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Suspended Students' Experiences with In-School Suspension: A Phenomenological Investigation

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Recommended Citation

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Katherine Rene Evans entitled "Suspended Students' Experiences with In-School Suspension: A Phenomenological Investigation." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Educational Psychology and Research.

Katherine H Greenberg, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Amy Broemmel, Susan Groenke, Trena Paulus

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

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Suspended Students' Experiences with In-School Suspension:
A Phenomenological Investigation

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Katherine Rene Evans
May 2011

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation study was to consider the ways in which middle school students made meaning of their experience with exclusionary discipline, specifically in-school suspension (ISS). While ISS has historically been positioned as an alternative to exclusionary discipline, ISS programs are often designed in ways that are exclusionary. Current research on exclusionary discipline points to the ways in which suspensions and expulsions impact students academically, socially, and emotionally. Very little of that research, however, considers the perspectives of the students who have been the recipients of exclusionary discipline. Thus, seeking to more fully understand the lived experiences of students who have been in ISS, I chose to apply a phenomenological methodology to the study.

The research took place in a large school system in the Southeast, specifically with 13 middle school students in grades six through eight. The participants had been suspended between four and 14 times, for between eight and 37 days. Situating the study within a social constructionist framework, I viewed student behavior as socially constructed within interactions with school personnel. Drawing on an interpretive approach to phenomenological inquiry, I developed verbal portraits of each student in the form of first person accounts of their experiences with ISS. I also conducted a thematic analysis of the 13 interviews, developing five themes that illustrated how they made meaning of their experience.

The themes, expressed in the words of the participants, are: (1) *Gettin' Written Up*, (2) *There are Some Teachers*, (3) *Sometimes it's Boring. Sometimes it's Fun. Sometimes it's Torture*. (4) *The ISS Teacher's a Nice Lady with a Snoozy Attitude*, and (5) *Our Learning Time*.

Based on these findings, implications are presented for both educators and educational researchers. Implications include (1) the need for students' input into educational decisions and educational research, (2) the need to research and design ISS programs that benefit students rather than simply punish them, (3) the need for discussions around teachers who bully students and the ways in which students resist such treatment (or don't), and (4) the need to further investigate the role of the ISS teacher in student discipline.

DEDICATION

To John, Jonathan, Sara, Shocky, Chris, Stewey, Andy, Bam, Marcy, Jeffrey, James, Matt and Josh – thank you for sharing your stories and ideas about in-school suspension. To the countless students whose voices you represent who experience exclusionary forms of discipline on a daily basis – may we learn to do things better.

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

During the 1999-2000 school year, public schools in the United States issued over three million suspensions and close to 100,000 expulsions (National Center for Education Statistics (2003)[1]. During the 2004-2005 school year, in the state of Tennessee, the site of the current study, almost 2,000 students were expelled from school, while close to 85,000 students were suspended at least once. During that same year, in the county where the current study occurred, more than 11,000 students were suspended from school. The statistical data on school suspensions is indeed staggering, but what draws me to this study is not so much the statistics, but the anecdotal comments from the teachers with whom I have worked, such comments as: "I'd love to teach critical thinking skills to my students, but I'm so busy trying to control their behavior, I barely have time to teach the basics." "That kid has an orange jumpsuit and a jail cell waiting for him somewhere. I wish he'd find them and quit disrupting my class." "If the administrators around here really cared about education, they'd get rid of some of these problem students so that the kids who really want to learn could."

Over the course of my teaching career, as well as during my graduate assistantships working with pre-service teachers, I have often heard frustrated comments like these by teachers, veterans and novices alike, about the need for better ways of disciplining students. To address the issue of student behavior, countless popular books have been published for teachers, "how-to manuals" for creating classroom climates conducive to learning (Fay & Funk, 2004; Foley &

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[1] See definition section below for the distinction between suspensions and expulsions.

Stewart, 2006; Wong, 2009). Further, countless programs have been developed and marketed for teachers and administrators with promises that their program will ensure that students learn without the distractions of misbehavior (Canter & Canter, 2001; Fay & Funk, 2004; Freiberg, Connell, & Lorentz, 2001).

Within academia, extensive research has been conducted attempting to identify the causes of misbehavior (Bibou-Nakou, 2000; Bibou-Nakou, Kiosseoglou, & Stogiannidou, 2000; Klassen, Chong, Huan, Wong, Kates, & Hannok, 2008; Riordan, 2006) and to narrow down which strategies are most effective (Harrington & Holub, 2006; Levin & Nolan, 2003). Handbooks on classroom management, classroom discipline, and classroom environments all seek to summarize the body of knowledge that teachers need in order to effectively teach students who exhibit challenging behaviors (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Marzano, 2003); yet, with all of this *knowledge* about *what works* (Marzano, 2003), issues with classroom discipline continue to be a central focus of educational discussions and research.

Much of research on student behavior has problematized disruptive behavior, showing its impact on classroom teachers (Borg, 1998). As early as 1962, teachers have been citing student discipline as a primary reason for their frustration with the teaching profession (Meryman, 1962). Some research has shown that between 30-40% of new teachers are quitting the profession within the first three to five years (NCES, 2007); many of these teachers attribute their leaving to student characteristics such as behavior (Check, 2001; Grayson & Alvarez, 2007; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). As the developer of one school discipline program phrased it, behavior problems in schools "take their toll on us [educators] professionally," causing teachers to "lose our perspective and begin to question our efficacy" (Orszulak, 2007, p. 2).

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While few would question the need for educational environments that are conducive to student learning and teacher job satisfaction, many debate how this is achieved and the intention of the teachers in constructing such an environment. While framing discipline as necessary for the creation of a safe learning environment, in many situations, suspensions and other exclusionary approaches are used simply as punishment or as strategy for removing students who are perceived as troublemakers (Arcia, 2007; American Psychological Association, 2008). For example, in one study (Noguera 2003), teachers and administrators expressed that it was not their responsibility to discipline students, in the traditional sense of the word, *discipline*, meaning *to teach* (see Chapter Two for a discussion around the varied meanings of the word *discipline*); they argued that they did not have the resources nor the time to help students who did not want to learn. They agreed that excluding a misbehaving student from an education may not be the best thing for the student, but in the words of a principal, "right now, it's the best thing for the school" (Noguera, 2003, p. 342).

Further, based on her three-year ethnographic study with black males who had been deemed "unsalvageable" (Ferguson, 2000, p. 9), Ferguson argued that most discussions about classroom management are actually about controlling students' behavior through the use of rules, with the assumption being that "conformity to rules" is seen as an "essential prior condition for any classroom learning to take place" (p. 51). According to Ferguson, such discipline serves primarily to sort, evaluate, rank, and compare students based on their behavior, with the goal being "the production of people who are docile workers, self-regulated and self-disciplined (p. 52) who conform to institutional norms.

While, teachers, parents, administrators, and policy makers all seem to view classroom discipline as one of the major problems facing education (Public Agenda, 2004), there is very little agreement as to the characteristics of the problem and whose perspectives matter as we address the issue. While the extensive research on classroom management and discipline has provided valuable information about teachers' experiences with discipline and their beliefs and perspectives about disciplinary interventions, these studies have not provided sufficient insight about students' experiences with discipline and how teachers' and administrators' disciplinary interventions are perceived by students. Decisions about school practices continue to be made by those with authority without input from those who are subjected to the consequences of those decisions (Angus, 2006; Sullivan & Keeney, 2008). Several researchers are calling for studies that examine "how schools are confronting the challenges that beset them *not* by seeking answers from a well-regarded think tank or policy center but from students themselves" (Noguera, 2007, p. 206; see also Lincoln, 1995; Angus, 2006; Rodriguez, 2008).

In the spring of 1995, the journal, *Theory into Practice*, published an issue committed to hearing from students about education. In that issue, Yvonna Lincoln (1995) stated that research that privileged students' voice was a "relatively unexplored territory, an arena to which researchers and teachers have just begun to turn their attention" (p. 88). She proposed several reasons for seeking out students' voices, including a recent paradigm shift where children are seen as "both the inheritors and the inheritance of the future" and "as citizens and successors to the future" (p. 88). As such, she argued that "it makes sense to attend to ways in which children actively shape their contexts" (p. 89). She further stressed that if indeed the purpose of education is to prepare its citizens to participate in a democratic society, our children need and deserve

opportunities to exercise their voice in decisions that directly affect them; after all, she concluded, "They are, in a very real sense, the primary stakeholders in their own learning processes" (p. 89).

More than fifteen years after Lincoln's call for more research privileging students' perspectives about education issues, there remains a lack of such research. Several researchers have theorized as to why students' voices about school have been so underreported in the literature. According to Fielding and Rudduck (2002), "There are many silent or silenced voices - students who would like to say things about teaching and learning but who don't feel able to without a framework that legitimates comment and provides reassurance that teachers will welcome their comments and not retaliate" (p. 2). Rodriguez (2008) argued that student voices are often omitted from educational research due to "intellectual paradigms that typically subtract, discredit, and dis-empower students' voices and experiences" (p. 438). Speaking specifically about the underrepresented nature of students' perspectives regarding discipline, Miller, Ferguson, and Byrne (2000) suggested that research on discipline in general is difficult because student behavior is "such a sensitive issue within schools" and therefore, it is often difficult to gain access to the schools and to the students involved in such situations (p. 88). Fine and Weis (2003) recognized that the dearth of student voices in educational conversations is often due to systematic and/or administrative silencing, but they also acknowledged students' active roles in choosing when to speak, when to critique, and when to remain silent.

Statement of the Problem

The absence of students' voice related to educational issues, particularly discipline-related issues, is problematic in that the students are the ones who are the primary recipients of

disciplinary interventions. As such, they have the most to gain or lose when disciplinary policies and practices serve to exclude, marginalize, or harm them. My concern for such students, coupled with my interest as a teacher educator and educational researcher concerned with issues of school and classroom discipline practices, compels me to seek ways to invite students to provide insight and input into educational decisions, both at the classroom and policy levels. I agree with Noguera (2007) that while students "may not have all the answers to the problems plaguing" schools, this does not mean they do not have ideas for improving school decisions and policies (p. 209). In light of both the gap in the literature and the prevailing issues related to exclusionary discipline practices, I chose to investigate the problem of exclusionary discipline, with an emphasis on students' perspectives about this issue.

Purpose of the Present Study

In light of the scant research about the perspectives of the students themselves with regard to disciplinary interventions (Knipe, Reynolds & Milner, 2007; Rodriguez, 2008), the purpose of this study is to provide further insight into students' experiences with exclusionary discipline practices, specifically the use of in-school suspension (ISS). According to Sheets (2002), the complexity of classroom discipline "necessitates a qualitative methodology" that includes the perceptions of students (p. 107; see also Angus, 2006; Lincoln, 1995; Rodriguez, 2008).

In this study, I sought to understand exclusionary discipline, specifically in-school suspension, from the perspectives of the suspended students themselves, exploring their experiences with such practices and seeking to understand how they make meaning of those experiences. Based on my research question and my own orientation to this research, I chose to

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conduct a phenomenological investigation, seeking to more fully understand the lived experiences of students who had been in ISS. Thus, the purpose of this phenomenological study is to investigate students' experiences with exclusionary practices from the perspective of those students who have themselves been excluded from educational environments as a result of disciplinary interventions.

Research Question

With very little of the research related to classroom discipline qualitatively considering the perspectives of students, specifically the perspectives of students who are the recipients of exclusionary interventions such as suspension (for exceptions, see Brown, 2007; Ferguson, 2000; Sheets, 2002), this study seeks to gain further insight into the experiences and perspectives of students who have themselves been suspended. Thus my research was guided by the following research question: What are the experiences of students who have been suspended from school through an in-school suspension program? Through phenomenological interviews, I aimed to listen to the voices of students as they described, explained, and shared how they made meaning of exclusionary discipline practices.

Definition of Terms

The discourse surrounding student behavior is expansive; the literature utilizes a variety of terminology, such as challenging behavior, misbehavior, maladaptive behavior, and discipline problems. Further, the research refers to students who manifest these behaviors with a variety of labels, such as problem children, delinquent youth, discipline problems, problem students, student offenders, at-risk students, or challenging students. Responses to student behavior have been written about using such terminology as classroom management, classroom discipline,

behavior interventions, or behavior management, to name only a few. It is, therefore, important

to define and articulate clearly which terms I will be utilizing, and how I will be using them,

throughout the paper. A more detailed discussion of the contested discourses surrounding

discipline is included in Chapter 2, but throughout this study, the following definitions will be

utilized.

Classroom Discipline and Classroom Management

For the purposes of this study, I use the term *classroom management* to reflect a set of

rules and procedures that teachers employ in order to maintain a classroom climate that they

perceive as conducive to learning. While the term *discipline* is highly contested and has multiple

meanings, I define discipline as any intervention, punitive or corrective, taken by a teacher or

administrator in response to actions on the part of the students that are perceived as misbehavior.

Further, in that the study focuses specifically on exclusionary discipline, I define exclusionary

discipline practices as those responses to student behavior that remove the student from a

learning environment. I provide a more detailed definition of exclusionary discipline next.

Exclusionary Discipline

The term, *exclusionary disciplinary interventions*, refers to the broad range of responses

to perceived misbehavior that exclude students from their regular learning opportunities. While

much of the research on exclusionary discipline practices includes any form of punitive

discipline that removes a student from the learning environment, there are four primary types of

such exclusion: expulsion, alternative school, out-of-school suspension (OSS), and in-school

suspension (ISS). In that the participants in this study reference each of these interventions, it is

important to differentiate between them and discuss how I will be using them throughout the text.

Expulsion refers to the removal of a student from their home school placement, either permanently or for an extended period of time. When a student is expelled, they may apply to be enrolled at an alternative school; however, there is some research that has suggested that this does not always happen, leaving students without access to educational services (Brown, 2007). For example, only 13 states require that students who are suspended for longer than 10 days be required to receive alternative educational opportunities (Meek, 2009). Out-of-school suspension (OSS) refers to the removal of a student from the school for a short period of time, generally ten days or less. Again, schools may assign OSS to students for up to ten days without requiring that they be provided with alternative educational services.

In-school suspension (ISS), the focus of this current study, refers to the removal of students from their regular classrooms while requiring them to remain in school. Although some ISS programs allow for students to keep up with their academic classes and receive supportive educational instruction, it is evident from the research that others do not; thus, for the purposes of this study, I do not assume that ISS is necessarily an exclusionary form of discipline, but rather look to my participants' descriptions of their experiences across several school contexts, referring to ISS simply as a disciplinary intervention that may or may not be exclusionary.

Misbehavior

The word *misbehavior* is perhaps one of the more contentious and contested words used in discussions of school and classroom discipline. While much of the literature speaks tacitly about *problem behaviors* or *disruptive behavior* (Canter & Canter, 1984; Erden & Wolfgang,

2004; Kern & Clemens, 2007), I view misbehavior as socially constructed by teachers and students, agreeing with Sheets (2002) that what constitutes misbehavior is not simply reflective of the action of the student, but also of the judgment of the teacher in the moment. For the purposes of this study, I use the term *perceived misbehavior* or simply *student behavior* to reflect those behaviors that are often deemed by those in power as disruptive, or as misbehavior.

As noted above, the language surrounding school and classroom discipline varies widely among researchers. As an educational researcher, I acknowledge the subjective and constructed nature of not only discipline, but of research in general; in order to increase transparency and to address issues of validity and trustworthiness (see Chapter Three for more about validity and trustworthiness), I include a reflexivity statement next in order to make explicit the history and assumptions that I brought with me to this research.

Reflexivity Statement

My interest in this research topic has evolved over the course of several years. As a college student, as a youth minister, and as a classroom teacher, I have worked extensively with adolescents who have been viewed as "behavior disordered," "at-risk," or "oppositional-defiant," as well as those who have had a history of behavior labeled as "delinquent" or "challenging." While it has always been a desire to work more effectively with students who manifest challenging behaviors, as a teacher educator, it has now become a primary focus of my work to help other teachers also work more effectively with those students. In both the literature and in my work with teachers, particularly pre-service teachers, I have noted that student disciplinary problems are often attributed with driving teachers out of the profession. Further, misbehavior is often framed as one of the most problematic deterrents to learning.

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As a teacher educator, I desire to promote positive classroom climates that are conducive to learning and to the well-being of all children. I view exclusionary discipline practices as harmful to both learning and to children's sense of self; further, I see them as exacerbating student challenging behavior, serving to exclude, rather than teach, students who do not comply with normative or socially-constructed rules about appropriate behavior. Further, I struggle with many of the conventional beliefs regarding classroom management, which imply a top down approach to controlling students or to managing their behavior. As Danforth and Smith (2005) have articulated, the idea of management "implies an active teacher role and a passive student role," where the "responsibility for order falls on the teacher and his or her abilities to control the activities of the classroom" (p. 57).

While I do not deny the importance of creating a classroom climate that facilitates learning, I come to this research having observed too many teachers who take up approaches to classroom discipline that I construct as disrespectful and oppressive. Further, it appears that some teachers tend to view their students as "disposable youth" (Giroux, 2003) who can easily be excluded from their classrooms. While I approach this research with a desire to avoid over-simplified accusations of teachers and while I make the assumption that many teachers lack the knowledge and resources, both physical and emotional, to relate to students who are exhibiting behaviors that they deem as challenging, I also believe that teachers have choices in how they respond to such students. I acknowledge that, at times, those choices have been constrained by institutional expectations; yet, there remains for these teachers the choice to take up an "ethic of care" (Noddings, 2005) or to perpetuate unjust disciplinary practices that serve to exclude and harm students emotionally, socially, and academically.

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Much of what I have studied about classroom discipline has been framed by such questions as "What Works in Classroom Discipline?" or "Classroom Discipline that Works" (Marzano, 2003). I approach not only my research, but my work as a teacher educator, not through questions about what works, but rather, I agree with Butchart (1998) who stated that "all manner of barbarity works, if the end is orderliness alone. The question is, what works to assure the sorts of civility and dignity that is essential in the short term for effective learning, and vital in the long run for democratic life?" (p. 3). Tracing the history of disciplinary practices in America, Butchart claimed that since the 1950s, the focus of classroom disciplinary literature has been predominately on what works for the short term control of students, rather than on the long term goals of fostering dispositions and character that contribute to the goals of a democratic society. It is the latter goal of education in which I am interested.

A related question then becomes that of the role of education; if the role of education is strictly limited to the dispensing of knowledge, then exclusionary approaches to discipline are necessary; removing the barriers (i.e., misbehaving students) to the transmission of information is essential in guaranteeing the learning of those students who indeed are motivated to learn, leaving those who are not interested in learning out of the equation. However, if as Dewey (1916) and others have suggested, education is about preparing children for independent, contributing, productive citizenship, then it is not acceptable to exclude any child from the educational equation. It is indeed the responsibility of the school to find a way to reach every child. As long as discussions about the role of education remain tangential to discussions about classroom practices in general, and classroom discipline in particular, I assert that there will continue to be disagreement about how teachers should approach the issue of school discipline.

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Noguera (2003) suggested that schools serve three primary purposes: to sort students into tracks for economic and social roles as adults, to socialize them into the values and norms of society, and to establish social control. Most teachers, he argued, were not drawn into education because they desired to sort, socialize, or control students, but because they believed in the higher ideals of education, namely to inspire, enlighten, and empower students. While these notions of the purpose of schooling have been challenged by many (e.g., see Bowles & Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America*; Apple, *Education and Power*), for this study, I maintain that the purpose of education is to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed in order to live in and contribute to an egalitarian society.

I acknowledge that schools are not solely responsible for ensuring an egalitarian society, but they do at least play a part in such by providing students with opportunities, knowledge, and skills for potential success in such a society. I believe that all children can learn and have the right to do so in an educational environment where they are honored and expected to learn. Discipline, then, should not merely be about punishing misbehavior, but rather serve as an avenue for teaching (Noguera, 2003). Based on current research (see Chapter 2), there is ample evidence to suggest that simply punishing misbehavior is not an effective deterrent and may produce toxic educational environments (Hyman & Snook, 2000; Noguera, 2003). My own research with restorative justice (Hopkins, 2002, 2004; Sullivan & Tifft, 2001; Zehr, 1990, 2002) leads me to believe that there are indeed alternatives to exclusionary and coercive disciplinary practices, alternatives that I view as restorative approaches to discipline. This restorative approach to discipline serves as one of the theoretical frameworks for this dissertation and is discussed in greater detail at the beginning of Chapter Three.

As I engaged in this research, interviewing students about their experiences with school discipline, I brought with me a history of working with students who have often been constructed by those in authority as "problem students," "discipline problems," or "delinquents." Further, I adhere to notions of justice and restoration that strongly influence how I view relationships in general, but specifically relationships between teachers and students. My educational history and my experiences serve to guide this research into students' experiences with exclusionary discipline practices such as ISS. I recognize that the findings of this research only represent the students' perspectives about ISS, but believe that these findings may serve to enrich the conversation about discipline that has historically represented only the perspectives of teachers and administrators.

Delimitations

In that the topic of exclusionary discipline is quite expansive, it was necessary to narrow the focus of the study; thus the following delimitations are noted. First, this study is delimited by a focus on how students make meaning of the exclusionary discipline interventions of which they have been a part. While I acknowledge the value of understanding multiple perspectives, including those of teachers and administrators, for the purposes of this study, I aimed to solely focus on those of the students due to the aforementioned absence of such research.

I further narrowed the study by solely looking at in-school suspension (ISS), rather than all forms of exclusionary discipline. Although much of the research broadly examines suspensions, very little research has focused on the use of ISS. As a teacher educator, I am particularly interested in the varied ways that ISS has been taken up and implemented in schools.

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Finally, I chose to delimit this study to the perspectives of middle school students. The primary rationale for this decision is that much of the current research suggests that disciplinary problems are more pronounced at the middle school level than at either the elementary or high school levels (Baker, 2005; Check, 2001; Christle, Nelson, & Jolivette, 2004). Further, my own experience as an educator and a teacher educator is situated primarily within middle school contexts. Thus, for the purpose of this study, I focused on the experiences of middle school students.

Limitations

While the decision to choose qualitative methodology, particularly phenomenological interviews, carries with it certain methodological limitations, I believe that they are simply characteristics of the study, not necessarily limitations of the study. For example, although the use of phenomenological interviews allowed for in-depth interviews with my participants, this methodology does not focus on the contextual factors and other stakeholders that are obviously a part of the complexity of disciplinary situations. The perspectives of teachers, administrators, and parents were not included, nor did I choose to collect data regarding the political climate of the district or the overall climate of the schools that these students attend. Although I consider this more a delimitation, rather than a limitation, the findings from this study should be read in light of this omission.

The findings of the study are also limited by the lack of time I spent in the field with my participants (Hatch, 2002). In many situations, regardless of attempts to let students know that I was coming, students were called out of homeroom having no idea who I was or why they had been called to the office to talk with me. While I attempted to engage them in casual

conversation to break the ice prior to the beginning of the interview, the fact that I was a stranger possibly influenced the direction and climate of the interview.

Significance of the Study

This study holds significance for the field of education and for educational research. One possible area of significance for this study is a further understanding of the meaning of disciplinary practices for students who have lived such experiences. Research seems to support the premise that exclusionary practices are ineffective; what we are doing is not working (Mendez, 2003). Exclusion from academic environments due to misbehavior has been shown to potentially exacerbate students' frustrations with school (Casella, 2001; Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997), create a climate of toxicity (Hyman & Snook, 2000), and deny some students access to education (Christle et al., 2004; Wald & Losen, 2003). Creating a safe learning environment is essential to creating a climate conducive to learning. It is imperative to find ways to create such a climate and if current practices are interfering with that potential, alternatives need to be considered. Many of the researchers who study discipline have suggested that students might have some insight into possible alternatives (Brown, 2007; Lincoln, 1995; Noguera, 2003). Thus, this research may potentially add to our understanding about the way exclusionary practices are understood by the students who are the recipients of such practices and possibly provide insight into new ways of considering discipline.

A more complete understanding of students' perspectives on disciplinary interventions such as ISS may inform the way we educate future teachers about classroom management and discipline. According to the *Handbook on Classroom Management* (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006), classroom management is one of the most grossly under-discussed topics in teacher

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education courses. Despite the vast research in the field, many teacher education programs have omitted courses on classroom management and discipline, leaving new teachers underprepared to create classroom climates that are conducive to learning (Baker, 2005; Martin, Linfoot, & Stephenson, 1999; Reyes, 2006). Further, in courses that do include classroom management, seldom do the texts and discussions involve students' perspectives or the need to include students in disciplinary decisions; thus, this study may inform teacher educators about current, as well as alternative, approaches to discipline.

Finally, this research has the potential to contribute to a growing body of literature that calls for students' perspectives about a variety of educational issues (Angus, 2006; Bland, 2008). Students themselves are calling for the opportunity for students to be more involved in decisions about those things that affect them (Lincoln, 1995; Mitra, 2003). I believe that acknowledging students' voices (Bland, 2008; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998; Yonezawa & Jones, 2009) has the potential to increase student engagement in classroom decisions (Yonezawa & Jones, 2009), inform teacher education reform movements (Cook-Sather, 2009), and provide "opportunities for imagination to be released in a way that posits new possibilities" (Bland, 2008, p. 6). As educational researchers and teacher educators, we have the opportunity to promote the inclusion of students in those decisions, whether they are at the classroom level, the school level, or the policy level (Cook-Sather, 2009; Rudduck & McIntyre, 2007). This research potentially contributes to that level of inclusion by encouraging further research that seeks the perspectives of students on educational issues that affect them.

Organization of the Study

In this chapter, I have introduced the current study, providing a description of the problem of classroom discipline and the lack of student perspectives on the issue. Further, I outlined the purpose of the study, my research questions, limitations, and the possible significance of this research. I also included in the chapter a discussion about the predominant concepts and terms that will be used throughout the study and a statement about my own reflexivity, articulating what initially drew me to the study and how I approached the research as a teacher, a teacher educator, and an advocate for students. In chapter Two, I provide a detailed discussion of the literature surrounding exclusionary discipline and the research that involves students' perspectives, first on a variety of educational topics and then moving to a review of the few studies that have sought students' perspectives on discipline. Chapter Three begins with a discussion of my theoretical framework and then outlines the methodological choices I made throughout the research project, including a discussion of phenomenology and why and how I utilized phenomenological methodology to answer my research question. Chapter Four provides a discussion of the major findings of the study, including a rich description of my participants' experiences. Chapter Five addresses the conclusions of the study, based on the findings outlined in chapter Four, and concludes with a discussion of the possible implications of this research.

CHAPTER TWO:
LITERATURE REVIEW

The focus of this study was to gain an understanding of middle school students' experiences with in-school suspension. In chapter 1, I articulated the rationale for researching classroom discipline, specifically the use of suspension, pointing to the importance of understanding students' perspectives related to such. In this chapter, I will provide a review of the current literature related to the use of school suspension, as well as the research that recognizes student voice, not only on discipline interventions, but on related issues as well.

Search Procedures

In order to thoroughly review the literature on classroom disciplinary interventions, I began by searching the UT databases, such as ERIC, Academic Search Premier, PychInfo, and Education Full Text, using words and phrases such as "classroom discipline," "classroom behavior," "school punishment," "discipline interventions," "behavior management," and "classroom misbehavior." The results from those searches were extensive, resulting in well over 40 books and 250 articles. As outlined in chapter 1, much of the research distinguishes between classroom management as a preventative approach to student misbehavior and classroom discipline as a reactive approach to student misbehavior (for a description of this differentiation, see Emmer & Stough, 2001 or Akin-Little, Little, & Laniti, 2007). Although there is a great deal of research on classroom management, the intent of this study is to focus more singularly on disciplinary interventions; in other words, what happens when misbehavior does occur. Although I acknowledge that these two constructs are not categorically separate, I chose to narrow my

focus specifically to responses to students' behavior, rather than measures taken to prevent misbehavior. Thus, as I narrowed my literature search, I focused on articles and books that examined disciplinary interventions rather than classroom management.

After briefly reviewing the literature I had gathered thus far, I organized it into four broad categories: (1) contextual factors related to disciplinary interventions, (2) research related to teachers' perspectives about discipline, including their professional knowledge and their beliefs about classroom discipline, (3) research about what teachers do in response to perceived misbehavior, what interventions they prefer, and what resources they draw upon to address behavior problems, and (4) research that drew on students' perspectives about classroom discipline. Although I had initially sought to inquire about teachers' beliefs and practices related to student misbehavior, as I reviewed the literature, I realized that extensive research had already been conducted related to teachers' beliefs and practices about discipline. Further, as I reviewed several studies that investigated the effects of exclusionary practices on students, I became increasingly interested in students' experiences with discipline, specifically exclusionary forms of discipline. Realizing I needed to narrow my focus, I made the decision to focus my research on the students' perspectives and began another search of the literature related to students' experiences with discipline, specifically exclusionary discipline such as suspensions and expulsions. Returning to my initial search process, adding phrases such as "student experience," "student interviews," and "student voice," I located three more dissertations, 15 additional articles, and two additional books. Again, reading those, I was led to further articles and texts, resulting in the literature that is reviewed below. Prior to reviewing that literature, I will provide an explanation of how the literature review is organized.

In the following literature review, I begin with a discussion of the various ways of talking about discipline before reviewing, albeit briefly, the history of disciplinary practices in the United States, pointing to societal and political conditions that led to the introduction of suspensions, specifically in-school suspensions. Then I turn to the literature related to the use of suspensions, explicating how suspensions are used and the sometimes unintended consequences that accompany them. Finally, I review the literature related to student voice, considering ways in which research has, or has not, acknowledged students' perspectives on schooling, particularly disciplinary aspects of schooling. I conclude this final section with a rationale for the current study.

Ways of Talking about Discipline

In the broader body of literature focused on the notion of discipline in K-12 schools, the very notion of and way of talking about discipline is contested, contradictory, and contentious. In Chapter One, I provided definitions for several concepts that I utilize throughout this study (classroom management and discipline, exclusionary discipline, and misbehavior); however, those definitions are the ones that I take up as I discuss the topic of school and classroom discipline. These terms have often also been taken up, interpreted, and employed as tools for exclusion and control. In this section, I discuss the key terms that are often used in the literature around discipline, exploring how those terms have been written about and implemented.

Classroom Management and Discipline

The two terms, *classroom management* and *classroom discipline*, are often used interchangeably to describe responses to students' behavior; however, according to some researchers, they are not synonymous, and thus, it is important to explain how they have been

reported in the literature. *The Handbook of Classroom Management* (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006) defined classroom management as "the actions teachers take to create an environment that supports and facilitates both academic and social-emotional learning" (p. 4). According to the handbook, there are five components of classroom management; four of the components relate to preventative measures, while the final component relates to "appropriate interventions to assist students with behavior problems" (p. 5). Thus, for Evertson and Weinstein, classroom management encompasses both preventative and responsive approaches to student behavior, with the primary focus being on the prevention of misbehavior.

For others, the term *classroom management* refers specifically to preventative measures, while *discipline* refers to responsive measures. For example, in their survey research with 246 teachers in the United States and Greece, Akin-Little et al. (2007) found that teachers distinguished between proactive and reactive strategies for handling student behavior. They identified proactive strategies as management techniques used to prevent misbehavior and reactive strategies as those used to address misbehavior. Emmer and Stough (2001) also differentiated between discipline and classroom management, defining classroom management as "actions taken by the teacher to establish order, engage students, or elicit their cooperation" (p. 103). Finally, Marzano (2003) defined classroom management as the use of "rules and procedures" for preventing student misbehavior (p. 10) and disciplinary interventions as "the strategies teachers can use when students do not follow the rules and procedures that have been established" (p. 27).

In that the emphasis of this study is on disciplinary interventions, particularly those that are exclusionary in nature, and in light of the various and often conflicting definitions of

discipline and the potential implications of those various definitions, it is important to consider

more specifically the ways in which discipline is conceptualized in the literature. Occasionally,

the language surrounding misbehavior and discipline become entangled and muddied; for

example, in one study, the author defined *discipline* as "misbehavior that is considered

inappropriate within a specific setting" (Sheets, 2002, p. 106), equating the word *discipline* with

misbehavior. As noted above, however, most of the research positions discipline as actions taken

by teachers in response to student misbehavior (see section below for a discussion around the

contested nature of the word *misbehavior*). Most of the divergence regarding discipline emerges,

then, in how that discipline is carried out and the purposes that guide the discipline.

Kajs (2006) argued that discipline could be categorized as "retributive, preventative, or

rehabilitative" (p. 18). Much of what occurs in exclusionary discipline can be categorized as

retributive, focused on who is to blame and what punishment they should receive (Wearmouth,

Mckinney, & Glynn, 2007; Zehr, 1990). Such retributive approaches to discipline seem to be all

too common in our current educational climate (Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006);

indeed, for many, the word *discipline* evokes images of consequences and punishment (Hyman

& Snook, 2000). While this may be a widespread view, this conceptualization of discipline has

been, and is increasingly being, contested by many researchers in education, with many equating

discipline with teaching, rather than with punishment (Skiba, Rausch, & Ritter, 2004; Yell &

Rozalski, 2008). For example, Noguera (2003) suggested that discipline encompasses more than

simply punitive or exclusionary practices, but rather discipline should evoke the notion of

teaching. Likewise, Amstutz and Mullet (2005) noted the lexical roots of the word *discipline*,

meaning "to teach or to train" and argued that *discipline* is "teaching children rules to live by and

helping them become socialized into their culture" (p. 9). In other words, for many, including myself, discipline is viewed as pedagogical in nature, rather than simply punitive.

Even though many teachers' disciplinary interventions may include more than simply punitive measures, they are often considered to be teacher-directed interventions that focus on changing students' behaviors (Danforth & Smith, 2005). In contrast to teacher-driven approaches to discipline, much of the literature suggests that discipline is not simply what teachers do, but is also a characteristic of learners, and as such, is something that can be fostered and taught. For example, Osher, Bear, Sprague, and Doyle (2010) insisted that discipline is "more than punishment" and must include "developing student *self-discipline*" (p. 48), arguing for "student-centered approaches" to discipline, where "the primary focus is on developing students' capacities to regulate their own behavior" (p. 50). Thus, in contrast to punitive models of *discipline*, we see that many teachers and researchers are taking up approaches to *discipline* that can be defined as "democratic" (Curtin, 2006; Hyman & Snook, 2000; Jackson & Davis, 2000), "ecological" (Osher et al., 2010), "positive" (Nelson, Lott, & Glenn, 2000), or "restorative" (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005; Hopkins, 2002).

In summary, the ways in which the word *discipline* has been taken up and employed within the literature ranges from a description of students' behavior to an array of punitive approaches to the notion of teaching. While I personally orient to notion of *discipline* as teaching (Noguera, 2003; Skiba, Rausch, & Ritter, 2004), most of the research I review below constructs *discipline* as a broad range of interventions taken by teachers and administrators in response to perceived misbehavior. This broad view is more narrowly discussed in research that specifically

examines exclusionary approaches to discipline. The concept of exclusionary discipline is also

complex and requires explication of its meaning, which I outline in the next section.

Exclusionary Discipline

As stated in Chapter One, exclusionary discipline is any form of discipline that excludes

a student from their regular educational placement (Noltemeyer & Mcloughlin, 2010). There are

four primary types of exclusionary discipline: expulsion, alternative school, out-of-school

suspension (OSS) and, in some cases, in-school suspension (ISS). In that the participants in this

study make references to each of these interventions, it is important to differentiate between

them and discuss how they are approached in the research. Expulsion refers to the removal of a

student from their home school placement, either permanently or for an extended period of time

(Brown, 2007; Troyan, 2003). When a student is expelled, they may apply to be enrolled at an

alternative school; however, there is some research that has suggested that this does not always

happen, leaving students without educational opportunities (Brown, 2007). Currently, only 36

states provide alternative school placements for expelled students and only 13 states require that

expelled students be provided educational services at alternative placements (Meek, 2009).

When such alternative placements are not provided for expelled students, they simply do not

receive an education. Thus for many students who are expelled, the opportunity for any type of

education is completely denied (Brown, 2007). One might assume that expulsion and alternative

school placements would be reserved for the most serious of infractions, such as drugs or

bringing a weapon to school; however, data from the National Center for Education Statistics

(2003) and other sources have shown that students are often expelled for much less serious

infractions, such as repeated dress code violations, excessive truancy, or failure to have the proper immunizations (Meek, 2009; Sughrue, 2003; TN Department of Education, 2009).

A third, more commonly used practice is out-of-school suspension (OSS), which refers to the removal of a student from the school for a short term period, generally ten days or less (Meek, 2009). Purportedly addressing misbehavior by removing the "offending student" from the school grounds and providing "temporary relief to frustrated teachers and administrators," (Dupper, Theriot, & Craun, 2009, p 6), the rise in out-of-school suspensions has risen dramatically since the passage of the Gun Free Schools Act of 1994 (see section below for a brief discussion of the history of discipline in the US).

Most of the research on out-of-school suspensions has suggested that OSS is both ineffective (Rossow & Parkinson, 1999) and harmful to excluded students (Casella, 2001) (see sections below for a further discussion of the deleterious effects of suspensions); nevertheless, as noted above, due to desperation on the part of administrators and the implementation of zero tolerance policies (Skiba & Noam, 2001), OSS continues to be a popular intervention for students who exhibit challenging behaviors. Perhaps in response to the research on the deleterious effects of OSS, the use of ISS has become a popular practice in schools (Noblit & Short, 1985).

In-school suspension (ISS), the focus of this current study, has been positioned by some as an improved alternative to exclusionary forms of discipline such as OSS and expulsion (Brown, 2007; Hyman & Snook, 1999). According to Theriot and Dupper (2010), ISS "usually involves removing a student to an alternate location within the school for a specified period of

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time. This alternate location is often isolated from the general student body and the student is expected to sit or study quietly for the duration of the punishment" (p. 209).

Much of the research around exclusionary discipline refers simply to suspensions, failing to distinguish between ISS and OSS; thus, in the following review of literature on suspensions (see next section), I report on the use of suspensions and exclusionary discipline, acknowledging that those studies are often referring to both ISS and OSS. When they are differentiated, I do report that distinction. Further, as noted above, I do not assume that ISS is always designed in exclusionary ways; however, based on my participants' descriptions of their experiences across several school contexts and based on the research that does exist on ISS programs, I consider ISS to be a disciplinary intervention that is generally designed in ways that are exclusionary.

Misbehavior

The word *misbehavior* is perhaps one of the more contested, or disagreed upon, words used in discussions of school and classroom discipline. Much of the literature employs language such as *disruptive behaviors*, *challenging behaviors*, or *discipline problems* as actions on the part of the student which need to be controlled in order to create a positive learning environment (Canter & Canter, 1984; Marzano, 2003; Swinson & Cording, 2002). For example, Irwin and Nucci (2004) defined *misbehavior* as "behavior that is inappropriate within a context or in a particular situation" (p. 62). They went on to characterize discipline as "teaching children to use their sense of judgment to make appropriate decisions, thereby helping them develop moral autonomy" (p. 63). In another study on teachers' perceptions of students' behaviors, Arbuckle and Little (2004) defined "disruptive behaviour…as an activity that causes distress for teachers, interrupts the learning process and that leads teachers to make continual comments to the

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student" (p. 60). In their concluding discussion, Arbuckle and Little suggested that student *misbehavior* could effectively be controlled through the use of appropriate classroom management strategies. While few would argue against the need to minimize behaviors that interfere with learning or to help students "develop moral autonomy" (Irwin & Nucci, 2004, p. 63) and make better decisions, the underlying assumption in such language is that student behavior can categorically be identified as problematic and as located within the child, to be controlled by the teacher.

While this language is seldom questioned, particularly in popular literature for educators, there are some who have problematized the language around *misbehavior*. For example, Toshalis (2007) placed the "mis" in parentheses; using the term *(mis)behavior*, he pointed to the contested nature of student behavior, indicating that teachers and students often interpret classroom interactions differently, frequently leading to conflict and frustration. Gartrell (1995) also problematized the term "misbehavior," arguing that it implies "willful wrongdoing for which a child must be disciplined (punished)" and that it "invites moral labeling of the child" (p. 27). He advocated for the term "mistaken behavior" instead, suggesting that such an orientation toward student behavior leads teachers toward a model of discipline that promotes learning from mistakes, emotional and social growth, and healthy approaches to behavior change.

The variability of teachers' reports about student behavior, even when those teachers are reporting about the same students (Achenbach, McConaughy, & Howell, 1987) has been explored by several studies. Drawing on sociocultural theory, Bibou-Nakou (2000) examined teachers' accounts of problem behavior as responses which are not "determined by social and psychological structures, but are constructed from them" (p. 94). Bibou-Nakou reported that

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teachers tended to construct categories of students based on societal norms, i.e., "what everyone knows" (p. 96); good students, problem students, and high and low achievers were common categories utilized by teachers. Further, she noted that some teachers drew on extreme examples as a way to legitimize their claims about student misbehavior, sharing more dramatic stories about parents and students that served to justify their interactions with what they described as problem students. Bibou-Nakou concluded that the teachers in her study drew on the discourses of child and educational psychology to inform and construct problem behavior. Therefore, according to Bibou-Nakou and others, what constitutes *misbehavior* is not simply reflective of the action of the student, but also of the judgment of the teacher in the moment (Sheets, 2002).

Studies by Cassidy and Jackson (2005), Ladd and Linderholm (2008), and Vavrus and Cole (2002) have examined the ways in which teacher expectations and behaviors often influence classroom discipline, also pointing to the problematic nature of the term, *misbehavior*. For example, some research has analyzed the difference between new teachers' perceptions of misbehavior and veteran teachers' perceptions. In surveys with 605 randomly selected secondary teachers in Malta, for example, Borg (1998) found that younger teachers tended to see things more seriously than those teachers with more experience; research studies such as these suggest that much of teachers' decision-making regarding what counts as misbehavior and who gets punished can be attributed to personal characteristics of teachers (burnout, implicit racism, intolerance toward difference, etc.) and not necessarily a characteristic of the student (Hyman & Snook, 2000).

Other researchers have challenged the notion that the responsibility for students' behavior lies solely within the student and his background, but that instead behavior is a "product of

characteristics of students in combination with school factors such as rules, policies, curriculum offerings, attitudes of teachers and principals, the provision or lack thereof of counselling, and other student-support services" (Riordan, 2006, p. 240). Coming from a similar perspective on misbehavior, Cassidy and Jackson (2005) interviewed teachers and principals at an alternative school who refused to take up such a deficit model of students. In their study, one principal considered that when a child acts out in a violent way, it might indicate that the child finally feels safe enough to express what is going on inside; "it is often this reactive behaviour that is the beginning of healing" (p. 457), recasting a student's behavior as part of a healing process, rather than simply misbehavior. Cassidy and Jackson considered such statements as indicative of the socially constructed nature of misbehavior; students' behavior does not stand alone, but rather is "determined or interpreted by the observer, according to a particular lens" (p. 451).

For the purposes of this research study, and as an underlying commitment as a researcher and teacher educator, I, like the teachers in the Cassidy and Jackson (2005) study, orient to misbehavior as socially constructed. Theoretically grounding this study in social constructionism (see Chapter Three for a discussion of the theoretical framework for this study), I acknowledge the socially constructed nature of student behavior and believe that it is important to ask questions about what constitutes misbehavior and who gets to make those decisions. I agree with Gallagher (2003) that too often, behaviors that are labeled *misbehavior* are a "lack of compliance to the preferred norm" (p. 114). In that students are often suspended under such categories as *conduct prejudicial to good order*, *defiance*, or *disobedience*, phrases that are nebulous and can be subjectively interpreted, the contested and constructed nature of misbehavior is an important consideration as we examine the literature around exclusionary approaches to discipline. In the

next section, I look briefly at the history of discipline and how exclusionary approaches to discipline have developed and have been historically employed in education.

A Brief History of School Discipline in the United States

According to Butchart (1998), a history of classroom discipline is difficult to construct for several reasons. First, he argued that there simply has not been much written about the early development of classroom disciplinary interventions over time. In fact, Butchart asserted that the historical context surrounding the development of classroom management is "absent from virtually all contemporary discussion" on the topic (p. 17). Butchart claimed that most of the literature that even tangentially references the historical context of classroom discipline is limited to discussions of Skinner's behavioral approaches or critiques of "traditional" models as a way to promote the next "new" thing. Thus, one potential strategy for developing a history of classroom discipline might be to review "current" literature from previous years and construct a chronological history of discipline utilizing educational texts throughout history.

A few writers (Dupper, 2010; Rousmaniere, 1994) have attempted to do this, but Butchart (1998) argued that there remains a second problem with devising a history of classroom management and discipline in the United States: like all histories, the histories of discipline are contested, often failing to consider the political and ideological dimensions of such histories. In response to what he claimed to be a "historical silence" (p. 20), Butchart attempted to construct a history of discipline in the United States that focused on the ways that various ideologies about discipline have cycled around, not in some linear fashion, but rather back and forth, through reform effort after reform effort.

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In my own review of the literature on classroom discipline, I was able to find only a few references that looked specifically at the early history of discipline. In one such history, Rousmaniere (1994), like Butchart, noted the ways in which ideologies have not only shaped the policies, but also the histories of school discipline. For example, she argued that since most teachers in the 19th and early 20th century were women, they were often caught between idealized notions of a "gentle, nurturing teacher, and the reality of the cold and confusing working conditions of city schools" (p. 49).

