a doctoral student conducting my dissertation research in Public Policy and Administration at Walden University. I request permission to use your Qualitative Interview Protocol in my research study.

The following purpose and question: This general qualitative study explores the emotional impact upon the State of Georgia's educational leaders working in the policy environment created by Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law codified in 2022. Along the same lines, what were the State of Georgia's educational leaders' emotional experiences as told through their personal stories about implementing controversial student curriculum frameworks and instructional practices based on the State of Georgia's O.C.G.A. 20-11-1 Divisive Concept law? This dissertation was conducted under the direction of the dissertation chair and Walden University professor, Dr. Gregory Campbell, and endeavors to add to the literature by informing the emotional intelligence and experiences of Georgia educational leaders.

Your instrument was used as the outline/structure and modified to meet the specific needs of my study. In addition to using the instrument, I also ask your permission to reproduce it in my dissertation appendix. The dissertation was published according to Walden University guidelines and deposited in the ProQuest Dissertations & Theses database.

I want to reproduce your instrument under the following conditions:

- I use the instrument only for my research study and do not sell or use it for any other purposes
- I include a statement of attribution and copyright on all copies of the instrument. If you have a specific attribution statement you would like me to include, please provide it in your response.
- At your request, I provide a hyperlink to the final manuscript.

Along the same lines, if you do not control the copyright for these materials, I would appreciate any information you can provide concerning the proper person or organization I should contact.

If these are acceptable terms and conditions, please indicate so by replying to me through e-mail at

Sincerely,

Shaun D. Heckstall

cc: Dr. Gregory Campbell, Walden University Professor
Dissertation Chairperson for Shaun Heckstall

Copyright Approval Email Text:

Dear Shaun Heckstall, Thank you for your email. This was very important work, and you can

Linda Nyanchoka

To:

- Shaun Heckstall

Cc:

- Gregory Campbell

Dear Shaun Heckstall,

Thank you for your email. This was very important work; you can use my tool to research. I wish you all the best in your work and look forward to your final manuscript, as well as the future implications of your work.

Best,

Linda Nyanchoka

Appendix C: Preliminary Coding Framework of Associated Emotional Reactions to

Policy Events

Characterization:	Joy Emotions	Distress Emotions	“Happy-for” Emotions	“Sorry-for” Emotions
Specification in Narrative text	A positive feeling about an event	A negative feeling about an event	A positive feeling about an event that was good for someone else	A negative feeling about an event that was undesirable for someone else
Tokens of the emotion as seen in narratives about events	Cheerful, contented, delighted, ecstatic, elated, glad, happy, overjoyed, pleasant, etc.	angry, depressed, despair, displeased, grieved, miserable, sad, troubled, uneasy, upset, etc.	Pleased-for, happy-for, delighted-for	Sorry-for, compassion, feel-bad, sympathy, etc.
Variable affecting intensity	The degree to which the event was desirable	The degree to which the event was undesirable	The degree the event was desirable for the other(s)	The degree the event was not desirable for the other(s)

Note. Adapted from *The Cognitive Structure of Emotions*, 2nd A. Ortony, G. L. Clore and A. Collins, 2002, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom.

Appendix D: Participant Demographic Data Confirmation Website

The participant's demographic data were obtained from the Georgia Department of Education College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) Reports website: <https://ccrpi.gadoe.org/Reports/Views/Shared/Layout.html>

It should be noted that the website information and usage are self-evident and support the confidentiality requirement of the study.

Directions to using the CCRPI website to obtain participant demographic information:

1. Access the website resources in the searcher bar on the landing page. The person searching can type a Georgia school district, K-12 school, or zip code to gain access to appropriate school data.
2. Without prior knowledge of Georgia, a researcher could determine zip codes in Georgia and begin the search with this further information [here was a publicly accessed list of the State of Georgia zip codes: <https://www.zip-codes.com/state/ga.asp>]. The researcher of this study was familiar with many of the State of Georgia's school districts and leveraged this prior knowledge to begin the search).
3. Once a particular K-12 school was selected, the necessary demographic to participate in this study can be verified by referencing the *Overview* page, which was also the school's *landing* page, and subsequently scrolling down to the second sub-section on the page, denoted as **School Demographics**. Here, the researcher can verify that leaders at this school would be known to represent minority students affected by the State of Georgia's Divisive Concept law. *For example, Tonikan Middle School leaders represent Asian/Pacific Islanders 0.0%, American Indians/Alaskan Natives .8%, Black 93.4%, Hispanics 5.4%, and Whites 0.0%. Based on Tonikan Middle School's School Demographic data*, the leaders at Tonikan Middle School in the State of Georgia would be eligible to receive an email to determine their interest in volunteering to participate in the study.
4. Leveraging the verified School Demographic data to determine whether the leader meets the inclusive demographic necessary to be included in the border 50-person sample pool from which 12 to 15 persons ultimately be interviewed; the researcher can acquire the individual emails from the school's website (a confidential list of persons emailed be kept in the *pCloud* security system for five years (post the acceptance and publishing of this study) that was referenced in Chapter 3's *Methodology* section of this study.

Appendix E: Reflective Journal Template

Journal Entry Per Participant

The participant was known in this rubric according to their order of participation	What did I notice based on my assumptions or what I did not expect out while interacting with this participant?	How did the participant's political views coincide or differ from my own?	What did I feel based on this participant's responses?	What other socioemotional determinants are a part of my experience with this participant?
Participant #1				
Participant #2				
Participant #3				
Participant #4				
Participant #5				
Participant #6				
Participant # etc.				

Note. The journal actually journal entries are kept privately in a secure cloud account.

This table was constructed from Ravitch and Carl's (2021) and Finlay's (2002) concepts.