Likewise, Dupper (2010) traced the history of discipline "from Puritanism to zero tolerance" (p. 16), noting that prior to the twentieth century, the dominant ideological position governing discipline practices was rooted in religious teaching, particularly Proverbs 23:13-14. These two verses have been considered instructions to parents, and teachers when they act *in loco parentis* (Yell & Rozalski, 2008), and are often interpreted to mean that if parents and teachers "spare the rod," they will "spoil the child."According to Dupper (2010), religious ideologies have frequently been cited as support for corporal punishment and other punitive measures in schools. Corporal punishment remained a pivotal issue in classroom discipline into the middle of the 20th century and is an important part of the history of classroom discipline in the United States.

Corporal Punishment

The use of corporal punishment has historically been seen as a natural consequence for school disciplinary infractions; in fact, Danforth and Smith (2005) suggested that in 19th century frontier schools, it was not uncommon "for teachers or principals to settle conflicts with students with bare fists" (p. 13). While "bare fists" might be considered extreme, the use of corporal

punishment dominated educational discipline policies in most states until the middle of the 20th

century (Hyman & Snook, 2000). Writing prior to the passage of the Gun-Free Schools Act

(GFSA) (see the next section for a discussion of the historical shift brought about by the GFSA),

Butchart (1998) asserted that the history of school discipline could be largely defined by the

issue of corporal punishment. Again pointing to the contested nature of the history of classroom

and school discipline, Butchart argued that it is too simplistic to say that the United States began

banning corporal punishment in the 1970's; indeed, reformation efforts as early as the 1820's

sought to approach education from a more virtuous position, and until the late 1800's, had

successfully banned corporal punishment in most schools.

Likewise, through interviews with female teachers who had taught in New York City in

the 1920's, Rousmaniere (1994) found that although corporal punishment was illegal in the

schools where these women taught, many of these teachers continued to practice paddling when

nothing else worked, while others resorted to other measures such as bribery, intimidation, or

threats of corporal punishment. Rousmaniere also noted that the women cited factors such as

war, immigration, poverty, and the emergence of compulsory schooling as having an effect on

students' behavior in schools, thus requiring more punitive approaches to discipline. According

to Butchart (1998), by the end of the 19th century, the bureaucratization of discipline and the

increasing emphasis on standards for curriculum and behavior led to less democratic approaches

and a greater reliance on coercive, and sometimes physical, approaches.

More recently, the work of Irwin Hyman (1990, 1999, 2000), school psychologist and

founder of the National Center for the Study of Corporal Punishment and Alternatives, has

focused extensively on the use of corporal punishment. Through much of the 1990's Hyman and

his colleagues and students actively researched, wrote about, and advocated for the discontinuation of corporal punishment. In his frequent visits to schools, he reported on the use of corporal punishment as a common occurrence, with school policies often stipulating "the number of blows per offense" (p. 10); he further noted that in the schools he had visited, the instruments of corporal punishment had included anything from wooden paddles and leather straps to rattan switches. In 1977, the Supreme Court ruled in *Ingraham v. Wright* that corporal punishment was not considered to be cruel and unusual; nevertheless, as of 2008, all but 21 states in the U.S. have prohibited the use of corporal punishment. Within those 21 states, located primarily in the southern part of the country, there are an estimated one million cases of corporal punishment annually; almost 75% of those cases are located in five states: Mississippi, Tennessee, Texas, Arkansas, and Alabama (Dupper & Dingus, 2008).

According to Hyman and Snook (2000), since the 1970's, the rate of school violence committed by students has not increased; however, in part due to "media hype and political rhetoric" (p. 7) that often create a climate of fear and suspicion of children (Devine, 1996; Hyman & Snook, 2000; Kupchik, 2010), corporal punishment and other "toxic" (Hyman & Snook, 2000) forms of discipline have persisted. In states that have outlawed corporal punishment, other measures have been implemented with the similar intention of securing school safety. At the forefront of these new measures has been the passage of the Gun Free Schools Act (GFSA) of 1994 and the subsequent enactment of zero tolerance policies. In1998, the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) defined a zero-tolerance policy as "a school or district policy that mandates predetermined consequences or punishments for specific offenses" (U.S. Dept. of Education, 1998).

Zero Tolerance

Almost everything written since the mid-1990's about the history of school discipline in the United States has been situated within the context of zero tolerance; the research related to zero tolerance is extensive (Ayers, Dohrn, & Ayers, 2001; Brady, 2002; Casella, 2001; Gregory & Cornell, 2009; Skiba & Peterson, 1999). Prior to the passage of the Gun Free Schools Act of 1994, use of the term *zero tolerance* was a fairly widespread phenomenon in law enforcement, referring to policies in both law enforcement and in many school districts that were intended to "get tough on crime" (Giroux, 2003; Steiner & Johnson, 2003). When Clinton signed the GFSA into law, however, it mandated that states impose a one year expulsion for any student caught with a weapon on school grounds (Advancement Project/Civil Rights Project, 2000; Sughrue, 2003). Essentially, then, the Gun-Free Schools Act (GFSA) of 1994 brought the language of zero tolerance from the world of criminal justice into the educational arena. While the intent of this bill was to promote school safety, a reasonable goal for educators, written into the bill was the discretionary freedom by administrators to modify the policy (Skiba & Peterson, 1999), modifications that had a "net-widening effect" on offenses for which students could be suspended (Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006, p. 127).

In 1997, the law was expanded to include expulsion and/or suspension for students caught with drugs or drug paraphernalia; it has since been applied to a variety of other offenses, in essence making it easier than ever for students to be excluded from educational environments (Casella, 2001). The application of zero tolerance policies has reached what some have called "absurd" and "illogical" extremes (Advancement Project/Civil Rights Project, 2000), leading Martinez (2009) to consider such policies as reflective of "a system gone berserk" (p. 153).

Skiba and Peterson (1999), recognizing the "dark side of zero tolerance" (p. 372), provided a list of nationally reported incidents such as the sixth grade girl who in 1996 was arrested and taken away in a police cruiser for having a steak knife in her lunch box or the nine year old boy who in 1997 was suspended for handing out mints in class because they were viewed as "look-alike drugs" (p. 375).

While some states have backed off of these extreme applications, many states continue to take a more strident stance on misbehavior, claiming that "zero tolerance is necessary to send a message to disruptive students" (Skiba & Peterson, 1999, p. 374). In this argument, students are constructed as dangerous, out of control, and in need of strict discipline in order to be forced to behave correctly (Devine, 1996; Hyman & Snook, 2000; Skiba & Noam, 2001). While the need to maintain safe schools is undeniably "incontrovertible" (APA, 2008, p. 859), especially in light of highly publicized incidences that point to a lack of safety in schools, most of the research that I reviewed argued that zero tolerance policies and exclusionary discipline only contribute to an ever-increasing sense of violence in the school environment (APA, 2008; Hyman & Snook, 2000; Kupchik, 2010). In fact, the American Psychological Association (2008) summarized their task force report on zero tolerance stating

> Ultimately, an examination of the evidence shows that zero tolerance policies as implemented have failed to achieve the goals of an effective system of school discipline. Although it seems intuitive that removing disruptive students from school will make schools better places for those students who remain, or that severe punishment will improve the behavior of the punished student or of those who witness that punishment, the available evidence consistently flies in the face of these beliefs. Zero tolerance has

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not been shown to improve school climate or school safety. Its application in suspension

and expulsion has not proven an effective means of improving student behavior. It has

not resolved, and indeed may have exacerbated, minority overrepresentation in school

punishments. Zero tolerance policies as applied appear to run counter to our best

knowledge of child development. (p. 860)

While consistent guidelines for enforcing discipline might be positioned as a way to

avoid bias, there are many who have argued that there remains a great deal of inconsistency in

the various applications of disciplinary interventions (Advancement Project, 2005; Fenning &

Rose, 2007; Monroe, 2005; Skiba, Simmons, Ritter, Kohler, Henderson, & Wu, 2006). Further,

according to Hirschfield (2008), the implementation of "uniform procedural and disciplinary

guidelines" transfers decision-making about student behavior from the discretion of teachers to

"disciplinary codes that stipulate exclusionary punishments," ultimately increasing the number of

suspensions and expulsions (p. 82). In fact, in the years following the passage of the GFSA, the

rate of suspensions increased nationally from 3.7% of students to almost 7% (Hirschfield, 2008).

Historically then the passage of the GFSA of 1994 allowed for students to be suspended in

greater numbers than ever, a trend that has been confirmed in a great deal of the literature. In

response to the rise in suspensions, mostly out-of-school suspensions, many schools began to

implement in-school suspension programs.

In-School Suspension

ISS was initially implemented in the 1970's (Dupper, 2010) as a form of suspension that

"denied the privilege of *attending class*" but that still required students to come to school; this

"compromise sanction" was intended to "remove a troublesome student from the classroom

while largely preserving the student's discipline record" (Troyan, 2003, p. 1642). Further, in that schools often prevent out-of-school suspended students from making up school work, ISS was conceived as a way to allow students to stay caught up academically (Brown, 2007). However, according to the limited research on ISS programs, the educational opportunities afforded to students in ISS often varies greatly from those in the regular classrooms (Dupper, et al., 2009; Troyan, 2003) and often serves as merely a "holding tank" on the way to out-of-school suspension (Dupper, 2010, p. 49).

Since the passage of the GFSA, much of the literature surrounding discipline has focused on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of zero tolerance policies in schools. For example, there have been arguments made that the "orderly movement of students and their obedience to strict codes of conduct" (Hirschfield, 2008, p. 80) is necessary for schools to function effectively; however, in my review of the literature on exclusionary discipline policies, such as suspensions, most of what has been written has examined the consequences of excluding students from educational opportunities, with very little of the research suggesting that such exclusions are effective (Skiba & Knesting, 2002).

In the next section, I provide a detailed review of the research related to suspensions, recognizing that most of that literature defines suspensions broadly, primarily focusing on out-of-school suspensions. While a few of the studies I reviewed included in-school suspensions (I made note of those studies in my discussion), very little research has been conducted that specifically examines the implementation of ISS programs. As noted above, some of the research on out-of-school suspensions and expulsions has suggested that in-school suspension programs should be used as an alternative to OSS (Brown, 2007; Hyman & Snook, 1999); however,

Theriot and Dupper (2010) argued that unless those ISS programs are well-designed, they can have the same exclusionary effects as OSS interventions. For example, Dupper, Theriot, and Craun (2009), addressing their implications for social workers desiring to reduce OSS for students, recommended developing ISS programs that "focus on the elimination of students' problematic behaviors rather than the elimination of students themselves" (p. 6). In light of the scant research on in-school suspension programs, I argue that the "history" of in-school suspension is being written in our current educational climate and that much more research needs to be conducted to demonstrate its effectiveness or ineffectiveness and to look more specifically at the potential consequences of certain configurations of ISS. It is my hope that this current study will add to that body of research.

The Use of Suspensions in Schools

In this section, I review the literature related to the use of suspensions. I feel that this literature is important to understand, in that it situates my participants' experiences with ISS within a broader context of school disciplinary procedures and that it helps the reader to more fully understand the phenomenon of being in ISS. As stated above, the body of research on classroom discipline is immense and covers a wide array of topics, such as the use of particular forms of discipline, teachers' and administrators' beliefs and approaches to discipline, and the consequences and/or effects of discipline. My particular interest is in the area of exclusionary practices related to discipline, which I view as discipline interventions that serve to exclude students from educational opportunities. Several disciplinary practices fall within the category of exclusionary disciplinary interventions: in-school suspension (ISS), out-of-school suspension (OSS), expulsion, and alternative school (see Chapter One and the previous section for a detailed

discussion of these types of interventions). In much of the research reported, studies include one or more of those practices; in that I am specifically interested in ISS, I paid particular attention to studies that focused on the practice of ISS, although within much of the research, the practices are often not differentiated. In such cases, I opted to include the information, recognizing that ISS is often included in what is labeled as simply "suspension." Finally, while I included literature that involved secondary students in general, I paid special attention to those studies that focused on the experiences of middle school students.

The literature on suspensions, often including both ISS and OSS, has suggested that while suspensions may be effective for a few students, for the majority of students, the practice is (1) overused (2) capriciously applied (3) ineffective (4) that it often leads to unintended consequences for the recipients, both immediate and long-term, and (5) that the applications of suspension practices are disproportionately doled out to minority students and students with lower socioeconomic status. As I discuss the literature on the use of suspensions, I organize my discussion around these five categories.

Overuse of Suspensions

In reviewing the literature on the use of suspension as a deterrent to misbehavior, I found that most of it concluded that suspensions and other exclusionary approaches are highly overused as interventions for what many see as minor offenses (Mendez, 2003; Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997; Wald & Losen, 2003). According to recent statistics from the Children's Defense Fund (2007), public school students are suspended at a rate of one every second. Further, as noted above, the overreliance on exclusionary practices, such as suspensions and expulsions, became even more problematic with the passage of the Gun Free Schools Act

(GFSA) of 1994, which has been applied to a wide variety of offenses that have nothing to do with weapons (Casella, 2001; Skiba & Peterson, 1999; Sughrue, 2003). The zero-tolerance policies that resulted from the GFSA has led to the criminalization of behaviors that historically have been handled through school discipline policies and according to some, has resulted in administrators and teachers abdicating their responsibility for helping students develop appropriate social and behavioral skills (Bazemore & Schiff, 2004; Giroux, 2003; Noguera, 2003; Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006).

One common criticism of the use of suspensions is that they are often applied to offenses for which other more logical consequences could be used. Dupper (1998) stated that suspension is frequently applied to "preventable, minor offenses" and is therefore "unjustified, ineffective," contributing to school failure for many students (p. 354). Examining suspension data over an eight-year period (1987-1994), Dupper and Bosch (1996) found that the majority of excluded students in one school district were suspended for minor offenses. Grouping 29 possible suspension codes into four broad categories, "criminal activities, physical confrontation with staff, physical confrontation with students, and other behavior problems" (p. 143), Dupper and Bosch found that 44% of the suspensions they reviewed could be identified as "other behavior problems." These "other" problems included behaviors such as truancy, dress code violations, excessive tardiness, disruptive behaviors (i.e., talking, getting out of seat), and insubordination, behaviors which, according to Dupper and Bosch, are preventable, do not merit exclusion from school, and could be handled through long-term, student-centered strategies.

In another large study that analyzed out of school suspension records for one large school district (n=142 schools), Mendez and Knoff (2003) found that 74% of middle school

suspensions were due to disobedience, while only one percent was in response to serious offenses. In one county in the state where this current study was conducted, suspension data from the 2005-2006 school year showed that of the 11,200 infractions that resulted in suspensions (impacting close to 10% of the total student population), 40% fell under the category of "Conduct Prejudicial to Good Order" which was described by the Knox County Task Force on Racial Disparity in Discipline (2007) as a term that was "nebulous and overused" (p. 3). Such vague categorizations of misbehavior, along with the overuse of such categories as "grounds for exclusion," have often been framed as a call for the creation of a safe learning environment, but in many situations they are used simply as punishment or as a strategy for removing students who are troublemakers (Arcia, 2007; American Psychological Association, 2008; Skiba et al., 2006). Not only are exclusionary practices reportedly overused but they are inconsistently and capriciously applied.

Capriciousness of Suspensions

Researchers not only report that suspensions are overused in response to challenging student behavior, but there is a great deal of evidence that they are often indiscriminately applied (Morrison, Anthony, Storino, & Dillon, 2001; Wald & Casella, 2006). In spite of zero tolerance policies which theoretically should create more consistent discipline, suspensions are generally doled out inconsistently, and as I will discuss below, are inconsistently applied to some groups more than others. As noted above, many school policies create behavior standards that are "nebulous" (Knox County Task Force, 2007), allowing for a capriciousness to the discipline process whereby certain students were watched more closely "for additional acts of defiance" based on previous disciplinary problems or other factors. For these students, subsequent

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misbehavior is often treated with more severe action, even though the subsequent offense was less serious (Morrison et al., 2001, p. 289). In other words, by utilizing vague terminology in what are positioned as standardized disciplinary interventions, teachers and administrators have huge discretionary freedom to apply suspensions in ways that are often subjective and inconsistent. Although providing such discretionary freedom to administrators and teachers, in and of itself, may not necessarily be bad practice, the American Psychological Association (2008) found that often this discretion has resulted in racially disproportionate applications, which will be discussed in detail below.

The inconsistency of administrators' decisions to suspend students has been noted in several studies. Citing Noddings' work, Loy (2002) found that principals who expressed an *ethic of justice*, which Loy defined as a principal who "insists on rules, reduces situations to a moral sameness and reduces the importance of relationships and particularities" (p. 13), had higher out-of-school suspension rates and tended to base their decisions on issues of policy, administrative control, and the rights of the other students in the school. While they admitted that excluding students from school was not beneficial to those students, they "consistently chose to sacrifice the learning of the one student in order to protect the learning of the group" (p. 138). In contrast, principals who expressed an *ethic of care*, which Loy characterized as "moral attention, sympathetic understanding, relationship awareness, and response" (p. 13), had lower out-of-school suspension rates and addressed student behavior by establishing caring relationships with students, by considering the context and the students' needs, and by building a strong in-school suspension program which worked with students to improve their academics and their behavior.

Loy's (2002) research suggests that the decision to suspend a student is as much

dependent on the disposition of the administrator as on the specific behavior of the student, a finding that is consistent with other research that points to inconsistencies in the use of suspensions as a disciplinary intervention. For example, in focus group interviews with 43 middle and high school public school teachers, Wald and Casella (2006) found that participants expressed frustration with administrators' inconsistent application of suspension and expulsion, implying that even though zero tolerance policies were intended to create universally defined consequences for specific offenses, there remained a great deal of ambiguity about such consequences. Thus, while much of the research on exclusionary discipline has suggested that suspensions, both OSS and ISS, are overused and capriciously applied, there is also quite a bit of evidence that suspensions are ineffective and may actually exacerbate negative behaviors. I discuss these two ideas in the next two sections.

Ineffectiveness of Suspensions

As noted above in the history of discipline, the policies of zero tolerance, which were implemented as a way of ensuring safe schools, have consistently been shown to be ineffective at doing so. In one longitudinal study, tracking students from 2nd to 12th grade in nearly 150 schools, Mendez (2003) surveyed students and teachers and examined suspension records, demographic information, and standardized test scores. She reported that although "get-tough policies, including zero-tolerance policies, [claim to] make schools safer and create a better learning climate," her research did not support such a claim (p. 25). Not only did the use of suspensions not appear to serve as a deterrent to further misbehavior, Mendez reported that students who were suspended in elementary and middle school were more likely to engage in challenging behaviors later in their academic careers. She speculated that the reason for the

failure of suspensions to deter misbehavior is that excluding students from school "fails to address issues that cause students to misbehave" (p. 25).

The American Psychological Association (APA) (2008), in a task force report on the implementation of zero tolerance policies, including suspensions and expulsions, concluded that

despite a 20-year history of implementation, there are surprisingly few data that could directly test the assumptions of a zero tolerance approach to school discipline, and the data that are available tend to contradict those assumptions. Moreover, zero tolerance policies may negatively affect the relationship of education with juvenile justice and appear to conflict to some degree with current best knowledge concerning adolescent development. (p. 852)

Instead of exclusionary practices, the APA suggested increased use of preventative and responsive measures, such as bullying prevention and restorative justice, to address students' behavior in ways that do not further alienate them from educational opportunities.

In another study, Petrosino, Turpin-Petrosino, and Buehler (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of nine studies which had examined the effectiveness of various "scared straight" type of programs for reducing juvenile delinquency. They found that exposure to the "realistic depictions of life in prison," (p. 42) intended to deter further criminal behavior, was somewhat effective at changing youth behavior temporarily, but in the long run, was not only ineffective, but in several situations, actually resulted in an increase in recidivism rates among at-risk juveniles. Likewise, research on "get-tough" policies in schools has demonstrated that they are also generally ineffective and may ultimately exacerbate student misbehavior. This exacerbation

of challenging student behavior is one of several unintended consequences that I found discussed in the literature (Morrison et al., 2001) and that I discuss in the next section.

Unintended Consequences of Suspensions

As noted above, the use of exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions, has been found to be ineffective at reducing students' misbehavior or creating a safe learning environment. There is also quite a bit of research that looks at the consequences of suspensions on the students who are the recipients of such exclusionary forms of discipline. I discuss those consequences in this section.

Exclusionary Practices Exacerbate Misbehavior

Several researchers have sought to understand the correlations between excessively punitive and exclusionary practices and the increase in student misbehavior. Some have linked student behavior with academic frustrations, proposing that students who are already struggling academically are deprived of opportunities to learn, further losing academic ground and resulting in further misbehavior (Christle, et al., 2004; Noguera, 2003). Leone, Christle, Nelson, Skiba, Frey, and Jolivette (2003) reported on the relationship between student misbehavior and a history of academic failure, asserting that some students will act out as a way of escaping the frustration of academic failure. They further suggested that when teachers are inadequately prepared to handle such misbehavior or are utilizing instructional strategies that do not promote student success, they exacerbate the potential for classroom disciplinary problems and reduce the educational opportunities for all students. Other research has suggested that students' misbehavior may be an act of resistance to rules that seek to ensure conformity and control. These studies suggest that disciplinary interventions based on coercion and control may end up

exacerbating student behavior problems and increasing acts of defiance (Casella, 2001;

Ferguson, 2000; Noguera, 2003; Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997).

Some research has attributed the increase in student misbehavior to the absence of caring

relationships between students and teachers, suggesting that a climate of fear, control, and

punishment may create a "toxic environment" (Hyman & Snook, 2000). For example, Casella

(2001) conducted ethnographic research on school violence in two high schools; neither school

experienced a reduction in violence after zero tolerance measures were enacted and several of the

teachers interviewed expressed that the climate had become more antagonistic since their

implementation. Casella stated that exclusionary, zero tolerance policies provided school

personnel with opportunities to "get tough on kids who already have it tough" (p. 20) and a tool

for politicians to demonstrate that they are getting tough on crime. Sullivan and Tifft (2005) also

critiqued zero tolerance approaches, accusing them of being coercive tactics that continue to

erode not only the school environment, but possibly the broader social climate as well. Sullivan

and Tifft, as advocates for restorative approaches to criminal justice and school discipline, have

argued that punitive responses to offenses deteriorate social relationships and create relationships

characterized by mistrust and fear. Thus, when students are criminalized for minor offenses and

are met with power and coercion on the part of the teachers and administrators in their lives,

there is a possibility that it will not only affect their relationships with teachers, but with other

adults as well. Wald and Losen (2003) noted that since the implementation of zero tolerance

policies, the annual rate of suspensions has doubled, supporting the claim that harsher penalties

for misbehavior are ineffective at reducing misbehavior and may create more disciplinary

challenges for schools; however, the effects of ineffective disciplinary practices does not only

threaten the overall climate of the school. According to the research, another unintended

consequence of exclusionary discipline practices is the harmful effects on the students who are

suspended.

Exclusionary Practices Negatively Impact Students' Academic Trajectory

Extensive research has documented correlations between academic failure and school

behavior. While much of that research demonstrates that students who have a history of

academic failure are more likely to misbehave, other research suggests that students who are

suspended from school suffer academically due to missed educational opportunities

(Advancement Project, 2005; Advancement Project/Civil Rights Project, 2000; Casella, 2003).

According to the Knox County Task Force report (2007), when students are suspended, "they are

not being educated – a fundamental right of children and the fundamental role of the public

school system" (p. 5). Giroux (2003) further stated that as we continue to punish students,

criminalizing their behavior through draconian practices, we not only deprive students of

educational opportunities that might lift them out of trouble, but we also undermine the

democratic principles on which our country was founded.

Arcia's (2007) research related to middle school suspension rates suggested that out-of-

school suspensions have a negative impact on academic achievement by depriving students of

educational opportunities and creating students who are unable to find success in academic

endeavors. Her conclusions align with research by Christle, Nelson, and Jolivette (2004) which

portrayed a "cycle of failure" for students who had experienced suspensions in 161 Kentucky

middle schools. The cycle began with academic frustration, either from boredom or feelings of

failure, which led to increased behavior problems. The students who misbehaved were then

excluded from academic instruction due to suspension which then culminated in further academic frustration. They suggested that unless this cycle is broken, the downward spiral often continues until students either drop out of school or end up in juvenile delinquency. Christle et al. concluded that "suspension may be a temporary solution to a behavior problem, but it is academically detrimental and may produce life-long, negative effects" (p. 521).

Likewise, Morrison, Anthony, Storino, and Dillon (2001) analyzed the suspension records of 85 middle school students who were participating in an in-school suspension program designed to help students reflect on their behavior and consider "possible alternative actions, problem solving skills, [and] communication skills" (p. 280). The students also completed questionnaires about their academic history, their behavior history, and information about their friends, family, and teachers. Morrison et al. found that the students in their study who frequently experienced academic failure had developed a negative discipline trajectory that led to multiple suspensions, lower grade point averages, and unsatisfactory attendance records. Morrison et al., however, noted that after participating in the suspension program, described as "a teaching/counseling approach" (p. 280), some students experienced a positive shift in their academic trajectory, suggesting that the cycle of failure, noted by these and other researchers, can potentially be reversed through other approaches to discipline.

Exclusionary Practices Have Deleterious Effects on Students beyond Education

Unfortunately, intervention programs such as those proposed by Morrison et al. (2001) are too seldom utilized; instead, as noted above, schools continue to rely on exclusionary practices which not only have negative effects on students' academic trajectories, but can affect students beyond simply what happens in the school context. Students who are routinely the

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subjects of exclusionary discipline have a history of being pushed out of the education system

altogether, contributing to higher dropout rates, delinquency rates, underemployment, and host of

other social problems (Advancement Project/Civil Rights Project, 2000; Casella, 2003;

Children's Defense Fund, 2007; Christle, Nelson, & Jolivette, 2004).

A report by the Advancement Project (2005) illustrated the results of excessive

exclusionary discipline practices by examining suspension rates in three large school districts. In

one district, over half of the student expulsions were for "subjective, non-violent acts" (as

discussed above) and as many as 1,400 students were referred to the local police through

citations, arrests, and juvenile detention. The report, citing trends from the Denver Public

Schools (DPS) stated:

> DPS has adopted a "double jeopardy" approach to school discipline, which has
>
> pushed students out of schools, through suspensions and expulsions, and pushed
>
> them into juvenile courts, through tickets and arrests, sometimes for one act of
>
> childish behavior that would have warranted nothing more than in-school
>
> detention or a reprimand only 15 years ago. (p. 30)

Similar patterns were noted in the other two districts where student misbehavior was increasingly

criminalized, pushing students into the juvenile justice system where they had little chance of

overcoming a criminal record. In fact, Hirschfield (2008) noted that with the increased presence

of school resource officers, metal detectors, and surveillance cameras, schools "have come to

look, sound, and act more like criminal justice institutions" than educational facilities (p. 81).

Beyond the criminalization of students (Hirschfield, 2008), there is some research that

has noted the social and emotional impact on students who have been suspended from school.

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Bazemore and Schiff (2004) suggested that exclusionary practices, such as suspensions, absolve schools of the responsibility for addressing discipline issues and deprive students of the opportunity to resolve their own conflicts or build competence in solving problems (Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006). According to Bazemore and Schiff, conflict is an essential component of growth; exclusionary discipline practices remove that conflict, disallowing students to experience growth that may only come through conflict and problem solving. According to Bazemore and Schiff (2004), by instituting mandatory expulsion and/or suspension, school personnel have shifted the potential for conflict out of schools and into the juvenile court system. This often results in students leaving school without having had opportunities to work through conflict and develop competence in problem-solving about behavioral choices, deficits which may plague them throughout their lifetime.

Skiba and Noam (2001) suggested that not only were exclusionary practices ineffective at helping students change their behavior, but they found that students who experienced exclusionary discipline often felt a sense of rejection and isolation, which had long-term emotional consequences. Their findings were consistent with a policy statement issued by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) (2003) which stated that students who have experienced emotional or social trauma are more likely to act out and therefore be suspended. The members agreed that students who are excluded from school are likely to experience depression and/or anger and aggression; however, they are often unlikely to receive the support from mental health services that they need to cope with and recover from such exclusion. The AAP recommended that "a full assessment for social, medical, and mental health problems by a pediatrician (or other

providers of care for children and youth) is recommended for all school-referred students who have been suspended or expelled" (p. 1208).

The exclusion and/or criminalization of students potentially sends the message that "students are not wanted, that they are not worthy of schooling, and deserve to be segregated and alienated" (Casella, 2001, p. 177). According to Casella, this is particularly true for students who are poor and non-white. When punishment is applied to some students, they are able to "bounce back from a suspension or expulsion," but students "who are already negatively affected by poverty, racism, academic failure, and other realities" (Casella, 2003, p. 879) experience such punishment differently; it is harder for them to recover. In the next section, I review the research that examines the disparity that often exists in the application of discipline based on race, gender, and socioeconomic status.

Disparity in Suspensions

A final characteristic noted in the literature related to the use of suspensions and other exclusionary policies is the disproportionate implementation of such practices for certain targeted groups. In the county in the state where the current study took place, a task force on racial disparity in discipline was appointed by the mayor and the school board to investigate allegations of racial disparity in school discipline. Disaggregating system-wide data from the 2005-2006 school year, members of the task force analyzed over 11,200 infractions that had resulted in suspensions. While the task force did find that minority students were indeed over-represented among students who had been suspended, they also reported that almost half of the suspended students received free and/or reduced lunch and that 70% were males, findings which

are consistent with other studies showing the layered complexity of suspensions and race, gender, and socio-economic status (Knox County Task Force, 2007).

Reporting on descriptive data based on one year of disciplinary records, Skiba, Peterson, and Williams (1997) examined the referral and suspension rates of over 17,000 middle school students at 20 urban and suburban schools. Across both school contexts, they found that students in urban schools were primarily suspended for violations such as non-compliance or insubordination, while suspensions in suburban schools were generally reserved for more serious offenses. Skiba et al. suggested that not only is there an overuse of suspension as a procedure for addressing disruptive student behavior, but there is also a disparity in the characteristics of students who are suspended, leading to suspicions of discrimination.

According to Fenning and Rose (2007), in over 30 years of research, the overrepresentation of African American students, especially males, is virtually uncontested. In their review of this research, they summarized the qualitative research that has sought to illustrate the over-reliance on exclusionary discipline practices, the way those exclusionary practices target certain groups of students, and the impact of those practices on students of color. In response to what they deem obvious discrimination, they call for further research which examines "the ways in which school personnel invoke discipline procedures for students perceived as trouble-makers or as threatening classroom control" (p. 548). While that is not the focus of my current study, similar patterns could be seen in my participants; for example, of the 13 participants, the seven minority youth missed more than twice the number of days due to ISS than the white youth and had more than twice the number of incidences of suspensions and three

of the black males in the study had the highest numbers of suspensions and the most days of school missed due to ISS. This will be addressed further in Chapter Three.

Summary of Research on Suspension

The extensive research on exclusionary practices has consistently demonstrated that suspensions are overused, capriciously implemented, ineffective, and disproportionately applied. Further, such practices have been shown to exacerbate student misbehavior, deprive students of educational opportunities, and cause harm to students beyond their educational experiences. According to Dupper (1998), "punitive school environments across the United States will produce greater numbers of students who are at risk of being repeatedly suspended from school and even pushed out of school unless alternative interventions are implemented" (p. 365). Reyes (2006) suggested that in order to prevent excessive suspensions, and/or other exclusionary practices, teachers and administrators need to be made more aware of and encouraged to use available resources, such as alternative discipline systems, school counselors, and continued professional development.

Most of the research on suspensions, both ISS and OSS, has been quantitative in nature, drawing on statistical trends and demographic information. While there has been some qualitative research related to the use of suspensions, most of that literature has been "teacher-centered" (Gallagher, 2003, p. 117), seeking the perspectives of those who administer the disciplinary interventions, such as teachers and administrators. Prior to reviewing the research on students' perspectives, I will provide a brief review of the research related to teachers' perspectives of classroom discipline.

Teacher Perspectives about Discipline

In light of the extensive research above that seems to demonstrate the ineffectiveness and potential consequences of exclusionary discipline, there is cause to question why teachers continue to utilize such disciplinary practices. There has been an abundance of research that has examined the perspectives of teachers as they make decisions and engage with students around perceived misbehavior. In this section, I will briefly summarize some of that research, beginning with studies that focus on teachers' frustrations about student behavior.

Teachers' Frustration with Student Behavior

As noted in Chapter One, there is a great deal of research that suggests that teachers are often frustrated with students' behavior and that their frustration is one of the most cited reasons for teachers leaving the profession (Borg, 1998; Check, 2001; Grayson & Alvarez, 2007; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). While this is not a new phenomenon (Meryman, 1962), there has recently been a great deal of research related to teacher's frustrations with school discipline. One of the frustrations noted by the literature is teachers' perceived lack of autonomy related to school discipline.

For example, in surveys and focus group interviews with 238 high school teachers and 70 middle school teachers in and around New York City, Sullivan and Keeney (2008) found that the most reported threat to school safety by teachers was not student violence, but rather a "lack of cohesive culture and relationships between staff and students" (p. 7). Survey results of the study showed that 43% of the teachers felt that they had little or no influence over school discipline policies. In another study, 43 middle and high school teachers who participated in focus group interviews conducted by Wald and Casella (2006) also commented that they felt limited in their

ability to respond to student misbehavior because there were few alternatives to suspension; students either were suspended or their behavior was not dealt with at all.

Citing teachers' frustrations with discipline and recognizing that "teachers will continue to be the frontline managers for student discipline" (Reyes, 2006, p. 132), extensive research has sought the perspectives of those teachers. Much of the research related to classroom discipline examines how teachers make decisions about what constitutes misbehavior, about the causes of such misbehavior, and about their decisions to intervene.

Teachers' Beliefs about What Counts as Misbehavior

One area of research on teachers' beliefs about discipline has examined the variability among teachers about what constitutes misbehavior (Achenbach, McConaughy, & Howell, 1987). For example, Vavrus and Cole (2002) found that teachers often overlooked student behaviors, even when they had been defined previously as misbehavior s; based on extensive classroom observations, they found that teachers oriented to student misbehavior only after it challenged either the normal classroom discourse or the teachers' authority in the classroom. Thus, based on this study, teachers' beliefs about what constituted misbehavior seemed to be contingent on what the students' behavior did in the dynamics of the classroom.

In another study related to the impact of teachers' beliefs on their views of student behaviors, Ladd and Linderholm (2008) found that pre-service teachers' interpretations of students' behaviors were influenced by their prior knowledge about the students and about the schools they attended. In their findings, they concluded that participants who perceived the school to be a failing school were more likely to recall and attend to negative student behaviors and less likely to comment positively about student behaviors than those who perceived the

school to be a typical or an exceptional school. Thus, according to these studies, teachers' perspectives about discipline are often defined by their beliefs about what counts as misbehavior. Other studies reporting on teachers' perspectives of discipline examine their views of the causes of students' perceived misbehavior.

Teachers' Beliefs about the Causes of Misbehavior

Another area of research on teachers' perspectives of discipline involves teachers' beliefs about the causes or attributions of students' behavior. In three studies that specifically examined teacher beliefs about the source of misbehavior, findings tended to focus on whether attributions were internal or external to the student and whether they are based on static or dynamic views of student behavior.

For example, in surveys and focus group interviews with secondary teachers from Canada and Singapore (n=255, 247, respectively) Klassen, Chong, Huan, Wong, Kates, and Hannok (2008) found that teachers from Canada, representing westernized thinking, tended to attribute student misbehavior to internal, individual deficits, finding them to be "immutable aspect of the child's learning profile" (p. 1932). The teachers from Singapore, however, attributed student misbehavior to a lack of discipline or motivation, expressing the need for teachers to collectively address those concerns. In similar research, Bibou-Nikou (2000) found that teachers in Greece attributed student misbehavior to three primary causes. Internal causes within the child, which represented things like attitude or personality; sociocultural causes within the home or community, which represented things like poor parenting or lack of supervision; and external factors within the school, which represented things like peer influence or school scheduling. She found that most of the teachers favored explanations which placed the blame on

the students (i.e. internal factors) or the home. Even when teachers recognized the role of the school in students' misbehavior, Bibou-Nakou stated that they often contributed disciplinary problems to a lack of resources, lack of time, and lack of training.

While the lack of resources, time, and training are contextual realities that are examined below, Bibou-Nakou (2000) also reported that the teachers tended to construct categories of students based on societal norms, i.e., "what everyone knows" (p. 96); good students, problem students, and high and low achievers were common categories utilized by teachers. Drawing on discourse from psychological theories of child development, many teachers attributed student misbehavior to immaturity, developmental delay, or static conceptions of deviant personality, seeming to minimize their responsibility for intervening to help students.

In one other study, Irwin and Nucci (2004) surveyed 120 pre-service and 120 in-service teachers about their interpretations of students' classroom behavior, concluding that both pre-service and in-service teachers generally felt that students' behavior was precipitated by external factors in the classroom, such as distractions, room arrangement, etc., more so than internal factors, such as anger, fear, or aggression. However, in-service teachers were more likely to see students' misbehavior as reasoned, intentional, and arising out of internalized morals, rather than out of blind obedience or habit, as indicted by the responses of pre-service teachers. Thus according to Irwin and Nucci, not only are there both internal and external attributions of student behaviors, but those attributions are often different for beginning teachers than they are for veteran teachers. In the next section, I review the literature around teachers' disciplinary choices and include studies that examine teacher characteristics that seem to influence teachers' decisions about discipline.

Teachers' Choices about Disciplinary Interventions

A third area of research around teachers' perspectives about discipline revolves around their decisions about disciplinary interventions. Most of these studies look at the types of disciplinary interventions teachers prefer, however, within this body of literature, there are also studies that examine the factors that impact teachers' disciplinary decisions, including their beliefs about students, their own personal characteristics, and educational contexts that affect their decisions.

There is a great deal of research that looks at teachers' disciplinary decisions, attempting to understand what teachers do in response to perceived misbehavior. Lewis, Romi, Katz and Qui (2008) conducted survey research with 748 teachers in Australia, China, and Israel; their survey distinguished between three commonly utilized approaches to classroom discipline. One approach utilized clearly established expectations and rewards and punishments. Another approach focused on student self-regulation, utilizing strategies such as negotiation, contracts, and student-teacher discussions to influence student behavior. A third approach emphasized "group participation and decision making, whereby the group takes responsibility for ensuring the appropriateness of all its members" (Lewis et al., 2008, p. 716). While they distinguished between the three approaches, Lewis et al. found that most teachers utilized a combination of the three approaches.

In another study, this one using Wolfgang's (1999) taxonomy of discipline philosophies, Erden and Wolfgang (2004) assessed whether teachers preferred a Relationship-Listening, a Confronting-Contracting, or a Rules and Consequences approach to disciplinary intervention. They provided eight vignettes with various discipline incidents to 130 female PK-1 teachers,

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followed by possible interventions for the teachers to choose from. Interested in gender disparities in discipline, they found that for discipline events where the male students were misbehaving, teachers primarily chose the Rules and Consequences option, while they chose the Confronting-Contracting intervention when the misbehaving student was a female. Erden and Wolfgang concluded that when female teachers were addressing discipline problems, they were more likely to use "maximum power when dealing with the misbehaviors of male students…[and] less use of power when female students misbehaved" (p. 8).

Some of the studies I reviewed looked at the differences between what teachers from different countries did in response to perceived misbehavior. For example, Akin-Little, Little, and Laniti (2007) surveyed 149 teachers from the United States and 97 teachers from Greece concerning their use of classroom management procedures. They found that teachers in the U.S. were more likely to report using extrinsic reinforcement, such as stickers or tokens, and that the most prevalent strategy used to address disruptive behavior was a verbal reprimand or a "long stare" aimed at the offending student. For students with chronic misbehavior, the top two interventions utilized by teachers in both countries were the revocation of the student's privileges or the removal of the student from the classroom.

In similar research, Shin and Koh (2008) found that in response to student misbehavior, American teachers relied most heavily on administrative interventions and parent involvement, while Korean teachers were more likely to utilize verbal and/or non-verbal warnings and teacher-student conferences. Further, the Korean teachers were more likely to directly intervene when students misbehaved, as opposed to American teachers who were more likely to rely on a third party, such as an administrator or teacher; they also reported that Korean teachers were more

likely to rely on aversive practices, such as corporal punishment or grade reduction for misbehavior, than American teachers. These final two studies by Akin-Little et al. (2007) and Shin and Koh (2008) suggest that there are cultural differences that might influence the types of disciplinary interventions that teachers choose to utilize. Other research has examined other teacher beliefs, characteristics, and contexts that influence the types of disciplinary decisions that they make.

Teacher Beliefs that Influence their Disciplinary Decisions

At the beginning of this section, I reviewed the research that suggested that teachers hold varying beliefs about the causes of students' misbehavior; there is some research that suggests that teachers' attributions of causality tend to impact the types of disciplinary interventions they choose to implement (Swinson & Knight, 2007). In other words, teachers' decisions about the types of disciplinary interventions they use are often influenced by what they determine is the cause of the behavior. For example, Riordan (2006) distinguished between two competing views of student misbehavior stating that deficit models attribute student misbehavior to the students and their background, while alternative models view "student misbehavior as a product of characteristics of students in combination with school factors such as rules, policies, curriculum offerings, attitudes of teachers and principals, the provision or lack thereof of counselling, and other student-support services" (p. 240). Likewise, Bibou-Nakou, Kiosseoglou, and Stogiannidou (2000), in surveys conducted with over 200 primary school teachers (students ages 6-12), found that teachers who attributed student misbehavior to external factors were more likely to take more integrative approaches to discipline (talking to the student or changing seats), while teachers who saw misbehavior as located within the student, attributed to student

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personality or familial factors, were more likely to take a punitive approach to intervention. They concluded that teachers' attribution beliefs about students impacted their decision-making about discipline and was thus an important area for further research.

In the Vavrus and Cole (2002) study mentioned above, videotaped observations in two high school classrooms were analyzed in order to explore the disciplinary moments where a teacher decided to remove a student from the classroom due to disruptive behavior. Vavrus and Cole found that in both classrooms, the use of suspension was closely linked to a disruption of the teachers' accepted discourse on the part of the student. For example, in one incident where the students were particularly off task and disengaged with the lesson, the teacher continued to issue "last warnings" until one student commented about the lack of order, challenging the teacher's authority. The student's "evaluation violated the normal classroom discourse pattern, in which teachers typically evaluate students' responses," and led to that student's suspension (p. 101). The authors concluded that "disciplinary moments are shaped, though not determined, by sociocultural relations in the classroom that affect whether a nonviolent event will be singled out for a suspension by the teacher" (p. 109). Thus, in these studies, it appears that teachers' beliefs about the cause of the perceived misbehavior have an influence on their decisions about when and how to address student behavior. Lastly, it appears that teachers' disciplinary decisions are often influenced by teachers' personal characteristics.

Teacher Characteristics that Influence their Disciplinary Decisions

There is a body of research that has examined the personal characteristics of teachers that tend to influence their decision-making about discipline interventions, such as self-efficacy (Baker, 2005), confidence (Martin, Linfoot, & Stephenson, 1999), and years of teaching

experience (Borg, 1998; Irwin & Nucci, 2004). For example, Borg (1998) reported that younger teachers tended to see things more seriously than those teachers with more experience. This was especially true of teachers who taught younger secondary students, i.e. 11-13 year olds, or middle school students.

Finally, in survey research with K-2 teachers, Martin et al. (1999) found strong correlations between teachers' confidence levels and their tendency to refer misbehaving students to other school-based professionals, suggesting that perhaps teachers felt uncomfortable handling their own disciplinary problems. In their findings, they stated that less confident teachers were more likely to use punishment in response to student misbehavior. Very few of the teachers in this study utilized non-school resources, such as collaborative relationships with other professions or counseling referral services; nor did they refer students to non-school professionals for assistance. Further, the teachers preferred school-based referrals and punishment rather than positive strategies, despite research suggesting the importance of positive approaches to classroom discipline. In the Martin et al. study, teachers noted that they infrequently used resources that might have helped then deal more effectively with challenging behaviors, sometimes suggesting that those resources might not be available or that they simply did not have the time. In the final section of research related to teachers' perspectives of discipline, I review the studies that examine the social and educational contexts that influence teachers' decision making about student behavior.

Educational Contexts that Affect Teacher's Decisions

Some of the research that includes teachers' perspectives on discipline has examined the contextual factors that impact teachers' decisions about discipline. In the Martin et al. (1999)

research above, the teachers reported needing more information about how to respond to student misbehavior, suggesting for the authors that teachers are often underprepared and inadequately equipped for effective classroom management. Martin et al. concluded by suggesting that teachers be "(a) provided with the support they need, (b) equipped with strategies to effectively and adaptively manage behavior, and (c) provided with information that ultimately promotes a and b" (p. 356). Issues like a lack of funding, an over-emphasis on accountability at the expense of support, or policies and principles that influence teachers' lives all serve to play a role in the ways in which teachers intervene in response to perceived misbehavior.

In one study, Noguera (2003), found that teachers expressed that helping students learn to behave (i.e. helping them to develop problem-solving skills about their behavior) was something they thought was important; however, they stated that they with heavy accountability demands being placed on them , they simply did not have time to teach students how to behave. In order to not sacrifice learning for the majority, they had to make choices and sometimes those choices included getting rid of the students that they did not know how to reach.

While the teachers in Noguera's study found that it was easier to suspend the students who exhibited chronic misbehavior, Solmitz (2001), chronicling his own experiences as a high school social studies teacher, discussed the struggles he faced and the rewards he experienced trying to maintain a democratic classroom in what he referred to as an educational culture dominated by external, top-down, corporate control. Positioning his work as an historical narrative, Solmitz shared that his view of *discipline as training* differed from that of the established school policy which was more about *discipline as control*; the tension between the two perspectives often led to conflicts with administrators and a sense of frustration with

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teaching. Solmitz concluded that although "public schools teach about democracy, they do not practice it. Our schools are hierarchical in structure, controlling teachers and students to assure compliance to school, community, state and national standards" (p. 225). Solmitz' findings point to the need for further discussions about the purpose of schooling and the ways in which those purposes influence how we choose to address challenging behaviors.

In a final study, Daniel and Bondy (2008) conducted 16 interviews with various school personnel in public schools regarding exclusionary policies associated with zero tolerance and Ontario's Safe Schools Act of 2001. Particularly relevant to this study, Daniel and Bondy noted the apparent paradox that existed between participants' acknowledgement that suspensions and expulsions were ineffective and their insistence that "firm treatment of problem youth in a school setting was necessary to act as a warning for potential offenders" (p. 14). Viewing zero tolerance as a form of retributive justice based on what students deserve, the authors recommended the inclusion of restorative justice where "the focus is on helping the youth to recognize the social and emotional consequences of his or her behavior" and to "take responsibility for their actions, to take the other's perspective, and learn what could have been instead" (p. 14). In other words, they recommended that punishment be given only when it leads to learning and only in ways that build students' capacity for learning. Their recommendations align with the recommendations of this current study and suggest that more research needs to be conducted to ascertain ways in which to facilitate these types of practices in the current educational context.

The preceding research examined the perspectives of teachers in relation to school discipline. I began the review examining studies that illustrate teachers' frustration with the issue of student behavior, then looked at the research related the ways in which teachers make

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decisions about what they determine to be misbehavior, about their perceptions of the causes of misbehavior, and about the factors that influence their disciplinary decisions.

As I searched the databases looking for research on school discipline, I was struck by the relative absence of students' perspectives about most aspects of education, including disciplinary interventions. Based on the existing research, I believe a strong case can be made to eliminate exclusionary discipline practices; however, I believe a stronger case can be made by considering the students' perspectives on discipline. Desiring to hear from those silenced voices (Fine & Weis, 2003), I chose to focus this study on students' experiences with exclusionary discipline. In the next section, I provide a review of the educational research that has included student voice, concluding with a rationale for why this study is so urgent.

The Perspectives of Students in Educational Research

When we consider ways to include student perspectives in educational research, it is important that we not assume that students have not had a voice. There have historically been young adolescents who have found ways to speak back to the injustices that they saw in their spheres of influence. Sometimes they have spoken with words; sometimes with their actions (Fine & Weis, 2003). Currently, many students are finding ways to become active in issues that concern them, including their own education. There are countless websites that provide a forum for youth to get involved in educational issues and to express their thoughts and opinions about education. For example, Californians for Justice (CFJ) [2] is a statewide, student-led, grassroots organization that works on a variety of justice-related issues, particularly educational issues. They recently succeeded in bringing about policy changes related to school curriculum options

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[2] http://www.caljustice.org/cfj_live/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=28&Itemid=44

and tracking in a San Jose school system. A brief perusal of the internet will reveal many of these types of student-led organizations.

However, in other arenas, such as academia and politics, there has traditionally been a reticence to include student perspectives about educational issues (Fielding & Rudduck, 2002; Miller et al., 2000; Rodriguez, 2008). On one website, Jason, a 17-year-old activist in New York City, expressed his frustration with adults who make decisions on behalf of youth without inviting youth to be a part of those decisions:

> If you had a problem in the Black community, and you brought in a group of White people to discuss how to solve it, almost nobody would take that panel seriously. In fact, there'd probably be a public outcry. It would be the same for women's issues or gay issues. But every day, in local arenas all the way to the White House, adults sit around and decide what problems youth have and what youth need, without ever consulting us. [3]

Within academia, several researchers have attempted to include students' perspectives about a variety of educational issues. Some of this research has sought students' perspectives on schooling in general (Bland, 2008; Smyth, 2007; Valenzuela, 1999), educational reform (Noguera, 2007; Wilson & Corbett, 2001; Yonezawa & Jones, 2006, 2009), student dropout rates (Fine, 1991; Gallagher, 2002; Smyth, 2007), and teachers' practices (Cook-Sather, 2009; Noguera, 2007; Rodriguez, 2008; Smyth, 2007; Yonezawa & Jones, 2006). For example, Wilson and Corbett (2001) spoke with urban students about school reform and the types of teachers they desired. Michelle Fine (1991) sought students' perspectives on dropping out of school, arguing

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[3] http://www.youthengagementandvoice.org

that often students' perspectives are intentionally silenced through institutional, pedagogical, and curricular practices. Jeffrey Shultz and Alison Cook-Sather (2001) edited a book written by students about their experiences and desires related to schooling; in the eight student-authored chapters, groups of students discussed a variety of topics including their desire for engaging curriculum, their frustrations with teachers who demean and belittle them, their thoughts about race and gender, and their views about the purpose of education.

Obstacles to Including Students' Voices

While some researchers are attempting to include the perspectives of students in educational research, they are also noting the obstacles that often work against their efforts. For example, Rodriguez (2008) suggested that there were "intellectual paradigms that typically subtract, discredit, and dis-empower students' voices and experiences" (p. 438). As noted above, Fine (1991) cited pedagogical and curricular practices as not only ways to push students out of educational opportunities, but also to silence their resistance. Likewise, Angus (2006) suggested that the "hardening of educational policy" (p. 369) through standardization and accountability measures has led to an educational environment that restricts any input, let alone input from students. Lincoln (1995) argued that the lack of student perspectives in educational research has more to do with obstacles than with intentional silencing, suggesting that if teachers are going to incorporate students' voices in their classrooms, they must, first, believe that what students have to say is important, and second, they must "be committed to the principles of social activism and critique" (p. 90). This second principle implies that teachers must be willing to take students' perspectives into consideration, regardless of how "counter-hegemonic" (p. 90) they are.

Fielding and Rudduck (2002) also pointed to power issues as a major obstacle to including

students' perspectives in educational research and decision-making.

Students Alluding to School Discipline

Despite the obstacles or hesitations some may report about the inclusion of student voice

in educational research, there has been a recent increase in the number of studies that seek

students' perspectives on school-related issues. Very little of that research has been specifically

about classroom or school disciplinary interventions; however, within studies about students'

perspectives about other aspects of schooling, there have been spaces where students alluded to

issues of discipline. For example, in the following three studies, none of which were explicitly

about school discipline, students alluded to classroom management and/or discipline as they

talked about other experiences related to schooling.

In one project, Mirón and Lauria (1998) conducted a comparative case study of two

inner-city high schools, a neighborhood school and a city school, gathering open-ended interview

data from students deemed "academically successful" (defined as students with an A or B

average) or "academically unsuccessful" (defined as students with a C or D average). Orienting

to "student voice as agency" (p. 189), Mirón and Lauria found that students talked openly about

issues of race, social class, academic instruction, and the struggles of school life. Consistent with

other research (Sheets, 2002), they noted that these students were not powerless, passive

recipients of others' decisions, but that they exercised "distinct patterns of accommodation and

resistance" (Mirón & Lauria, 1998, p. 194), at times going along with what they had to do to get

by, while at other times acting in opposition, often through misbehavior or grades, to practices

they deemed unfair or disengaging. For several of the students in this case study, misbehavior

served as an act of resistance and opposition to school practices that they perceived as unfair, uncaring, or irrelevant.

In another study, Wilson and Corbett (2001) interviewed middle school students about their perceptions of their educational experiences, including school climate, instructional practices, and teacher characteristics. For the students in this study, one of their frustrations was with teachers they viewed as ineffective at classroom management and discipline. Though not the focus of the interviews, these students admitted that they appreciated teachers who could keep control of the classroom and who actually taught and adequately explained the material. Nothing in their study discussed student suspensions or discipline practices explicitly; however, according to Wilson and Corbett, listening to students' voices has the potential to provide "bountiful grist for the mill of uncovering, depicting, and critiquing patterns of schooling" (p. 8).

Likewise, in another interview study with students who had "made the decision to terminate their schooling" (Smyth, 2007, p. 636), students oriented toward the ways in which instructional practices, lack of meaningful relationships with teachers, and disciplinary suspensions had played a role in their decisions to leave school. Smyth argued that for these students (students who had either dropped out or been pushed out), the "suspension, exclusion, and expulsion policy…was putting these young people on a fast track out of the school" (p. 643). Smyth's findings are consistent with earlier work done by Fine (1991) who found that some students who acted out in resistance to policies and practices that they deemed unfair or illogical were encouraged by teachers and administrators to drop out of school.

The previous three studies give us a bit of insight as to the ways in which disciplinary interventions have been perceived by students; however, none of the studies were explicitly

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devoted to students' experiences with exclusionary discipline. Further, in each of the studies, the researchers noted the need for more research that examines how students make meaning of schooling. There is a growing body of research that is beginning to more explicitly examine students' perspectives of discipline and disciplinary practices, including their perceptions of the structure of school rules and of teachers' interventions when those rules are not followed. In the next section, I present a summary of that research.

Students' Perceptions about Schooling and Rules

A few studies, historically and recently, have specifically sought students' perspectives about school rules. In an early study, Marsh, Rosser, and Harre (1978) interviewed students about schooling and school rules. Differentiating between official rules and unofficial rules, the students in their study stated that non-academic students often perceived official school rules to be irrelevant, instead adopting their own rules of behavior within the confines of the school environment. The mismatch between what the students saw as just and fair, therefore, differed drastically from that of the teachers, often creating a distrust of the teachers and a culture of defiance.

In the classic ethnographic study, *Learning to Labor,* Willis (1977) presented the case of a group of adolescent boys in the United Kingdom who realized that their academic efforts were inconsequential to their future success. In a conscious attempt to create a counter-culture, they deliberately acted out, defied the school rules, and ironically, disqualified themselves from the benefits of education. According to Willis, their deliberate, blatant defiance served as an act of rejection of the schools' values and norms and a statement of their own autonomy. More recently, Ferguson (2000) came to similar conclusions in her ethnographic study of black males

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in an urban school system in the United States. She found that much of their "misbehavior" served as a form of resistance to rules that the students perceived as tools for control and ensuring conformity.

More recently, in an ethnographic study in Sweden involving two schools, 141 students, and 13 teachers, Thornberg (2008) also found a mismatch between how teachers and students viewed school rules and consequences. The students in Thornberg's study supported the inclusion of school rules, but they tended to distrust teachers' application and explanation of those rules, often perceiving rules as unfair and inconsistently applied. Countering traditional theories of socialization that assert that students are passive recipients of the socialization process, Thornberg conducted group interviews with the students and found that they often criticized and/or resisted, covertly or overtly, school rules that they deemed as unfair or illogical. According to Thornberg, failure to understand students' perspectives of school rules results in a hidden curriculum where students either follow blindly with unquestioning obedience, or where they pretend to comply yet act in defiance of the rules when adults are not around, or where they give up on classroom rule systems and overtly act in defiance of those rules.

The preceding studies by Marsh, Rosser, and Harré (1978), Thornberg (2008), Willis (1977), and Ferguson (2000) seem to suggest that while schooling may be seen as a route to a successful life for many students, not all students share those perceptions. In each of these studies, researchers investigated the academic experiences of students for whom schooling was not a successful endeavor, finding that students who perceived that education may not lead to opportunities for success were more likely to disengage, act out, or defy the system. Further, when these students felt that rules were being applied unfairly or illogically, they were prone to

actively resist such rules. These findings are consistent with other research about students'

perceptions of teachers' disciplinary interventions. This research will be discussed next, first in

studies that examine non-suspended students' perceptions of teachers' disciplinary interventions

and then in studies where the student participants have themselves been recipients of

exclusionary discipline practices.

Students' Perceptions about Teachers' Disciplinary Interventions

In my literature search, I found three studies that sought students' perspectives of

teachers' disciplinary interventions; however, they were not necessarily students who had

themselves been the recipients of those interventions. For example, in one study (Knipe,

Reynolds, & Milner, 2007), 114 students from Northern Ireland (11-16 years of age) participated

in group interviews (approximately seven students per group) about their views on disciplinary

interventions. Many of these randomly selected students, who had not necessarily been

suspended themselves, agreed that there were situations where suspensions and expulsions were

appropriate, particularly when violent behavior was involved; however, they disagreed with

lengthy suspensions (more than 3-5 days) that prevented suspended peers from attending school.

Further, these students also expressed that students who were suspended maintained the right to

an education and should be provided with educational opportunities during their suspension.

In another recent study, Lewis, Romi, Katz, and Qui (2008) administered surveys to over

5500 students in Australia, Israel, and China, comparing students' reactions to classroom

discipline. While they observed several clear distinctions between students' perceptions in the

three countries, students in all three countries tended to view some teachers' discipline

techniques as coercive, comprised of punishment, aggression, and sometimes sarcasm or anger,

while they saw other teachers' approaches as relational, promoting discussion, respect, and involvement. Based on the same set of surveys, Lewis (2001) found that students who reported being in coercive environments tended to also report greater levels of misbehavior, a diminished focus on individual responsibility, and greater levels of distraction from learning activities.

In the third study, Miller, Ferguson, and Byrne (2000) administered questionnaires to 105 secondary students. Based on a factor analysis of the questionnaire, they found significant correlations between students' perceptions of teacher fairness and their attributions of student misbehavior, suggesting that students attributed "misbehavior to injustices on the part of the teacher" (p. 90). The students further reported that some teachers relied on disciplinary interventions that were excessively aggressive or coercive, findings consistent with several recent studies on teacher bullying (Whitted & Dupper, 2008; Twemlow & Fonagy, 2005; Twemlow, Fonagy, Sacco, & Brethour, 2006).

While admittedly, there has been an increase in the research that seeks the perspectives of students, some of which has examined students' perspectives of classroom rules and of teachers' classroom management and disciplinary interventions, a limited number of those studies have specifically considered the voices of the students who have themselves been suspended or expelled from school. It is these voices, the voices of the excluded students themselves that I sought in this study. I believe that their personal experiences with the phenomenon of being suspended and their first-hand accounts of being in ISS provide a deeper understanding of school discipline. Thus when reviewing the literature on student perspectives, I specifically attended to studies that invited students who had been the recipients of exclusionary disciplinary

interventions to speak about their own experiences. These few studies will be discussed in this final section.

Excluded Students' Perspectives Regarding Exclusionary Discipline

The research on excluded students' perspectives of exclusionary discipline practices is sparse. In my review of the literature, I found seven recent studies that focused specifically on the experiences of students who had been either expelled or suspended; of those studies, five were primarily quantitative in nature, consisting of surveys or questionnaires, while two were qualitative in nature, both employing ethnographic methods. As I review these studies, I will present the need for further research on students' experiences with disciplinary interventions.

In two of the quantitative studies, surveys were administered to previously suspended students about their perceptions of being suspended. The findings from these two studies showed that many students who had been externally suspended viewed their time away from school as a reward (Atkins, McKay, Frazier, Jakobsons, Arvanitis, Cunningham, Brown, & Lambrecht, 2002) or as a holiday (Rossow & Parkinson, 1999), suggesting that schools that are implementing out-of-school suspension as a type of punishment may actually be positively reinforcing the negative behaviors that they are attempting to prevent.

In another related study, Costenbader and Markson (1998) administered surveys to 620 middle and high school students, 252 of whom had been suspended, either through ISS or OSS. More closely analyzing the self-report of those 252 students who had been suspended, Costenbader and Markson found that most of the suspensions were reportedly due to physical aggression (n=131), talking back to teachers (n=75), or the use of inappropriate language (n=65); however, many of the students reported being suspended for minor offenses, like not completing

assignments (n=27), being late to school (n=62), or leaving class without permission (n=48). Several items in the survey asked how the suspended students felt about the benefit of their suspension; consistent with the two previously reported studies (Atkins et al., 2002; Rossow & Parkinson, 1999), only 25% of the internally suspended students and 36% of externally suspended students felt that the suspension was helpful in preventing future misbehavior, while 31% of internally suspended students and 33% of externally suspended students chose the response: "Not at all; I will probably be suspended again" (p. 71). Thus for the students in the previous studies, students do not always perceive of suspensions as an effective deterrent; several of the students in my study made statements that were consistent with this argument.

As mentioned earlier, the use of exclusionary discipline, such as suspension, continues to be a preferred practice in addressing challenging student behavior (Children's Defense Fund, 2007; Mendez, 2003; Wald & Losen, 2003); however, the three studies above suggest that many students view suspension as ineffective at preventing future misbehavior. In the remaining four studies, students reported that suspensions and expulsions were not only ineffective, but that they also negatively affected them socially, emotionally, and/or academically. In the first two studies explicated below (Whitted & Dupper, 2008; Brown, 2007), surveys were administered to students who had been suspended or expelled from school. In the final two studies (Sheets, 2002; Ferguson, 2000), researchers conducted qualitative investigations related to students' experience with exclusionary discipline. While many of the studies reviewed thus far are valuable for understanding students' perspectives of discipline, these next four studies specifically provide an opportunity for students who have been the recipients of exclusionary discipline to discuss their experience with that discipline. It is within this small body of literature that I situate my current

study. As I review each of the studies, I aim to share how my own research relates to our current understanding of the phenomenon of being in in-school suspension.

In the first study, Whitted and Dupper (2008) administered surveys to 50 middle and high school students placed in alternative schools either due to an expulsion from school or due to a suspension lasting longer than 10 days. From the 47-item questionnaire, they found that 86% of the students reported being victims of some type of physical maltreatment (i.e., pushing, grabbing, being hit with an object) at the hands of an adult in a school setting; 88% reported being a victim of some form of psychological maltreatment (i.e., being picked on, ignored, ridiculed, or yelled at). In the sole open-ended item, where students were asked to describe their Worst School Experience (WSE), 64% of the students shared personal stories about being mistreated by a teacher. Whitted and Dupper claimed that a limitation of their study was the use of student self-report data; however, they concluded that the experiences of these students constituted bullying by teachers against the students.

Looking across the literature on student behavior and teachers' disciplinary interventions, the findings of this study are consistent with recent research that has proposed that when students are bullied, whether by peers or by adults, resulting in unsafe school conditions, they are more likely to exhibit behavior problems in school and have higher levels of truancy (Gastic, 2008; Twemlow & Fonagy, 2005; Twemlow et al., 2006). While the Whitted and Dupper study reveal interesting insights into disciplined students' perspectives about disciplinary interventions, their insights are not specifically related to their experience with being disciplined, nor are their experiences specifically related to in-school suspension.

In another study analyzing student questionnaires, including both Likert-style questions and open-ended questions, with alternatively placed students who had been suspended or expelled, Brown (2007) found that of the 37 participants, more than half of the students reported missing over a month of school due to their suspension or expulsion, and five students indicated that they had missed over six months of school while awaiting placement at the alternative school. According to Brown, the students acknowledged in the open ended responses that missing days of school had a negative impact on their academic success, one student stating that he doubted he would be able to catch up and would probably fail the 10th grade, another student worried about the fact that he had lost almost a year of school and would mostly likely not be able to recover and finish high school. Beyond academic struggles, these students expressed frustration with poor relationships with administrators and teachers; some expressed concerns that adults did not care about them as individuals, but instead treated them unfairly based on previous behavior. Asked what they might change, students expressed that it should be more difficult to suspend a student and that principals or teachers should not be able to expel a student without sufficient witnesses. Brown concluded that it was a "tragic irony" that "interventions aimed at students' troubles actually compound them" (p. 449). Brown's research goes a step further at engaging suspended students about their experience with being suspended; however, in that the methodology was primarily written surveys, I believe that there is still more that can be learned from students' experienced by actually talking to them. Brown agreed, concluding with a call for studies that analyzed "in-depth interviews with students to better discern how they experience exclusionary disciplinary practices" (p. 451).

In one of the few qualitative inquiries with students about the topic of disciplinary interventions, Sheets (2002) conducted an ethnographic study with four Chicano students who had experienced disciplinary exclusion from school. These students shared a history of academic failure, excessive truancy, and poor relationships with teachers. Through interviews, observations, and focus groups, Sheets found that the students reported experiencing both alienation and discrimination due to "teachers' prejudicial and racist attitudes toward them as Chicanos" (p. 111). Although they agreed that what they had done was a violation of the school rules, the students admitted feeling "disliked and mistreated" (p. 116) by the teachers and administrators in their school and each of the students expressed that they felt teachers were out to get them, holding their "past misbehavior, irregular attendance, and lack of achievement" (p. 116) against them. This notion of being "disliked and mistreated" by teachers and administrators seemed to be a rather common theme through much of the qualitative research that reported on students' perspectives of schooling in general; thus, it is not surprising that students who have been the recipients of exclusionary discipline would report experiencing these feelings as well.

The students in Sheets' (2002) research also reported that they felt that teachers' poor management and inadequate instruction contributed to their misbehavior; they expressed that when rules were enforced, they were often applied inconsistently, with one student claiming that the teachers changed the rules for the white students. Based on observations and field notes, Sheets reported that the students often "trivialized, questioned, or dismissed disciplinary events, making deliberate choices when to sabotage, resist, ignore, avoid, or acquiesce to teachers' positions" (p. 109). She also stated that rather than act as "passive victims of teacher action," these students focused on their own "personal needs and internal values, rather than conform to

expected behaviors" (p. 108). The four students in Sheets' ethnographic study oriented to race as a factor in their experiences, claiming that because they were "poor" and "Chicano," they were treated differently. In Ferguson's (2000) seminal ethnography, she and the students in her study also oriented to race as a factor in their experiences with school discipline.

In a three year ethnographic study, Ferguson (2000) carried out extensive observations, conducted in-depth interviews with students, teachers, administrators, and parents, and analyzed documents related to students' academic and discipline histories. Spending extensive time with students who had been identified as "Troublemakers," Ferguson noted how they were constructed as "at-risk" or "unsalvageable" (p. 9) by school personnel. In interviews with these ten students, Ferguson found that their attitudes and behavior toward their teachers were often contingent on how the teachers viewed and treated them. When teachers were rude and disrespectful to students, students perceived their treatment as harassment, provoking defiance and disrespect in return. According to one of the students in Ferguson's study, some teachers "think it's all right to treat us anyway they want…like they yelling up in your face and pointing at you – and you want to do that back and you get in trouble. But they don't want that done to them" (p. 69). Not only did these students acknowledge the disrespect of the teachers, they also talked openly about the inconsistent and inequitable nature of rule enforcement, attributing teachers' unfair discipline practices to their gender, their ethnicity, or what Ferguson called "racialized poverty" (p. 104). In her conclusions, Ferguson posed few solutions to the complex and layered problems of discipline and racialized/gendered identity, but instead asked several questions related to the implications of her study; one of those questions asked whether attention will "be paid to the counterdiscourse of the Troublemakers themselves?" (p. 234). It is

Ferguson's question that I sought to answer with this current research project. Who will pay

attention to the students who are often labeled troublemakers, deviants, tough kids, or problem

students?

Summary of Student Perspectives on Discipline

The few studies that report on students' personal experiences with exclusionary discipline

practices seem to be consistent with other research that has investigated suspension records,

school characteristics, teacher beliefs and practices, and/or student characteristics related to

classroom discipline. Survey research with suspended students has concluded that many students

find suspensions and exclusions to be ineffective (Atkins et al., 2002; Costenbader & Markson,

1998; Rossow & Parkinson, 1999) and potentially harmful (Brown, 2007; Whitted & Dupper,

2008). Some students have expressed frustration with excessively coercive and/or discriminatory

disciplinary practices (Ferguson, 2000; Sheets, 2002; Whitted & Dupper, 2008). Much of this

data, however, is grounded in quantitative methodology, restricting, in a way, students'

opportunities to express themselves fully. While the previous two studies included qualitative

interviews with students about their experience with disciplinary interventions, I agree with

Brown (2007) that further research needs to be conducted, research that seeks not only the

perspectives of students about discipline practices, but that aims to convey, in a descriptive

approach, the ways in which the students made meaning of their own experience with

exclusionary discipline. A closer examination of disciplinary interventions, from the perspectives

of students who have themselves been the recipients of such discipline, is necessary as we

continue to seek more effective approaches to creating educational climates conducive to

learning.

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None of the research I reviewed utilized phenomenological approaches to understanding exclusionary discipline interventions. Further, none of the studies above specifically examined the use of ISS as a disciplinary intervention. This distinction is important to consider in that most of the research examined above focuses primarily on OSS; the research specifically looking at ISS is scant and much more understanding is needed regarding the nature of ISS, how it is being framed, and how students are experiencing it. Finally, most of the research on classroom discipline that I reviewed either has not considered student grade level as part of the context of the study or has been conducted in either elementary or secondary contexts. Relatively less research has been conducted specifically within middle schools. Further, the research that has been conducted on student behavior has consistently demonstrated that discipline and behavior problems become a more significant issue at the middle school level (Christle, Nelson, & Jolivette, 2004). Check (2001) found that elementary and middle school teachers were twice as likely to experience problems with discipline as were secondary teachers. According to Arcia's research (2007), middle school students were suspended four times more often than elementary school students. Further, research conducted by Murdock, Anderman, and Hodge (2000) showed that a history of discipline problems in the seventh grade was found to be the most significant risk factor in ninth grade student dropout rates. Considering the lack of middle school focus in the literature and the reported increase in discipline issues at the middle school level, I believe there is a need for more research on discipline that specifically considers middle school students' perspectives and seeks to understanding their experience with the phenomenon of being suspended.

Chapter Summary

For the purposes of this research, I reviewed two extensive bodies of literature, the literature on the use of suspensions and the literature on the inclusion of student voice in educational research. Before presenting this research, I began the chapter by discussing the various definitions related to school and classroom discipline, followed by a brief history of discipline in the United States, bringing attention to two particular historical issues, corporal punishment and zero tolerance. As I then reviewed the literature that has examined the implementation of suspensions in the era of zero tolerance policies, I focused on the overuse, ineffectiveness, and capriciousness of suspensions as a disciplinary approach, as well as the possible consequences and disparities found by using suspensions. The next section of the literature review examined research, both quantitative and qualitative, that has included students' perspectives, concluding with a discussion of four studies that sought the experiences of students who had been the recipients of exclusionary discipline practices. It is important to note that in my review of the literature, I did not find any studies that specifically looked at ISS from the perspectives of students who had been in ISS.

In the current study, I aim to speak to both bodies of literature, informing both what we know about the use of suspensions, as well as what we know about student's perspectives about suspensions. I also hope to add to a growing body of literature that seeks to involve students in educational research and decision-making. In the next chapter, I will outline the methodological choices I made as I designed the study.

CHAPTER THREE:
METHODOLOGY

In that the aim of this study is to more fully understand the lived experiences of students who have experienced exclusionary disciplinary interventions, specifically in-school suspension (ISS), I chose to apply a phenomenological methodology to the study. Phenomenology is the "study of lived experience" (van Manen, 1984, p. 1), a primarily descriptive approach to inquiry that "focuses on the structures of experience, the organizing principles that give form and meaning to the lifeworld" (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 203), where structures are seen as "the organizing principles making sense of experience" (p. 204). Prior to explicating the specific methods I applied to the research, I will discuss the theoretical ways in which I framed the study.

Theoretical Considerations

As I approached this research, I was primarily influenced by three theoretical frameworks. First, I view relationships, in general, and teacher/student relationships in particular, through a lens of restorative justice. Secondly, I situated the study within a social constructionist framework (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Finally, phenomenology itself claims to be both theoretical and methodological; thus I also came to this work through the theoretical framework of phenomenology. As I discuss each of these frameworks below, I articulate how that framework has influenced my methodological decisions.

Restorative Justice

First, I grounded not only this study, but my ideas about school discipline in general, within a framework of restorative justice. While restorative justice has been historically situated

within the criminal justice system, more recently, there have been moves to apply restorative

justice to school contexts (Amstutz & Mullet, 2002; Cameron & Thorsborne, 1999; Hopkins,

2002). According to Zehr (2002) and Hopkins (2002), the discipline system implemented in

many schools mirrors that of our Western legal system, which "is preoccupied with identifying

the wrongdoer, affixing blame and dispensing an appropriate punishment or pain to the offender"

(Larson Sawin & Zehr, 2007, p. 43). Zehr (2002) refers to these as retributive approaches to

justice; throughout this dissertation, I refer to them as punitive approaches and view restorative

justice as a paradigm shift, offering "new ways to look at old challenges" (Hopkins, 2004, p.

13).[4]

According to Cragg (1992), one weakness of the current system is that often, in the quest

for equality and fairness, we end up ignoring contributing factors to the offense. For example,

one of the purported aims of zero tolerance policies is to seek impartiality for the purpose of

avoiding bias or accusations of profiling (i.e., to treat all students the same); however, one

possible by-product of such an attempt is a depersonalization of the process. According to Cragg,

"the inability to focus on the individuals involved blinds justice to the crime's victim as well as

to the personal characteristics of the offender" (p. 19). Thus, two students may be exhibiting

similar behaviors, but for vastly different reasons. Treating both students with the same

disciplinary interventions may serve to ignore factors that are contributing to their behaviors and

may also ignore the needs of the victims of the offenses.

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[4] I acknowledge that restorative justice is one of several approaches that are resisting punitive or retributive approaches to school discipline and taking up some of the notions I describe as restorative.

Many restorative justice advocates have written about the role of zero tolerance policies in "absolving educational institutions of responsibility for problem-solving and disciplinary responses" (Bazemore & Schiff, 2005, p. 3) According to these writers, zero tolerance policies, which are implemented as mandated suspensions, deprive students of the opportunity to solve their own problems and thus to build their own competence in problem-solving (Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006). Restorative justice views conflict as a necessary part of growth and change; when external consequences are pre-determined, the system is essentially "stealing the conflict" (Morrison, 2007), disallowing the individual and the community from experiencing the growth that may only come through conflict and problem-solving. According to Bazemore and Schiff (2005), by instituting mandatory expulsion and/or suspension, zero tolerance policies have shifted the potential for conflict out of schools. Restorative justice seeks to "reclaim some of the conflict" in order to "resolve situations in a healing, and less exclusionary way" (p. 268).

Hopkins (2004), in her manual for implementing restorative justice at a whole school level, suggested that extrinsic reinforcement, positive or negative, "does not help to develop an internal locus of control and an ability to take responsibility for the behavioural choices made and the impact these choices have on others" (Hopkins, 2004, p. 150). This often leaves students self-centered and egocentric, dependent on others for approval and/or correction, and ill-equipped to regulate their own behavior. Brenda Morrison (2007), in research on restorative practices within school contexts in the United Kingdom, noted that the overarching goal of restorative justice is to "build the social and emotional intelligence and skills within the school community such that a normative capacity for safe and just schools can be realized" (p. 326).

With much of what is discussed in middle grades education promoting democratic

approaches to discipline that serve to build students' capacity for self-regulation (National

Middle School Association, 2003), restorative justice is one lens through which to look at such

best practices. According to Cameron and Thorsborne (1999),

> restorative justice provides an opportunity for schools to practice participatory,
>
> deliberative democracy in their attempts to problem solve around those serious
>
> incidents of misconduct that they find so challenging. It also provides an
>
> opportunity to explore how the life chances of students (either offenders or
>
> victims) and their families might be improved, and how the system might be
>
> transformed in ways likely to minimise the chance of further harm. (p. 7)

For the restorative justice community, punishment fails to address the underlying problems that

often lead to challenging behaviors; through a restorative lens, students' behaviors are viewed as

opportunities to promote social and emotional growth by addressing not only the behaviors, but

also the underlying roots of those behaviors. According to Pranis (2007), restorative justice is not

about "justice as getting even" but rather "justice as getting well" (p. 60). Thus, the underlying

goal for restorative educators is helping students become healthier, socially and emotionally,

assuming that when they are, that many of the challenging behaviors they exhibit with decline.

With its roots in indigenous traditions, restorative justice posits that it is "the lack of

connection and social rootedness, this alienation or disengagement" that leads to "a lifestyle of

self-oriented behavior" (Sullivan & Tifft, 2001, p. 59-61). The solution then for anti-social

behavior is not further alienation, but rather a reintegration back into the community. Thus,

within a framework of restorative justice, students are not excluded when they engage in

perceived misbehavior; instead, restorative educators seek to restore not only the student who has caused the offense, but the relationship that was affected due to the offense.

Using the framework of restorative justice as discussed above, I developed a model of restorative discipline, taking the principles of restorative justice and applying them to school contexts. As such, I define restorative discipline as an approach to addressing student behavior that is guided by six underlying values: 1) A belief in the unconditional value and worth of each individual student; 2) a conviction on the part of the teacher that children's behavior is dynamic and modifiable; 3) an attempt to address the underlying needs that motivate student behavior, rather than simply the behavior itself; 4) a view of student behavior that affords students the opportunity to learn from their choices, appropriate or inappropriate, i.e., that every behavior is a learning opportunity; 5) a move to include the student in decision-making about their behavior, allowing them opportunity to make things right with those whom they have wronged; and 6) a recognition that students' behavior is integrally connected to their membership within a community; thus, in addition to considering factors that contribute to that behavior, there is also an attempt to maintain or reintegrate students into that community.

This framework of restorative justice applied to educational contexts serves to inform the way I view school discipline and influenced the way I viewed and interpreted my data. With Hopkins (2004), I recognize that restorative justice:

> challenges many notions deeply imbedded in our culture and enacted in many
> homes, schools and institutions. These notions include the idea that those who do
> wrong deserve to be punished, that punishment will change behaviour, and that

the threat of punishment is required to ensure that potential wrongdoers comply

with society's rules. (Hopkins, 2004, p. 30)

If a restorative approach to school discipline is to be successfully implemented, open dialogue

must first be established, dialogue about teaching and learning, about students, and about the

inherent worth and value of every individual despite the behavior they manifest. One way in

which restorative justice advocates, myself included, seek to begin that dialogue is by listening to

underrepresented voices; I hope this research and subsequent research in which I engage

contributes that that dialogue.

Social Constructionism

I further approached this research study from a social constructionist framework (Berger

& Luckmann, 1966), viewing reality and the way people make meaning of their experiences as

constructed within their interactions with the world. Constructionism, like phenomenology,

acknowledges that everyday experiences, such as the experience of being angry or the experience

of being in ISS, are often taken for granted as reality, what Berger and Luckmann (1966) call the

"non- or pre-theoretical" (p. 15). However, this reality is always "interpreted by men and

subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world" (p. 18). In other words, when students

experience schooling, they subjectively interpret their world in a way that makes sense to them.

Further, according to Berger and Luckmann, they do this subjective interpretation through their

interactions with the world and with others, including their peers, their parents, and their

teachers. As I discuss below, phenomenologists such as Schutz (Schutz, 1967; Schutz &

Luckmann,1973), Pollio (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997; Thomas & Pollio, 2002), and van

Manen (1990) have situated their work in the ideas of social constructionism. Thus as I

approached this study, I theoretically oriented toward constructionism as grounding my work both in how I view the specific topic of my research and in the way I orient to the research itself.

First, I view "misbehavior" as socially constructed within classroom interactions. I do not believe there is a universal set of rules that govern appropriate behavior in school; rather I view those rules and expectations as socially constructed norms, interpreted contextually by the teacher and by the students. When the interpretations of a teacher clash with those of a student, it is often the student whose interpretations are disallowed, resulting in what teachers then construct as misbehavior (Thornberg, 2008). Vavrus and Cole (2002) share this orientation toward "misbehavior," stating that "disciplinary moments are shaped, though not determined, by sociocultural relations in the classroom that affect whether a nonviolent event will be singled out for a suspension by the teacher;" further, "it is the teacher's interpretation of these moments of tension that ultimately determine whether a suspension will occur" (p. 109).

Within this framework, not only are behaviors viewed as socially constructed, but as Danforth and Smith (2005) have noted, teachers construct identities of students that then become reified into social categories, such as "the good kids and the bad kids," "the overachievers," or "tough cases." These labels are then used to create a reality about delinquency and children that follows students throughout their school careers. What is labeled as misbehavior or delinquency is often a "lack of compliance to the preferred norm" (Gallagher, 2003, p. 114), i.e., those behaviors that have been socially-constructed as appropriate. Thus, for the purposes of this study, I view "misbehavior" and "discipline" as socially constructed, and consider students' perspectives of disciplinary interactions, specifically ISS, as valuable in better understanding school discipline as a phenomenon.

Second, I view research itself, and interviews in particular, as socially-constructed. Through this lens, I acknowledge that meaning is "actively constructed within the interview interaction" (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 52). In other words, interview conversations should not be seen as "a pipeline for transmitting knowledge," but as a social interaction where knowledge is produced (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 3). Thus, not only are students actively making sense of ISS in their interactions with peers, parents, and teachers, but as they participated in the interview, they were actively making sense of that experience through their interactions with me as the researcher. Further, it is the student's active sense-making, not "an internal representation of his/her subjective experiences," that is the focus of the phenomenological interview (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997, p. 30). Therefore, consistent with interpretive approaches to phenomenology (see discussion below on the various approaches to phenomenology), I do not view the students' accounts of their experience with ISS as factual or definitive, but rather as a way that they made meaning of their experience within the context of the interview itself (van Manen, 1984; Thomas & Pollio, 2002).

In that I view participants as actively constructing meaning within the interview and with the researcher, I also am aware that as the researcher, I am an active part of that meaning-making process (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Pollio et al. (1997) acknowledged the constructed nature of the phenomenological interview, resisting the notion that interviewing is objective, but is rather a dialogic achievement between the researcher and the participant. In that I view myself as an active participant in the interview process, it is important that I am transparent about my own positionality and the role that I played in the interview process. The bracketing process and my research positionality will be discussed in greater detail toward the end of this chapter.

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While some phenomenologists consider that through bracketing, the researcher can transcend her own presuppositions, and somehow acquire findings that represent reality (Dowling, 2005; Giorgi, 1985), other phenomenologists acknowledge that the descriptive data obtained during interviews "are descriptions of what is present in a person's consciousness when he or she attends to the particular experience under investigation," not necessarily those which "correspond to an independent reality" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 50). It is the latter approach to phenomenology that I found consistent with a social constructionist framework and in which I chose to situate this study theoretically. In the next section, I will discuss my final theoretical framework, phenomenology, including the theoretical underpinnings of phenomenology, the historical approaches to phenomenological research, and the two primary phenomenological traditions that have emerged.

Phenomenology

While other qualitative studies have been published examining students' perspectives of school discipline, I found very little research that sought to understand how students themselves experienced school discipline, ISS in particular, and how they made meaning of their experience. My aim was not to establish causal relationships between school-related variables and student behavior, nor to develop theories about school discipline, but rather to provide a space for students to share their stories about ISS in their own language and from their own perspectives (Thomas & Pollio, 2002). In order to more fully understand students' experiences with ISS, then, I chose to apply a phenomenological methodology to this study.

While most qualitative research shares a desire to understand participants' *perspectives* about a particular phenomenon, phenomenology explicitly seeks to understand their *experience*

and how they make meaning of that experience. According to van Manen (1984), "the point of phenomenological research is to 'borrow' other people's experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience" (p. 16). Thus, in the absence of my own experience with a phenomenon of interest, such as being in ISS, gathering data in the form of students' experience enables me to potentially develop a deeper understanding, albeit only one possible understanding (van Manen, 1984) of the phenomenon itself.

According to Valle, King, and Halling (1989), phenomenology emerged primarily in response to the "inability of positivistic, natural scientific thinkers in the social sciences to deal adequately with basic human issues" (p. 6) such as emotions, experiences, and perception. Often attributed with being the initial developer of phenomenology (Thomas & Pollio, 2002), Edmund Husserl was interested in the study of human phenomena "as they appeared through consciousness[5]," which he saw as a "co-constituted dialogue between a person and the world" (Laverty, 2003, p. 23). This was a radical break from contemporary notions of scientific research and challenged "the dominant views on the origin and nature of truth of the time" (Dowling, 2005, p. 132). Since Husserl's writings, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, among others, have expanded on Husserl's philosophical ideas, both continuing them and departing from them in various ways, resulting in a wide variety of approaches to

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[5] Access to consciousness has been problematized by Polkinghorne (1989) and others who acknowledge that the "data a researcher collects are several times removed from the actual flow of experience" (p. 45). This also illustrates another distinction between interpretive approaches to phenomenology and transcendental approaches, who do not necessarily acknowledge the problem of access.

phenomenology; below, I briefly outline how I made sense of those approaches and discuss how I oriented toward phenomenology throughout this study.

Historical Approaches to Phenomenology

Thomas and Pollio (2002) claimed that there are at least 18 permutations of phenomenology; however, many of the texts that outline phenomenology speak broadly about phenomenological assumptions, overlooking the variations that exist. While these variations share many similar assumptions, there are significant distinctions in the way they approach research both philosophically and methodologically. Dowling (2005) posited that the variability of phenomenological traditions can be traced to their philosophical orientations, such as positivism, post-positivism, interpretivist, and constructivist paradigms. She further identified key phenomenologists whose work aligned with each paradigm. She described the phenomenological traditions that align primarily with the work of Husserl as positivist; those aligning with Merleau-Ponty as post-positivist; that which aligns with the work of Heidegger as interpretivist; and those aligning with Gadamer's work as constructivist. Dowling's categories are a bit reductionist, ignoring the fact that more contemporary phenomenologists, even those who align with more constructivist and interpretivist approaches to phenomenology, draw heavily from the work of Merleau-Ponty and Husserl (van Manen, 1984). Nevertheless, the distinctions help to illustrate the philosophical diversity that exists within phenomenological research.

In an even more simplified categorization, Laverty (2003) contrasted what she identified simply as "phenomenology" in the tradition of Husserl, with "hermeneutic phenomenology," which followed the traditions of Heidegger and Gadamer. Laverty merged Heideggerian,

hermeneutic, and interpretivist approaches together, and like Dowling, Laverty combined Husserlian and transcendental approaches under one umbrella. A third approach to phenomenology can be found in the work of Merleau-Ponty. According to Thomas and Pollio (2002), Merleau-Ponty drew from the phenomenology of Husserl, Heidegger, and Gadamer, as well as from the existentialism of Kierkegaard, infusing aspects of existential philosophy into current notions of phenomenology. The resulting approach to phenomenology, existential phenomenology, holds many of the tenets of an interpretivist approach to phenomenology, but also brings to the forefront the "four major existential grounds of human existence," namely "others, time, body, and world" (Thomas & Pollio, 2002, p. 4).

For the purposes of this discussion, and for my own approach to this phenomenological study, I choose to distinguish between (1) transcendental phenomenology, including Husserlian and descriptive approaches, and (2) interpretive phenomenology, including Heideggerian, hermeneutic, and existential. In the next section, I explicate the philosophical underpinnings shared by much of phenomenology, including a discussion of these two major traditions that have developed and how each makes sense of the underlying assumptions of their research. Throughout this section, I return to my own philosophical assumptions, sharing how and why I orient toward an interpretivist approach to phenomenology.

Underlying Assumptions of Phenomenology

Several underlying assumptions lie at the heart of most phenomenological research, regardless of the particular phenomenological tradition being followed. Giorgi (1997), who primarily follows a Husserlian or descriptive approach to phenomenology, posited that several key assumptions of phenomenology cross the various methodological approaches. His first

assumption is that consciousness is the primary focus of the research, "the medium of access" (p. 2); he defined consciousness as the awareness of the phenomenon or the way in which things are present to the person. A second assumption is that, in contrast to other sciences, human science considers the nature of the phenomenon under investigation through the reference point of experience, where experience is defined as the intuition of things that may or may not be "real," but rather that are perceived as real through the consciousness of the subject.[6] As a third assumption shared across phenomenological traditions, Giorgi clarified the definition of the word "phenomenon," stating that for phenomenologists, phenomena are only understood subjectively "in terms of the meaning that the phenomena have for the experiencing subjects…only its presence for the experiencer counts" (p. 3). Finally, Giorgi assumed that in order to qualify as phenomenology, an understanding of intentionality was essential, where intentionality means that the researcher, or individual considering the phenomenon, acts in such a way as to direct their consciousness toward the object or phenomenon.

Giorgi's (1997) assumptions are not without critique, nor are they uncontested in their interpretations; however, they do presuppose a shared emphasis on the subjective experience of the participant, not on an objective reality that is presented by the participants. Using an example of a person describing a table, Giorgi asserted that the phenomenologist would not declare that the table is a real table, but rather that the table is presenting itself to my consciousness as a real table. So within phenomenology, across traditions, one of the key underlying assumptions is that it is not important whether the thing is real or not, but rather how that thing is presented to the

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[6] Giorgi uses the term "subjects" to refer to the participants of a research study, as do other phenomenologists; I however prefer the term "participants" and will use that term throughout this document. I maintain the word "subjects" here to be true to Giorgi's language.

observer. One primary area where the different traditions diverge is in how real they believe that table to be.

For example, when considering exclusionary approaches to school discipline, I acknowledge the value of research that examines statistical correlations and demographic descriptions; an abundance of such research exists (for examples, see Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997; Sullivan & Keeney, 2008). While important findings may come from those studies, those forms of research often come to definitive conclusions about the objective reality of their findings; taking up a phenomenological approach, I am more interested in the subjective experience of the students who have spent time in ISS. Thus, across traditions, phenomenologists orient to participants' subjective experiences; some traditions, however, consider there to be an objective reality that their findings will enable them to determine, while others consider that the experience itself is the reality (Laverty, 2003; Giorgi, 1997). In the following paragraphs, I show how phenomenologists vary epistemologically and ontologically and discuss the rationale for my approach to this study.

Distinctions between Major Phenomenological Approaches

For transcendental phenomenologists, such as Husserl and Giorgi, there remains an assumption that there is an objective reality that can be fully understood by transcending the "natural attitude" (Giorgi, 1997, p. 5) and reaching what Husserl called "epoche," which means "to refrain from judgment, to abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things" (Moustakas, 1995, p. 33). Transcendental phenomenology then, in the tradition of Husserl, is "concerned with wholeness, with examining entities from many sides, angles, and perspectives until a unified vision of the essences of a phenomenon or experience is

achieved" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 58). Thus for Husserlian or transcendental phenomenology, the aim of research is to discover, through logical and systematic methods, an essential description (i.e., the essence) of the experience that is assumed to be shared for all participants. The construct of *essence* is one of the key assumptions of phenomenology; however, although it is consistently referenced across phenomenological traditions, it has been taken up in different ways by transcendental approaches and interpretive approaches.

Essence

The term *essence*, which is utilized across traditions, holds different meanings from tradition to tradition. Within transcendental phenomenology, essence "does not refer to Platonic substances nor simply to word analyses;" instead, "an essence is the most invariant meaning for a context" (Giorgi, 1997, p. 7). In contrast to transcendental phenomenologists, phenomenologists who adhere to a more interpretive approach understand the construct of essence quite differently. According to van Manen (1984), essence does not refer to an "ultimate core or residue of meaning" (p. 6), but is simply a "description of the phenomenon" (p. 6). In other words, van Manen resists the notion of "invariant" as it refers to the essence of an experience, but rather views the essence as fluid and dynamically constructed through the participant's interactions with the world and with others. Thomas and Pollio (2002) also seem to resist the notion of a universal essence, instead viewing essence as a description of "participants' lived experiences *within the context of culture* rather than [a search for] *universal* essences divorced from cultural context" (p. 11).

This notion of essence and the variance of understanding between the traditions reflect the philosophical distinctions noted by Dowling (2005), who placed Husserl primarily within a

positivist paradigm, with other phenomenologists adopting other paradigms, including post-positivist, interpretivist, and constructivist. Thus, for Husserl, and those who adhere to transcendental approaches to phenomenology, the essence of a phenomenon is an epistemological achievement, a search for how one knows what is real (Giorgi, 1997). For Heidegger, and those who follow an interpretive or hermeneutic approach to phenomenology, the emphasis is more ontologic in nature, seeing the experience, not as a representative of the real, but as the real itself (Laverty, 2003). Within Husserlian traditions, the assumption of an objective reality remains, albeit a reality that can only be known through our subjective experience (Moustakas, 1994), while in Heideggerian or interpretivist traditions, the essence of the experience is the meaning of that experience, with no claim as to an underlying reality. Thus, taking up an interpretivist approach to phenomenology, I make no claims that the experiences of the students in my study are representative of a universal essence of in-school suspension, but rather that their descriptions are ways of making meaning of their experience within the context of their environment.

Descriptive Accounts

Regardless of how each tradition defines essence, it is the essence of basic human experience that is being sought by researchers. Further, there is an assumption that these essences can be "revealed through essentially descriptive techniques" (Valle, King, & Halling, 1989, p. 6), where descriptive indicates that rather than approaching a phenomenon with a "pre-determined hypothesis, they look to discover the essential attributes of phenomena and then express the results in verbal portraits" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 45). According to Polkinghorne, "the purpose of phenomenological research is to produce clear, precise, and systematic descriptions of the

meaning that constitutes the activity of consciousness" (p. 45). Thus, in an interview, the participant's consciousness is evoked as they describe their experiences, constructing the meaning of that experience within their interactions with the researcher. In that one of the underlying assumptions and goals of phenomenology is to "describe human experience on its own terms and not in terms of theoretical principles" (Thomas & Pollio, 2002, p. 13), I chose to follow the model of much phenomenological research and report the experiences of the students in my study using their own words.

This practice of presenting themes in the words of the participants is also taken up by interpretive phenomenology; however, interpretive approaches also recognize the importance of the researcher's experience with the phenomenon of interest. van Manen (1984) recognized that in the search for the meaning of a phenomenon, the experience of the researcher is the "ego-logical starting point" (p. 13), a place to begin to understand. The assumption for interpretive phenomenologists is that any experience of my participants, or of myself as a researcher, is seen "as a possible human experience" (p. 14) for others. Thus throughout the study, I worked to consider my own experience with ISS and exclusionary discipline practices, acknowledging my own perspectives as a researcher, as a teacher, a teacher educator, and as an advocate for students. The practice of making my own experience explicit can also be traced to the common phenomenological practice of bracketing. Like the notion of *essence*, the concept of bracketing can also be interpreted and applied differently based on the phenomenological tradition being followed.

Bracketing and Reduction

The use of bracketing originated with Husserl as a way to suspend judgment about a phenomenon in order to "see the phenomena as it really is" without individual bias or presupposition (Laverty, 2003, p. 23). As an approach to research, transcendental approaches to phenomenology assert that by coming to the object of study from a "pure" and "naïve" stance, "from the vantage point of a pure or transcendental ego" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33), researchers are able to

> eliminate everything that represents a prejudgment, setting aside presuppositions,
>
> and reaching a transcendental state of freshness and openness, a readiness to see
>
> in an unfettered way, not threatened by the customs, beliefs, and prejudices of
>
> normal science, by the habits of the natural world or by knowledge based on
>
> unreflected everyday experience. (Moustakas, 1994, p. 41)

Within Husserlian phenomenology, the assumption regarding bracketing is that the researcher is able to and must "do his or her work from within the attitude of the reduction, or else no phenomenological claims for the analysis could be made" (Giorgi, 1997, p. 8). In other words, only as the researcher is able to reduce their own biases and to "withhold past knowledge about the phenomenon," are they then able to transcend the natural attitude of the everyday and "be fully present to the concrete instance of the phenomenon as presented by the subject's description" (p. 8).

Within interpretive approaches to phenomenology, there is still a call for researchers to go through a bracketing process, but for vastly different reasons. First, Thomas and Pollio (2002) recognized the impossibility of completely relinquishing our own interpretive lens; citing

Gadamer, they asserted that "no interpretation is ever without its historical and personal horizons" (p. 22). Applied to the phenomenological interview, they argued that "there are two people and two histories, and understanding takes place only when both take their ongoing life situations and histories into account" (p. 22). Likewise, Laverty (2003) reported that Gadamer "viewed bracketing not only as impossible," but that "attempts to do so [were] manifestly absurd" (p. 25).

Secondly, not only do interpretive phenomenologists consider it impossible, but in the words of Thomas and Pollio (2002), "it is not possible, or even desirable, for a researcher to be completely free of presuppositions" (p. 33). Taking an interpretive approach to phenomenology, I agree with van Manen (1984) that researchers should consider their own experience with the phenomenon of interest as part of the data collected, assuming that their own experience also contributes to the essence or meaning of the phenomenon.

This does not mean that those presuppositions do not need to be acknowledged, however. Again agreeing with van Manen (1984), I believe that

> …our "common sense" pre-understandings, our suppositions, assumptions, and
> the existing bodies of scientific knowledge predispose us to interpret the nature of
> the phenomenon before we have even come to grips with the significance of the
> phenomenological question… If we simply try to ignore what we already "know,"
> we may find that the presuppositions persistently creep back into our reflections.
> (p. 9).

In other words, bracketing potentially helps us to avoid imposing a prior theoretical or causal understanding on a phenomenon without first developing a better understanding the phenomenon

itself. As such, for interpretive phenomenology, "bracketing is not a one-time event; it is a

dynamic, ongoing process, in which the researcher repeatedly cycles through reflection,

bracketing, and intuiting" (Thomas & Pollio, 2002, p. 33). Thus, throughout this study, not only

did I participate in an initial bracketing interview, but I also frequently engaged in reflexive

journaling where I reflected on my developing understanding and beliefs about exclusionary

discipline practices.

Interpretive Findings

Another distinction between the transcendental and interpretive phenomenological

traditions can be found in the need for and notions of interpretation. For Husserl, it is the

description of the phenomenon that is important, rejecting the need for interpretation on the part

of the researcher. Contrasting the two approaches and advocating for a Husserlian approach to

phenomenology, Giorgi (1997) stated that "for 'pure' phenomenology, the task is to describe the

intentional objects of consciousness from within the perspective of the phenomenological

reduction" (p. 6). For those who align with this tradition, the data provided are sufficient without

the need for theoretical reflections. In contrast, those who take a more interpretive approach to

phenomenology acknowledge that the act of interpretation is an inescapable and critical aspect of

research. According to Laverty (2003), Heidegger claimed that "to be human was to interpret"

(p. 24) and although "a definitive interpretation is likely never possible" (p. 25), van Manen

(1984) claimed that the role of the phenomenological researcher is "*to construct a possible*

interpretation of the nature of a certain human experience" (p. 7). For van Manen, this

interpretation is regarded as only "*one* interpretation, and [where] no single interpretation of

human experience will ever exhaust the possibility of yet another complementary, or even potentially richer, description" (p. 3).

In summary, broadly speaking, phenomenology "seeks to explicate the *essence*, *structure*, or *form* of both human experience and human behavior as revealed through essentially descriptive techniques" (Valle, et al., 1989, p. 6). Historically, two major traditions have arisen; one draws primarily on the work of Husserl, the other on the work of Heidegger, as explicated above. Due to my own theoretical commitments toward a constructionist framework (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), this research was primarily guided by those who have followed a more Husserlian approach to phenomenology. I chose to orient to this research study through an interpretivist approach to phenomenology, primarily drawing on the work of Thomas and Pollio (2002), van Manen (1984, 1990), and Laverty (2003) for my methodological decisions; however, when appropriate, I do reference other phenomenologists including Valle and Halling (1989) and Moustakas (1994). In the next section, I further describe the procedural decisions I made as I sought to explicate the essence, structure and form of the experience of students who had spent time in ISS.

Methods

Orienting to qualitative research, in general, as a recursive process of data collection and analysis, this phenomenological study followed three basic steps, which will be explicated in the following sections. First, I gathered descriptions of participants' lived experiences with exclusionary discipline practices through open-ended, unstructured interviews; I then transcribed the interviews and analyzed them, noting common themes, as well as individual expressions of each theme; finally, these themes were reported in the words of the participants within a general

structure that represents the essence of their experience (Polkinghorne, 1989). Acknowledging that the analysis process is "complex and idiosyncratic" (Hatch, 2002, p. 147) and therefore, ever-evolving, the specific analytic steps of this research developed, and continue to develop, recursively throughout the research study. Thus, as I share my analysis in Chapter Four, I attempt to be transparent about the decisions I made, noting places where I returned frequently to the interview text, as well as to the actual interviews, to not only read what my participants said, but how they said it (i.e. inflections, pauses, volume, etc.).

Setting and Participants

The study took place in a large school system in the Southeast, specifically with middle school students in grades six through eight. The following criteria were used to select participants: (1) participants were currently enrolled in a middle school in the county; thus, the participants ranged in age from 10-15 years; (2) participants had been suspended through in-school suspension (ISS) at least twice during the 2009-2010 school year. Access to students was negotiated through the local County Office of Research and Evaluation (CORE) who assisted by running an initial database search of all students who met the criteria. Out of 6,678 middle school students in the district, close to 2,500 met the initial search criteria. In order to further narrow the number of potential participants and to possibly limit participation to those students who had more recent experiences, a third criterion was added requiring that students had been in ISS during the last month. Finally, this list was sorted by the number of days served in ISS and a packet was sent to the parents of the 150 students serving the most days in ISS. Included in the packet was a letter from CORE and two copies of a parent consent form, one to keep for their

records and one to send to CORE in the return-addressed, stamped envelope provided (see Appendix A for a copy of the parent consent form).

Consent forms were returned to the CORE after which an email was sent to me from the CORE granting permission to contact the student at their middle school after first obtaining building permission from the principal. After meeting with the principals at each designated school, providing them with a permission letter from the CORE, and explaining the details of my research, the principal, assistant principal, or office personnel assisted with calling the students to the office and arranging for a room in which to meet for the interviews. Although I attempted to meet with students prior to the actual interview, scheduling difficulties made this impractical; thus, I ended up interviewing students on the same day as our initial meeting in most cases. When students arrived, I explained the research project using a student assent form (see Appendix B for a copy of the student assent form) and gave students the opportunity to come up with a pseudonym prior to beginning the interview. Only students for whom a parental consent was obtained were contacted and only students for whom a student assent form was obtained were interviewed. Of the 150 recruitment letters sent, only 16 consent forms were returned to the CORE; the low return rate represents one plausible explanation for why studies involving young adolescents are difficult to conduct.

Initially, I received 16 consent forms; however, three students were not included in my data set. Two students had been given out-of school suspensions through the rest of the year. According to due process legislation, as long as a suspension is less than ten days, it can be considered "short term" (Tennessee Department of Education, 2010), thus within the last two weeks of school, instead of assigning ISS, administrators sometimes opt to simply send students

home early for the summer. While this is not part of the official school or district policy, one principal's assistant stated explicitly that this was why one of the students had received OSS rather than ISS. Further, one of the participants stated during the interview that there wouldn't be many people in ISS because they usually give them OSS at the end of the year, which led me to believe that at least this student perceived it as common knowledge. A third potential participant elected not to participate in the interview. He had recently been in ISS for two days and when he was called to the office to participate in the interview, he told me that he thought he was being called to the office because he was in more trouble. Further, it was the day before the last day of school and his class had been outside playing basketball. He did not want to be there and so after attempting to do several things to break the ice and open up, I finally asked him what he wanted to do. He replied, *I WANNA go play basketball.* Thus, the following analysis includes data from 13 students who had been in ISS. It is possible that I might have been able to interview all 16 students had interviews not been conducted within the last two weeks of the school year.

The 13 participants had been suspended between four and 14 times, for between eight and 37 days. The total number of days of school missed due to time spent in ISS was 186, for an average of 14 days per participant. Table 1 outlines the 13 participants, including their grade, race, and gender, their school pseudonym, number of suspensions, and number of days suspended. As noted in Table 1, the 13 participants in this study consisted of six black males, one black female, five white males, and one white female. While the racial make-up is relatively equal, data from the County Office of Research and Evaluation (CORE) show that the six black males were suspended 57 times for a total of 114 days, compared to the five white males, who were suspended 28 times for a total of 52 days. Although I recognize that no strong correlations

Table 1. Participants.

| | | | | Participant Chart | | | |
| | | | | Student Experience with ISS | | | |
Student Pseudonym	Grade	Race	Gender	School Pseudonym	Number of Suspensions	Days Suspended	Length of Interview
Matt Rogers	6	W	M	Tate Middle	4	8	10:09
Bam Margero	7	W	M	Tate Middle	5	9	13:50
Sara Peterson	7	W	F	Tate Middle	6	9	14:41
Andy Richman	6	W	M	Butler Middle	5	10	13:45
Marci Clemmons	7	B	F	Tate Middle	5	11	9:46
Jonathan Carter	7	B	M	Tate Middle	4	11	20:07
Jeffery Richardson	7	W	M	Green Middle	7	11	55:55
Josh Stinson	7	B	M	Tate Middle	5	12	9:32
James Thomas	8	B	M	Green Middle	8	13	18:37
Stewey Potter	8	W	M	Butler Middle	7	14	20:30
Shocky Miller	6	B	M	Butler Middle	14	16	11:46
John Smith	6	B	M	Green Middle	12	25	19:36
Chris Roque	7	B	M	Green Middle	14	37	11:33

can be made due to the small sample size, it is interesting to note that issues of racial and gender disproportionality in this study are consistent with over 30 years of research illustrating the extent to which minority male students are more likely to be the recipients of school punishment (Fenning & Rose, 2007; see also Ferguson, 2000; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Monroe, 2009; Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997).

Data Collection

After contacting students and obtaining both student assent and parental consent, I conducted unstructured phenomenological interviews with students at a secure location on their

school campus. These locations were dictated by the principal and/or office staff; however, on one occasion, I requested a different room due to the proximity to the intercom. Interviews were conducted with 13 students over the course of nine visits to the three middle schools over the course of three weeks. The interviews lasted between nine and 56 minutes, with the average length being 18 minutes; the majority of them took place either before school or during lunch.

Two participants were currently in ISS and were allowed to leave ISS for the interview. The goal of phenomenological interviewing is to "attain a first-person description of some specified domain of experience, with the course of dialogue largely set by the respondent" (Pollio et al., 1997, p. 29). According to Moustakas (1994), the phenomenological interview process generally begins with open-ended questions, followed by subsequent questions that dialogically provide clarification of participants' accounts. Therefore, in the current study, I began with one open-ended question about students' experiences with in-school suspension: "So you were recently in ISS. Can you tell me about that?" Further, I had two guiding questions that I hoped would emerge from their recounting of their experience, one related to their experience in ISS and the other about their experience getting into ISS. In most cases, students brought up both without being prompted; however, if they did not, I did specifically ask about both experiences. As students entered the room, I worked to create a safe and welcoming interview environment that facilitated trust and participation. Prior to beginning the interview, I briefly engaged them in informal conversations about their day, their interests, and why I desired to talk with them about ISS, positioning myself as someone who teaches middle school teachers and requesting their help to know how to do that better. Recognizing that an interview is a social encounter, and socially constructed with the participants (Pollio et al., 1997), I attempted to

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maintain a dialogic stance, encouraging their participation and engaging with them as co-researchers (Moustakas, 1994) as I developed a deeper understanding of the experience of being in ISS.

During the explanation of the study, I helped students understand the concept of a pseudonym and encouraged them to select their own, which I then used throughout the rest of the session, including the interview. Throughout the interview, I attempted to connect with the students and increase their comfort level; for example, I made eye contact and smiled each time I referred to them by their pseudonym. In an effort to make the interviews with my participants as much like a dialogue as possible, I further attempted to adopt a student-friendly, casual style when asking follow-up questions, to consider how I structured my questions for a middle school student, and to check my language to ensure that the students felt comfortable sharing their thoughts, including sufficient wait time before responding or asking follow-up questions. Although several of the interviews were short, throughout the interview process, I felt that an acceptable level of mutuality had been reached and that, in light of the short time that I had know the participants, they felt relatively comfortable in the interview. In that I had positioned myself as someone who taught middle school teachers, toward the end of the interview, I asked a final non-phenomenological question about what advice they might give to middle school teachers about ISS and school discipline.

Data Analysis

There are a variety of possible approaches for analyzing phenomenological interviews (Moustakas, 1994); van Manen (1984) claimed there were as many possible approaches to phenomenological analysis as there are phenomenologists. Taking up an interpretivist approach

to phenomenology, I decided to follow Hatch's (2002) steps for interpretive analysis. Upon

completion of the data collection process, I listened to the digitally-recorded interviews several

times each in order to gain a "sense of the whole" (Hatch, 2002, p. 181). During this stage of

listening, I recorded several entries into my research journal attempting to become "intuitively

present" (Churchill, 2006, p. 88) to the students in my study, meaning that I felt some degree of

connectedness to the participants. As I became familiar with the interviews, I began to take note

of statements of interest, identifying impressions that stood out as particularly salient and

recording those impressions in my research journal. Through this process, I paid particular

attention to places in the transcripts where the participants' language illustrated potentially

developing themes. For example, in one entry in my research journal, I noted that I was surprised

by how much the students talked about the impact of ISS on their grades and began to note the

places where they talked about academics and credits and missing work. This eventually

developed into one of the overarching themes.

Although I had had the interviews transcribed by a professional transcriptionist, I went

through each interview text while listening to the interview again to ensure accuracy, to make

notes in the text about things that were interesting, and to note nuances in the interview that I did

not want to lose, such as pauses, fidgeting, yelling, or whispering, etc., nuances that were based

on my observational notes at the time of the interview. At that point, I moved the interview texts

into Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis software package, for a more systematic analysis of the

interview texts.

Through a first pass in Atlas, I recorded memos of things that stood out to me about the

students' experiences. I also noted metaphors and sections of the text that seemed particularly

relevant to their experience. For example, I wrote a memo regarding a student's comparison of ISS to prison and another one about the student who liked ISS because it was fun. Many of the memos that I created were repeated across several of the interviews. Reading through the interview texts again, I began to make notes about places where certain memos overlapped or related to one another. Through this process, I developed 28 codes from the initial memos and developed a definition/description of each code such that I had a sense of how I was making meaning of that code. Based on these initial tentative interpretations, I again read through the transcripts, looking for places where those interpretations were confirmed and disconfirmed, revising my interpretations and accounting for both shared and disparate experiences of my participants.

As I read through the interview texts again, I coded sections of each interview using the 28 codes that I had developed. I then thought about how the codes were related, considering how they overlapped and what type of structure was being represented by the codes. I further made sense of the relationships between the 28 codes by developing six preliminary themes. Three of these themes represented the ways in which the participants talked about what it was like to be in the ISS room, including their descriptions of the ISS teacher, the ISS room, and the ISS activities. The other three themes related more to the ways in which participants talked about things that crossed between ISS and their regular school experiences, such as getting written up and going to ISS, their interactions, both positive and negative, with various school personnel, and the ways that ISS impacted their learning opportunities. While these six initial themes presented a useful organizing structure for the ways in which the participants talked about their

experience in ISS, they did not necessarily represent the ways in which the students made meaning of their experience.

In that I desired to more fully understand how each student was making meaning of the experience of being in ISS, at this point, analytically, I made the decision to interpret each interview separately, seeking to understand each participant's experience separately and to develop what Polkinghorne calls verbal portraits (Polkinghorne, 1989). Analyzing and providing a detailed interpretation of each interview is a common analytical approach by many phenomenologists. Churchill (2006) referred to these individual analyses as "individual structural descriptions" (p. 90) and considered each detailed description as part of the findings and a way to reveal each participant's meaning-making about the phenomenon of interest. For van Manen (1990), the interpretive analysis begins with developing thematic statements for each participant, individually, before looking across participants for general themes. Likewise, in his steps for phenomenological analysis, Moustakas (1994) called for the construction of "individual textual descriptions" for each participant that includes "verbatim examples from the transcribed interview" (p. 121). For the purposes of this study, I adopted the term, "verbal portraits," to identify my selection of excerpts representing the key elements of the perceived experience of being in ISS for each participant.

Verbal Portraits

In order to construct the verbal portraits, I needed to individually analyze each interview text; thus, I returned to Atlas.ti, where I had written detailed memos of each transcript and had initially coded each interview text. I reviewed the transcript for each participant, extracting the quotes that I deemed most pertinent based on the initial themes and creating a separate document

for each student. Next, I analyzed each quote, weaving together quotes that were related. While during the interviews themselves, the conversations between me and the participants frequently jumped back and forth between topics, as I wove together their first-hand accounts, I attempted to more coherently organize their statements thematically according to each student's experience, roughly grouping the quotes according to the initial themes mentioned above. In addition to pertinent quotes, I also integrated students' stories told during the interviews. In contrast to theoretical abstractions, phenomenology seeks to situate findings in the concrete experiences of the participants, experiences that are often revealed in the form of stories told during the interview. The frequent use of stories in the data serves as "a device for making comprehensible" the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990, p. 116) of being in ISS; thus, throughout the verbal portraits, such stories were included in order to make concrete the ways in which the students were making meaning of their experience.

Keeping in mind that I had already developed six preliminary themes related to the total corpus of data, I considered places where the students' accounts of being in ISS were related to those preliminary themes, while also attempting to look beyond that structure and notice places where each student's account did or did not align with the structure. As I wove together the designated quotes and stories and interpreted them individually, I sought to create a portrait of each student, an account of their experience that portrayed my understanding of how they made meaning of their experience in ISS. These verbal portraits take the form of rich, thick descriptions of each individual participant's experience of being suspended, as well as descriptions of the students based on researcher field notes. After writing each verbal portrait, I returned to the interview transcript and re-read it, making sure that I had attended to the details of

each interview in a way that faithfully represented what I believed to be the way that student made meaning of his experience with ISS.

My intent in these verbal portraits was to "construct a full interpretive description of some aspect of the lifeworld [being in ISS], and yet to remain aware that lived life is always more complex than any explication of meaning can reveal" (van Manen, 1990, p.18). Thus, I recognize that these verbal portraits are incomplete and partial (van Manen, 1990), only representing one possible way in which they made meaning of the experience of being in ISS during the process of the interview (Polkinghorne, 1989).

Thematic Analysis

The verbal portraits allowed me to understand the individual experiences of each participant, which was an important aspect of my commitment to honor the unique experiences of each participant. However, I also desired to continue to develop a thematic analysis of the data. Pollio et al. (1997) discussed the need "to understand both the network of meanings connecting tree-in-relation-to-forest and the network of meanings connecting forest-as-instantiated-in-tree" (p. 42). In other words, while I found it important to provide a detailed rendering of each particular student's experience with the phenomenon of being suspended, inviting places of variability and leaving room for tensions within each theme, I also considered the value in looking more broadly at the themes that connect each of the 13 participants in this study. Viewing analysis as an iterative process, after constructing the verbal portraits for each participant, I returned to my preliminary themes where I had initially noted commonalities across the interview texts. My intent was to consider whether each theme was represented by each participant and, where they were not, to adjust the themes to more faithfully reflect the students'

experiences. I also desired to more thoughtfully consider how the students were making meaning of the experience of ISS, and not merely how I was making sense of their experience as a researcher.

While the specific aspects of each student's experience varied, there were some common elements that I found shared across the interviews (Valle & Halling, 1989). For example, each of the students talked about relationships with adults in their school; however, how they talked about those relationships varied greatly, from complaints that they had been treated unfairly to expressions of gratitude for adults who took the time to help them with their school work. Thus, as I discuss the themes in Chapter Four, I attempt to present both the shared essence of each theme, while also seeking to honor the participants' uniqueness and the variance that existed within each theme.

Finally, Pollio et al. (1997) recommended that when possible, the investigator present interpretations using the language of the participant, rather than simply abstracting the language of the researcher. Thus, I sought to provide a detailed description of the participants' experience in their own words, allowing a space for the reader to also participate in the interpretive process and provide support for the interpretive conclusions that I purport. In that it is the student's experience, I attempted to present the findings, including the theme names, in the language of the student when possible.

Ethical Considerations

The study was approved through the Institutional Review Board and both parental consent and student assent were obtained. In that I was interviewing minors, and minors who had experienced difficulties in educational environments, I took extra precautions to ensure

confidentiality by allowing students to select a pseudonym that was utilized during the interviews (Thomas & Pollio, 2002). Since the actual names of the participants were concealed prior to the interview process, I primarily know my participants by their pseudonym and any research team members who read the transcripts or listen to the audio files will merely have access to the pseudonyms. Further, throughout any reporting of the findings, whether in this work or other publications, students' identities have been kept confidential such that quotes, themes, and/or findings do not inadvertently reveal information that might compromise students' identity.

Beyond protection for the students in the study, pseudonyms were assigned to the various teachers and administrators that the students referenced throughout their interviews, as well as to the names of schools, classrooms, team mascots, etc. Any information that might assist in identifying the schools or students in the study has been modified.

Issues of Validity and Trustworthiness

While I acknowledge the subjective and constructed nature of my interpretations, in order to establish trustworthiness, I included several validation strategies. Most phenomenological researchers, especially those from a more Heideggerian tradition, assume that the researcher brings her own understandings to the interpretive process (Pollio et al., 1997) and that their findings represent one interpretation among many (van Manen, 1984). Perhaps the most commonly assumed validation strategy for phenomenologists is the bracketing interview

As is common with phenomenological research, I participated in an initial bracketing interview that provided an opportunity to make explicit my prior assumptions and raise awareness of my own perceptions regarding school disciplinary interventions. Acknowledging

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that researchers bring their own experiences and predispositions to their research and eschewing the notion that bracketing interviews eliminate those assumptions or ensure objectivity, I contend that the purpose of the bracketing interview is to increase transparency and reflective awareness of my own stance toward the research (Valle et al., 1989). Beyond the bracketing interview, another way I attempted to make explicit those prior assumptions is through a detailed reflexivity statement which was presented at the end of Chapter One.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have outlined the theoretical frameworks that served to ground this study, explaining how restorative justice, social constructionism, and phenomenological theory have guided my methodological decisions. I also clarified the way in which I approached this phenomenological study from an interpretivist stance, as guided primarily by those who have followed the phenomenological tradition of Heidegger. Next, I explicated the specific methods such as participant selection, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, and issues of trustworthiness. In the next chapter, I will share the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR:
ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to consider the ways in which middle school students made

meaning of their experience with exclusionary discipline, specifically in-school suspension

(ISS). As outlined in Chapter Three, the study drew upon phenomenological methodology and

was grounded in both a phenomenological and a social constructionist framework (Berger &

Luckman, 1966; Pollio, Henley, & Thomas, 1997; van Manen, 2002). The primary source of

data was 13 interviews with middle school students who had been placed in ISS for more than

five days during the 2009-2010 school year. As discussed in Chapter Three, methodologically, I

held a commitment as a researcher to present the unique and individual ways in which my

students experienced ISS, as well as to look thematically at the "shared essence" of their

experiences. Thus, my findings are presented in two sections, one illustrating how each

participant made meaning of the experience of being in ISS through verbal portraits, and the

other presenting a thematic analysis of the 13 interviews.

Textual Notes

Throughout the findings, in order to increase transparency, I chose to use italics when the

words were directly quoted from the students and ellipses to note places where the students'

statements were spliced together or where I had omitted information that was either redundant or

not necessarily relevant to the topic of the paragraph. I also omitted my questions or

interjections, except where I felt that those were essential to help the reader gain a better

understanding of the experience of being in ISS as constructed in the interview. Finally, I

roughly organized the verbal portraits around three broad ideas: their accounts of getting into ISS, what ISS was like, and how ISS impacted them.

Verbal Portraits

To develop each verbal portrait, I analyzed each interview and wove together various parts of quotes in order to present the students' experiences more coherently (see Chapter Three for a more complete description of my analysis process). As I developed the verbal portraits, I chose to represent the students' voices in first person language using the actual words of the participants (Pollio et al., 1997).

van Manen (1990) suggested that often, when we ourselves have not had the experience of a particular phenomenon of interest, we draw on the experiences of others to help us understand. Phenomenological research seeks to do this; in a sense, phenomenologists "'borrow' the words of another" (p. 113) in order to more fully understand another's way of being in the world. This was my intent as I sought to understand what it was like for middle school students who had been in ISS and to present in a coherent way how they each made meaning of that experience. Further, I invite the reader to refer to Table 1 (Chapter Three, p. 108) for germane information about each of the students, including the school they attended, their race and gender, and the number of incidences and days they had spent in ISS. Each of their interviews began with the question, "So you were recently in ISS. Can you tell me about that?"

Shocky Miller

I interviewed Shocky on Wednesday, May 19th, just before school ended on the 21st. When I introduced myself, he held out his hand to shake hands with me. He was friendly, polite, and frequently said *yes ma'am*. When I told him that he could select his own pseudonym, he

giggled and then immediately came up with Shocky. Before coming into the room where the

interview was to occur, I saw him having a conversation with the principal at Butler Middle

School, Mrs. Orwell, who he later referenced during the interview.

Well ISS is like, like if you be bad or something and the teacher's like in the classroom,

then they tell you repeatedly, repeatedly to stop and you don't listen to 'em and like they'll get

tired of it and eventually they'll write you up…sometimes they'll tell you that they gonna write

you up or sometime they don't, or sometimes you'll just see them, they be writing you up and

you'll be like, well they just writing me up…we have to wait cuz the teachers put it in Ms.

Orwell's [principal] *box and then we have to wait until they call us up to the office. Then we go*

back there to her room and she talk about all the disciplines like that and what do you think

should be done and then you could tell her like, what you think can be done and sometime she'll

go with your ideas and sometime she'll go with her own ideas… the conversation sometime it

can be like sort of irritating because like Ms. Orwell like she'll listen, like she'll be like, "okay

do you have anything that you have to say?" She'll let you like say what you have to say. She

don't interrupt you. She'll just sit there and like let you say what you have to say and then like

she'll make her choice. Like sometimes she'll give you a break. She'll be like "well you have

improved on your behavior stuff so I'm just like gonna like give you a little pass" and then a

couple of days later, you have another write up, she'll put the other write up with that write up

and you'll have to get them both signed and I think you'll have to do like 2 days of ISS or like 2

days of OSS.

When we get to ISS, *first, you have to unpack your stuff out of your backpack, hang up*

your backpack and you have to have all of your stuff with you and if you don't, you can't go back

to your classroom and get it…then like we go in there and sit down. First we write down the 13 rules, and about like, there's no idle time, there's no sleeping, you can't chew no gum, um, no talking out loud, no playing with other students, and uh, you can't be in the hallway without other teachers.

Like there's like these little cubicles and they have like these little walls to it so nobody can like see each other or mess with each other, but if you lean back [Shocky demonstrates leaning back in his chair] *you can see like other kids like doing their work because the cubicles, they not fully closed on you so, like duh…It's not fun because you like can't move around and like you barely have any space in there for your own books.*

Well there's like this little piece of paper that like got all your teachers' name on it - it would have their names and then like language class like…she'll put the piece of paper in the teacher's mailbox in front of the office and the teachers will get it, fill it out, and pass to the other teachers to fill it out what all that the student has to do like and then they'll send like the books and stuff like with them or like the books will already just be in the ISS desk with you…one time because like I had came to ISS and like Ms. Walker, she didn't get my work because my teacher, Ms. Miller, she said that she had signed it but she hadn't. It's just like almost getting to the end of school and I was just sitting there, I was just turned around looking at her because I didn't have nothing to do, so I was just sitting there turned around looking at the other kids do their work and sometimes I would make some noise and sometimes I wouldn't and then like so then I just raise my hand and I was just like, 'can I go and get my work, cuz I didn't get my work' and that's when she'll have like another student in ISS to like get up and give them a hall pass to like go to that teacher's classroom and ask them what happened to that little piece of paper.

Sometimes it can be fun. It depends like how many kids are in there and if there's like, it's a whole bunch, like Ms. Walker, she'll get like like upset because there's like a whole bunch of 6th graders…and so sometimes she'll yell at you like cuz if you don't listen to her, she be like, well she don't practicely [sic] *yell. Her voice just get loud and she'll tell you to stop…She always leave her door open so like the people can hear her just in case another student try to hurt her or something, so she always leave her door open… and um we can raise our hands if we need help on math or anything. Once you all done with your work, you um either have a choice like to sit there and really read, don't sit there and just like just go through the book, just keep on flipping pages, just acting like you reading or cuz she can tell when you reading and when you not reading, so uh, like if you want to, either she can give you work to do a packet or you can just sit there and read until the day is over with.*

Like ISS, it can sort of be fun cuz me and another student was in there and Ms. Walker she wasn't mean, she was being nice to us and we both got done with our work at the same time and she let us get up and just talk to each other for a few minutes but then we had to go back and sit back down and then that's when we left for the end of the day…Uh, the only time when it's fun is just like it's like either when there's two people in there or it's just like or just like if you by yourself. She like lets you get up and talk to her for a few minutes, talk about like what you did, like what you did wrong and what did you learn from that.

When there's lots of people in there it can sorta sometimes be fun, it's just like there's certain kids that's in there with you, like if there's like um a whole bunch of kids in there that you don't like, you might as well just not go ahead and talk…If you just keep on acting up and you don't get your work, you just sit there, she can have the choice to just to keep you in there for the

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rest of the year or she can just like give you a couple of more days of ISS, just keep adding them

on until you sit there and do your work..

Shocky's description of ISS primarily focused on what happened when he was in ISS and only tangentially about the process of getting into ISS. For Shocky, it seemed that the ISS teacher, Ms. Walker, at Butler was strict and enforced the ISS rules, but that she was not necessarily mean about it. He particularly talked about how nice she was when there were not many people in ISS, but that when ISS was full, she seemed less likely to engage students in conversations. It did not appear that he considered ISS as preventing him from being academically successful, nor did he seem to express that he had been written up unfairly. Rather, he suggested that he gets written up for repeatedly doing something that he was asked not to do.

Andy Richmond

I interviewed Andy on the Wednesday before school was dismissed for the summer, which he referenced in the interview, stating that several of the students who would normally get ISS were getting OSS since it was the end of the year. Andy spoke to me very systematically, almost as though he had been thinking about ISS and wanted others to know what he'd been thinking. There was an 8th grade honors ceremony on campus that day and several individuals came into the office where we were meeting; Andy didn't seem distracted in the least.

Well, sometimes it can be um a little bit long um and you know the ISS teacher likes to

scream a lot and I just don't like it when people scream and stuff… I mean, the students are

really bad in there and you know they hardly do anything. She um yells at them a lot if they don't

do anything or don't write the rules down and she slams stuff on her desk sometimes…like um,

one time she was cleaning up and she then slammed something on her desk next to her and

telling them to do stuff you know because they weren't doing it. And there was actually this one time, she like got so mad at somebody that she called the cops on them.

When she's mad, oh it could be scary at sometimes and sometimes not you know, if you're really into you work and not paying attention, you know really thinking about stuff, you don't notice her that much but like if you are kinda zoned out, it could be kinda scary…this one time when I was trying to study because I had a test the next day and she said that my pencil had to be on paper…Like um, she said I had to like have my pencil on the paper, like writing and stuff like that… We pretty much just have to write and you can't really idle.

First, she gives us the ISS rules and we write them and stuff. I think it's like 27 questions …it just says uh like I will report immediately to ISS after the bell rings or at 8:45 and it says you know that you get permitted one bathroom break in the morning and one bathroom break in the afternoon and at this period of time you can um get water and you know what time you leave for lunch and that you leave before anybody else can eat and then you come back down to the room. And it also states that no talking or idle time or sleeping…And it pretty much just says that if you idle or sleep or whatever and if you do another day will be added, another day of ISS. And that's just what the sheet says…After we finish that [writing the rules] *we do our work… first we do our normal school work and then she gives us a sheet that's like, write these words like 20 times each and it's like 20 of them, or stuff like that…and um like math problems, then like um math words and then if we get finished with that, then we go on and we do another sheet. And if we finish that…I think it's like the spelling…and then we have to write a story… and they have one about the steps, how you would drape a coffin and like um the American Flag and all that stuff and how to take care of it and all that stuff. And then, after that there is some more stuff that*

we have to do… it's pretty much like an essay, I mean it's like a couple of sentences or a paragraph and that's pretty much it. And then uh after that it says that we have to get the definitions for the spelling words that we did above. Like the abdominal or it could be like stuff along that line…she would hand us a dictionary and we would do that. Then after, if you got done with that…there is like these sentences and you would write down, sentences from the language pack. It's like a couple of pages long and that's pretty much what you do all day. The thing that I dislike the most is that we have to write like a lot and usually it's like the whole day…I'm just really bored and like you know like it's so boring and you know like with doing all the writing and stuff, you know it takes longer, it makes your day longer and you know instead of like being, uh, doing stuff in um other classes because when you look at that worksheet and stuff you know, it just like makes me like, ahhhhh.

They have these little boxes that you would sit in and you can see out of the back, but you can't see out into the hallway and you can't see anyone else and that's what she calls them cubicles and you have to sit in the cubicle and it makes me a little claustrophobic. This one day that I was in there, she said that my teachers didn't give me my work until like 12…but the ISS teacher was trying to get that…ISS makes me mad because you know, I really like to be with my friends and I like to learn stuff and I pretty much like to be in the classroom and learn stuff and uh extend my knowledge for my future and stuff because I want to go to UT, like really bad, and I was going to try really hard next year and try to get honor classes in high school and 8th grade and stuff…So that's pretty much my goal and you know to be in there and not be able to learn stuff you know it kinda makes me mad.

Andy's description of ISS, like Shocky's, focused primarily on what it was like to be in

the ISS room, with only a brief mention of how he got into ISS. In his explanation of ISS, he seemed to focus mostly on the ISS teacher, who he described as angry and someone who yelled all the time. It is interesting to note that he was a student at Butler and yet seemed to have a very different experience of the ISS teacher than Shocky did. He also talked extensively about the ISS rules and the amount of writing they have to do when they are in ISS. He seemed to see ISS as boring and something that he gets into unfairly, only remembering the one occasion where he felt he was in there for something he shouldn't have gotten ISS for. He also seemed to view ISS as hindering his future potential.

Stewey Potter

I interviewed Stewey just after Shocky on Wednesday before school let out on Friday for the summer. He literally ran into the room where we were conducting the interview, sat down quickly, and sat straight upright, fidgeting with a piece of paper throughout the entire interview. He made several comments about his ADHD before and during the interview. His interview seemed to be about teaching me about the schooling system. He took seriously his role as "instructor of teachers" and made sure to give me some good advice for them. His pseudonym was a combination of Stewey, a cartoon character he was familiar with and Potter, as in Harry Potter. He was a big fan and talked to me quite a bit before the interview about how much he loved to read.

It's very boring; it's very ideal punishment…it's like a whole day of punishment. It's worse than OSS…it's just more of an ideal punishment, like you know what I mean, I guess cuz students hate it so much and for those that don't hate it, they put them in OSS. And I hate both because I get whip lash from both here and at home…It's like a prison almost. You're in there

and you can't really do anything. You go to lunch, but you come down to eat. So it's just kind of boring really…I have heard people say that they love it but I personally have not had any experience where I have like being in ISS. I think it's boring as just - being locked in a steel box.

When you are in there she is very lenient sometimes – well she tries not to be but she lets us, she doesn't let us get away with anything and we have to do all of our work… like she was lenient with the work like sometimes if there wasn't that many students…Okay well she lets us talk, well not talk but go to sleep after we finish our work sometimes and that's if like we have, if she only has a couple of students in there, and we don't have to raise our hands to ask a question. Like if there's 5 or 10 people in there, we got to raise our hand. She's in a bad mood…It's chaotic…people getting, hmm, punished for not really doing anything…like she sent some kid, one of my friends, to the bench and he wasn't even doing anything. It was the kid next to him and she didn't even make sure…I guess she's kinda just disappointed that's why. And I kinda am too seeing that many people in ISS…I mean we're in 8th grade you know, almost going into high school. We shouldn't need, we shouldn't misbehave like that. We should be able to control ourselves and sometimes we don't, but that's kind of sad because we do.

Like I bet if you looked in there right now there'd be 5 - 10 people…Well, no maybe 3, cuz right now it's toward the end of the year, there's only 2 days left and people are going to be getting OSS instead of ISS, which is why I was kinda scared when I came down here…It's bad when you get in ISS cuz it's basically, people are going to be wondering why you are gone, what'd you do, you know, um and some people, it gets you the wrong rep. You don't want to hang out with the wrong people. It's just some people think it's cool to be in ISS. I know some friends that do stuff on purpose just to get in ISS.

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I get ISS for stupid stuff [Stewey laughed] *I've gotten ISS for a teacher thinking I said BS but I didn't –I've gotten ISS for throwing something. One time when I got ISS, I accidentally hit someone in the face, I didn't mean to. Like I was just messing around and it was just horse play and that's the reason I didn't get OSS cuz it was just horse play gone too far…So yea - so I got ISS for that cuz one of our friends snitched on us… but there's you know, there's like a no tolerance in 8th grade right now, which is why I don't want to come to school on the last day.*

It's really kind of fun, well no not fun, like the system is fun… like how it works -Yea it's easy I guess - not fun. Like, I can understand it. I know how I got certain demerits and everything…A demerit is a strike basically, um, you have three strikes. Once you get three demerits, you have detention after school. If you get six, you have off team. I think it's either off-team or ISS or maybe it is nine for ISS.

*For all the students going to hear this, ISS sucks…*To teachers, *try to be a little bit more, like think about it a little bit more before you send somebody and don't just like write somebody up out of impulse, just like instinctively out of anger. Think about it before you write em up, because sometimes they really won't do something or they really haven't done anything and they end up getting punished for it…It's happened to me…cuz she was in a bad mood that week - that whole week I think she was a little like clawing your eyes out if you mess with me.*

Stewey described ISS as boring, punishment, a steel box, and a prison. It appears that he did not like it much. His description of the ISS teacher, like Shocky's was that she was lenient when there were a few people in there but it was chaotic when the ISS room was full. He seemed to think that he was in ISS for stupid stuff and for accidents and because others snitched on him, suggesting that perhaps, Andy did not take responsibility for his own behaviors.

Chris Roque

Chris was very soft-spoken and quiet during the interview; sometimes I was afraid the recorder wouldn't pick up his voice so I found myself repeating a lot of what he said, just to be sure I could hear him.

I don't like *ISS. It's boring…You have to sit there all day…in one seat and do work.* If we finish, *she give me more work to do…Like a big ole book of English…It's just worksheets.* Sometimes teachers *don't give us work*; when that happens, *Ms. Taylor, the ISS teacher, make us do her work* [pause] *or be bored.* If we don't get our work done, *then they say we missing it and they give us a zero on it.* Missing *that much school because of being in ISS* is *lame…cuz you just keep on going in there - like as soon as you get out, you have to go right back in there…just sitting there being quiet in that one room all day.*

The ISS teacher, Ms. Taylor, yell at people for *no reason really,* but *she be nice to some people, people she likes.* She yells at me *when I'm falling asleep or something or I stop doing my work…like when I get tired*…Last time I was in there, *like two weeks back*…Ms. Taylor *yelled at people and wrote people up and let all her good students, like the people she like, get on the computer…but I was doing my work.* They get on *Study Island, a little class thing - it'll help your grades…Like if you're missing something and they put it on there and you can do it… I got an F in social studies. Everything else is good.*

A write-up is *like a little piece of paper- they put your name down and your address and your phone number and what you did* and then *the principal assigns what you get ISS or out of school,* depending *on how many days I been in there before.* I've been *written up for talking during class, not doing my work when I'm supposed to, walking out of class when I got to use the*

bathroom…cuz I couldn't hold it. I *sometimes yell at teachers when they get on my nerves*, but *they don't write me up when I yell at em. Aint no teacher wrote me up yet for yellin' at 'em.*

Tell us to be quiet I guess…Some teachers do, some teachers just write us up when they see us talking…but sometimes we gettin bored so I still talk when I'm bored. I don't get bored in math, *cuz it my favorite subject* and *she be nice to me; she give me chances in class.* My social studies teacher, *don't like nobody in there, she just tell us to get out if we talk.* She just wants us *to be quiet*. My math teacher wants us to *do our work…she just want us to do our work. And listen….so we can get a good education*.

For Chris, then, ISS is boring because you have to just sit there all day. He contrasts *his* work, as what the teachers should send to ISS, but apparently do not always do, with *her* work, the work that the ISS teacher gives them to do in ISS apparently in order to keep them busy and out of trouble. As a student at Green Middle School, Chris seems to believe that his ISS teacher does not like him and that because of that, she yells at him frequently.

James Thomas

Prior to beginning the interview, James indicated that he would like to be a school superintendent one day. He was very talkative and had a great deal to say about student discipline and students' interactions with teachers.

I haven't really liked it [being in ISS] *because you know I don't really think that I am a troubled child…I don't like it, because of its rudeness… and it's so many rules to abide by and some of the rules to me aren't worth having…I feel like a prisoner instead of feeling like I am in ISS…Like you can't drink chocolate milk, or strawberry milk or you can't buy chips. Or you have to go by what they ask you to eat and stuff like that and that's not for me. And uh, no*

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talking, I don't think that we should be able to talk but I kinda do at the end of the day, you know

and uh you know, I don't think we should be quiet the whole day. We shouldn't have to be quiet

and look at a black wall all day…no it's a black wall…No seriously all the way to the top, it's

black at the top. But it's really black all the way. The whole room it's black…the only thing we

get to do is Study Island…it's where, it's like another TCAP[7] basically, except you don't get

graded for it. It's helping you be prepared for TCAP and other lessons and stuff like that. [James

made a funny face when I asked him if it was like a game] *You can take it as a game; I take it as*

work…I take it as a work sheet; you can take it as a game though.

    No, no, no. They don't let you leave ISS to go ask for help. I just wait til I get done with

ISS…you still got to sit there or she'll tell you what to do - you gotta read a book or go on the

computer or something, you know…She gives you a packet of work and she usually put it in the

mailbox. She's usually generous about that and helps you to get extra credit or something.

    She's a nice lady. She just has a snoozy attitude…A rude attitude…the teacher, the ISS

lady is rude...I just, out of the whole experience, I didn't like it because like every time you talk,

she hollers at you like you was a dog or slams books in front of your face and everything else, I

just didn't like it… She yells all through the day. That's how I feel, she yells all through the day.

Pacifically [sic] *if she feels threaten, 'cuz she's a little bit older, maybe in her 60s, I don't know I*

think, so she feels she has to holler. And a lot of the kids here at this school, they don't go for it. I

mean, you can holler at them, but they don't go for it. I mean they don't go for it…They don't

take anything off anyone, not at all…They scream back, you scream at them and they scream

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[7] TCAP stands for Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program and is a "timed, multiple choice assessment that measures skills in Reading, Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies" (TN Department of Education, 2011).

*back and most of them will hit you…*and then *they send you home or send you back to ISS.*

I just like, you know, get written up for silly stuff like calling a teacher a b-i-t-c-h, you know…One teacher lied and said that I called her that; she took up for another student. It didn't really bother me; I had other stuff on my plate. I didn't have time to worry about what she was lying about. So you know there was one time I got written up in Social Studies. I called Ms. Winston a b-i-t-c-h…Yeh, I really did. She locked the door on me and I told her, don't lock the door on me [student made a face indicating that this was where he had used the word, "bitch"] *I kinda got a temper…She locked the door on me, you know she locked me out of her class…she does that all the time. All the teachers do that. They just do that, then the principal go out into the hallway and they say they scooping up students, saying if you are late, they have to lock the doors, I just don't like that at all…No I wasn't late…She told me I could go and then the bell rung and I knocked on it and she opened it up 10 minutes later and told me, 'you was late for my class', and I said 'no, I wasn't late - I asked you if I could go and you told me yes.' You told me yes and I walked out and she still locked the door. But you know she does it all the time so I'm just not worrying anymore.*

I was *playing in her* [Ms. Lofton] *class after she asked me to stop. I guess she had a bad day all day…I got sent from one class to another class so I won't get into trouble in that class. She usually jokes around with me and when she do that kind of joking, we laugh about it… then she wrote me up… I got suspended but she didn't get any disciplinary action and that's something - I think teachers should get disciplinary action as well as students. And uh you know, I just don't think it's right.*

Teachers like, excuse me, Mr. Leonard, he's the art teacher, he's rude and ah I don't

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want to bite my tongue about this, because I think that it should be addressed. He is rude, he needs psychological help if you ask me. Um he's called me gay on 3 occasions but I'm just gonna leave that alone… in my opinion, I felt like he was calling me gay…It kinda makes me upset at him…but then again, if I say something back I can always back it up and say he will write me up and I can say I will try to get you in trouble too, cuz…he wrote me up once and I told him if you write me up I am going to have my granny go down to the Board of Education and I'm gonna get you. And I really mean that…He didn't write me up.

If I could change it, there would be a lot of changes, um like not slamming books and not hollering and less rules…if I could, I would just change everything around at this school… I wouldn't have ISS; I wouldn't have it at all. No, I don't believe in it. I just don't. I don't like it. I wouldn't have it; I think it is the worst thing ever. I'd also change *the policies - if I were the superintendent…I would change a whole bunch of things such as freedom in the school. I don't feel we have freedom in the school…And another thing I would change in school is that they have too many petty rules.*

I'm just tired of getting into trouble…It's just bull crap. All of it, you know. It just upsets me you know? It's little stuff you shouldn't write up about, like a cell phone being out. Don't write a student up for a cell phone being out. And don't write up a student for saying a little cuss word here and there. Just tell them watch your mouth, put the cell phone up. You know? Now in a couple of days if it continues, I think you should call the parent, if the parent doesn't do anything about it after a couple of days, then you should write up. I mean that is little petty stuff.

To teachers, *um, be lenient, be strict and be nice…What I mean by that - be smart when you are writing up students and think, is this something you should write up or you know, and*

what I mean by be strict is, do as you feel, don't be too hard, just be nice about things and be strict in a generous way. Just, you know, what I mean about being lenient, is I mean be… don't write up things that is not important you know, just to be suspending them, to get kids out of school. You get students out of school, the more harder it is for them to make up work, the more grades drop and everything else. You know, no one needs that…If you write it up, the principal's going to do something about it. And 9 times out of 10 students don't like what principals do; I don't like what principal does. So I'm just saying, teachers think.

James' account of ISS seemed to revolve around the unfairness of ISS and the teachers with whom he interacts. He complained that teachers yelled too much, that there were too many rules, and that students often do not get their work sent to ISS. While James referred to ISS as a prison, apparently because students were not able to do what they wanted, it was the relationship between he and his art teacher that appeared particularly troubling. The interactions between James and the art teacher appears to be very unhealthy, with both the student and the teacher appearing to be acting disrespectfully toward one another. James' solution would be to get rid of ISS altogether; it represents one of many things that he would change in schools, most of which seeded to be related to getting rid of what he called the petty rules. Like other students, James' advice to teachers seems to be to just think before they write students up.

John Smith

When I called on the morning of May 14th at around 10:00, the office attendant informed me that I should come now and interview John, if I could, because he had just been sent to the principal's office and they were probably going to send him home for the rest of the year. So I rushed over to Green Middle School. When I walked into the main office, he was sitting in the

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office of the dean of students. The assistant principal went and talked to him and brought him into the room where hopefully we were going to conduct the interview. He seemed to be in a really foul mood, so when he smiled, it was pretty great. He warmed up fairly well and eventually I saw a shift in his disposition. In order to get there, we had quite a talk about basketball, football, his very cool watch, and a field trip he took Nashville with his 5th grade class that he thought was fun. After he started talking, I went back to the ISS conversation and he agreed to talk with me. He gave me a funny look when I suggested he choose a pseudonym, acting like that was something weird. So we agreed to John Smith together and laughed that it was a bit boring but it would work.

W*hen we go there she* [the ISS teacher] *tells us to write a - it's a morning assessment for ISS. To get us started off, we either got to write two or one or what she tells us to write. We copy it down on a piece of paper…like why you be in the ISS, things you should do…like, how we waste the principal's time and …if she doesn't have stuff for us to do, we can like read or write words out the dictionary. Before TCAP, we had this spelling word list and we put them in a scrabble game.* Sometimes my teachers don't send work. When they do, *she* [the ISS teacher] *said if we don't finish that in there, basically we can't do nothing then but the morning writing. Then we have to do it at home and if we don't do it at home, we won't be able to do it.* The ISS teacher is *strict* and *don't let us talk.* If you talk, *she make you stand up like for 15 minutes or 30. And if you keep on talking she gonna send you back to the dean of students and then he or she will either add two or one more day.*

One of my teachers uses *this thing called Skype and she'll - like Ms Buchanan, our language teacher, she's up there and we can see her talkin to us. We get on, like we still be in the*

class…it's like, it's a video message and stuff, like if she over in the 8th grade hall, over there, then we down here and we not in her class, but in ISS, she puts um, she got a camera that she put on her computer and she got a Skype website. And she, um, it like this little phone in the computer and she calls um Ms. Taylor and a video pops up on the screen. She can't see us, she can only see herself. But we can see her when she's teaching.

Basically we can't do nothing and when you finish that [your class work and the writing assignments from the ISS teacher], then *you get privileges… like Study Island…It's like a website that you um, that they like, that each school do, each middle school. And it's like um, like pre-test and stuff... They got like little games, like after you pre- test on it. If you get it right you can play and I think it like goes on your grade - yeh, like if you get a 85% it's like if you not did get good on your TCAP last year.*

I just got written up this morning, so I'll probably be in ISS *the rest of the day*. I'll d*o my makeup work and my agenda and um and a binder*. I have make-up work *from Science, Social Studies, Math and Language. Then they just send me a whole bunch of make-up work and then I'll just do it there in ISS if I won't do it in her class…ISS be better because it's more quieter in there.*

I don't remember how many times I've been in ISS this year, *a lot.* This morning, *one of the girls in the class was being disrespectful, I mean disruptive. And she* [the classroom teacher] *was giving people warnings and I was just coming in there when she was yelling at the class and she gave the class a warning. Well she went back to teach and she looked back and I was talking, talking to my friend. And she said, she just wrote me up and she said that I have two days of ISS... She was about to start teaching and I came in late, and she was already mad cuz the class*

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was already being disrespectful…she told me to go stand at the front desk and wait for her to write the referral.

If I am tardy to some of my classes, and I got me a date to do detention, then, and if I don't go to detention then I have ISS two days. I get into ISS fo*r being disrespectful…talking out loud, not doing what I'm supposed to do. Like I decide to do, when I am assigned to do an assignment and I don't do the assignment, then I refuse to do it, she'll write me up and she'll put being disrespectful for not doing, by refusing to do work.*

Your grades can get down uh will go down if you don't if you not doing any work cuz like some people don't even get work when they be in ISS…Sometimes they'll ask for make-up work and she'll say that's not my responsibility. So then*, either they grade will get lowered because that's like them not being there in the class. And if they aren't there in the class then there ain't no point in keeping their grade up - if they ain't did no work.* If teachers don't send assigned class work, *sometimes she'll* [the ISS teacher] *have work in the little file cabinet and she'll give it out, and uh if we don't finish it, we have to take it home and finish and if we don't finish it then we and we not in ISS she just makes you do another day. She um she just, it's like this little big old list, it says how much the people in ISS and how much days they have and she can just mark that out and put another day.*

John's description of ISS seems to revolve around the ISS teacher and her role in John's ISS experience. He, like Andy, talked about how much writing they did in ISS, especially when his teachers failed to send his regular class work, something he seems to suggest happens frequently. He provided several examples of times when he had been written up and sent to ISS, most of which seemed to position him as a student who is picked on or unfairly treated. Finally,

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John talked a great deal about his grades and what he perceived were the negative impacts of ISS on his grades.

Jeffery Richardson

I interviewed Jeffrey before school on May 17; he was talkative and animated as he shared extensively about his relationships with teachers at Green Middle School. After an hour, an assistant principal came in and reminded Jeffrey that he had a test in his next class that he needed to get to. I'm fairly confident that he would have talked to me all day.

It's fun for us, but it's also cutting into our learning time…Most of the time you just sitting there…It's kind of bored. Cuz when you're sitting there, right after lunch, you're just sitting there, you not doing nothing. It just gets boring, and boring, and boring and boring so, but I been bringing a book in there…I just go in there and I just sit down and I just start reading in my book and from there and it gets bored-er and bored-er. And you keep being bored until you get like a work that you really want to do, or some work that you really don't want to do but just still going to do it cuz you really need to do it, but other than that it's fine.

Some teachers have this thing on the Internet where you go into ISS if you are so below in their class. You'll get on the computer, you log into it under their name and whatever it is and it'll bring up their class. You're sitting there learning…other times you just go into ISS and you just sit there and sit there and you don't do nothing…It's kinda torture because you are sitting in there and the ISS teacher will sometimes yell at you because you are sitting in there and you can't do nothing because you have no work…It's fun except when you get to the boring part; then you have nothing to do…Doing the work is fun…but as soon as you get done with your

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work, you have nothing to do…so you're basically sitting there bored out of you mind, can't talk, unless the teacher leaves the room and you try to get help and all this and that.

This one time, I had like a bunch of military books, some science fair books that I'm working on, they're all just lined up in there…I had nothing else to do so I was sitting there reading and reading… and Ms. Taylor [ISS teacher] *came over and asked me what I was doing and I said that I'm just sitting here reading. She said you are not supposed to be reading; you are supposed to be in here working. I said I finished my work. I have no more work to do so I was just reading; I don't have no more work to do. So she took all the books and sat them over behind the desk so I couldn't get them. So I just sat there with nothing for I think an hour and a half. Then two teachers uh brought me some math, like five or six pages of math. I whipped through it in about 30 minutes and stayed there the rest of the time and did nothing.*

I took a packet of at least 75 word searches in there with me one day and some of the kids that get finished with they work, after the teacher would leave the room, they be like, can I have a couple of word searches because they don't have no more work and she won't give them any more work. So I give um, I say like here, here is you a couple of word searches and be easy but um one of them ask me while she was in the room could they have a word search and she got super mad, I'm talking she was, she was just furious…she got him at least 6 days out of school because of him asking me for a couple of word searches. She does not like talking in there. If you talk she gets mad. [The word, mad, was drawn out and said with great emphasis.] *It's not nice to us because she's getting mad at us - she's yelling at us and it makes us kinda feel bad… She'll say* [Jeffrey raised his voice] *you need to stop talking and all this and that, and she'll just yell, you need to stop talking and then she'll make us stand up beside our desk for 15 minutes and if*

we touch the desk, it's another 15 minutes. If we lean over to look at our paper, it's another 15 minutes, but she keeps adding minutes on…if we start talking again, tryin' to ask for help, she'll get mad. She'll get angry. She'll get furious. It just escalates.

She, well she really don't like it when anybody's talking or anybody saying help me or something. She gets really mad. She don't like us talking, but the only time we can talk is if we are talking to her. The last time I was in ISS, a girl asked me for a sheet of paper, for a sheet of graph paper and I only have one sheet of graph paper and I said I don't have any more but you can have this one. Well, she [ISS teacher] *walks back in the room and she asks who was talking. The little girl says "I was. I was asking for a sheet of paper." And she said to stand up and I said, no it ain't right that she asked me for a, cuz she needed a sheet of graph paper and you won't give her none. So I said, why don't you just let me stand up and let her sit down. And she said well how about you both stand up and you both just stand there for 45 minutes. And I said what for? She said because you're standing here back-mouthing me. I said no I'm not. She got a little bit mad at me*

Sometimes, *some of the teachers they go into ISS to help the students. They go in there for a certain amount of minutes to help the students on their lunch period or their break or something, whatever you want to call it. They go there because their kids are in related arts. So they go in there and you know they'll help their students, but other than that you are in there all by yourself, doing your work by yourself, because the teacher in there won't help you.*

Mr. Langston, one of the project GRAD people, he'll come in there sometime and he'll just come in there and just come talk to us while she's not in the room, cuz they'll have to watch us, and he'll just come in there and talk to us and he'll ask us why we're in there so we'll tell him

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and everything. Well, when Ms. Taylor comes back in, he'll lie and say that we weren't talking to keep us covered so that none of us will get in trouble, cuz he likes to talk to us to figure out what's going on - uh, a couple of boys normally go to see him for like, to like figure out how they can solve a problem yada and Ms. Quincy [guidance counselor] *likes to, she'll come every now and then and she'll grab you out of there, like if you are like having a problem with another student or something, she'll come grab you out of there to take you to see if you can try to figure out your problem.*

We get sent in there for like stupid stuff, like since we're in dress code, we get sent in there for like stupid stuff like if we have an itty bitty hole in our pants, we have to go and ask our parents to bring us pants or something to put on. And if we don't have on the right shirt, we have to go in there and sit down until our parents come. And I've been there a couple time for something super retarded cuz they want to send me there cuz I got up and picked up my pencil cuz it was on the other side of the desk…so I got up and I picked it up and he wrote me up for getting up and getting my pencil. When I asked him to get it for me and he said that he wouldn't… so I sat there for a couple of minutes later and then I got up and got my pencil. So he sent me to ISS.

I have a history of getting into trouble because a lot of teachers don't like me, so when they start arguing with me I can't help, because I am bipolar and ADHD, to argue back, so I be like arguing and basically they like to like pin it all on me because something that's going on…Ms. Tucker, she gets mad, she'll get mad at me every now and then and Ms. Marshall, I wish more people were like her cuz she makes learning fun. She makes - say if we, if we're trying

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to do a certain thing, she'll try and figure out a way to make it easier on us to learn it and

everything like that…I never get into trouble in her class, never.

You can read a book or whatever, but still it ain't – well, it looks fun from a person's

point of view, but it's just pure torture to the kids cuz we're missing out on our learning time, so

it is taking US out of OUR learning so the teachers don't have to put up with us… It's especially

torture for the kids because they are not getting their learning time. They can't do what they

need to because over what the teachers are doing. They're sticking us in ISS when they could just

have us go into another room.

Jeffrey spent a large part of our interview describing what happens in the ISS room;

while he reported that he gets to read in ISS all day, which he seemed to appreciate, he did share

a time when the ISS teacher would not let him read his books, which he considered unfair. He

seemed to view the ISS teacher as someone who yelled a great deal, especially when students did

not have any work, which apparently happened often, according to Jeffrey. While he

acknowledge a several adults at Green Middle School who appear willing to listen to students,

the ISS teacher does not seem to be one of them. Jeffrey provides a long list of things he had

been written up for, most of which he described as stupid stuff, which he seemed to feel was

jeopardizing students' opportunities to learn.

Josh Stinson

I interviewed Josh in the morning before school began. He smiled frequently during our

interview and while he seemed comfortable, he did not have a whole lot to say.

It was not fun, aggravating. Sometimes I was in there for no apparent reason…cuz like

some people try to blame stuff on me…Like somebody threw a pencil one day and they blamed it

on me, but it was really the dude that was way in the front of the class. They just didn't see him

chunk it, so they just told me to go. I also get accused *sometimes when people fighting, and they*

try to say I was on the hallway that they fought on. They tell me, what happen? I was like, no I

wasn't. Now I'll admit I wasn't on the hallway, so I don't know what to say. They said that I had

*said something, so they wrote me up…*I also get sent to ISS for *aggravating people…why do they*

always blame me for certain stuff?

Well, [grinning] *there's a certain class, it's 5th period…these two girls they always*

messing with me…they always messing with me. I got like a little anger issue…Like it comes at a

weird time if I get aggravated, I just start getting mad and sweat a lot. These two girls always

messing with me. Ahhh, that's the main ones that get on my nerves though uhhh, I can't uh, I just

get mad and uh, sorry, yea that's the word for it, I get in trouble…Some teachers they just give

you a write up and say go on in there. They make the principal just come and get you and you

wouldn't even know that the principal was on the way for a small, small, small reason, like

someone could be arguing in class and she'll just say get out and the principal will be on her

way or something.

In ISS, *you have to just work…if they send it,* but that *don't usually happen.* When they

don't send it, I do *nothing…I just sit down and just stare into space…I gotta go back to class and*

ask them for it. But the ISS teacher she won't let you…Uhh, it's tiring, that's all, just tiring…If

you in for a reason then you probably would learn something but I never been in there for a

good reason.

If I ask for help, they'd help, *but not really…I like to work things out myself.* I'm failing most my classes, *cuz I got a lot of absences…39…I just get sick easy…and I've been Out of School Suspended, 3 times, no I been 4 times, cuz I was suspended yesterday*

While Josh talked about being in ISS as boring, not fun, and aggravating, most of his accounts of his experience with ISS were about getting into ISS, which he mostly described as unfair. After giving a list of things he had been in ISS for, he seemed to indicate that he had never been in ISS for a good reason, but that he felt teachers tried to blame him for things he did not do. He also seemed to complain that teachers do not send work to ISS which he blamed for his failing classes.

Marcy Clemmons

Marcy was quiet and did not volunteer a great deal of information, so I felt the need to adjust my questioning style in order to elicit more information. To fairly specific questions, she seemed much more willing to respond.

Being in ISS is… [followed by a long pause, and then a deep sigh, as if exhaling] *boring, cuz you don't get to talk in ISS, you don't get to chew gum, you don't get to say anything. Ever. Unless you raise your hand. And you only get to talk when you're in, when you're eatin in lunch…Well you get all your work from your teachers. You go in there, sit down and do it. And you go to lunch at like 11:30, when uh people are in special areas…sometimes they have like these students that go and get the work for you…*We get there at *8:30* and *we sit there til 3:30….I mostly get through with my work at like one something* and then *just sit there, and you can draw or whatever.* I'd rather have *in-school…cuz with OSS, you can't get your work and when you come back to school you have to make it up, which is why my grades are failing right now.*

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I mostly get ISS for *uh, mouthin off to the teachers* [pause] *and out a area. Out of area's being somewhere where you shouldn't be, like if my class is in the cafeteria and I'm in the auditorium, then that's out of area…When I mouth off to the teachers, it's only cuz they make me mad and they just* [deep breath, followed by a long pause] *I don't know…They yell for nothing! And sometimes kids walk out of there with headaches, cuz a how much teachers yell…So I yell. I just don't like it and I yell back…sometimes it* [ISS] *helps me learn, and sometimes it doesn't…It only helps when I know I did something wrong.*

Sometimes I get into ISS for something that I didn't even do or something that happened on a accident…one time, they said that I told this one, uh, this girl, I called her a b-word and I didn't. It was one of my other friends. But now, the girl that called her a B, we're no longer friends because she's the one who got me in trouble. So I got ISS for that. Somethin' that I didn't even do…I think teachers just don't like me and don't want me here…Cuz, everytime I come down the hallway, just like in the morning, teachers just stare at me. Not all, but some…I don't know, I think it means to me that they just don't like me. [long silence] Do you have any teachers that do like you? *Ms. Flemming.* How do you know she likes you? *She tells me…It just hasn't been a good year…mostly cuz my uh, I been suspended and gettin' in trouble by mostly the same teachers over and over again.*

Like all of the students, Marcy seemed to find ISS to be boring and characterized by too many rules. In her description of a typical day in ISS, she stated that teachers most always sent her work to ISS; she stated that she was currently failing, it appeared, due to out of school suspension, not ISS. In her accounts of getting sent to ISS, she seemed to attribute most of her trouble to her teachers who she felt yelled too much. She also seemed to think that her teachers

did not like her and did not want her around.

Matt Rogers

Matt was a fairly soft-spoken young man; other than when he told the story about the student who threw the paper airplane in ISS, he maintained a fairly low affect. He had a deep southern accent and smiled freely, but appeared a bit shy. There were a couple of places in the interview when he started to say something, but then hesitated and did not say it. He later asked me if he was *allowed to say names* so I felt that he might have been hesitant to give too much information.

When we get in there, sometime she is strict and usually, you have to be good, but when we have a substitute, we like take control over her and it ain't really like ISS. It's like free time if we have a substitute...like we'll do whatever we want really. But if we have like Ms. Arthur, she'll actually like control us and stuff...we always have to do our work and if you make like a sound or something she may write you up again and plus she could let's see, um, that's about it...Yea. You have to be good...let's see, good in ISS is like being quiet, not uh, talking loud, don't whisper, always raise your hand before you talk. I get into ISS *usually for disrespect...and oh, talking, uh I can't shut my mouth really...Yeh. I like talking... They write you up and then like then during lunch, then they'll give it to them. And then, I think that you'll talk to Ms. Rogers* [6th grade principal] *for a little bit.*

It's *boring...I can't really do nothing...Sometimes I usually draw when I get through with my work or make little airplanes or something, and just put them in my backpack so I won't get in trouble...I went through that one time when I was in ISS, I saw a kid throw an airplane. She got really mad. She made us get out our paper and see if our paper matched it and he got*

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caught…It ain't that much fun though, cuz I'd rather be in class than out of class…cuz I can

actually comprehend it when the teacher says it…Sometimes it's fun if you have your friends in

there. But like me I usually get sent in there when there's like only two 6th graders. And it's

actually boring, really! You wouldn't want to be in there.

Teachers need *to be strict on me. Um like some teachers, they let me kinda roam around*

and that's when I like start getting hyper and I get mad sometimes and like in some classes when

they can handle me, I like it because I can actually learn stuff more. Ms. Perkins, she let me um,

you know roam around, sit wherever I want to. She doesn't really give me no warnings or

nothing and she doesn't really do nothing to me, and that's why I don't learn nothing and Ms.

Marshall, you know, she has all kinds rules like when you walk in you have to be quiet um do

your homework. If not you have to sign a book. If you have 3 sign-in's, it means you would have

um detention for an hour.

Matt seemed to focus his discussion of ISS around what it was like to be in the ISS room,

with only a few references to his experience with getting into ISS. He described ISS as boring

and provided a list of things that he occupies himself with in order to stay out of further trouble

while he is in ISS. Matt's advice to new teachers seemed to suggest that he wanted to learn, but

that the way some teachers structure their classes, he has too much freedom, which seems to

hinder his learning.

Bam Margero

Bam very quickly selected his pseudonym, the name of a famous skateboarder, after

which he gave a detailed explanation of his choice and a description of his "hero" complete with

a litany of stats about the tricks that Bam can do and how cool his board is. As we talked, he

mentioned that his own board had *snapped* (broken) recently and he was quite *bummed* about it, but he thinks he can fix it for about $40. Our conversation about skateboarding seemed to set the tone for the interview, casual and informative.

I like ISS; it's quiet and I get to do my work a lot better in there cuz no kids are distracting me - cuz I have a bunch of friends and they always try to talk to me in class. So [in ISS] *I don't get in any trouble. I can just do all my work and I'm the first one always done. Cuz everyone has to stay quiet so I'm good at that…some kids are just like I hate ISS - it's boring. It is boring but I get my work done, bring my grades up and so I'm good with that…Like if I'm missing assignments and that drops my grade cuz I don't have any grades to put in, so I don't get points for it. If I do it and turn it back in then I can get points for it. They might be lower, but I still get points and it brings up my grades…We get our work done and it's somewhere better for us to be other than the classroom, where we disrupt everybody else, so I think ISS is a good idea...See I like ISS so it doesn't really bother me, but it's boring.*

The ISS teacher is nice - she's funny. Whenever a kid's like in ISS, they say like man, this is boring or like they'll just say something randomly out loud, she'll say like, not make fun of them, but say a joke to them like and everybody starts laughing and it's not really quiet in there - cuz whenever she gets off topic, everybody gets off topic and they just start talking. Yeh, she's nice…When we ask her for help, she usually helps us and uh I have trouble with math and whenever I ask her for questions, she doesn't tell me the answers like most teachers. She helps me get to it by myself. So that helps me.

ISS is supposed to show me to be more responsible, I guess? I don't know really, it's basically like a regular class. You go to lunch and everything. They treat you normal. You can

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still get written up in there. It's just a normal class. You just gotta stay quiet.

Sometimes I get written up for *stupid things…Well, one time, I thought it was kinda ridiculous, but this one girl had Doritos and I got one, one chip, and the teacher, Mr. Henry, came up to me and he said, uh, why are you eating chips and I said she had a bag and she gave me one and everybody else had one so I just thought I'd get one and he wrote me up and uh, and I said dude, can I just like eat this right quick and just get on with it? and he said first of all, I'm not a dude and everybody started laughing, so he obviously thought that did something but I didn't, so he wrote me up and gave me three days ISS…Well as soon as I got back from that time, as soon as I went back into his room, he wrote me up again, the same teacher, so he wrote me up for talking and he sent me out in the hallway and I came in and got my stuff and went back out in the hallway and he wrote me up for being out of area so I didn't think that was right.*

Another time, *I can't remember all of it um, but one of my friends, he took my hat, cuz I skated to school and I wore it so my hair wouldn't get in my eyes. So I wore it to school and I had it and he was out of the room, and he said everybody stay quiet and stay in your seat. So as soon as I got, as soon as he came back in, I was standing up at my seat, but I was right beside my seat and I said Mr. Henry, tell him to give me my hat back and he said, first of all, you don't tell me what to do and that's a write up for both of you because you were out of your seat. And I said, but he took my hat. Well,* then *he writes me up. He'll take it to Mr. Smith or Mrs. Baker* [assistant principals] *and once he gives it to them then they'll search over it and if they think I need ISS then they'll give me days, so,* [pause] *sometimes I'll get it short, like one day.*

Most of them [write-ups] *are in Mr. Henry's* class*, but there was this one time when Mr. Walker - I went through a bad streak with him because he wrote me up, I can't remember what*

for, but he wrote me up and sent me to ISS so I was kinda mad at him, so I didn't do my work in

there for maybe a week or two and so that got me some ISS time and an F in his class. And *Ms.*

Brice - she's kinda close to me, so she would always say like - she'd take stuff overboard and she

would just write me up for not even doing anything - so this year, this one time, she said that I

threw a broken pencil at her, but some kid broke it and threw it at her...and she wrote me up and

called the officers on me...yeh, we were really close, we were like family almost, and I called her

and emailed her and everything, but then she had a bad day and she made it my bad day and we

just didn't get along the rest of the time.

      I do have one more thing - I had like all F's on my report card and over like four weeks, I

brought every single grade up to like an A or a B and now if I just bring up one more grade to a

B or an A, then I'll have second honors...I did my work and I did a bunch of extra credit - a lot

of extra credit. So now I have *to get to 8th grade - cuz they gave me a letter for retention, when I*

had all F's, and that kinda made me know that they're really serious about it...well, just cuz I got

the letter and it said, you have the possibility of being retention, um held back, so I thought about

me being with all those 6th graders and not with my friends and then this uh girl named Melissa,

she's my best friend, she uh, like made me confident that I could do it - so I kinda got into it.

Whenever I was in ISS all those times, I guess that everybody goes through it, because I just

didn't care about anything - I didn't care about my schoolwork or nothing.

Unlike the majority of participants, Bam seemed to like ISS; it was quiet, he didn't have

to deal with the distractions of other students, and he could bring his grades up. As a student at

Tate Middle School, Bam appeared to like the ISS teacher as well, indicating that she was

helpful and nice. Although he did share stories of getting written up for what he seemed to

consider stupid things, several of his accounts of getting written up revolved around his relationships with his teachers. He concluded the interview with a story about his friend, Melissa, who helped him come through a difficult time. He seemed to be suggesting that her friendship helped him develop the confidence to change his attitude about school.

Sara Peterson

My interview with Sara took place on a Friday, but I had seen her on Monday being picked up at school by an adult male. I had gone in to the office to request to see two students, one of whom was Sara; the principal's assistant told me that she had just been sent home for three days and to try back on Friday, which I did. So on Friday, Sara had just returned from three days of OSS, which I discovered later was for stealing candy from the front office. During the interview, Sara seemed very sleepy and yawned frequently; she wasn't very talkative and kept fidgeting, sticking her finger in the hole in her jeans.

Um [long pause]*, you're not allowed to chew gum, you got to stay in your seat um, you got to raise your hand every time you want something…then, usually the teacher is sort of strict and then it's got the rules. Like the rules, are like, hard and stuff like, you can't fall asleep, no talking, no candy, no food until lunch…Like, I'm always in there and like, I should know what it's like…I lost count* of how many days, but it's *a lot.*

Ms. Arthur [ISS teacher] is *really strict…you can't really do anything cuz she like watches you all the time…You gotta do work, in silence, you can't talk.* If you do, *she'll tell you to move or she'll give you a write up…I remember one day I got into trouble in ISS because I threw a pepperoni…Yea, cuz this girl, she said, 'give me a pepperoni,' so I gave it to her. So I got sent out with a write up, out of the ISS. I had to be with Ms. Lyndsay - it's sort of like off*

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team…It means like you gotta sit in somebody else's classroom and like stay in the corner.

Mr. Standifer puts you in there [ISS] *if you get into like, not a fight fight but you know, if you like, throw something in the class room…if you hit somebody and it's not a physical fight, you get put in there and like, if you do something that's not really bad, like if you skip class, you get put in there. But then me and my sister* [laughs] *we skipped class and we got caught so we didn't get put in there because we kept laughing at Mr. Standifer…We just didn't want to go to class…We just walked away from the class.* We went *to the bathroom.* And sometimes I get into fights with *just kids…hmm, well like somebody will say something or something and I'll just be like ok, now I am gonna hit you. Then like I get sent to ISS or I get suspended…because I threatened and hit them.*

Yesterday, wait the day before yesterday, my teacher got mad at this one boy cuz he was messing with the teachers' stuff and he got really, really mad. He choked the boy and then this lady called Susan, um uh, Sharon, came to see me and I was just so happy that I got to get out of that class. When Sharon comes, we meet *down in that little office*…she *comes to see me once a week*. [Sara was looking down at something on her arm] It's *an eraser burn* [pause] *and cuts* [long silence] *I think I got a test today.*

It took Sara a full minute to begin talking about ISS; she began with a list of the ISS rules, which she apparently felt were strictly enforced by the ISS teacher. She did not seem to deny doing the things that got her sent to ISS, things such as threatening other students, throwing pepperoni, or skipping class. After telling the story about the teacher choking the boy, Sara expressed that she was glad to get out of that class, suggesting that perhaps for Sara, the class might have been as unsafe for her as it had been for the boy being choked.

Jonathan Carter

Jonathan's interview was the first one I conducted. I had met him two days earlier when I went by the school to set up appointments for interviews. When I met him the first day, he had long curly hair, but when I saw him on the day of the interview, he had gotten a haircut for an upcoming wedding; he told me all about the wedding, who was getting married, and what was going to happen. He spoke freely about his life, about ISS, and about having ADHD.

For some students, it's [ISS] *bad and for some students, it's good because uh, with me I like to do my work quickly in ISS but then I don't have nothing to do. But other students they don't do their work and don't earn credits…So they decided to put me in ISS so I could actually do my work and earn credits.* In the regular classroom, *there's always a whole bunch of students and they are always talking and just like messing around a lot. When I am in ISS I am more focused on my work. But that's not necessarily true with other students cuz they don't like to do their work in ISS… they think that ISS is bad but it actually helps me do my work… Some days I don't wanna go into ISS, the others I do. It's kind of an on and off thing. It helps me earn credits but then again it gets me write ups.*

I kind of liked it because Ms. Arthur she was kind of nice to me…I would like finish my work easily and quickly. So she, so I would actually request that I do make-up work. Or um busy work.. So like there was this one time where I didn't understand how to do this math thing and then Ms. Arthur taught me how to do it and everything and then I was doing it really good and when I got back they were still teaching it. It gave me *a sense of power that I am smarter than the other kids…If I don't understand something, I'll tell her I don't understand it and she'll look at it and she'll she'll try to tell me the answer but if I can't, if she can't then she'll ask another*

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student to help me. One day, *I was really bored cuz I am ADHD and OCD, so I asked her, cuz all the books in the back of the book shelf in the back of the room there's a giant bookshelf - all of the books were all messed up - so I asked her if I could label the book shelf and put all the books in order from grade old to up and I did that and uh, it gives you something to do…Sometimes if I am bored I start making like little hoppy frog things…cuz I am in to origami…She actually doesn't mind because I made her a little gold fish that inflates…She doesn't really mind because it doesn't bother the other student around me and it doesn't bother her.*

      Sometimes I get written up *for getting in an argument or yelling at a teacher…well it's, it's more of defiance than yelling…That's days that I didn't take my medicine…Like they tell me something to do and I say I don't want to do it and then I'll get sent to the back of the room. And then from there I just get mad and I just don't do my work…They'll tell me - they'll write me up and they'll tell me next - tell me that tomorrow you'll have ISS for so many days…Well I kinda just get mad. I don't think that everything is right like I am trying to do something in my way but the teacher tells me I can't do it that way.* One time, *um, it's kinda hard. I was in the back of the room in Ms. Larson's class. I was trying to do my work and then I went to sleep. I went to sleep and then Ms. Larson wakes me up and says, do your work or else you will get a write up* [this was said with a higher pitch indicating raised voice]. *I said I don't want a write up* [said with a little bit of an edge]. *And then I said, can you just send me out of the classroom and she said no and then I want to get out of the classroom because there's too much like distractions. So, I actually tried to be bad to get out of the classroom so I could do my work.*

      I get in trouble for *talking…like the person next to me, we always try to talk or pass notes and we always got in trouble and he would, one day he got moved to the back of the room and he*

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was still talking…on a good day when I take my medicine, on good days I am more focused on my work but there's still that little bit of temptation - its more distraction than temptation cuz I want to talk but then I want to finish my work to earn credits. And for *pencil tapping…I was sitting there and I started tapping my pencil and she kind of got mad at me…Well it's normally just like* [he sounds out a rhythm on the table with two pencils]. *It just gives me something to do. Like I, um, I have a little drum set. I like drumming. So it just gives me something to do…It gets on her* [classroom teacher] *nerves, and it distracts the other students…I would tap my pencil and kinda do my own thing and that's what got me written up and suspended.*

A write-up, *I think, it's like 5 or 4 sheets of paper, it's white on the top. The way that you tell a write up form from a contract form is at the bottom of the write-up form its orange instead of yellow. And I always know when I'm getting written up because the teacher is madder and she always goes to her desk…and you get a choice of major or minor and sometimes whenever she checks major, and she puts in insubordinance, then I'll get suspended…things like fighting, insubordinance and arguing just stuff like that* are major…*Sometimes I get minor and sometimes major. It's like on and off. You can never tell because it's different with different teachers.*

I get in trouble most in Mr. Watson's class *because we don't like him cuz he always, he's kinda like a smart aleck, and he always like tries to outsmart you and says like I'm bigger and stronger than you and like Marco, he's one of my kind-of friends, and he always gets on Mr. Watson's nerves…On bad days*, I might get in trouble in other classes too…A *bad day mainly starts when I don't take my medicine and stuff. Or when I do take my medicine and my brother wakes me up. Because the way that my brother wakes me up is I have tile on this side and right on this side of my bed, he always wakes me up this other way and he puts me on the tile and it's*

super cold [both of us laughed] *and I hate that.*

Once, in Mr. Watson's class, *he* [Mr. Watson] *was going to send me out of the classroom if I talked. And I think this is kind of dumb cuz he actually tricked me into talking. He says, um, he said talk one more time I'll send you out of the class, you got that? And he started to walk away and I said yes sir and he said get out of my classroom, you're talking…I wasn't supposed to say anything I guess. I always get caught by that like talking.*

Like Bam, Jonathan seemed to find ISS to be helpful academically; he expressed that it was quiet and that in ISS, he was not distracted by the behaviors of the other students. He seemed to find Ms. Arthur, the ISS teacher, to be nice and helpful. In his description of being in the ISS room, he listed several things he would do in ISS apparently to keep from getting in trouble. He tended to attribute his getting written up to not taking his medicine, to teachers who he seemed to think were unfair, and to talking too much.

Summary of Verbal Portraits

The verbal portraits presented above represent, albeit only partially (van Manen, 2002), the way each participant made meaning of their experience in ISS during our interview. Further, these verbal portraits allowed me to understand the individual experiences of each participant, something that I was personally committed to as a researcher.

<div align="center">

Thematic Analysis

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Although each student's experience with ISS was unique, I also found common themes that were shared across the interviews. Further, while the students were at three different schools, their experiences cannot be correlated with the schools they attended. For example, the three students who attended Butler Middle School did not necessarily have the same experience with

teachers not getting their work to the ISS room. Thus, as I discuss the themes in the section

below, I present the shared essence of each experience, while still seeking to honor the

participants' uniqueness and the variance that existed within each theme.

Through the thematic analysis, I developed the following themes: *Gettin' Written Up*;

There Are Some Teachers; *Sometimes it's Boring. Sometimes it's Fun. Sometimes it's Torture*;

The ISS Teacher's a Nice Lady with a Snoozy Attitude; and *Our Learning Time*. Figure 1

provides a graphic organization, or a structure, of the experience of being in ISS, illustrating how

the themes are related.
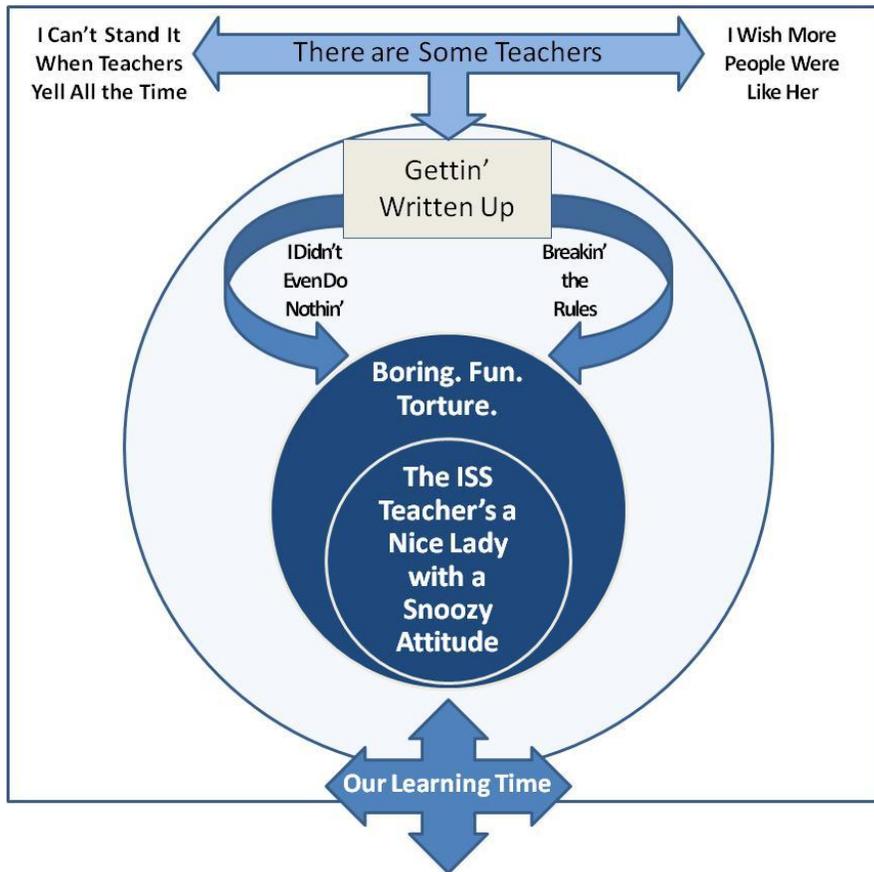
Figure 1. Students' Experience with ISS

As I discuss each of the themes, I work to show how that theme is related to other themes, as well as how and where the themes overlap. I also make references to Figure 1 as a way to illustrate those relationships. Further, as I reference specific quotes, I provide the students' pseudonyms followed by the line numbers in the interview text. I begin with students' accounts of getting written up and how they made meaning of the process of getting into ISS.

Theme 1: Gettin' Written Up

Theme 1, *Gettin' Written Up*, represents students' accounts of getting written up; the theme encompasses the ways in which students made sense of their experience of getting into ISS. This theme is closely related to the next theme, *There are Some Teachers*, in which I discuss how students talked about their relationships with teachers and other adults who seemed to play a role in whether or not students were in ISS. For the students in this study, their accounts appeared to be as much about the classroom teacher's mood, about having a bad day, or about what they perceive as boring instruction as it is about simply breaking the rules.

These accounts of getting into ISS were often conveyed through stories; there were stories of unfair treatment, stories of justification for their behaviors, tales of bad days and of teachers who don't like them. Some students readily admitted that they had engaged in the behaviors they had been accused of while others insisted that they had been merely innocent bystanders. Their stories were often linked to descriptions of the school's system for dealing with behaviors, with several students outlining elaborate accounts of the rules, the various mechanisms for dealing with unruliness, such as detentions, OSS, and demerit systems.

After outlining how some of the students explained the system of rules and consequences that were a part of their getting written up, I focus on two sub-themes that I saw in students'

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accounts of getting written up. The first sub-theme relates to students' discussions about

Breakin' the Rules and the second relates to students' expressed frustrations with unfairly getting

written up, entitled *I Didn't Even Do Nothin'*.

Discipline Systems

Several of the students used the opportunity to talk about ISS as a way to explain how

their school's discipline system works. For example, many of them described what a write-up

looked like or how principals and teachers decide who gets written up and how many days they

get, as seen in the following excerpt:

> A write-up is *like a little piece of paper they put your name down and your*
> *address and your phone number and what you did*. Yeh? And then what happens?
> *The principal assigns what you get-ISS or out of school.* So the principal makes
> the assignment? The teacher writes it up and the principal does it**?** *Uh huh.* How
> many days? *It just depend on how many days I been in there before* (Chris
> Roque, 101:109).

For Chris, then, the teacher fills out the write-up, which contains, among other things, a

description of the offense; then, it is the principal who makes the decision about whether the

student receives ISS or OSS. Chris also saw that decision, as well as the decision about how

many days he will receive, as contingent on his prior record. Jonathan, on the other hand, viewed

those decisions as being at the discretion of the teacher, as seen in the following:

> *On a write up, you get a choice of major or minor and sometimes whenever she*
> *checks major, and she puts in insubordination, then I'll get suspended.* Do all
> major things go out of school? *Just things like fighting, insubordination and*
> *arguing, just stuff like that. Sometimes I get minor and sometimes major. It's like*
> *on and off…You can never tell because* [long pause - student laughs]. *You can*
> *never tell because it's different with different teachers* (Jonathan Carter, 189:205).

Jonathan stated that it was the teacher who either checked major or minor, which then

determined whether or not he receives ISS or OSS. According to Jonathan, though, these

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decisions are not straightforward, nor does he often know what to expect. After a long pause, he

laughed and commented that it was *different with different teachers*, suggesting that getting

written up depends on the teacher who is doing the writing up, something that is further

explicated in the theme, *There Are Some Teachers.* For the students in this study, some teachers

were viewed as more likely to write them up, while other teachers were experienced as more

likely to provide support that they needed to help them change their behavior. The relationship

between getting written up and the teachers and adults with whom they interacted seemed to be

something that most of the students experienced.

In one other description of a write-up, Bam, like Chris, noted that it was the principal

who made the decision about whether students receive ISS or OSS and how many days were

assigned; unlike Chris, however, Bam expressed that those decisions were made based, not on

his prior offenses, but rather on what the principal thinks he needs.

> *He* [the teacher] *writes me up, then he'll take it to Mr. Smith or Mrs. Baker* [assistant principals] *and once he gives it to them then they'll search over it and if they think I need ISS then they'll give me days, so, sometimes I'll get it short, like one day* (Bam Margero, 29:29).

For Bam, the principal's decision about how many days to give him appeared to be related more

to what he needs than on how many days he had previously been in ISS, as Chris seemed to

indicate. Decisions about the assignment of punishment or consequences, whether by the

principal or to teachers, then, appeared to be based on a variety of factors, only some of which

are clearly articulated for students.

With all three students, and with most of the participants who talked about the process of

getting assigned to ISS, it is important to note that the decisions about what happened after they

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are written up, i.e., whether they receive ISS or OSS and about how many days they receive, was attributed to someone else, either the principal or the teacher. These were described as decisions made by others on their behalf, rather than decisions that included them in the process. Looking at students' accounts through a lens of restorative justice, it seems that the students viewed the decisions about ISS and about their discipline in ways that were made by adults without any input from the students themselves. According to Sharpe, (2007), restorative practices enable the offender to take responsibility for their actions and be an active participant in repairing the damage done. When students are disempowered from participating in their own discipline, they miss out on opportunities to develop problem-solving skills about their own behavior, they fail to develop empathetic understanding about teachers' and other students' educational needs, and they are more prone to see themselves as victims of someone else's disciplinary interventions. Restorative justice, in contrast, is about fixing problems *with* people rather than strictly doing things *to* them or *for* them (Larson Sawin and Zehr, 2007; Wachtel, 2004). With this objective in place, the student's misbehavior becomes a learning opportunity rather than an isolated event. The behavior itself becomes restorative in that it provides an opportunity to address a need which may not have previously surfaced.

For one participant, it appeared that the principal did attempt to involve students in decision-making about their behavior. Shocky, a student at Butler Middle School, described the process of getting written up by discussing what happens after the write-up.

> *Sometimes they'll* [the teachers] *tell you that they'll write you up or sometime they don't or sometimes you'll just see them, they be writing you up and you'll be like, well they just writing me up so um, we have to wait cuz the teachers put it in Ms. Orwell's box and then we have to wait until they call us up to the office. Then we go back there to her room and she talk about all the disciplines like that and what*

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do you think should be done and then you could tell her like you could tell her what you think like can be done and sometime she'll go with your ideas and sometime she'll go with her own ideas (Shocky Miller, 5:5).

Thus, for Shocky, the principal is the one who makes the final decision about what happens when students are written up, but he reported that she often asks for their input into that decision. In this quote, Shocky also seemed to express that he often does not know when he is going to be written up until he sees the teacher filling out the form, indicating that he might not have a clear understanding of what behaviors are going to result in a write-up. In contrast, another student at Butler Middle School described an elaborate system involving clearly articulated steps that students go through before actually being suspended. Stewey appeared to have a more defined expectation about what leads to getting written up.

In Stewey's extensive description of Butler's discipline system, he talked about demerits, detentions, and off-team as things that happened before getting sent to ISS. The following quote illustrates how the Stewey made meaning of this system:

The demerit system…there's demerits and then there's merits but they don't really give merits here cuz, I mean, teachers might erase one every now and then, but that's very rare, very, very rare…A merit is like it erases a demerit and a demerit is a strike basically. You have three strikes. Once you get three demerits, you have detention on Wednesday after school. If you get six you have off team… maybe it is nine for ISS (Stewey Potter, 98:106).

For Stewey, then, there is a process in place whereby students incrementally make their way to ISS. For certain offenses, they receive demerits which accumulate, eventually resulting in ISS. The baseball metaphor about *three strikes* has often been brought into discussions of criminal and/or offensive behavior (Giroux, 2003; Knipe et al., 2007); Stewey uses the metaphor to illustrate that in this demerit system, they are written up

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three times before they move up to the next level of punishment. Stewey also explains

that although there is a merit system in place to potentially erase those strikes, it is

seldom used. The seldom use of merits while primarily issuing demerits may point to the

teachers and administrators who tend to focus on what students do wrong, rather than on

what they do well. Even within discipline paradigms that focus on rewards and

punishments, research on classroom management has consistently pointed to the

advantages of rewarding positive behaviors over punishing negative behaviors (Canter &

Canter, 2001).

In his description of Butler's discipline system, Stewey also talks about write-ups,

contrasting them with demerits, as seen in the following quote:

> *Yea, like kicking somebody in the shin, that'd probably be a demerit, but if you*
> *kick somebody in you know where, that would be a write up. Yea like if that was*
> *another guy, like out of anger* (Stewey Potter, 246:254).

Stewey provides an example of an offense that is worthy of a demerit and one that would

result in a write-up. He sees that both are kicking, but there is something different in the

two types of kicking that would result in different consequences. He went on to describe

the discipline system as *fun*, as seen in the following quote:

> *It's really kind of fun; well, no not fun, like the system is fun. How it works. Yea*
> *it's easy I guess, not fun…Like I can understand it. I know how I got certain*
> *demerits and everything* (Stewey Potter, 294:312).

The use of the word *fun* in the first part of the sentence struck me, especially in that he

quickly adjusted his language to clarify that getting written up was not fun, but the

system was fun, which he then clarified as meaning *easy*. His description seems to

indicate that the discipline system in place, with its pre-determined consequences for

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various offenses, was comforting to him; he knew what to expect. Stewey expressed an appreciation for how the system was laid out in a way that helped him know what was expected and why he would receive various punishments.

This expectancy about outcomes has been discussed in the research about what constitutes best practices in discipline; it is also something that the students in this study often discussed, sometimes, as in Stewey's statement above, talking about how those expectations were clearly established for students, but more often talking about the ways in which clear expectations were not given and enforced.

In the preceding descriptions of school discipline systems, it appeared that the systems of rules and punishments varied from school to school and from participant to participant; thus, in a school climate where zero tolerance policies should provide some degree of uniformity, this clearly is not how students are experiencing things. The students' different experiences, even those at the same schools, may reflect different relationships with the principals and teachers, which will be discussed in the next theme, *There Are Some Teachers*. It may also reflect inconsistent implementation, administrator attitudes toward students (Loy, 2002), or students' prior experiences, among many other things. What is important to note is that they seemed to experience these discipline systems in a variety of ways, each student unique in their understanding. One of the emphases in restorative justice, as with many approaches to discipline, is the importance of treating each student individually, meeting students where they are without attempting to force all students into uniform codes of behavior (Bazemore & Schiff, 2005; Hopkins, 2004).

In summary, while schools often have pre-designed discipline systems in place, only two students in this study talked about such a system in their school, both of whom attended Butler Middle School. This may indicate that the others either were aware of it or might not have seen it as impacting whether they were written up or not. Most of the students expressed that there were often times that they felt they were written up unfairly, suggesting that they might not have been aware of what behaviors would warrant getting written up. In other accounts of getting written up, students talked about understanding the rules and from their stories, it appeared that they knowingly broke those rules. In the following two sub-themes, I discuss both the times where students freely admitted to breaking the rules and times where they felt they had been written up unfairly.

Sub-Theme 1: Breakin' the Rules

Sub-theme 1, *Breakin' the Rules*, reflects students' accounts of getting written up in which they did not deny breaking some school rule. Although I might have anticipated frequent stories where students expressed a reluctance to take responsibility for their own behavior, it seemed that not all of the students avoided accepting such responsibility. While all 13 participants talked about getting written up, ten of the students told stories in which they admitted that they had engaged in the behavior they had been written up for. Within the interviews, most students voluntarily brought up the types of things for which they had been sent to ISS; when they did not bring it up, I did specifically ask them, "What kinds of things get you sent to ISS?" Their responses ranged from *usually disrespect* (Matt Rogers, 125:135) to *talking, uh, I can't shut my mouth really…Yeh. I like talking* (Matt Rogers, 179:193). Several other responses were:

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Well like somebody will say something or something and I'll just be like, ok now I am gonna hit you…Then, like I get sent to ISS or I get suspended…because I threatened them (Sara Peterson, 217:225).

If I am tardy to some of my classes and I got me a date to do detention, then, and if I don't go to detention then I have ISS two days (John Smith, 195:199).

Mostly for uh mouthin off to the teachers, and out a area. Out of area's being somewhere where you shouldn't be. Like give me an example. *Like if my class is in the cafeteria and I'm in the auditorium, then that's out of area.* So why would you be in the auditorium if your class was in the cafeteria? What were you doing? *Maybe playin around* (Marcy Clemmons, 12:15).

In the preceding quotes, we see accounts of getting written up in which the students did not deny any wrongdoing. Sara admitted to threatening another student; John admitted to skipping detention, which he admitted was due to tardies; Marcy admitted to skipping class to go play in the auditorium. For these students, their accounts of getting written up in these situations were simply stated as a matter of fact without any apparent avoidance of responsibility and without any justification for their behavior.

In these quotes, it appears that the students knew what they were supposed to do (i.e., go to detention or be in the right classroom) and chose not to do it, or that they knew what they were not supposed to do (i.e., threaten another student, be tardy, or mouth off to teachers), but chose to do it anyway. Without further discussion, it is impossible to know why they chose to engage in behaviors that they knew might get them written up; however, several students, while still not denying they had done something to be written up for, did provide explanations for their behavior.

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Accounting for Why They Broke the Rules

For some of the students, even though they did not deny having broken a rule, they tended to qualify their behavior, accounting for why they had engaged in the behavior. As seen in the following excerpts, students stated what they had done wrong, but then added an explanation:

> *Not doing my work when I'm supposed to, um, walking out of class when I got to use the bathroom.* You walked out of class when you needed to use the bathroom? *Yeh…Cuz I couldn't hold it* (Chris Roque, 76:81).

In this quote, Chris admitted to walking out of class without permission, but he qualified his decision to do so, expressing that he *couldn't hold it*. According to his account, his reason for breaking the rule about leaving the class without permission was justified by his need to go to the bathroom. Sara, on the other hand, also admitted to being out of area, but expressed a different explanation for her decision to skip class:

> *Skipping, being on the wrong hallway, out of area…We just didn't want to go to class* (Sara Peterson, 155:177).

Thus for Sara, she simply did not want to go to class; again, without further discussion with Sara, we do not know her reason for not wanting to go to class. We do not know what other factors might be involved in her behavioral choices; restorative justice advocates are interested in those types of discussions with students, however, which I discuss below.

The students in this study often expressed these types of choices and the decisions that they made about their own behaviors. In a few interviews, students did account for their behaviors by talking about other mitigating factors, as seen in the following quote:

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Sometimes it's for getting in an argument or yelling at a teacher. That's days that I didn't take my medicine…Like they tell me something to do and I say I don't want to do it and then I'll get sent to the back of the room. And then from there I just get mad and I just don't do my work…They'll tell me, they'll write me up and they'll tell me that tomorrow you'll have ISS (Jonathan Carter, 97:105).

Jonathan did not deny that he had gotten into an argument or that he yelled at a teacher; but he attributed those behaviors to the fact that he had not taken his medicine. He had earlier explained that he is ADHD and that he often has bad days when he doesn't take his medicine.

Thus, in the preceding quotes, students seemed to have made choices about their behavior despite rules being in place that were designed to regulate those behaviors; some of the students provided explanations for their decisions, indicating that perhaps there were underlying motivations for their behavioral choices, explanations that might help their teachers and principals more effectively address those behaviors. One of the core values of restorative justice is an emphasis on addressing students' underlying needs or motives. Zehr (2002) identified three pillars on which we build our lives: *autonomy*, *order*, and *relatedness*. He suggested that when those pillars are disrupted, individuals may go to great lengths to re-establish them. For example, from a restorative justice perspective, the decision to skip class made by both Marcy and Sara might possibly reflect a need to avoid the chaos they often experience in their classrooms, something that other students alluded to as well. Marcy's decision to mouth of to her teachers might reflect a frustration about being continually yelled at by those same teachers, something she also spoke explicitly about later in the interview. Chris' decision to walk out of class might reflect a wise choice to take care of his physical needs and not jeopardize his health. A restorative approach to discipline would not ignore students' behaviors, but rather address them by seeking to understand what was happening beyond the external behaviors.

While most of the students shared accounts of getting written up where they did not deny wrongdoing, many of those same students also told stories of getting written up for things that they deemed unfair or stupid. For example, although Stewey suggested that *it's a fun system* because *it makes sense* (Stewey Potter, 86:94), he also stated that sometimes there is still an inconsistency to the enforcement of rules as seen in the following quote:

> *Sometime they put you in there for stuff that you really shouldn't be in there for. They should like give you a demerit or something…I mean accidents, like real accidents, you shouldn't be in there. Like somebody saying bull, not BS. That shouldn't be in there; that should just be a demerit. That's foul language; it's on the demerit thing* (Stewey Potter, 86:86).

In this quote, Stewey provided further examples of offenses that are and are not worthy of being written up for. He explained that there are times, when according to the demerit system, he feels that a demerit is appropriate, but that still result in ISS. Thus, in spite of a system that is reportedly designed to ensure consistency and fairness, most of the students told stories about being written up unfairly or for stupid reasons, as discussed in the next section.

Sub-Theme 2: I Didn't Even Do Nothin'

In Sub-theme 2, *I Didn't Even Do Nothin'*, I provide a discussion of students accounts of getting written up in which they did deny responsibility for their behavior; these were often accounts where students expressed frustration with teachers, with rules, or with the way in which they had been treated. Students' descriptions of unfairly getting written up generally fell into two categories: either the rule or reason for being written up was viewed as unfair and did not merit ISS, or the application of the rule was seen as unfair, indicating that they believed they had been treated unfairly.

Stupid Rules

As students shared stories about getting written up, many of them talked about the rules being unfair or stupid. For example, Jeffrey shared a story about getting sent to ISS for picking up his pencil, as seen in the following excerpt:

> *I've been there a couple times for something super retarded, like cuz I got up and picked up my pencil. It was on the other side of the desk. So I got up and I picked it up and he wrote me up for getting up and getting my pencil. When I asked him to get it for me, he said that he wouldn't. So I sat there for a couple of minutes later and then I got up and got my pencil. So he sent me to ISS* (Jeffrey Richardson, 85:93).

The way that Jeffrey related the story seems to invite the listener to agree with his claim that getting written up, in this situation, was *super retarded*; indeed, how could anyone justify writing up a student for picking up a pencil so that he could continue to participate in class activities? Jeffrey's account of getting written up could reflect either an extreme example of a teacher demonstrating their own power over a student or a gross misunderstanding between a student and a teacher. Similar stories were told by other students as well.

Bam relayed a story about getting written up for eating Doritos in class. In this story, however, Bam provides some interesting information about the situation:

> *Well one time well I thought it was kinda ridiculous, but this one girl had Doritos and I got one, one chip, and the teacher came up to me and he said, uh why are you eating chips? and I said she had a bag and she gave me one and everybody else had one so I just thought I'd get one, and he wrote me up. And I said dude, can I just like eat this right quick and just get on with it? and he said, first of all, I'm not a dude and everybody started laughing, so he obviously thought that did something, but I didn't, so he wrote me up and gave me three days ISS* (Bam Margero, 19:19).

As in Jeffrey's account, Bam told this story in a way that invited the listener to agree with him that getting written up, in this situation, was *kinda ridiculous*; it was just *one chip* after all. While again, this might be seen as a misunderstanding between a student and a teacher, Bam provided some additional information that indicates that something else might be going on here. Notice that after Bam stated that he referred to the teacher as "dude," the teacher responds that he was not a dude, which the class found funny, evidently resulting in a great deal of laughter and a possible threat to the teacher's authority in the class. Vavrus and Cole (2002) examined videotaped disciplinary moments in two high school classrooms and found that the teachers would often overlook disruptive behavior until a student disrupted the dominant classroom discourse or challenged the accepted authority in the classroom. For example, when Bam called the teacher a "dude" or when the teacher was laughed at by the students, there was a potential challenge to the dominant discourse; the teacher's authority was possibly undermined, which then resulted in a write-up.

As stated, many of the students expressed that the rules themselves were unfair. James summarized his views on rules with the following:

> *It's so many rules to abide by and some of the rules to me aren't worth having* (James Thomas, 5:5). *It's just bull crap. All of it, you know. It just upsets me you know? Its little stuff you shouldn't write up about, like a cell phone being out. Don't write a student up for a cell phone being out. And don't write up a student for saying a little cuss word here and there. Just tell them watch your mouth, put the cell phone up, you know. Now in a couple of days if it continues I think you should call the parent, if the parent doesn't do anything about it after a couple of days, then you should write up. I mean that is little petty stuff* (James Thomas, 245:245).

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James, in this quote, seemed to be suggesting that there were simply too many *petty* rules and too much of an emphasis on following rules. In my own role as a middle school intern supervisor, I have observed similar situations where teachers' focus on rules and on students' behavior preempted their focus on learning.

The relationship between student behavior and instructional practices has been found to be a reciprocal one; although many teachers have expressed that they must control students' behavior in order to effectively teach (Canter & Canter, 2001; Fay & Funk, 2004; Foley & Stewart, 2006; Marzano, 2003), research has suggested that engaging and relevant instructional practices serve to prevent disruptive behavior (Riordan, 2006; Swinson & Knight, 2007; Weinstein, 1998). The relationship between pedagogy and student behavior will also be discussed within the theme, *Our Learning Time*, where students talked about the relationship between ISS and academic opportunities.

In the above quotes, students discussed getting written up for reasons that did not make sense to them. The rules were seen as unfair in and of themselves and thus their behavior was not perceived as misbehavior; they did not see what they did as worth getting written up for. In the next section, students expressly stated that they felt they had been picked on or treated unfairly.

Unfair Treatment

Several students told stories about unfair treatment, situations where they seemed to feel that getting written up was personal and directed toward them in unfair ways. For these students, there seemed to be teachers who were targeting them, acting in ways to get them in trouble for

things that they were doing. For example, Josh seemed to think that people, presumably teachers, intentionally seek to blame him for things he did not do, as seen in the following quote:

> *It was not fun, aggravating uh sometimes I was in there* [ISS] *for no apparent reason* (Josh Stenson, 5:5). When you say you were there for no apparent reason what does that mean? Like did somebody just say, Go to ISS today? Y*ea, cuz like some people try to blame stuff on me.* Like, what kind of stuff? *Like, somebody threw a pencil one day and they blamed it on me but it was really the dude that was way in the front of the class. They just didn't see him chunk it, so they just told me to go* (Josh Stenson, 11:17).

According to Josh's account of getting written up, he had been unfairly accused of doing something that someone else had done. Josh indicated that they (the teacher) had not seen who had thrown the pencil, but rather had assumed that it was Josh and had sent him to ISS. His explanation for the unfair accusation was personal and indicated that perhaps he had been blamed for things in the past that he felt he had not done.

In other students' accounts of getting written up unfairly, there seemed to be less of an emphasis on the personal, meaning that their stories did not reflect a belief that the teacher was targeting them in particular, but rather that the enforcement of the rules was itself unfair. For example, Jonathan seemed to view his disciplinary interaction with Mr. Watson as trickery:

> *Mr. Watson, one day he was going to send me out of the classroom if I talked…And I think this is kind of dumb cuz he actually tricked me into talking. He says, um, he said talk one more time I'll send you out of the class, you got that? And he started to walk away and I said 'yes sir' and he said get out of my classroom, you're talking…I wasn't supposed to say anything I guess. I always get caught by that like talking* (Jonathan Carter, 213:225).

For Jonathan, getting written up was snare or a trap that he got caught in, something that

he *always* gets caught by, possibly indicating that the rules are often enforced, at least in

Mr. Watson's classroom, in ways that are illogical or even tricky.

James also shared an account of getting written up in which the enforcement of

the rules did not make sense to him, which potentially resulted in further and more

serious offense, as seen in the following excerpt:

> *So you know there was one time I got written up in Social Studies. I called Ms. Winston a b-i-t-c-h.* Did you actually call her that? *Yeh. She locked the door on me and I told her don't lock the door on me and I kinda got a temper.* What do you mean she locked the door? *She locked the door on me, you know she locked me out of her class.* Why did she do that? *Oh she does that all the time…All the teachers do that. They just do that, then the principal go out into the hallway and they say they scooping up students, saying if you are late they have to lock the doors, I just don't like that at all.* So like you were late to class and she locked the door? *No I wasn't late. She told me I could go and then the bell rung and I knocked on it and she opened it up 10 minutes later and told me you was late for my class and I said no I wasn't late I asked you if I could go and you told me no I mean you told me yes excuse me. You know you told me yes and I walked out and she still locked the door. But you know she does it all the time so I'm just not worrying anymore* (James Thomas, 155:169).

James' account of getting written up reflects a series of events, beginning with a request to go to

the bathroom. According to James, the teacher seemed to have forgotten that she gave him

permission to go to the bathroom and then locked the door on him, assuming that he was tardy

for class. His account appears to suggest that the school principals encourage teachers to lock the

door on students who are tardy, a practice that James seems to feel is unfair; in this situation,

however, he was not even late, which appeared to frustrate him even more, leading to his calling

the teacher a bitch, a more serious infraction that then resulted in ISS.

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The accounts of getting written up told by James, Jonathan, and Josh, each seem to suggest that at the very least, there was a lack of effective communication between the student and the teacher about the student's behavior. Through the lens of restorative justice, miscommunication often happens between people, resulting in conflict. Advocates of restorative justice have asserted that students often respond to their unmet need for control through some form of anti-social behavior (Hopkins, 2004; Sullivan & Tifft, 2001; Morrison, 2007). Attempts on the part of the teacher to control student behavior, as seen in the accounts above, may actually end up exacerbating the problem by taking from the students the very control that they are working so diligently to obtain. Further, the need for fairness or justice, which seemed to be lacking for many of the students in this study, has been shown to result in students' unwillingness to comply with given expectations (Kupchik & Ellis, 2008).

In summary, the preceding quotes illustrate that students seemed to express that they often felt that they had been treated unfairly by teachers who were writing them up. At times this seemed to be a reflection of intentional targeting on the part of the teachers, while at other times, students seemed to be saying that the rules themselves were unfair.

Summary of Theme: Gettin' Written Up

Students' experiences with ISS usually began with a write-up, which they described as part of a system of discipline that varied from school to school and from student to student. As seen in Figure 1, the students' accounts of getting written up generally took one of two paths, either accounts where they admitted to having broken the rules, as denoted by the sub-theme, *Breakin' the Rules*, and accounts where they reported being written up unfairly, as denoted by the sub-theme, *I Didn't Even Do Nothin'*. In many of their accounts, they questioned whether or

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not they deserved to be sent to ISS and often complained that teachers had targeted them unfairly, with students complaining that they had been written up for rules that were described as stupid or petty. Some students felt that they had been written up by teachers who were unfairly picking on them or tricking them. It is important to note that these students were not simply denying culpability for their actions; there were many admissions of wrongdoing for things they knew they had done. These students were not passive about the things that concerned them; they had a great deal to say and as discussed in the theme, *There are Some Teachers*, several of them were active in their resistance of what they deemed unfair.

At the conclusion of each interview, I asked students what advice they might give to new teachers about ISS or about classroom discipline. Some of the students' responses to this question related specifically to their experience with getting written up. Two students summarized their advice to teachers in the following quotes:

> *Think about it before you write em up, because sometimes they really won't do something or they really haven't done anything and they end up getting punished for it* (Stewey Potter, 442:454).

> *Be smart when you are writing up students and think if this is something you should write about… If you write it up the principal's going to do something about it. And 9 times out of 10 students don't like what principals do, I don't like what principal does. So I'm just saying, teachers think* (James Thomas, 245:245).

Stewey and James seemed to be asking teachers to think about what they are doing before writing students up and to consider the possible consequences for students, consequences that students seemed to feel were unjustified in many cases. In light of students' accounts of getting written up, and in light of the vast research on the consequences of exclusionary discipline

outlined in Chapter Two, the students' advice to teachers seems to be particularly pertinent to our understanding of school discipline.

The stories students told about getting written up was a significant part of their experience with ISS. The teachers who wrote them up, or didn't, were also an important part of their experience with ISS. In the next theme, I discuss how students made meaning of the teachers, principals, and other school personnel who played a role in their ISS experience.

Theme 2: There are Some Teachers…

Theme 2, *There are Some Teachers,* revolves around students' experiences with the teachers and other adults with whom they interact in school. School personnel, including classroom teachers, principals, guidance counselors, and other adults, appeared to be an important part of students' experiences both in and out of ISS. Unlike the stories about the ISS teacher, some describing her as nice, others as rude and mean, which will be discussed within the theme *The ISS Teacher's a Nice Lady with a Snoozy Attitude*, the adults discussed in this theme, mostly but not always teachers, influenced students' experiences with ISS in a different way; many of these adults seemed to serve as a gatekeeper, of sorts, to ISS, in many ways, determining whether or not students were written up and suspended. For example, Marcy shared that it had not been a good year for her *mostly cuz I been suspended and gettin' in trouble by mostly the same teachers over and over again* (Marcy Clemmons, 80:81). These adults also represent the daily classroom activities that served as the context for students getting written up (see the theme, *Gettin' Written Up*, for a discussion about students' stories about how they ended up in ISS).

Juxtaposing Teachers

Overall, students told two types of stories about the teachers, administrators, and adults in their schools; there were stories that reflected teachers being mean to them and stories of teachers being supportive and kind. Further, several students told comparative stories of good and bad teachers, juxtaposing those stories in ways that illuminated the difference between the two types of teachers. For example, in the following conversation with Chris, he juxtaposes his math teacher and his social studies teacher:

> *Some teachers tell us to be quiet, some teachers just write us up when they see us talking.* So if they told you to quit talking would you quit? *yeh, but sometimes we gettin bored so I still talk when I'm bored.* Do you have classes where you're not bored? *Yeh, math, cuz it's my favorite subject. She* [the math teacher] *be nice to me; she give me chances in class...*Which class do you get written up most in? *Social studies... Ms. Douglas, she don't like nobody in there, she just tell us to get out if we talk...she wants us to be quiet.* What do you think about math? What does she want you to do? *Do our work; she just want us to do our work. And listen...so we can get a good education* (Chris Roque, 156:187).

For Chris, Ms. Douglas, who he later stated was his social studies teacher, frequently wrote him up for talking, which he attributed to his being bored in class. Chris seemed to think that Ms. Douglas just wanted students to be quiet. In contrast, Chris apparently saw his math teacher as having a different goal for her students, i.e., to do their work. Chris expressed that the math teacher would give him second chances and seemed to want to make sure that they *get a good education.* Chris' comparison of these two teachers points to the ways in which students distinguish between teachers who facilitate learning and those who do not.

Matt also compared two teachers, Ms. Perkins and Ms. Marshall, seeming to juxtapose one teacher, Ms. Marshall, whose pedagogical style helped him with one whose did not, as seen in the following excerpt:

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Ms. Perkins, she let me um, you know roam around, sit wherever I want to. She doesn't really give me no warnings or nothing and she doesn't really do nothing to me, and that's why I don't learn nothing, and Ms. Marshall, you know, she has all kinds of rules, like when you walk in you have to be quiet um, do your homework. If not, you have to sign a book. If you have three sign ins, it means you would have um detention for an hour… I learn more, actually I can comprehend stuff (Matt Rogers, 257:261).

According to Matt's descriptions, Ms. Perkins, whose classroom interactions seem to be more permissive, allowing Matt to get away with things like roaming around, was seen by Matt as contributing further to his behavior problems. In contrast, Ms. Marshall, who was perhaps seen as more strict, was seen by Matt as helping him to learn.

Other students shared similar accounts where teachers' classroom interactions either helped or hindered their ability to participate successfully in class without getting into trouble. For some, it was their classroom management approaches; for others it was teachers' teaching styles, as described by Jeffrey in the following excerpt:

Now Ms. Tucker, she gets mad. She'll get mad at me every now and then and Ms. Meyers, I wish more people were like her cuz she makes learning fun…Say if we, if we're trying to do a certain thing, she'll try and figure out a way to make it easier on us to learn it and everything like that…I never get into trouble in her class, never (Jeffrey Richardson, 105:109).

In Jeffrey's description of Ms. Meyers, as contrasted with his description of Ms. Tucker, he seems to be suggesting that when instruction is fun and presented in a way that is easier for him to learn, he does not get in trouble. There is an abundance of research that supports Jeffrey's connection between pedagogy and students' behavior (Battistich, Solomon, Watson, & Schaps, 1997; Noddings, 2006; Osterman, 2000).

Thus, for Jeffrey, Chris, and Matt, there are different types of teachers, and their experience with getting in trouble and getting sent to ISS was directly related to the type of

teacher they have, which is the focus of this theme. Due to the preponderance of statements and stories illustrating this theme, I chose to create two sub-themes, one where students talked about teachers who were mean to them or who treated them unfairly, the other where students shared stories of adults who had been helpful and nice to them. The two subthemes are presented below.

Sub-Theme 1: I Don't Like It When Teachers Yell All the Time

Sub-theme 1, *I Don't Like It When Teachers Yell All the Time*, represents students accounts of teachers who seemed to contribute to their being written up and getting sent to ISS. Throughout the interviews, there were several accounts of getting written up in which students seemed to attribute their getting in trouble to teachers' practices; indeed, there is a great deal of overlap between the descriptions of the classroom teachers and students' accounts of getting written up. Of the 13 participants, 11 conveyed at least one story of a teacher being mean to them, yelling at them, or unfairly targeting them.

Perceptions of Unfairness

While I discuss this in greater detail under the theme, *Gettin' Written Up*, I feel it is important to show that the teachers who are writing students up are often portrayed by the students as acting unfairly. Students shared their accounts of getting written up as being influenced by the teachers and administrators in their school. For example, John shared a story about getting written up, suggesting that that the teacher's prior mood contributed to her decision to write him up, as illustrated by the following excerpt:

> *One of the girls in the class was being disrespectful, I mean disruptive. And she* [the teacher] *was giving people warnings and I was just coming in there when she was yelling at the class and she gave the class a warning. Well she went back to teach and she looked back and I was talking, talking to my friend. And she just wrote me up and she said that I have two days of ISS...I came in late, and she was*

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already mad cause the class was already being disrespectful (John Smith, 113:121).

In this account, John attributed his getting into ISS to the fact that the teacher was already mad at the class for being disrespectful. He did not deny talking to his friend, but seemed to think that he should not have been sent to ISS for talking and perhaps would not have been assigned ISS had the teacher not already been angry. Other students throughout the study made similar statements, linking their getting into trouble with teachers' moods or frustrations. For example, in one account of getting written up by his science teacher, Stewey stated that *she was in a bad mood that week, that whole week I think she was a little like clawing your eyes out if you mess with m*e (Stewey Potter, 442:454). In other words, Stewey attributed his getting written up to the teacher who *was in a bad mood*.

Many of the students talked about teachers who had bad days and seemed to take it out on them. Bam, in particular, told a story about a teacher who was a friend of his mother, who apparently had such a bad day, as depicted in the following quote:

> *Yeh, we* [he and one of his teachers] *were really close, we were like family almost, and I called her and emailed her and everything, but then she had a bad day and she made it my bad day and we just didn't get along the rest of the time* (Bam Margero, 43:43).

Bam's account of his teacher's bad day, seemed to not only affect whether he was written up, but in this situation, seemed to affect their relationship in general. Students appeared to talk about how these relationships between students and their teachers influenced whether or not the teachers wrote them up. Jonathan talked about a teacher demonstrating a greater proclivity to writing certain students up more than others, as seen in the following quote:

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We don't like him [Mr. Watson] *cuz he always, he's kinda like a smart aleck, and he always like tries to outsmart you and says like I'm bigger and stronger than you and like Marco, he's one of my friends, and he always gets on Mr. Watson's nerves* (Jonathan Carter, 227:233).

Jonathan's description of Mr. Watson as a *smart aleck* could have suggested that Mr. Watson was protecting his authority in the classroom and that Jonathan's friend, Marco, was seen as threatening that authority, resulting in students getting in trouble (see note above about Vavrus & Cole, 2002).

Some research has suggested that some teachers are more prone to write students up than others, often contingent on the teacher's personal dispositions. For example, in surveys with 885 teachers, Baker (2005) found that self-efficacy played a role in the disciplinary decisions that teachers made; teachers who had low self-efficacy were more likely to resort to strict disciplinary interventions. From a restorative justice perspective, Zehr (1990) asserted that people strive for a sense of autonomy and control over their own lives and that when they lose that sense of personal autonomy and control, they often will go to great extremes in order to regain it. This is potentially true for teachers as much as it is for students. Thus, a teacher who senses a lack of control over their classroom environment may resort to more coercive practices in order to regain that control, possibly accounting for what some of the students describe as mean behavior on the part of teachers.

Several of the students talked about ways in which they had been targeted by certain teachers. Specifically, of those 11 who expressed that a teacher had been mean to them in some way, four of them expressly stated that a particular teacher didn't like them. Marcy was one of

those students who expressed a belief that teachers did not like her as illustrated by the following quote:

> *I think teachers just don't like me and don't want me here…Cuz, every time I come down the hallway, just like in the morning, teachers just stare at me.* What does that mean to you? That they stare at you? *I don't know. It means to me that they just don't like me* (Marcy Clemmons, 36:43).

Marcy's belief that the teachers did not like her and did not want her in their classrooms seemed to be linked to their staring at her. Whether or not the teachers' staring was an indication that they did not like her is irrelevant in this situation; what is important was Marcy's interpretation of their behavior.

There is a great deal of research, not only within restorative justice circles, that emphasizes the importance of respectful relationships between teachers and students as a necessary condition for learning (Gregory & Weinstein, 2008). According to Nelson, Lott, and Glenn (2000), students' success in the classroom is more strongly correlated with whether or not they believe the teacher likes them, not necessarily whether or not they like the teacher. The work of Nell Noddings has consistently called for teachers to view and value their students holistically and with an "ethic of care" (Noddings, 2005, p. 147). Linda Lantieri, national director for the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program, has written about the need to establish schools where students are treated with respect and thus learn to treat one another with respect (Lantieri & Patti, 2002). From Paulo Freire (1970) and Jonathan Kozol (2005) to bell hooks (1994) and Sonia Nieto (1999), there is a long list of educators who have historically advocated for a stronger belief in and respect for students.

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Within a restorative justice framework, the most foundational principle is respectful relationships. The primary emphasis of restorative justice is on restoring relationship between the victim and the offender, but "it also includes the larger web of relationships in which they live" (Pranis, 2007, p. 59). Restorative justice views people as inextricably connected with one another such that what affects one affects the entire community (Johnstone & Van Ness, 2007).Thus when students like Marcy experience conflict with their teachers, from a restorative justice perspective, it does not simply affect Marcy and her teachers, but rather that the entire learning community is affected.

While not all of the participants told stories where they described teachers as not liking them, knowing the potential consequences of such perceptions, I still found it concerning that some did. Further, there were a couple of stories about students' experiences with teachers that stood out to me as especially significant, where teachers were portrayed as going beyond simply not liking or targeting a student, to what might actually be considered bullying a student (Twemlow & Fonagy, 2005; Twemlow & Sacco, 2008). For example, Sara shared a story about a teacher she had witnessed physically mistreating a student, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

> *Yesterday, wait the day before yesterday, my teacher got mad at this one boy cuz he was messing with the teachers' stuff and he got really, really mad.* Yea? Then what happened? *He choked the boy.* He choked the boy? Wow. Then what happened? and *then this lady called Susan, um uh Sharon, came to see me and I was just so happy that I got to get out of that class* (Sara Peterson, 267:277).

Sara's story, while hopefully an isolated incident, does point to a potential danger in classrooms where teachers themselves might not have the self-restraint to refrain from engaging in a physical altercation with a student when other approaches have failed. Perhaps it also points to

the toxic environments (Hyman & Snook, 2000) that exist in some classrooms, environments

that might cause a student like Sara to be glad to get out of.

James also shared a story about a particularly troubling experience with a teacher; he had

been telling me about things he didn't like about ISS and then, in mid-sentence, he began talking

about rude teachers, as portrayed in the following excerpt:

> *Teachers like excuse me, Mr. Leonard, he's the chorus teacher, he's rude and ah I*
> *don't want to bite my tongue about this, because I think that it should be*
> *addressed, he is rude, he needs psychological help if you ask me. Um* [long
> pause]. *He's called me gay on three occasions but I'm just gonna leave that alone*
> (James Thomas, 97:97).

James went on in the interview to outline the three occasions and further describe his relationship

with the chorus teacher, which appeared to be characterized by a great deal of conflict. Howard

Zehr (2002) acknowledged that "most violence is a response to a perceived violation." While

"this sense of victimization may not be a valid excuse for their victimization of others…neither

can it simply be ignored as if it did not exist or did not play a role" (p. 26). In other words, it is

futile to address the student's behavior without considering the ecology of their behavior,

including the actions of others that might have provoked those behaviors.

Later on in the interview, James again talked about Mr. Leonard in a discussion about

getting written up. James' account of the experience is recorded in the following quote:

> *Mr. Leonard, he wrote me up once and I told him if you write me up, I am going to have*
> *my granny go down to the Board of Education and I'm gonna get you. And I really mean*
> *that.* How did that go? *He didn't write me up* (James Thomas, 135:145).

For James, Mr. Leonard's rude behavior was not taken lightly, nor was it dismissed, but rather

was, according to James, used against Mr. Leonard later on. James' response to Mr. Leonard

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could be seen as an act of resistance for what James perceived as unfair and rude behavior on the part of the teacher.

Students' Resistance to Unfair Teachers

James was not the only student who talked about actively resisting teachers' rude or mean behaviors. Several students talked about yelling at teachers, mouthing off at teachers, or going to sleep in class as ways in which they defy or responded to teachers' behaviors that they deemed as unfair or disrespectful. Marcy was one of those students, as seen in the follow excerpt:

> *When I mouth off to the teachers, it's only cuz they make me mad and they just* [deep breath] *I don't know…They yell for nothing! And sometimes kids walk out of there with headaches, cuz a how much teachers yell.* So what do you do when they yell? *I yell. I just don't like it and I yell back* (Marcy Clemmons, 20:27).

According to Marcy, some teachers apparently spend a great deal of their class time yelling at students. Marcy's admitted response is to yell back.

Marcy was not the only student who admitted to yelling at a teacher. Jonathan stated that he sometimes gets written up for yelling at teachers; in the following excerpt, I ask him a follow-up question about it:

> You said sometimes you yell at the teacher? *Well it's more of defiance than yelling.* What do you mean? *Well I kinda just get mad. I don't think that everything is right like I am trying to do something in my way but the teacher tells me I can't do it that way…I was in the back of the room in Ms. Larson's class. I was trying to do my work and then I went to sleep. Then Ms. Larson wakes me up and says, do your work or else you will get a write up* [this is said with a higher pitch, indicating raised voice]. *I said I don't want a write up* [said with a little bit of an edge]. *And then I said can you just send me out of the classroom and she said no and then I want to get out of the classroom because there's too much like distractions. So, I actually tried to be bad to get out of the classroom so I could do my work* (Jonathan Carter, 119:133).

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In Jonathan's account, it appears that he became frustrated with some academic task where he and the teacher had different ideas about how to do the work. After apparently giving up and going to sleep, Ms. Larson woke him up with a threat about getting a write-up. According to Jonathan, this exchange then escalated until he finally got in trouble on purpose so that he could get sent to ISS and do his work.

Jonathan's experience with Ms. Larson in this situation seems to point to places where negative relationships between students and teachers potentially exacerbate students' defiant behavior. Further, his experience provokes further questions about students' violent behaviors toward teachers and other classmates. In one final excerpt related to the toxic relationships that exist between many students and their teachers, Marcy gave a chilling piece of advice to new teachers. As noted in Chapter Three, toward the end of the interview, I asked a final question of each of the participants; Marcy's response illustrates the potential consequences of ignoring the relationships between students and teachers:

> What should I tell my students who are studying to be teachers? *hmm. I guess you should tell them there are kids who mouth off and don't care. And some bring knives to school - pocket knives - and some actually fight with teachers if the teachers do anything wrong* [Pause]. *So I guess you could tell them to uh, watch what they say to students* (Marcy Clemmons, 78:79).

These last few quotes illustrate the extent to which relationships between students and teachers can become antagonistic and corrosive.

According to Twemlow and Sacco (2008), vicious cycles of disrespectful interactions between students and teachers, like those described by the students above, must be avoided by creating classrooms organized around democratic principles which promote mutual respect, autonomy building, listening and caring. Restorative justice is grounded on these principles.

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Through her review of the literature related to the values underlying restorative justice, Pranis (2007) noted that at the core of its philosophical underpinnings is a simple emphasis on respect, love, reconciliation, and community. She went on to insist that there is an "interconnection and interdependence" at the core of all human relationships (p. 65); when those relationships are disrupted, conflict generally arises. According to Pranis (2007), justice is established when "all parties feel equal, respected, valued in their individual uniqueness, able to exercise constructive control in their lives and able to take responsibility for their actions" (p. 66).

From media accounts and from the accounts of the students in this study, it appears that toxic relationships do occur and from a restorative justice perspective reveal relational issues between students and teachers that desperately need to be addressed. It is important to note, however, that not all of the students expressed these types of relationships. Some of the students talked about teachers and other adults who went out of their way to build positive relationships with them as discussed in the next sub-theme.

Sub-Theme 2: I Wish More People Were Like Her

Sub-theme 2, *I Wish More People Were Like Her*, describes students' positive experiences with teachers and other adults within the school context. In contrast to the teachers who were described as mean or always yelling, the students shared accounts of teachers or other adults who treated them with respect, who took time to listen to them, and/or who helped them with their learning. Eight of the 13 participants told such stories.

Teachers Who Help with School Work

As noted above in Jeffrey's comparison of Ms. Meyers and Ms. Tucker, in Chris' comparison of his math and social studies teachers, and in Matt's comparison of Ms. Marshall

and Ms. Perkins, teachers' classroom styles were seen to impact whether students were written

up or not. For example, in Chris' juxtaposition of his math and social studies teachers, one was

seen as focusing solely on keeping students quiet, while the other was focused on helping them

to *get a good education* (Chris Roque, 156:187). This perceived willingness to help students with

their education was seen in a few other descriptions of teachers. For example, two students

talked about how their classroom teacher would come into the ISS room to help them with their

class work. In the following excerpt, I asked Chris a follow-up question about getting his work

done in ISS:

> What happens if you don't understand the work? *I wait til my teacher comes in there and I ask for help.* Does your teacher come in there? *hmm mm* (Chris Roque, 31:35).

Jeffrey also noted that teachers will occasionally come into the ISS room during their

lunch break or planning period, as seen in the following quote:

> *Some of the teachers they go into ISS to help the students. They go in there for a certain amount of minutes to help the students on their lunch period or their break or something, whatever you want to call it. They go there because their kids are in related arts. So they go in there and you know they'll help their students* (Jeffrey Richardson, 277:277).

Jeffrey seemed to suggest that some teachers will go into the ISS room to help their

students, but he later acknowledged that not all teachers do. In the following excerpt, he

suggested that sometimes when there is substitute teacher, that they don't bring the work

to the ISS room, which, as discussed within the theme, *Our Learning Time*, would then

leave the student without anything to do. He then referenced Mr. Smith, who was

described as one of his teachers who does come into the ISS room at times:

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Mr. Smith, he likes to joke around a lot we always like to have fun…He, he's actually, if a student's in ISS and the substitute teacher won't come down there to give them work, he normally brings I'd say a big humongous pile of work down there (Jeffrey Richardson, 121:133).

Thus, for Jeffrey, Mr. Smith not only comes to check on him, but also seems to make sure that the students have plenty of work to do. It is interesting to note that Jeffrey seems to be suggesting that Mr. Smith is being helpful by bringing the humongous pile of work to ISS, perhaps indicating that in spite of his being in ISS, Jeffrey still was interested in school work, a point that will be discussed further within the theme, *Our Learning Time*.

Beyond students' descriptions of their classroom teachers, two students talked about other adults who played a role in their ISS experiences. Interestingly, while many of the students talked about teachers who had been mean or who had yelled, and while the ISS teacher was often presented as someone who yelled and was mean, these other adults were not described in that same way. It appeared that students only brought up other school personnel as exemplars of helpful adults.

Other School Personnel

These other adults included principals, guidance counselors, and representatives from Project Grad, a local "education-reform program with a record of improving the academic achievement and college going rates of students from low-income backgrounds" (Project GRAD, 2011). For example, as noted under the theme, *Gettin' Written Up*, Shocky's experience with ISS was largely influenced by his principal, Ms Orwell, as depicted in the following quote:

The conversation sometime it can be like sort of irritating because Ms. Orwell, like, she'll listen, like, she'll be like, "Okay do you have anything that you have to say?" She'll let you like say what you have to say; she don't interrupt you. She'll just sit there and like let you say what you have to say and then like she'll make

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her choice. Like sometimes she'll give you a break. She'll be like, "Well you have improved on your behavior stuff so I'm just like gonna like give you a little pass" and then a couple of days later, you have another write up or the next day and she'll put the other write up with that write up and you'll have to get them both signed (Shocky Miller, 67:81).

The willingness on the part of Ms. Orwell to listen to Shocky, even if she didn't always take his suggestions, was portrayed by Shocky as *sort of irritating,* but was nevertheless a significant part of his experience. When I met Shocky on the day of the interview, I saw him talking with Ms. Orwell in the hall and wondered just how many conversations they had had about his behavior.

Jeffrey also shared several stories about other adults who were a part of his experience with ISS, even if only tangentially so. One of those adults, Mr. Langston, was described as someone who came into the ISS room to talk to the students, as illustrated by the following quote:

> *It's* [ISS] *not fun, but Mr. Langston, the Project GRAD person, he'll come in there sometime and he'll just come in there and just come talk to us while she's* [ISS teacher] *not in the room cuz they'll have to watch us and he'll just come in there and talk to us and he'll ask us why we're in there so we'll tell him and everything. Well, when Ms. Taylor* [the ISS teacher] *comes back in, he'll lie and say that we weren't talking to keep us covered cuz, so that none of us will get in trouble, cuz he likes to talk to us to figure out what's going on. A couple of boys normally go to see him for like to like figure out how they can solve a problem. And Ms. Quincy* [guidance counselor] *likes to, she'll come every now and then and she'll grab you out of there like if you are like having a problem with another student or something she'll come grab you out of there to take you to see if you can try to figure out your problem* (Jeffrey Richardson, 293:293).

Thus, Mr. Langston and Ms. Quincy, the guidance counselor, were seen as adults who not only came to ISS to help students with their academic work, but to help them with some of their problem-solving.

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While the experiences of Jeffrey and Shocky illustrate stories of helpful and supportive adults, unfortunately these types of stories appeared to be less common than the stories of adults who had been mean or who had treated students unfairly. The accounts of mistreatment, as well as accounts of kindness, on the part of adults in the school stood out to these students as an important part of their experience with ISS, many time potentially influencing whether or not they were sent to ISS or not and what happened to them as a result of being in ISS.

Summary of Theme: There Are Some Teachers

As discussed in this theme, *There Are Some Teachers*, school personnel, including the classroom teachers, the principals, guidance counselors, and Project GRAD personnel who interact with students on a daily basis, played a significant role in students' experiences at school, often determining whether or not the students were written up and what happened to them when they were written up. As depicted in Figure 1 by the two-sided horizontal arrow, the two sub-themes, *I Don't Like It When Teachers Yell All the Time*, and *I Wish More People Were Like Her*, reflect the various ways in which students experienced adults in their schools, particularly classroom teachers. As seen in Figure 1, these teachers, and other school personnel, were potentially seen as gatekeepers for the students' experiences with getting into ISS. Their actions, both positive and negative, were seen by the students in this study as contributing to whether or not they were sent to ISS. In the next two themes, I discuss how students made meaning of their experience of being in ISS. In this first theme, students describe what it was like to be in the ISS room.

Theme 3: Sometimes it's Boring. Sometimes it's Fun. Sometimes it's Torture.

Theme 1, *Gettin' Written Up*, and Theme 2, *There Are Some Teachers*, reflect students' experiences with getting into ISS, including descriptions of teachers and circumstances that seemed to affect whether or not they were sent to ISS. In Theme 3, *Sometimes it's Boring. Sometimes it's Fun. Sometimes it's Torture.*, I talk about students' experiences actually being in the ISS room. For most of these students, getting sent to ISS meant spending a full day, at least 7 hours, sitting in the ISS room. Many of the conversations with the students revolved around their descriptions of the ISS room and the activities that went on while they were in there. All 13 participants described ISS as boring, even those who found it to be fun at times and those who found it to be torture or prison-like. As they shared what it was like to be in ISS, some of them became somewhat animated, such as Marcy in the description below:

> *Being in ISS is* [long pause] *boring. Cuz you don't get to talk in ISS, you don't get to chew gum, you don't get to say anything. Ever. Unless you raise your hand. And you only get to talk when you're in, when you're eatin in lunch* (Marcy Clemmons, 32:33).

During the long pause in the preceding quote, Marcy took in a deep breath and when she said *boring*, it was almost as an exhaled breath, followed by a rather lengthy description of all the things they could not do while they were in ISS. Several other students also provided lists of things that they were not allowed to do while in ISS; according to some of the students, the rules of ISS seem to be different than the regular school rules, as discussed in the following quotes:

> *Um, you're not allowed to chew gum, you got to stay in your seat um, you got to raise your hand every time you want something* (Sara Peterson, 5:5). *Um, like the rules are like hard and stuff like, you can't fall asleep, no talking, no candy, no food until lunch* (Sara Peterson, 69:69).

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Thus, for Sara, the rules of ISS are not only different that the regular classroom rules, but they are harder than the regular classroom rules. It is interesting to note that some of the things she mentioned, like having to raise your hand or not falling asleep, are perhaps things that might be expected to be rules in the regular classroom as well, perhaps leading to a question about why Sara saw these as ISS rules and not general classroom rules as well. Likewise, in Marcy's list of rules, it is interesting to note the focus on not being able to talk. Considering that these students are middle school students and that one of the characteristics of middle school students is a need to develop social interaction skills (NMSA, 2003), Marcy's observation might also be pointing to possible issues about the developmental appropriateness of having students remain silent and isolated for this many hours each day.

James also included *no talking* in his list of ISS rules, rules that he seemed to think were unfair, as seen in the following quote:

> *Like you can't drink chocolate milk, or strawberry milk or you can't buy chips. Or you have to go by what they ask you to eat and stuff like that and that's not for me. And uh, no talking, I don't think that we should be able to talk but I kinda do at the end of the day you know* (James Thomas, 9:13).

For Marcy, James, and Sara, being in ISS was accompanied by a set of rules that they had to follow. Students' lists of rules seemed to include more than a few references to food, suggesting that food, including candy, chocolate milk, and perhaps even *what they ask you to eat*, represented ways in which the withholding of food served as a form of punishment for being in ISS.

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In another description of ISS, after providing a litany of things that they had to write while in ISS (see discussion below), Andy summarized his comments with an exclamation of how boring ISS was, which he then followed with what I would describe as an exasperated growl:

> *Well you know it just feels like, the days like um, like I'm just really bored and like you know like it's so boring and you know like with doing all the writing and stuff...when you look at that worksheet and stuff, you know, it just like makes me like, ahhhhhhrg* (Andy Richmond, 9:9).

It appeared that as they described their experience being in the ISS room, these students exhibited almost a visceral response, as if they were experiencing those same feelings again. The deep emotional expressions that accompanied their descriptions of ISS draw attention to the possibility that for these students, ISS was a frustrating experience and a frustrating place.

Several students described ISS using various metaphors that reflected this possible frustration; for example, in the following quote, Stewey compares being in ISS to being locked up:

> *It's just kind of boring really. I have heard people say that they love it but I personally have not had any experience where I have liked being in ISS. I think it's boring - as just being locked in a steel box* (Stewey Potter, 26:26).

In addition to being boring, Stewey's description of ISS as *being locked in a steel box* was similar to other ISS descriptions where students tended to compare ISS to very negative experiences. While every participant referred to ISS as boring, four of the students also described ISS with much stronger terms like *prison* or as *torture*, or having *to spend all day locked in a*

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room (Stewey Potter,14:14). Jeffrey described ISS as torture, giving several statements

supporting his description:

> *It's kinda torture because you are sitting in there and the teacher will sometimes*
> *yell at you because you are sitting in there and you can't do nothing because you*
> *have no work* (Jeffrey Richardson, 65:65).

Thus, it appeared that Jeffrey found ISS to be torturous, not only because he had to sit there all

day, but because the ISS teacher yelled at him and because he did not have anything to do while

in ISS. The perception on the part of Jeffrey, as well as several other of the students, that the ISS

teacher yelled all the time was repeatedly mentioned frequently and will be discussed in the next

theme, *The ISS Teacher's a Nice Lady with a Snoozy Attitude*.

Finally, James also described ISS as a prison-like experience, suggesting what he would

do to change it, as demonstrated in the following quote:

> *If I could change it, there would be a lot of changes, um like not slamming books*
> *and not hollering and less rules that really cuz…in ISS, I feel like a prisoner*
> *instead of feeling like I am in ISS* (James Thomas, 5:5).

Thus, for James, ISS was not only boring, but it seemed to be characterized by *slamming books*,

hollering, and too many *rules*. Students also used other descriptors for ISS, such as *tiring, that's*

all, just tiring (Josh Stenson, 110:114) or *lame…cuz you just keep on going in there - like as soon*

as you get out, you have to go right back in there…just sitting there being quiet in that one room

all day (Chris Roque, 188:195). For Chris and Josh, it seemed that ISS was also seen as a

negative experience, characterized by boredom, having to be quiet, and repeated visits.

Not all of the descriptions of ISS were negative; a few of the students expressed that it

was *fun at times*, depending on the circumstances. Shocky and Matt, for example, saw it as fun,

but only under certain conditions, as described in the following quote:

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When we got in there, sometime she is strict and that and usually you have to be good but when we have a substitute, we like take control over her and it ain't really like ISS. It's like free time if we have a substitute (Matt Rogers, 9:25).

For Matt, then, ISS is potentially fun, but only when the regular ISS teacher is not there.

As noted, in the theme, *The ISS Teacher's a Nice Lady With A Snoozy Attitude*, I will discuss the role of the ISS teacher in students' experiences in ISS. Shocky also described ISS as being fun at times, as seen in the following:

The only time when it's fun is just like, it's like either when there's two people in there or it's just like or just like if you by yourself and she like lets you get up and talk to her for a few minutes, talk about like what you did, like what you did wrong and what did you learn from that. When there's lots of people in there it can sorta sometimes be fun. It's just like if there's certain kids that's in there with you (Shocky Miller, 31:41).

For Shocky, ISS could be described as fun when there were only a few people in there; what seemed to make it fun was the ability to talk to the ISS teacher about why they were in ISS and what they could learn from the experience. It is interesting to note that Shocky seemed to appreciate the opportunity to talk about his behaviors, what led to those behaviors, and what better decisions might be made in the future. This is one of the key components of a restorative approach to school discipline; by giving students the opportunity to problem-solve about their own behaviors and the ensuing consequences, they potentially have the chance to learn from their mistakes and not only avoid similar mistakes in the future, but to develop problem-solving skills that will impact their lives beyond their school experiences (Hopkins, 2004; Morrison, 2007).

While not necessarily describing ISS as fun, Bam described ISS as basically *like a regular class; you go to lunch and everything. They treat you normal. You can still get written up*

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in there. It's just a normal class. You just gotta stay quiet (Bam Margero, 31:31). Thus, for Bam,

the only perceived difference between ISS and his regular classroom was that he had to stay

quiet. Finally, it is interesting to note that two students in particular found ISS to be helpful in

staying caught up academically; their experiences are discussed in the theme, *Our Learning*

Time. Thus, with the exception of a few students, most of the descriptions of ISS seemed to be

negative, some of those descriptions revolving around the physical description of the ISS room.

In the following descriptions, James talked about *staring at a black wall* and several

students discussed the cubicles in which they sat, which Andy said, *makes me a little*

claustrophobic. James' description of the black wall can be seen in the following quote:

> *I don't think we should be quiet the whole day. We shouldn't have to be quiet and*
> *look at a black wall all day.* A blank wall or a black Wall? *No it's a black wall.*
> *No seriously, all the way…to the top, it's black at the top. But it's really black all*
> *the way. The whole room, it's black* (James Thomas, 9:9).

Thus, for James, ISS seems to be characterized by being quiet and staring at a black wall.

No other student at Green Middle School talked about the black wall in the same way that

James did, but two of the students at Butler talked about cubicles that they were required

to sit in all day. According to Andy,

> *They would have little boxes that you would sit in and you can see out of the back,*
> *but you can't see out into the hallway and you can't see anyone else and that's*
> *what, she calls them cubicles* (Andy Richmond, 13:13).

For Andy, the cubicles appeared to restrict their ability to look out into the hallway or to engage

with their neighbors in the ISS room. Interestingly, Shocky did not orient to the cubicles in quite

the same way and literally found a way around them:

> *There's like these little cubicles and they have like these little walls to it so*
> *nobody can like see each other or mess with each other but if you lean back*

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[student demonstrates leaning back in his chair] *you can see like other kids like doing their work because the cubicles they not fully closed on you so, like duh* (Shocky Miller, 9:9).

Shocky appeared to experience great satisfaction at demonstrating to me how easy it was to see the other kids, in spite of the cubicle that was designed to prevent them from doing so. Shocky's and Andy's descriptions of ISS revolved around their experience sitting in the cubicles, which perhaps were designed to punish student by restricting social interaction and preventing students from talking with one another.

The use of social isolation as a type of punishment has a long history within the criminal justice system and is something that restorative justice advocates vigorously counter. Within conventional discipline interventions, one of the "natural consequences" of misbehavior is often exclusion from the community through such methods as suspension and expulsion. Critiquing zero tolerance policies, Bazemore and Schiff (2005) insisted that ultimately these policies have the potential to increase the likelihood of further offending because they alienate those who have committed the offense. Restorative justice allows offenders to avoid this type of alienation by reintegrating into the community those who are often alienated because of their behavior. Thus, isolating students through the use of cubicles and strict rules about not talking would be seen through a restorative justice lens as potentially exacerbating students' misbehavior; instead restorative justice promotes inclusive strategies, such as peacemaking circles, peer mediation, and community building (Hopkins, 2004).

As seen above, students often described their experiences in the ISS room as being about sitting all day. The students reported spending a great deal of time *just sitting there being quiet in that one room all day* (Chris Roque, 188:195). What they did during the time that they were in

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ISS was an important part of how they made meaning of ISS. As illustrated by the following

quotes, Josh reported that he simply did

> *nothing.* What do you mean nothing? *just sit down and just stare into space.*
> Really? for like seven hours? *Yes.* You don't draw or write letters to people? [Josh
> shook his head] You just sit there and stare into space? *Yea* (Josh Stenson, 54:68).

Thus, even after prompting to provide other responses, Josh insisted that he did nothing

in ISS. Jeffrey also characterized his time in ISS as just sitting there doing nothing, as

seen in the following quote:

> *Other times you just go into ISS and you just sit there and sit there and you don't
> do nothing* (Jeffrey Richardson, 5:5).

Thus, for Jeffrey and Josh, ISS seemed to be described as sitting there and doing nothing.

When we consider that the 13 participants in this study spent approximately seven hours

a day in ISS, some for as many as 39 days, it is interesting to note just how many hours of

these students' lives have been potentially wasted, hours that could have been spent

engaging students in academic tutoring, social skill training, dialogues between them and

their teachers with whom they are in conflict, or working with a counselor or teacher to

find ways to problem-solve about their own behaviors. Restorative practices in education

might be characterized as not only restoring relationships, as was discussed in the theme,

There are Some Teachers, but also restoring the time that our students need in order to be

successful academically.

　　While some students reportedly spent their days just sitting, for other students,

just sitting was not an option. Andy argued that the rules of ISS state that *you can't really*

idle (Andy Richmond, 43:43), so it became important to find something to do. For some

students, teachers sent their class work to ISS and they spent most of their day

completing it. In the theme, *Our Learning Time,* I discuss students' experiences with

getting and not getting their class work in ISS in greater detail.

Some students shared that when they completed their work for their classes, *if* they

received their work from their teachers, they were then free to do make-up work or to find

something to do; but for other students, the ISS teacher had extra work for them to do. For

example, Chris stated that if he finishes his class work, *she give me more work to do*. What kind

of work? *Like a big ole book of English*. Is it make-up work for your other classes? *No, it's just*

worksheets (Chris Roque, 64:71). Thus, for Chris, the work that he was required to do in ISS was

not related to his classroom teachers' assigned work and perhaps was perceived as simply

punishment for being in ISS. Some students described this extra work that was distributed by the

ISS teacher as *busy work,* as seen in the following quote:

> *I would like finish my work easily and quickly. So she, so I would actually request*
> *that I do make-up work. Or um, busy work* (Jonathan Carter, 5:5).

For Jonathan, then, when he finished his class work, which he seemed to be able to do

easily when he was in ISS, he then could choose to do make-up work, which he seemed

to differentiate from the busy work that the ISS teacher would assign.

Andy also discussed the busy work that they were required to do once they

finished their regular class work, providing a litany of things they were required to write,

as seen in the following excerpt:

> *Then once we do our work, once we finish it, then we work on this sheet…I think*
> *it's like the spelling, and then it's like the math problems, then it's like the words,*
> *eleven, fourteen, ninety-five, stuff like that…they're just kinda random, just*
> *practice and then we have to write a story…And then we have to get the*

definitions, for the the spelling words that we did above…Then after that, if you got done with that, we had to do a, uh, it's this language sheet. And you would write the…there is like these sentences and you would write down the sentences from the language pack. It's like a couple of pages long and that's pretty much what you do all day (Andy Richmond, 53:55).

Andy appeared to view the extra work assigned by the ISS teacher as busy work, and perhaps viewed the extensive writing as a punitive part of being in ISS. For example, he relayed a story where he seemed to suggest that the students were required to write all day and that not writing might have been equated with being *idle*, as seen in the following:

*Well there's this one time when I was trying to study because I had a test the next day and she said that my pencil had to be on paper…*What did she mean by your pencil had to be on paper? *Like um, she said I had to like have my pencil on the paper, like writing and stuff like that* (Andy Richmond, 127:131).

Thus, it appeared that the act of writing was part of the ISS requirements, and perhaps was implemented as a way in which to ensure that students were busy and not able to get into trouble. While Andy, in particular, expressed that t*he thing that I would say that I dislike the most is that we have to write like a lot and usually it's like the whole day* (Andy Richmond, 5:5), other students also talked about the amount of writing they had to do.

As noted, this work of writing appeared to include tasks such as copying the ISS rules, doing worksheets out of the *big ole English book*, copying math facts, or copying definitions out of the dictionary. Much of the writing was described as things that don't necessarily have anything to do with their regular school work. For example, several of the students talked about a standardized writing assignment that they did every morning when they first arrived in ISS. John called it a *morning assessment* (John Smith, 5:5), which students described as writing things *like*

why you be in the ISS, things you should do…like how we waste the principals' time (John Smith,

13:25). Shocky described the activity of writing the rules in the quote below:

> *We go in there and sit down; first we write down the 13 rules and about like,*
> *there's no idle time, there's no sleeping, you can't chew no gum, um no talking*
> *out loud, no playing with other students, and uh no in you can't be in the hallway*
> *without other teachers* (Shocky Miller, 9:9)

Shocky's description of the morning writing activity not only points to the writing

requirements, but also provides a bit more insight into the rules that govern the ISS room.

Students in all three schools reported that they begin the day by having to write the ISS

rules; some students reported that they might be required to write them multiple times.

Note that in Shocky's description of the ISS *morning assessment*, one of the rules is that

there is *no idle time.* This emphasis on not being idle perhaps points to the assumption

that if students are busy, they are less likely to engage in disruptive behavior. Thus, in

order to prevent further disruptive behavior, students are required to be busy.

For many of the students, it was important that they find something to do so that

they are not *idle.* Throughout the interviews, students provided an extensive list of things

that they did in order to not be idle, some appearing to be perhaps more productive than

others. The activities they engaged in ranged from working on make-up work to bring up

their grades, as noted above, to working on crosswords or making paper airplanes.

Jeffrey described bringing a book of word searches to ISS, not just for himself,

but also for other students who needed to find something to do:

> *I took at least a packet of at least 75 word searches in there with me one day and*
> *some of the kids that get finished with them, I mean get finished with they work,*
> *they come, after the teacher would leave the room, and they be like can I have a*
> *couple of word searches because they don't have no more work and she won't*

give them any more work. So I give um, I say like here, here is you a couple of word searches (Jeffrey Richardson, 277:277).

Jeffrey seemed to suggest that the other students in the room waited until the ISS teacher left the room before they asked for the word searches, perhaps suggesting that even asking for more work might constitute talking, something that they were forbidden from doing in ISS at Green Middle School.

In his account about what he did in order to stay busy, Bam suggested that he had several options, as discussed in the following:

Then I either draw or get caught up. I ask the ISS teacher if I can go and get extra work or she has a drawer that we can get crosswords out of and stuff so I do those (Bam Margero, 4:5).

Thus, for Bam, it appears that the ISS teacher at Tate Middle School perhaps was more willing to help them find something to do, even if was simply *crosswords*. The list of things that students did while in ISS included making paper airplanes (Matt Rogers, 75:97), rearranging the book shelf in the ISS room (Jonathan Carter, 13:25), playing a scrabble game using TCAP spelling words (John Smith, 87:97), and *making like little hoppy frog things*. According to Jonathan:

Sometimes, if I am bored, I start making like little hoppy frog things. Hoppy frog things? *Yea. cuz I am in to origami…I can make this little froggy thing that if you push down on its tail like this and it makes it hop* (Jonathan Carter, 301:309).

There seemed to be an endless list of activities that were unrelated to students' academic success in which students were engaged while in ISS. A great deal of research has been conducted that suggests that students who exhibit frequent disciplinary challenges also experience academic challenges (Brown, 2007; Casella, 2003; Christle et al., 2004),

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pointing perhaps to a need to re-examine how students' time in ISS is being utilized. While two of the students did talk about how ISS was helpful to their academics, providing a quiet space for them to complete their work, most of the students seemed to have a very different experience, suggesting that ISS had hindered their learning, which will be discussed further in the theme, *Our Learning Time*.

ISS was not only positioned as possibly hindering their academic opportunities, but students also seemed to conceptualize ISS as a punitive experience. While all of the students described ISS as boring, one student added that *it's very boring; it's very ideal punishment* (Stewey Potter, 6:6). For Stewey and other students, ISS seemed to be conceptualized as punishment for breaking the school rules; however, other students questioned the purpose of ISS. Bam expressed that it was *to show me to be more responsible, I guess*? (Bam Margero, 21:21). The question at the end of his explanation, possibly suggests that he did not see ISS as actually helping him *to be more responsible*, but that perhaps he thought that was the expected response. After Josh expressed that ISS was *aggravating* and *tiring*, I asked if he had learned anything, to which he replied:

> *Nothing.* Nothing at all? *Well, if you in for a reason then you probably would learn something, but I never been in there for a good reason* (Josh Stenson, 114:124).

Thus, although ISS might have been intended as punishment designed to compel students to comply with school expectations, for Josh, it had been ineffective at doing so. In a similar statement, Marcy agreed that she should get ISS when she *mouth*[s] *off to a teacher,* but that ISS *only helps when I know I did something wrong* (Marcy Clemmons, 56:62).

From a restorative justice framework, the notion of punishment is often challenged as being ineffective at long-term behavioral changes, as suggested by Josh and Marcy above. Rather than simply punishing students when they behave in ways that do not conform to our expectations, restorative justice seeks ways to help the students make right what they have made wrong, to fix their mistakes, and to bring about reparation (Zehr, 2002). There is no assumption that punishment is never applied, but rather there exists a commitment to ensure that punishment leads to restoration of the relationships that are often damaged due to offensive behaviors. The difference is in the intention. Punishment is not seen as the end itself, but rather may be used as a means to the end, which is ultimately restoration to the community and the opportunity to develop into one's better self (Sullivan & Tifft, 2001).

As Cragg (1992) has noted, retributive justice, or punitive practice in general, looks backward, seeing what has occurred and what punishment is deserved; restorative justice looks forward, asking where we go from here. Thus, as the students above noted, punishment as an end in itself will fail to address the underlying issues that are causing challenging behaviors, such as excessive talking or mouthing off to teachers. Tickell and Akester (2004) asserted that imposing harsher penalties on these individuals will do nothing to change their behavior until we begin to address the needs that led to that behavior.

Related to our notion of punishment has to be our understanding of the purpose of education. When our understanding of the purpose of school relates to notions of control and acculturation, the need for strictly enforced rules become essential; if we, as Dewey and others imagined, view school as providing students with skills and knowledge to participate in a democratic society, then we have to do more than simply enforce rules. We have to practice

democracy in our schools. Thus, our notions of the purpose of schooling, while beyond the scope of this paper, are important to consider as we develop our policies and practices related to discipline and punishment.

Summary of Theme: Sometimes it's Boring. Sometimes it's Fun. Sometimes it's Torture.

The outer blue circle in Figure 1 represents ISS, as denoted by the theme name, *Sometimes it's Boring. Sometimes it's Fun. Sometimes it's Torture*. Students described ISS using a variety of descriptors; for all of the students, ISS was seen as boring, while for a small minority, it was perceived as a place where they were able to focus and thereby more effectively complete their class work. The accounts of their time spent in ISS varied greatly from student to student, but for all of the students, what happened in the ISS room was a significant part of their experience with ISS.

It is interesting to note that in Jeffrey's description of the activities of ISS, he described the ISS teacher at his school, Green Middle School, as someone who *won't give them any more work*, possibly contradicting what students at the other schools were saying about their ISS teachers. At the other two schools, Butler Middle School and Tate Middle School, some of the students described the ISS teacher as someone who appeared to be supportive and demonstrate a willingness to help students. The ISS teacher is represented in Figure 1 by the smaller blue circle within the ISS circle. All 13 students mentioned her in their accounts of being in ISS. The description of the ISS teacher will be further explicated in the next theme, *The ISS Teacher's a Nice Lady with a Snoozy Attitude*.

Theme 4: The ISS Teachers' a Nice Lady with a Snoozy Attitude

As noted in the preceding theme, *Sometimes it's Boring. Sometimes it's Fun. Sometimes it's Torture.*, the ISS teacher played a critical role in the students' experience in ISS and perhaps, to some degree, a role in their school experience in general. Theme 4, *The ISS Teacher's a Nice Lady with a Snoozy Attitude,* focuses on how the students seemed to experience the ISS teacher. All 13 participants talked about the ISS teacher when discussing their experiences in ISS. Two students clearly portrayed the ISS teacher as nice and helpful; others reported that she was strict, but not necessarily mean. Some participants described her as being nice under some conditions and mean under others. Seven participants explicitly described the ISS teacher as mean or rude.

Unlike the theme, *There are Some Teachers*, which relates to classroom teachers and school personnel who appeared to influence whether or not students ended up in ISS, this theme specifically relates to the ISS teacher, who seemed to influence their experiences while they are actually in ISS. While the experiences of students did not always correlate with the school they attended, within this theme, all four students at Green Middle School described the ISS teacher as mean, while at the other two schools, the students' descriptions varied between participants.

Whatever She Tells Us

While all of the students talked about the ISS teacher; for some, it was simply a matter of her telling them what to do while they were in the ISS room. For example, John began his description of ISS by stating that *when we go there, she tells us to write a, it's a morning assessment for ISS. To get us started off, we either got to write two or one or what she tells us to write* (John Smith, 5:5). For John, then, the various writing assignments that the students discussed within the theme, *Sometimes it's Boring. Sometimes it's Fun. Sometimes it's Torture.*,

were assignments that were given out by the ISS teacher. Other students talked about the ISS teacher making sure that students completed their class work, assuming that it had been sent, or assigning busy work, TCAP review, or other extra assignments (see the theme, *Sometimes it's Boring. Sometimes it's Fun. Sometimes it's Torture*, for more about what types of activities students are engaged in while they are in ISS). As students discussed the various activities that they engaged in while in ISS, students seemed to suggest that often it was the ISS teacher who appeared to control the goings on in the ISS room.

For example, John shared that if they don't complete their class work in ISS, *then we have to do it at home and if we don't do it at home, we won't be able to do it if we got another day* (John Smith, 69:69). John went on to say that if they do complete their class work, *the ISS teacher will give them, she'll have work in the little file cabinet…and uh if we don't finish it, we have to take it home and finish and if we don't finish it then we, and we not in ISS, she just makes you do another day* (John Smith, 261:265). Chris stated that if his classroom teachers don't send work, *the ISS teacher will give me more work to do…*worksheets out of *a big ole book of English* (Chris Roque, 67:71). Thus, for John and Chris, the ISS teacher has a great deal of influence on the types of work that they do or do not do while in ISS. It appears that she has the potential to either help them gain access to their assignments or not.

Helping with Our Work, or Not

Some students talked explicitly about the ISS teacher helping or not helping them with their class work. For example, when Josh told me about his teachers not sending work to ISS for him, he stated, *I gotta go back to class and ask them for it. But the ISS teacher she won't let you* (Josh Stinson, 104:104). For Josh, then, the ISS teacher was preventing him from staying caught

up on his class work. Bam, on the other hand discussed how he perceived the ISS teacher as

helping him stay caught up with his academic work:

> *When we ask her for help she usually helps us and uh I have trouble with math
> and whenever I ask her for questions she doesn't tell me the answers like most
> teachers. She helps me get to it by myself. So that helps me* (Bam Margero,
> 11:11).

Thus, for Bam, not only did the ISS teacher help him to gain access to the work, but she

was willing to help him understand it as well. Further, Bam seemed to suggest that she

was able to explain his math to him in a way that his regular teacher was not able to do.

Not everyone, however, saw the ISS teacher as willing and able to help them with their

school work. Jeffrey stated that other than the few classroom teachers who come into ISS

occasionally to help students with their work, they are on their own:

> *Some of the teachers…they go in there and you know they'll help their students,
> but other than that you are in there all by yourself, doing your work by yourself
> because the teacher in there won't help you* (Jeffrey Richardson, 277:277).

The preceding quotes illustrate how various students viewed the ISS teacher as either helping

them or not helping them with their work. Bam not only felt that the ISS teacher was helpful, but

that the way she helped him with his math was particularly beneficial, whereas Jeffrey expressed

that the ISS teacher would not help with students' class work. Considering that students are

spending a significant amount of time in the ISS room, the lack of academic support provided by

the ISS teacher may point to a need to consider designing ISS programs that focus on helping

students more with their academic work while in ISS, something that will be discussed further in

the next theme, *Our Learning Time*.

Enforcing the Rules

Beyond her role in helping students get their class work done, the ISS teacher was often portrayed as the person who enforces the rules and maintains order in the ISS room. Most of the students talked about how they have to be quiet in the ISS room, and they ways in which the ISS teacher maintained that silence. Sara, for example, noted that *Ms. Arthur, the ISS teacher, is really strict…you can't really do anything cause she like watches you all the time* (Sara Peterson, 47:57), while Stewey expressed that *when you are in there, she is very lenient sometimes. She tries not to be, but she lets us* [hesitation] *she doesn't let us get away with anything and we have to do all of our work* (Stewey Potter, 6:6). It was interesting to note that Stewey hesitated after beginning to say that *she lets us* and then changed his statement to *she doesn't let us;* while he began his statement talking about how lenient she is, he seemed to shift his description, possibly indicating that he might have re-thought about what he was going to say about the ISS teacher. While there is very little research about the ISS teacher, Stewey's contradictory statements about the ISS teacher leads to possible questions about how the role of the ISS teacher is positioned for students and the mixed signals that might be sent when ISS is conceptualized as punitive, but where students don't find it as such.

While students at Tate Middle School and Butler Middle School varied in their descriptions of the ISS teachers at their schools, the students at Green Middle School, John, Chris, James, and Jeffrey, consistently described the ISS teacher, Ms. Taylor, as mean, angry, and unwilling to help them. For example, in the following quote, Jeffrey shared that sometimes, when Ms. Taylor is out of the room, the students will work together to complete assignments,

apparently helping one another understand their class work; when she returns, they have to return

to being quiet:

> *But we talk sometime because Ms. Taylor likes to leave the room a lot. So we sit there and the people that are next to us...will be like, what's this question and what's that question, cuz like we don't understand. And when she comes back in, we be quiet. Cuz if we start talking again, tryin' to ask for help, she'll get mad, she'll get angry, she'll get furious. It just escalates...she really don't like it when anybody's talking or anybody saying help me or something, she gets really mad. She don't like us talking, but the only time we can talk is if we are talking to her...*One day, *I didn't understand the questions, so I asked him* [another student in ISS] *and she writes me up and sends me to the dean of students and gives me six more days* (Jeffrey Richardson, 165:174).

In this description of the ISS teacher, Jeffrey seemed to portray her as someone whose anger

escalates when students talk, even when they are talking about academic things. Jeffrey indicated

that he was written up and assigned six more days in ISS for what he described as simply asking

another student for help.

Several of the students at Green talked about what they saw as harsh consequences of not

following the ISS rules (see the theme, *Sometimes it's Boring. Sometimes it's Fun. Sometimes*

it's Torture, for a discussion of the ISS rules). For example, two of the students, Jeffrey and

John, talked about having to stand next to their desks when they talked, as discussed in the

following quotes:

> *She'll say* [student raises voice] *YOU NEED TO STOP TALKING and all this and that, and she'll just yell, you need to stop talking and then she'll make us stand up beside our desk for 15 minutes and if we touch the desk, it's another 15 minutes. If we lean over to look at our paper, it's another 15 minutes, but she keeps adding minutes on* (Jeffrey Richardson, 285:285).

In the above quote, Jeffrey reported that the ISS teacher uses the act of standing next to their

desk as a possible punishment for talking without permission and that she continues to add

minutes for what Jeffrey seemed to describe as minor things. John also talked about having to

stand by their desk as a possible form of punishment assigned by the ISS teacher for talking:

> If you talk…*she gone send you, she gone make you stand up like for 15 minutes or 30. And if you keep on talking she gone send you back to the dean of students and then he or she will either add two or one more day* (John Smith, 283:289).

John, however, added that the punishment can escalate if students' behavior doesn't change;

according to John's description, the ISS teacher can also reportedly assign extra days, thus

extending their time in ISS and away from their classes.

Other students, not only those at Green Middle School, also discussed the ISS teacher's

ability to assign extra days in ISS, as illustrated in the following description by Shocky:

> *The kids who just keep on turning around or saying I wasn't talking or if you just turn around and like you almost done with your work and you just sit there and just look at her all day she'll just keep you another day* (Shocky Miller, 41:41).

Shocky's statements above seem to suggest that the ISS teacher can assign students extra

days in ISS for turning around in their desks, for denying that they were talking, or for

just sitting there. In fact, according to Shocky,

> *Like she* [ISS teacher] *can keep you to the rest of the year. It's just like if you just sitting there and you ain't doing nothing and you like sleepin or just chomping on gum or you have your phone out and you keep on texting and you're not going to give it to her and you're doing the same thing over and over, she have the choice to keep you to the rest of the year* (Shocky Miller, 61:61).

Thus, according to the preceding quotes, the ISS teacher is presented as having a great deal of

influence not only on the students' experiences while they are in ISS, but also on the number of

days they remain in ISS. As discussed within the theme, *Gettin' Written Up*, restorative justice

advocates consider it important to include students in the decisions that are made about discipline

(Larson Sawin & Zehr, 2007; Wachtel, 2004). When students have the opportunity to engage in

problem-solving about their own behavior, they have the chance to view consequences as learning opportunities, rather than simply as punishment (Morrison, 2007; Sullivan & Tifft, 2001). Thus, through a restorative justice lens, the ISS teacher was potentially imposing disciplinary measures in ways that were not effective in that they did not engage the students in the process.

The students also seemed to express that the ISS teacher influenced their experience in ISS by the way that she treated them. Most of the students talked about the ISS teacher as someone who often yells or screams at them. For example, Andy stated that *she um yells at them a lot if they don't do anything or write the rules down and she slams stuff on her desk sometimes* (Andy Richmond, 103:103). Shocky also talked about how Ms. Walker, the ISS teacher at Butler Middle School, yelled at them sometimes, but then seemed to back off of his accusation, suggesting that she just raises her voice, as seen in the following quote:

> *Like Ms. Walker* [ISS teacher], *she'll get like like upset because there's like a whole bunch of 6th graders…and so sometimes she'll yell at you like cuz if you don't listen to her, she be like that, well she don't practicely* [*sic*] *yell, her voice just get loud and she'll tell you to stop* (Shocky Miller, 9:9).

Shocky, who had earlier described Ms. Walker as someone who was nice at times (Shocky Miller, 9:9), in this quote described her as yelling and appeared to attribute her yelling to how many sixth graders are in ISS.

Many of the students attributed the ISS teacher's behavior and/or attitude to her perhaps being in a bad mood or having a bad day. Stewey, for example, noted that the ISS teacher would get in a *bad mood* sometimes. When I asked him to tell me more about what that was like, he replied:

Chaotic…um, people getting punished for not really doing anything…like she sent some kid one of my friends to the bench and he wasn't even doing anything. It was the kid next to him and she didn't even make sure (Stewey Potter, 384:398).

Stewey seemed to be indicating that when the ISS teacher was in a bad mood, that she became more punitive, perhaps indicating that her decisions about enforcing the rules was contingent on the mood she was in, not necessarily what was in the best interest of the student.

James, a student at Green Middle School, also seemed to provide a reason for the ISS teacher yelling, as seen in the following quote:

She's a nice lady. She just has a "snoozy" attitude. A "snoozy" attitude, tell me what that is? *A rude attitude…She yells all through the day. That's how I feel she yells all through the day. Pacifically if she feels threaten, cuz she's a little bit older, maybe in her 60's I don't know I think so she feels she has to holler* (James Thomas, 41:53).

Thus, for James, the ISS teacher at Green appears to frequently holler and yell at the students, which James seemed to attribute to her age. All four students at Green Middle School characterized the ISS teacher as rude, mean, or *snoozy,* describing her as someone who yelled at students.

Chris, also a student at Green Middle School, expressed that Ms. Taylor only yelled at some people, however, as seen in the following quote:

Ms. Taylor…she yell at people. What does she yell at them for? *No reason really…She be nice to some people…people she like* (Chris Roque, 11:23).

Chris went on to say that she often yelled at him because he was not one of the people she liked. For Chris, the ISS teacher was described as someone who showed partiality in how she treated the students who were in ISS, possibly exacerbating Chris' feelings of

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disconnectedness and sense of unfairness. Chris had spent 37 days in ISS during the school year, more than any other participant.

According to Murdock, Anderman, and Hodge (2000) students, like Chris, who in the seventh grade have a history of discipline problems, are at a much greater risk of dropping out of school. Further, students who experience being disliked by their teachers, not only tend to struggle academically, but socially and emotionally as well (Battistich, Solomon, Watson, & Schaps, 1997; Christle et al., 2004; Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Noddings, 2006). One of the core values of restorative approaches to discipline is an emphasis on respectful relationships between students and teachers. According to Sullivan &Tifft (2001), "We develop our potentialities as human beings and enhance our collective well-being when our needs are respected, expressed, listened to, defined with care, and ultimately met" (p. 167). Thus, from a restorative justice perspective, the act of yelling at students or slamming desks indicates a lack of respect for those students, and possibly exacerbates students' defiant behaviors rather than alleviating them.

As illustrated above, most of the students described the ISS teacher as rude, mean, and as someone who frequently was in a bad mood and yelled at them. This was particularly true for the students at Green Middle School. Among the participants, however, there was a small minority of students who had a different experience with the ISS teacher. In the next section, I talk about experiences where students did describe the ISS teacher as nice or helpful.

While most of the students did describe the ISS teacher as strict and as someone who enforced the rules, not everyone perceived of her as mean or unfair. Three of the students, Bam,

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Shocky, and Jonathan, talked about the ISS teacher as a nice lady, as illustrated by the following quote:

> *She's nice; she's funny. Whenever a kids like in ISS, they say like man this is boring, like they'll just say something randomly out loud, she'll say like, not make fun of them, but say a joke to them like and everybody starts laughing and it's not really quiet in there, cuz whenever she gets off topic, everybody gets off topic and they just start talking. Yeh, she's nice* (Bam Margero, 17:17).

In this quote, Bam describes the ISS teacher at Tate Middle School as nice and someone who apparently allows students in the ISS room to talk and even to laugh. Although they were definitely a minority, it is important to see the way that Bam, Jonathan and Shocky portrayed the ISS teacher as someone who was nice and helpful, suggesting that perhaps it is possible to design ISS programs and to hire ISS personnel who can fulfill a role other than a strictly punitive one for the students who are in ISS.

Summary of Theme: The ISS Teachers' a Nice Lady with a Snoozy Attitude

In summary, the theme, *The ISS Teachers' a Nice Lady with a Snoozy Attitude*, relates to the role of the ISS teacher and students' descriptions of her. The ISS teacher was primarily described as someone who enforced the rules, someone who yelled a lot at the students, and someone who held a significant role what happened to them while they were in the ISS room. In Figure 1, the ISS teacher is represented as the smaller circle within the larger circle of ISS. She represents a central piece of the students' experience in ISS, whether the students perceived of that experience as primarily positive or negative, or helpful or harmful. Thus far, I have discussed the ways in which students made meaning of getting into ISS, including getting written up and the teachers and school personnel who made decisions about writing students up or about helping them out. I further have looked at students' experiences while they were actually in the

ISS room, including their descriptions of ISS and of the ISS teacher. As students talked about and described their experiences with ISS, I was surprised to realize how much these students oriented to the impact of ISS on their learning, as discussed in the next theme, *Our Learning Time*.

Theme 5: Our Learning Time

Along with discussions about how the students experienced getting written up and spending time in ISS, many students also talked extensively about how ISS impacted them; specifically, they discussed how being in ISS affected their learning. The fifth theme, *Our Learning Time*, focuses on students' perceptions about how ISS impacted their academic progress. The students overwhelmingly made references to ways in which they felt that ISS either contributed to their academic failure or helped to alleviate it. In these discussions, they primarily talked about the amount of time they spent in ISS and how that time was used. They also talked about the ISS teacher and how she either contributed to, or did not contribute to, helping them stay caught up with school work. Finally, they talked about the availability of resources that were used, or not, to help them academically. In the following discussion, I begin with students who talked about how ISS had hindered them academically.

Of the 13 participants, 11 explicitly addressed their school work, grades, and credits. Of the 11, eight explicitly talked about how ISS had hindered their learning. As students discussed in the theme, *Sometimes it's Boring. Sometimes it's Fun. Sometimes it's Torture.,* students spend a great deal of time sitting in ISS; many of them expressed losing academic ground while they are in there. For example, Jeffrey found ISS to be fun at times, but noted that it was also *pure torture* because it was interfering with his learning opportunities, as seen in the following quote:

> *It's fun for us, but it's also cutting into our learning time* (Jeffrey Richardson, 5:5). *It looks fun from a person's point of view, but it's just pure torture to the kids cuz we're missing out on our learning time, so it is taking US out of OUR learning so the teachers don't have to put up with us* (Jeffrey Richardson, 9:9).

In this quote, Jeffrey appears to attribute his being in ISS to teachers who don't want to have to put up with students. He does not seem to understand, from a teacher's perspective, why they might want to remove students from the class. Through a restorative justice perspective, teachers and students should have the opportunities to discuss these types of discrepancies in their understanding in ways that allow them to see each other's perspectives. Based on Jeffrey's account, it appears these types of conversations may not be happening.

Further, according to Andy, not having these conversations and yet still removing students from the classroom may not only be affecting their grades in middle school, but is perhaps affecting their long-term future goals as well, as seen in the following excerpt:

> *It makes me upset because you know I really like to be with my friends and I like to learn stuff and I pretty much like to be in the classroom and learn stuff and uh extend my knowledge for my future and stuff because I want to go to UT, like really bad and I was going to try really hard next year and try to get honor classes in high school and 8th grade and stuff. So that's pretty much my goal and you know to be in there and not be able to learn stuff you know it kinda makes me mad* (Andy Richmond, 135:139).

Andy, it appears, has some clearly defined goals about his future; however, he seems to not understand what needs to happen in order to help him reach those goals. Without more information from the teachers, we cannot know whether or not they have attempted to help him see the relationship between his perceived misbehavior and his academic potential, but assuming that they have attempted to help him understand those

connections, it appears that he still does not fully understand how his behaviors, and not simply the teachers' disciplinary interventions, are playing a role in his missing out on educational opportunities.

Whether or not Andy has made those connections, the research has provided quite a bit of evidence that students' behavior and their academic success are tightly linked, each influencing the other (Christle et al., 2004; Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Morrison et al., 2001). Further, there is some research to suggest that when students clearly understand the expectations that teachers have for them, they are more likely to make the choices to follow those expectations (Good & Brophy, 2003; Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Lewis, 2001). Finally, according to the students in this study, there seems to be some question as to whether or not they are provided the opportunity to keep up with their academic work while they are in ISS.

According to some of the students, as well as official district policy, teachers are expected to ensure that students have the opportunity to stay caught up with their school work. Some of the students explained how this happens in their school; Shocky, in particular, explained how the ISS teacher goes about securing the students' class work, as seen in the following excerpt:

> *Um, well she like, there's like this little piece of paper that like got all your teachers' name on it, like Ms. Miller, Ms. Edwards, Ms. Cameron, Ms. Slater, Ms. Masters, Mr. Aaronson, just any teachers that you have. It would have their names and then like language class, like um, she'll* [ISS teacher] *send the, she'll put the piece of paper in the teacher's mailbox in front of the office in the little slot and the teachers will get it fill it out and pass it to the other teachers to fill it out what all that the student has to do, like, and then they'll send like the books and stuff like with them or like the books will already just be in the ISS desk with you and then like that's pretty much it* (Shocky Miller, 43:53).

According to students' accounts, it appears that each of the schools and ISS programs have mechanisms in place for students to get their regular class work; however, as seen in the next section, students reported that those mechanisms do not always function and that many times, they are left in ISS without work to do.

Missing Work

Although students are intended to be able to complete their course work while in ISS, many students complained that this does not always happen. For some, including Chris, the teachers do not always send the work to ISS, as illustrated in the following quote:

> *They don't give us work…sometimes they don't.* So if the teacher doesn't give you your work, how can you do it? (Chris shook his head) *Then they say we missing it.* And then what happens? *They give us a zero on it* (Chris Roque, 137:145).

So according to Chris, a student at Green Middle, the teachers will tell students they are missing their work and give them zeros on those missing assignments. Thus, students, like Chris, who have been in ISS with a great deal of frequency, are potentially at risk of failing due to assignments missed while they are in ISS. While Chris attributes his missing work to his classroom teachers, Josh seems to blame both the ISS teacher and his classroom teachers for his lack of work, as seen in the following:

> *It don't usually happen* [teachers sending work]. So how do you get your work done? *I gotta go back to class and ask them for it. But the ISS teacher she won't let you* (Josh Stenson, 94:108).

For Josh, it appears that the classroom teachers do not usually send the work to the ISS room and when he asks to go to class to get his work, the ISS teacher will not let him leave ISS. Thus, it appears that while there are mechanisms in place to make sure

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students do not fall behind academically due to being in ISS, it appears that procedures

are failing and that as a result students may be failing as well, as seen in the following

excerpt:

> *Your grades can get down, uh will go down if you don't if you not doing any work*
> *cause like some people don't even get work when they be in ISS. Like some*
> *people, some of the assistant principals be giving kids more than three days. Like*
> *Mr. Jefferson, they don't give kids one day, they give em two or more.* Oh yeh?
> and then what happens? *Sometimes they'll ask for make-up work and she'll* [ISS
> teacher] *say that's not my responsibility. Either they grade will get lowered*
> *because that's like them not being there in the class. And if they aren't there in*
> *the class then there aint no point in keeping their grade up, if they ain't did no*
> *work* (John Smith, 239:257).

For John, who is also a student at Green Middle, not only do the teachers not send the work, but

it appears that the ISS teacher was seen as refusing to help him get access to his work, something

that according to the district's website, was the responsibility of the ISS teacher (County Board

of Education, 2010). For most of these students, then, their experience with ISS was related to

getting behind academically because of teachers or administrators who failed to send their work

to the ISS room.

ISS Helps Me Get Credits

Although most of the students talked about how ISS had hindered their learning,

contributing to their academic failure, a few of the students, particularly Bam, John, and

Jonathan, seemed to think that being in ISS helped them. For these students, ISS provided a quiet

place for them to complete assignments in a space where they weren't competing with other

distractions.

> *It's quiet and I get to do my work a lot better in there cuz no kids are distracting*
> *me. Cuz I have a bunch of friends and they always try to talk to me in class, so I*

don't get in any trouble; I can just do all my work and I'm the first one always done. Cuz everyone has to stay quiet so I'm good at that (Bam Margero, 3:3).

Bam described his regular classroom as a place where he was often distracted and struggled to complete his work. He seems to appreciate the quiet working space that ISS provides. Bam further explained that although ISS was boring, he did not seem to mind it because it helped him to bring up his grades, as seen in the following:

Some kids are just like I hate ISS; it's boring. It is boring but I get my work done. It brings my grades up and so I'm good with that (Bam Margero, 7:7). *Like if I'm missing assignments, that drops my grade cuz I don't have any grades to put in, so I don't get points for it. If I do it and turn it back in then I can get points for it. They might be lower, but I still get points and it brings up my grades* (Bam Margero, 9:9).

Bam appeared to like ISS, in contrast with his friends who hate it; he seems to view it as an environment that was more conducive to his own learning style. The importance of students finding a learning environment that matches their own learning preferences has a great deal of support in the literature (see Good & Brophy, 2003 for a summary). For John, ISS not only helped him complete his regular class work, but also allowed him to complete make-up work or do extra credit assignments that served to actually help him pull up his grades, as illustrated by the following quote:

Well she sent me to ISS and then they just send me a whole bunch of make-up work and then I'll just do it there in ISS if I won't do it in her class. Would it be easier to do it in her class, or do you like ISS? *ISS would be better because it's more quieter in there* (John Smith, 233:237).

John, like Bam, appeared to prefer doing his work in ISS because it was quieter, which could point to a personal learning style, as discussed above, or it might point to possible classroom management issues in the regular classroom that often serve to inhibit student learning.

According to Jonathan's account of what happened in his regular classroom, it appears that at least in some situations, these students may prefer the ISS room due to poor classroom management on the part of the teacher, as seen in the following:

> *They decided to put me in ISS so I could actually do my work and earn credits…* *Because there's always a whole bunch of students* [in my regular class] *and they are always talking and just like messing around a lot. When I am in ISS, I am more focused on my work. But that's not necessarily true with other students cuz they don't like to do their work in ISS* (Jonathan Carter, 33:41).

Jonathan went on to say that *sometimes, I actually tried to be bad to get out of the classroom so I could do my work* (Jonathan Carter, 133:133), which points to the possibility that sometimes students exhibit challenging behavior as a purposeful attempt to get sent out of the classroom.

It is interesting that Jonathan recognized that not all students shared his preference for doing his work in the ISS room, suggesting that perhaps he may view the quiet of the ISS room as a personal preference, rather than an indication of the teacher's chaotic classroom environment.

While Bam and Jonathan explicitly attributed their academic success in ISS to the quiet atmosphere, each of them also talked about the ISS teacher and the way in which she helped them with their class work. In the theme, *The ISS Teacher's a Nice Lady with a Snoozy Attitude*, I discuss in much greater detail the role that the ISS teacher played in the students' experiences with ISS. For example, Jonathan particularly discussed the way the ISS teacher helped him academically:

> *If I don't understand something she'll like uh, I'll tell her I don't understand it and she'll look at it and she'll she'll try to tell me the answer but if she can't, then she'll ask another student to help me* (Jonathan Carter, 359:361).

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Jonathan's experience in the ISS room seemed to reflect a place where he was able to get help academically when he needed it, whether from the ISS teacher or from another students.

The ability to stay caught up with their regular class work and to keep their grades up appeared to be important to the students, a characteristic that is not always attributed to students who frequently end up in ISS. According to Swinson and Knight (2007), when students are identified as difficult or disruptive, teachers are often prone to treat them differently, lowering their expectations for both behavior and for academics; in turn, Swinson and Knight suggested that students often act in ways that meet the expectations placed on them by their teacher, creating what Christle et al. (2004) refer to as a cycle of failure. Thus, while students who exhibit challenging behavior are not always expected to be concerned about their academic performance, according to the students in this study, they may be more concerned than they are often given credit.

Further, according to Christle et al. (2004) and Morrison et al. (2001), the negative cycles of discipline problems and academic failure can be reversed given sufficient support. In the following quote, Jonathan reported that after Ms. Arthur, the ISS teacher, taught him how to do something, he returned to his classroom feeling really good about himself, as exhibited in the following quote:

> *Well, it's kind of like you learn a little bit one day and then you go to ISS and you are really not learning anything, but you're still practicing what they're learning. So, like there was this one time where I didn't understand how to do this math thing and then Ms. Arthur taught me how to do it and everything and then I was doing it really good and when I got back they were still teaching it.* What was that

like for you? *It's a sense of power that I am smarter than the other kids* (Jonathan Carter, 77:85).

For Jonathan, learning something not only seemed to build his sense of self, but it also potentially empowered him as a learner. From a restorative justice perspective, these types of changes in students' self-worth and a belief in their own potential to learn are important components of education.

The literature reviewed on restorative justice almost always begins with a belief in the value and worth of every individual. Within the school context, every student is viewed as intrinsically beautiful and worthy of our hope, our love, and our best effort. Regardless of the student's current behavior or attitude, restorative justice advocates express confidence in every student's capacity for change and the potential to become their better self (Sullivan & Tifft, 2001; Zehr, 2002). Implicit in the value and worth of the individual is the confidence that ultimately every student is redeemable (Evans, 2010). Although educators might consent to a belief in the potential of all students, too often our educational systems belie that conviction by alienating and, in a sense, "writing off" students who manifest behavior problems, where "writing off" includes excluding them from classroom involvement and ultimately from the educational process. The students in this study appeared to care about their assignments, their grades, and their learning, and for most of them, they saw ISS as contributing or hindering them academically.

There is one other finding from the interviews that I found particularly relevant for classroom teachers and for educational researchers. Several of the students mentioned resources,

specifically web-based resources, which seemed to be utilized in ways that aided in their ability to succeed academically in ISS.

Resources that Help

Four of the students, the four students who attended Green Middle School, mentioned the use of a computer program, Study Island, which according their website is "specifically designed to help students master the content specified in the Tennessee Curriculum Standards. Study Island's focus on the required standards enables students to improve their performance in all standard skill areas, which results in increased proficiency and leads to improved test scores" (Archipelago Learning, 2011). In their interviews, the four students, John, James, Chris, and Jeffrey, described Study Island and talked about how they experienced Study Island while they were in ISS. According to John,

> *It's like a website that you um, that they like, that each school do, each middle school. And it's like um, like pre-test and stuff, you test and stuff on it. They got like little games, like after you pre- test on it. If you get it right you can play and I think it like goes on your grade, like if you get a 85%, it's like if you not did get good on your TCAP last year* (John Smith, 29:41).

John saw Study Island as a resource to help him get ready for the TCAP test; he also seemed to orient to the computer program as something that was fun. Unlike John, James did not seem to appreciate Study Island quite as much, apparently viewing it more like worksheets on a computer screen, rather than something that actually helped him learn, as seen in the following quote:

> *The only thing we get to do is Study Island…it's where it's like another TCAP basically, except you don't get graded for it. It's helping you be prepared for TCAP and other lessons and stuff like that.* Is it a game? [James made a funny face] *You can take it as a game; I take it as a work. I take it as a worksheet, but you can take it as a game though* (James Thomas, 25:37).

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For James, Study Island was simply more TCAP review, but without the incentive of getting a grade. Jeffrey, while not explicitly naming Study Island, appears to mention it as a way that teachers could help students stay caught up with their grades, as seen in the following:

> *It's* [ISS] *fun for us, but it's also cutting into our learning time cause they're sticking us in ISS when they could just have us go in the room or some teachers have this thing on the internet where you go into ISS if you are so below in their class, you'll get on the computer, you log into under their name and whatever it is and it'll bring up their class. You're sitting there learning but some teachers won't do that* (Jeffrey Richardson, 5:5).

According to Jeffrey, even though teachers could allow students to get on the computer and bring up their grades, *some teachers won't do that*. Thus, Jeffrey seems to suggest that simply having the capacity for helping the students in ISS does not necessarily ensure that the help will occur.

Another student at Green Middle School, Chris, also talked about Study Island; however, his experience was somewhat different as illustrated in the interaction below. Chris viewed the computer as something that the ISS teacher used as a reward for those who deserved to be on the computer, stating that the last time he was in ISS:

> *she* [ISS teacher] *yelled at people and wrote people up and let all her good students, like the people she like, get on the computer.* Did she let you on the computer? *No* (Chris Roque, 36:43). What do they do on the computer when they get on the computer? *Study Island.* What is Study Island? *It's a little class thing - it'll help your grades like if you're missing something and they put it on there and you can do it* (Chris Roque, 46:57).

In the preceding quote, Chris expressed that even though he was failing social studies and could have benefited from being able to get on Study Island in order to help his grades, he was not allowed to get on the computer while in ISS. Further, his explanation for not being able to get on the computer seemed to be simply because he was not someone that the ISS teacher liked, nor

was he one of her good students. Thus, by using or refusing to use available technology, we see

in this these quotes that teachers, including the ISS teacher and classroom teachers, are seen to

have a great deal of influence over whether students stay caught up academically or not.

Beyond Study Island, one student, John, mentioned another technology resource that his

teacher used to help him, and others in ISS, stay caught up with what the class was doing.

Evidently, at Green Middle School, one of the teachers, Ms. Buchanan, is using Skype with her

students who are in ISS, as John explained in the conversation below:

> *They got this thing called Skype and she'll, like Ms Buchanan, our language*
> *teacher, she's up there and we can see her talkin to us. We get on, like we still be*
> *in the class* (John Smith, 5:9). *Umm, like it's like, it's a video message and stuff,*
> *like if she up in the 8th grade building, up there, then we down here and we not in*
> *her class but in ISS, she puts um, she got a camera that she put on her computer*
> *and she got a Skype website. And she, um, it like this little phone in the computer*
> *and she calls Ms. Thurber and a video pops up on the screen.* And you can see
> her? *Um hum, but she can't see us, she can only see herself* (John Smith, 45:57).

Thus, for at least one student, being in ISS does not necessarily mean missing out on their

regular classroom instruction. According to John, the technology exists that would allow students

who are in ISS to continue to experience the lessons, explanations, and interactions that are

going on in their classrooms.

Summary of Theme: Our Learning Time

In this theme, *Our Learning Time*, students overwhelmingly expressed concern for their

own academic success as they talked about ISS. The students expressed a desire to learn, and to

learn in their regular classes with their regular teachers and their classmates. Further, although

there were some exceptions, the majority of the students expressed that ISS had hindered their

learning. As seen in Figure 1, the four-sided arrow represents this theme. It shows that students'

learning time impacted and was impacted by their experiences in the ISS room, represented by the vertical arrows pointing both toward and away from ISS. The horizontal arrows represent the idea that students expressed that the impact on their learning time extended beyond their classroom and the ISS room; students also talked about their learning time within the context of their future. For example, Andy talked about wanting to pull his grades up and get into honors classes so that he could go to The University of Tennessee one day. The horizontal arrows illustrate that for students like Andy, what happens in ISS with regard to their academics carries on beyond what happens in the classroom.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the major findings from this study; I presented those findings in two sections. In the first section, I presented verbal portraits for each of the 13 participants, describing the individual ways in which the students made meaning of their experience being in ISS. In the second section, I provide the results of a detailed thematic analysis, looking across the 13 interviews at the shared essence of the experience of being in ISS. Five themes were presented and an organizational structure was provided that illustrated the relationships that existed between the themes. As I presented these findings, I sought to be transparent about the analysis process and to provide a thorough discussion of each theme. Further, my intention was to present the findings, as much as possible, in the words of the participants. In the next chapter, I will provide a discussion of the themes and propose several implications that can be drawn from this study.

CHAPTER 5:
IMPLICATONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of middle school students who had been in ISS. The literature on discipline is replete with statistical data that examines various disciplinary interventions and their effectiveness or ineffectiveness and there are some qualitative studies that look at discipline primarily from the perspectives of teachers. Further, in my own experience as a middle school teacher and now as a teacher educator, I have some first-hand knowledge of teachers' perspectives about classroom discipline and student behavior. As I walk the halls of middle schools, I have found many schools and classrooms to be unsafe and antagonistic environments where teachers and students vie for control and where learning becomes a secondary goal, just behind classroom management. It was primarily this concern that prompted me to investigate the ways in which middle school students made meaning of their experience with disciplinary interventions, specifically ISS.

After introducing the study in Chapter One, in Chapter Two I reviewed the relevant literature on the topic of school discipline, concluding with a discussion of the literature that has included students' perspectives on educational issues and drawing attention to the relative absence of research related to school discipline that has included the voices of students who have been the recipients of such discipline. Chapter Three details my methodological decisions, providing an overview of the theoretical frameworks that guided this research, the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenological inquiry and the methodological steps that were taken throughout the study.

In Chapter Four, I discussed the findings of the study, presented both as verbal portraits of each participant and as a thematic structure of students' experiences in ISS. In this final chapter, I briefly summarize the major findings of the study and then suggest five implications from the study, linking them to our current understandings of exclusionary discipline practices when pertinent and suggesting areas for further research when there is an evident gap in the literature. In that I situated my study within a theoretical framework of restorative justice, I make connections, when applicable, to restorative justice and suggest implications for practice when they are relevant.

Summary of the Themes

The findings of this study represent middle school students' experiences with in-school suspension. As they talked about getting into ISS, many of their accounts revolved around the relationships they had with teachers and other school personnel. Represented by the theme name, *There are Some Teachers*, students shared frustrations with teachers who yelled and who treated them in ways that they perceived to be unfair and unkind; however, there were a few stories of teachers and other school personnel that they deemed as supportive. According to the students, the relationships they had with adults seemed to play a direct role in their getting written up or not. Within the theme, *Gettin' Written Up*, students primarily shared stories about times when they felt they had been written up unfairly, which they almost always tied to the actions of a teacher who either did not like them, or who was in a bad mood that day, or who was just trying to get rid of them. Thus, we see that a major part of the students' experience with ISS appeared to revolve around their relationships with their teachers, and with other adults in the school, and how those relationships led to their getting in trouble or not.

Students not only talked extensively about getting into ISS; they also talked about their experiences while they were in ISS, as represented by the theme, *Sometimes it's Boring. Sometimes it's Fun. Sometimes it's Torture*. Without exception, each student referred to ISS as boring; but they used other descriptors as well, such as fun, torture, like a prison, or quiet. As they described their experiences, the way that they made meaning of being in ISS was tightly related to the role of the ISS teacher, as represented by the theme name, *The ISS Teacher's a Nice Lady with a Snoozy Attitude*. Thus, their experiences in the ISS room seemed largely colored by their experiences with the ISS teacher.

Finally, students talked about their learning time and about how ISS either contributed to or hindered their academic success, as represented by the theme name, *Our Learning Time*. The students overwhelmingly expressed concerns about their grades, about their learning, and about how ISS impacted those things. While a small minority expressed that ISS helped them, the majority of students expressed frustration about the loss of learning opportunities due to their time in ISS, with one student expressing that this loss of learning time was what made ISS like torture. In light of these findings, I outline in the next section several implications that can be drawn from this study, both for practice and for future research.

Discussion and Implications

Based on the findings of the study, there are several potential implications for both educational researchers and for educators; throughout, I attempt to situate each implication within the existing literature related to that implication. As I outline these implications below, I make note of places where attention should be given to practice and to research. I also make recommendations throughout for further research.

Include students' perspectives in education and educational research.

Perhaps one of the most important implications of this study, at least from my perspective as the researcher conducting the study, relates to the importance of continuing to include students' perspectives in our research and in our teaching practices; I believe this to be both an implication for educators and for educational researchers. I acknowledge that the data collected in this study and the resultant findings represent solely the students' perspective, which is one of many possible ways of constructing the meaning of disciplinary interventions and suspensions. As noted in Chapter Two, I view discipline as a socially-constructed event (Cassidy & Jackson, 2005; Vavrus & Cole, 2002) and recognize that my participants presented a "partial, shifting, and even distorted" rendering of their experiences (Gallagher, 2003, p. 131); further, I acknowledge that there are other such renderings that could be obtained from principals, teachers, parents, and other students.

Through a lens of restorative justice, the act of valuing individuals can manifest itself in a willingness to listen to them, to give them an opportunity to express themselves, whether they are the victim or the offender or any of the other stakeholders involved in the process. According to Sullivan and Tifft (2001), there is often a political-economy in relationships that results in an assignment of "relative value or worth" and leads to "hierarchical classification or ranking systems whereby we situate some people as more worthy and others as less worthy; some people of more, and others of less, value" (p. 103). Sullivan and Tifft expounded on what constituted that value or worth: when a person is valued, he is "considered worthy of our attention; that is, of having his or her needs listened to, taken seriously, and met in everyday situations, especially in times of crisis" (p. 103). I believe that research that honors students' voices, not only has the

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potential to inform us about more effective approaches to discipline, but has the potential to heal many of the toxic relationships (Hyman & Snook, 2000) that often exist between students and teachers.

Thus, the need to listen to students' perspectives is also an implication for educators. Classroom teachers, administrators, and other school-related personnel have much to learn from students about pedagogy and disciplinary practices in schools (Cook-Sather, 2009; Noguera, 2007; Smyth, 2007). The students in this study had a great deal to say about disciplinary interventions in their schools, and while I did not specifically ask them about classroom teachers and instructional practices in their schools, they had much to say there as well.

It is important to note that I closed each interview by asking them what advice they might give about discipline to my students studying to be teachers (see Chapter Three for a discussion about the questions asked in the interview). Three of the students explicitly asked that teachers would simply think before writing a student up and to consider the potential consequences for the students. Two students linked their advice to the notion of teachers who played favorites, requesting that teachers treat all their students fairly. One student suggested that teachers should refrain from writing students up when they are angry; they should wait until they have had a chance to calm down. Two students specifically requested that teachers be strict and lenient; in follow-up conversations, these two students clarified that they wanted to know what they could and could not do (be strict), but that when they messed up and accidentally did something wrong, they needed reminders, not simply punishment (be lenient). Overall, I found their advice to be quite insightful and helpful for teachers. Recently, there has been an increased emphasis on

including students' perspectives in instructional decision-making and in educational reform efforts (see for example Cook-Sather, 2009; Noguera, 2007; Weis & Fine, 2005).

Alison Cook-Sather (2001, 2009) is a teacher educator at Bryn Mawr College, where she facilitates a project called Teaching and Learning Together (TLT); TLT "positions high school students…as teacher educators" with the goal being to "inspire prospective teachers to ask about and attend to students' perspectives on what works, what does not work, and what could work" in their future classrooms (2009, p. 177). In longitudinal research related to the project, in which she interviewed fourth and fifth year teachers who had participated in the TLT experience, Cook-Sather found that when teachers listened to students' perspectives on educational decisions, they were able to "create classrooms in which students are active partners not only in dialogue, but in learning" (p. 179). While Cook-Sather does not make the link to student behavior, other research has established strong correlations between student engagement in learning and student behavior (Noguera, 2003; Smyth, 2007).

Previous research on student-teacher relationships has often focused on educational outcomes or preventative approaches to classroom management. The findings of this study, while albeit represent only the students' perspectives, suggest that these relationships also have implications for students who have exhibited challenging behaviors, something not as evident in existing research. The students in this study frequently talked about teachers with whom they had antagonistic relationships, relationships that seemed to increase their potential for getting written up. They also talked about school personnel with whom they had positive relationships, those who created spaces where students' perspectives were valued and where teachers worked to build intentionality and reciprocity with those students (Feuerstein, Feuerstein, Falik, & Rand,

2006). These types of trusting relationships have the potential to decrease student disengagement, improve students' classroom behavior, and improve the learning for all students (Gregory & Ripski, 2008). Allowing students to participate in their own disciplinary decisions, giving them a voice in what happens when they break school rules, and providing a space for them to express frustrations when they feel that they have been treated unfairly are three strategies that could be employed in a well-designed ISS program. Further, based on the findings of this study, in that students in ISS are apparently spending a great deal of time being bored, ISS could potentially provide an opportunity to have conversations with students about teachers' perspectives, reasons behind various expectations, and some of the hidden rules of schooling. While it is important to help students understand these things, it is perhaps more important to help teachers learn to consider students' perspectives as they make disciplinary decisions.

Look more closely at antagonistic relationships between teachers and students.

One of the more disturbing findings of this study was the perception of antagonistic relationships between some of the teachers and students that seemed to exist for the participants. From the perspectives of students, it appeared that there were teachers who consistently acted with disrespect toward the students in their classrooms. Likewise, from my perspective as a researcher and as a teacher, and perhaps from the readers' perspective as well, based on students' accounts of their interactions with teachers, it appeared that students often demonstrated a lack of respect toward them as well. As a restorative justice educator, I have to believe that we can do better at facilitating healthy relationships between students and teachers; there has not been enough research nor has there been sufficient discussion focused on this notion of mutual respect between students and teachers.

Students' Perspectives. For some of the students in this study, the unfair treatment by adults went beyond simply getting written up or not; several students told stories of perceived mistreatment at the hands of an adult, mistreatment that, according to some definitions, might be considered bullying on the part of the teacher. Although Sara did tell a story about a teacher choking another student, mistreatment by teachers toward students can be psychological as well. One example of this can be found in James' story about Mr. Leonard calling him "gay" and continually picking on him about being friends with girls. There is a growing body of research, although it still remains quite limited, that examines the phenomenon of teacher bullying, which may include physical or psychological mistreatment at the hands of an adult (Whitted & Dupper, 2008).

For example, in his research on school violence, Terry (1998) suggested that bullying can occur in a variety of social contexts including those between a student and a teacher. Distinguishing bullying from other acts of aggression, Terry defined bullying as involving three qualities: (1) An "uneven balance of power [that] is exploited and abused by an individual;" (2) A situation where "the victim cannot easily escape;" and (3) "persistent, repetitive acts of physical or psychological aggression" (p. 261). While Terry's conclusions regarding bullying teachers were incidental to his overall study, he suggested that further research be conducted in the area of teacher bullying. A few studies, primarily survey research with teachers, have been conducted by several researchers, including Twemlow and Fonagy (2005) who defined a bullying teacher as "one who uses his or her power to punish, manipulate, or disparage a student beyond what would be a reasonable disciplinary procedure" (p. 2387). In light of the findings of

this study, there is at least room to suggest that the definition of teacher bullying espoused by Twemlow and Fonagy might apply to some of the students who participated in this research.

While some researchers have backed off of the language of bullying, preferring to use language such as coercive forms of discipline (Lewis, 2001; Martin, Linfoot, & Stephenson, 1999), others insist that it is important to bring attention to bullying behavior committed by teachers. Survey research by Twemlow and associates (Twemlow, Fonagy, & Sacco, 2004; Twemlow & Fonagy, 2005; Twemlow, Fonagy, Sacco, & Brethour, 2006) revealed that 45% of the 116 teachers in their study admitted to having bullied a student at least once; 2.7% admitted to frequently bullying their students. Furthermore, 33% of the 116 teachers reported that they knew at least one teacher who regularly bullied students.

The116 teachers in the Twemlow et al. study (2004) attributed the causes of teacher bullying to teacher attitudes and experiences, coercive school environments, lack of support from administrators, lack of training in discipline approaches, and frustration with school climate. Noting the imbalance of power that exists at various levels of educational policy, beginning with politicians' power over administrators, administrators' power over teachers, and teachers' power over students, Twemlow and Sacco (2008) suggested that within educational contexts steeped in power and control, there is a greater likelihood that teacher bullying will occur. They further acknowledged that acts of bullying are often reflective of the stressful nature of teachers' work and proposed that many teachers who bully their students are themselves victims of bullying on the part of demanding and unsupportive administrators. While they agreed that not all coercive environments resulted in school violence, they insisted that coercion of any form is dehumanizing and contributes to an unsafe school climate.

Hyman and Snook (2000) have also noted the negative impact of coercive climates on teacher bullying, stating that "when officials denigrate, demean, or ridicule teachers, teachers will tend to denigrate, demean and ridicule students" (p. 492), creating what they referred to as "toxic" environments. While Twemlow and Sacco (2008) acknowledged that this is a difficult issue to discuss, they insisted that it must be addressed in order to establish safe environments for both students and teachers. They proposed that vicious cycles of disrespectful interactions between students and teachers must be avoided by creating classrooms organized around democratic principles which promote mutual respect, autonomy building, listening, and caring.

When students feel belittled or berated by teachers, it creates toxic relationships between students and school personnel, ultimately increasing the likelihood that students will continue to misbehave and/or drop out of school (Gastic, 2008; Whitted & Dupper, 2008). Therefore, whether we adopt the language of bullying or coercive approaches to discipline, at the very least, it can be argued that these types of interactions with students create antagonistic relationships between students and teachers and interfere with the creation of productive learning environments. It is apparent from the students' perspectives in this study that they view some of their interactions with adults to be antagonistic.

In light of this finding, there is both an implication for practice and for research. One implication for practice relates to what happens to teachers who are indeed bullying students? Are there disciplinary measures in place that ensure that teachers who treat students with such coercive control and disrespect are themselves disciplined? After describing one particular incident perceived as mistreatment, James concluded, *I got suspended but she didn't get any disciplinary action and that's something - I think teachers should get disciplinary action as well*

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as students. As educators, we need to find ways to ensure the creation of safe learning environments; ironically, while *Goss v. Lopez* called for the use of suspensions as a way to do this, it might be that the continued reliance on punitive and exclusionary approaches to discipline might actually decrease students' overall perceptions of safety.

Conversations about teachers who potentially bully students are difficult for educational personnel; however, in light of this research, these are conversations that need to happen. Further research needs to be conducted, as well, related to teachers who bully students. While there has been some survey research conducted by Twemlow and Sacco (2004) and Whitted and Dupper (2008), qualitative research would provide more information of a different nature that would further inform how we approach teachers who are simply mean to students. Further, there is some evidence from the findings of this study that when we fail to address issues of mean and abusive teachers, students may find a way to address them.

Students' Resistance. The findings of this study also seem to suggest that many students do not simply sit back and take the bullying or verbal abuses that they sense coming from adults; they talk back, they resist, they yell back. Marcy, Chris, Jonathan, and James all admitted to yelling at teachers who yell at them. James told a story in which he apparently used Mr. Leonard's bullying behavior against him, claiming that he told Mr. Leonard that if he wrote him up, he would go to the school board with a complaint about him. These types of threats against teachers, while perhaps precipitated by teachers' own antagonistic behaviors, serve only to disrupt and corrupt the learning environment in the school or classroom.

According to some research, when students feel that their educational opportunities are limited, they are more likely to disengage, act out, or defy the system (Noguera, 2008;

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Thornberg, 2008; Whitted & Dupper, 2008; Willis, 1977). Although none of the participants

talked explicitly about their open defiance of rules, they did talk about yelling at teachers and

resisting teachers who had yelled at them or who had treated them in a way that they deemed to

be unfair. This type of response on the part of students has been documented in previous research

by Marsh, Rosser, and Harré (1978), Thornberg (2008), Willis (1977), and Ferguson (2000).

More research should be conducted on students' responses to teachers who treat them with

disrespect. Further, teacher educators should find ways to help pre-service teachers learn to look

beyond students' outward manifestations of anger and hostility to issues of frustration over

mistreatment by adults in their schools. In order to begin to address these issues, it will require

that we as educators relinquish some of our control and listen to students as they share their own

experiences and the ways in which they have made meaning of those experiences.

Restorative approaches to discipline begin with a commitment to mutual respect. In fact,

Zehr (2007) suggested that if he had to define restorative justice in one word, it would be the

word, respect. When students and teachers come together, in respectful ways, to address

students' behavioral concerns, I believe that there is great potential for relational restoration. One

of the key components of restorative justice in practice is to bring together stakeholders, in this

case, the teacher, the student, the parents and anyone else who might have a stake in the

situation, to restore a sense of community through restitution and relational problem-solving.

Van Ness (2002) outlined four components of restorative justice: encounter, amends,

reintegration, and inclusion. Encounter is the meeting itself; it is difficult to remain angry at

someone who becomes personal. Having a face to face encounter with another is one way to de-

vilify the offender and to personalize the victim. Amends are made in tangible ways by the

offender to the victim and/or community. Amends may come in the form of an apology, but more than likely as some form of restitution for what was harmed, damaged, or taken. Reintegration allows the victim and the offender to remain an integral part of the community, ensuring that there is relational support for both, and decreasing the likelihood of recidivism. Inclusion suggests that all parties, be it the victim, the offender, the community, family members, etc., are invited to participate in the restorative process, again strengthening the ties to community and ensuring a support system for all involved (Van Ness, 2002, pp. 2-6). While Van Ness was speaking primarily about the use of restorative justice within the criminal justice field, his four principles hold potential for our understanding of student-teacher relationships.

Pranis (2007) acknowledged that her views about restorative justice have been "heavily influenced by Native American and First Nation teachers who emphasize the interconnectedness of all things and the importance of balance in the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of human experience" (p. 60). Existing in community not only provides us with alternative ways of viewing one another after a wrong has been committed, but it also becomes a preventative measure against harm. When people are connected to a larger community, they are less likely to treat one another poorly. They become less likely to harm or exploit one another, because they view one another as a person, rather than an abstraction. I believe that when those relationships are at the heart of our decisions about discipline, they open us up to possibilities for different ways of intervening when students exhibit challenging behaviors.

Consider ways to address discipline without excluding students from learning.

Exclusionary discipline, by definition, is any form of discipline that excludes students from educational opportunities (Noltemeyer & Mcloughlin, 2010); according to most of the

participants in this study, ISS has been a form of exclusionary discipline. One of the important implications of this study for classroom teachers and school administrators is the need to find ways of addressing challenging behaviors in ways that do not deprive students of the opportunity to learn.

One of the more surprising findings for me was the extent to which the students discussed their academic work; perhaps, I had expected that students who were frequently in trouble might have decided that academics were not important or that maybe they had been so disenfranchised academically that they might have given up on school success, but this clearly was not the case. In Chapter Two, I alluded to the relationship between discipline and school success, pointing to the vast research that suggests that there is a cycle of failure (Christle et al., 2004) where students who are written up frequently miss out on academic learning opportunities, which leads to academic frustration; according to Christle et al., when students are academically frustrated, they are more likely to act out in defiance of a standard of academic success that they deem unreachable (see also Children's Defense Fund, 2007; Marsh, Rosser, & Harré, 1978; Willis, 1977). While there is considerable research that demonstrates correlations between discipline and academic success, I only found one study (Brown, 2007) that presented qualitative findings about discipline and academics from the perspectives of students (see Chapter Two for a more thorough discussion of the consequences of exclusionary discipline, including suspensions, on students).

Ten of the 13 participants in this study specifically talked about the impact of ISS on their academic success; two of the students specifically noted the ways that ISS had helped them academically by providing a quiet place for them to complete assignments while the rest talked

about ways that ISS had hindered their academic progress due to missed assignments. These students shared accounts of teachers not sending their work to ISS and of the ISS teacher not helping them with those assignments when they did not understand.

As discussed in Chapter Two, although *Goss v. Lopez* (1975) sought to ensure that students receiving disciplinary measures did not miss out on educational opportunities, this requirement was tempered by the emphasis on "maintaining order and discipline in schools" (Meek, 2010, p. 10). Further, *Goss v. Lopez* specifically related to students who were being out-of-school suspended, the assumption being that students in ISS were not being denied educational opportunities. However, according to the students in this study who regularly talked about not getting their work in ISS, this assumption lacks support. According to the district policy for the county where the study took place,

> Personnel responsible for in-school suspension will see that each student is supervised at all times and has textbooks and class work assignments from his regular teachers. Students given in-school suspension shall be required to complete academic assignments and shall receive credit for work completed.
> (County Board of Education, 2010)

Thus, for the students for whom ISS has been designed in ways that are indeed exclusionary, their disciplinary experience is in clear violation of district policy. While students at each middle school reported that their school had a mechanism in place to ensure that students' work was sent to ISS, there were occasions in each school that it didn't happen and in two of the schools, students mentioned that it frequently did not happen. As a couple of the students noted, this is not just about their grades; this is about whether or not they learn, which

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affects them way beyond their middle school years. The decisions teachers make on a daily basis about their discipline often have long term consequences on students' success into adulthood (Brown, 2007; Christle et al., 2004; Troyan, 2003).

Further, in an educational climate driven by the need to demonstrate accountability through test scores, consideration for students' academic progress should be a priority for administrators. In one study, Kralevich et al. (2010) examined correlations between middle school students' achievement test scores and the disciplinary methods used in schools; looking at discipline records for over 900,000 middle school students from the 2005-2006 school year, they found that when "disciplinary consequences became more severe, the average scaled scores on TAKS [Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills] Reading and Math tests decreased" (p. 17). While they were careful to not assume causality, they called for more research, including qualitative research, to investigate various stakeholders' perspectives on the relationship between disciplinary interventions and academic progress.

It is important to note that some of the students in this study did talk about teachers who helped them academically while they were in ISS. For example, Jeffrey said that sometimes teachers will come into ISS to help him with his class work. Further, Chris talked about Ms. Buchanan, who would Skype him into the classroom so he didn't miss instruction for language arts. Thus, within these findings there are examples of teachers, albeit a minority, who take responsibility for ensuring that students are not being deprived of educational opportunities when they are in ISS.

The participants in this study talked about several practical ways of making ISS less exclusionary and more conducive to academic success, the most obvious being to request, insist,

and ensure that teachers send the appropriate assignments to the ISS teacher, so that students are

not missing out on instruction while they are in ISS. While computerized, educational programs

like Study Island do not necessarily meet the criteria for best practice, using such programs to

help students boost academic skills has the potential to help struggling learners re-engage

academically. Also, I was personally quite excited to hear that Chris' teacher, Ms. Buchanan,

was utilizing Skype as a way to include in their regular classroom instruction those students who

had been placed in ISS. What became disconcerting to me was that these resources, and any use

of a computer in general, were seen as available, but then were withheld from certain students,

used as a reward and/or negative reinforcement. To have these types of resources, and to not

provide them for all of our students, constitutes partiality, favoritism, and unethical pedagogy.

As educators, we have to make critical decisions about how we choose to be a part of

contributing to students' academic failure or helping to alleviate it. These decisions will manifest

themselves differently for different students. For example, some students, as reported in the

findings, need to sit quietly in a room without distractions and have time to work in peace; others

need more social interaction. Differentiating instruction, while beyond the scope of this

dissertation, is an essential pedagogical issue, and one that must be addressed if we are to enable

all students to succeed. Asking students about their educational needs, helping them to develop

metacognitive skills about their own learning, and then tailoring our disciplinary and pedagogical

choices to meet those needs will promote success for our students and decrease a great deal of

misbehavior (Cassidy & Jackson, 2002; Noguera, 2008; Osher et al., 2010; Sheets, 2002).

As we consider ways to reconceptualize how ISS programs are implemented, we need to

not only work to ensure that lack of academic success does not exacerbate students' challenging

behaviors, but we also need to design ISS programs that help students think through their behavior, their relationships with teachers and fellow students, and their decision-making skills. There are a great number of possibilities for designing this type of ISS program. Doing so will do more than reduce the number of students in ISS; it has the potential to benefit students long-term.

Design ISS programs that are therapeutic, not punitive, in nature.

As noted above, researchers who examine the consequences of exclusionary discipline often focus on out-of-school suspensions, many of them suggesting that in-school suspensions are a viable alternative that allows students to stay in school and not miss out on academic experiences (Advancement Project, 2010; Bergquist et al., 2004; Meek, 2010; Riordan, 2006). However, one of the findings of this current research project is that according to my participants, in-school suspensions itself is often exclusionary in nature, resulting in missed opportunities to excel academically. However, beyond the academic consequences for students in ISS, some research, albeit older research, has suggested other reasons for re-conceptualizing how ISS programs are designed.

Noblit and Short (1985) suggested that ISS can have three primary configurations: "punitive, therapeutic, or academic" (p. 60). While there is often an assumption that ISS will provide some type of therapeutic interventions, helping students to modify problematic behaviors and seeking to address underlying issues that are leading to those behaviors, it is clear from the participants in this study and from the limited research on ISS programs (Noblit & Short, 1985; Nevetsky, 1991; Troyan, 2003), that this is not always the case. For example, Noblit and Short (1985) found that the rhetoric of ISS differed greatly from the reality of ISS and that while ISS was conceptualized as an alternative to OSS that would help students stay in school, provide

academic and social support, and stay caught up on academic work, the actual implementation of such programs was not meeting those promises. The middle school students in my study also reported that much of their time in ISS was spent completing mindless tasks, being bored, and staying quiet. Rather than using the students' time to address relational, social, emotional, and/or academic issues that might be creating behaviors that are perceived as challenging by their teachers, ISS was viewed simply as punishment.

Despite the shortcomings of many approaches to ISS, there is evidence that ISS programs can be designed such that they do take a more therapeutic approach. For example, in their comparison of schools that had high suspension rates and low suspension rates, Christle et al. (2004) found that schools with low suspension rates provided alternatives to suspensions such as counseling, a voluntary time-out room, or supportive relationships with adults. Further, those schools emphasized professional development in areas such as classroom management, designing engaging instruction, and understanding issues related to culture and diversity. These are considerations that can be built into well-designed ISS programs, as has been suggested by Dupper (1998), Karp & Breslin (2001), Stinchcomb, Bazemore, and Riestenberg (2006).

Despite ISS program designs that seemed to be described primarily as punitive in nature, a few of the students in this study referenced adults who, individually, took on a more therapeutic role with the students. These adults included teachers who gave second chances, system-based personnel who came to the school to talk with students who needed help with conflict resolution, and principals and guidance counselors who took the time to listen to students and help them with decision-making about their behavior. Unfortunately, accounts of

these more therapeutic or pedagogical alternatives were not as frequently shared as the other more punitive accounts, a trend which appears to be consistent with other school districts.

In one research report on alternatives to out-of-school suspension in Florida public schools, Bergquist et al. (2004) found that of the 50 school districts in Florida that were included, 96% were utilizing ISS as an approach to school discipline; 65% of those programs had a preventative component to them and only 33% included the use of community-based resources, such as mentoring programs or counseling, as ways to minimize suspensions. Bergquist et al. noted that 16% of the schools were using a restorative justice model, which included restitution, peer mediation, and initiatives aimed at building social skills and conflict resolution training. Restorative approaches to discipline have been implemented in other schools, often being integrated into ISS-type programs as a way to promote mutual respect, collaborative problem-solving, taking responsibility for actions, and making amends for wrongs committed (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005; Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006; Wearmouth, Mckinney, & Glynn, 2007). These approaches are consistent with what has been described as therapeutic approaches to ISS (Kralevich et al., 2010; Noblit & Short, 1985) and more consideration needs to be done about how to design such ISS programs.

Nevetsky (1991) conducted observations and interviews with personnel involved in an ISS program that had been designed to take such a therapeutic approach to discipline. Rather than assigning ISS duty to regular classroom teachers as an administrative task, the principal had selected an ISS teacher who provided educational support as well as counseling about behavioral choices. Further, students were assigned a classroom teacher who provided extra support both relationally and academically. Nevetsky recommended that these types of ISS programs should

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be expanded in order to address the social, emotional, and academic needs of students who experience frequent disciplinary actions.

As Riordan (2006) has suggested, the goal of any type of disciplinary intervention should be "pedagogy not punishment" (p. 246), where misbehavior is always viewed as an opportunity for learning and for developing self-regulation (Cassidy & Jackson, Gossen, 2001; Hopkins, 2004; Morrison, 2007; Noguera, 2008; Osher et al., 2010; Skiba, Rausch, & Ritter, 2004). When these types of opportunities for students to learn from their "mistaken behavior" (Gartrell, 1995, p. 27) are omitted from our current ISS designs, as discussed by several of the students in this study, students often do not have a chance to address the underlying causes of their behavior and are then more likely to engage in future misbehavior (Mendez, 2003). Further, considering the values and principles of restorative justice, there is some potential for using the time that students are in the ISS room to focus on facilitating positive and healthy relationships between students and teachers, providing a time and a space for each to work toward understanding the perspectives of the other. As we begin to rethink the ways in which ISS programs are designed, we also need to consider strongly the role of the ISS teacher.

Rethink the role of the ISS teacher in students' experience with ISS.

Perhaps one of the more unexpected findings for me as a researcher was the significant role that the ISS teacher played in the students' experiences. The students in this study spoke extensively about their interactions, both positive and negative, with the ISS teacher. Referred to by one student as "a nice lady with a snoozy attitude," two of the students at one of the schools found the ISS teacher at their school to be kind and helpful; seven students, at all three schools, found the ISS teacher at their school to be mean and rude. According to the findings in this

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study, this individual who supervises the ISS room has a great deal of control over the lives of the students who have been assigned to ISS, determining the overall climate in the ISS room, deciding what activities they engage in while there, and making decisions about how many days they serve. With all of this influence over what happens to children who are in ISS, there is virtually no research that examines the role of the ISS teacher, her qualifications, or her practices. I believe the findings of this study move toward filling that glaring gap in the literature; however, much more research needs to be conducted.

The scant research that I found specifically about ISS programs suggested that students in ISS are seldom given the opportunity to keep up with classroom assignments, some even noting that teachers are resistant to providing those assignments (Bergquist et al., 2004; Nevetsky, 1991; Noblit & Short, 1985). Those studies only tangentially make referent to the ISS teacher. One exception is a study conducted in 1985 by Noblit and Short, where they examined ISS programs in North Carolina and made recommendations for rethinking the role of the ISS teacher, including the suggestion that she be qualified to help students academically and behaviorally during their time in the ISS room. Further, in the ISS programs reported on in the North Carolina study, ISS teachers either felt unqualified or were forbidden in their contract to help students with their class work (Noblit & Short, 1985).

In the absence of documented research on the ISS teacher, it was difficult to find information about how this position is filled. In some schools, oversight of the ISS room is an administrative duty assigned to regular classroom teachers, but generally, it is a job performed by a paraprofessional (Bergquist et al., 2004). In the policy manual for the Tennessee Department of Education, the state where the current study was conducted, under a section outlining the

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minimum requirements for school personnel, there is no specific mention of ISS teachers; however, educational assistants, also known as paraprofessionals, who reportedly staff many of the ISS rooms, must simply have a high school diploma or the equivalent (TN Department of Education, 2011). Thus, it is highly possible that ISS teachers would have very little training in how to help students academically or behaviorally.

Thus, the perceived power on the part of the ISS teacher to add more days and to make significant decisions regarding students' disciplinary experiences, in many cases, is given to someone who is not a certified teacher and may not have had any type of training in child development, disciplinary strategies, or content knowledge. The participants in this study spoke about two very different experiences of the ISS teacher. Ms. Taylor, at Green Middle School, was described by all four students at that school as someone who yelled all the time, slammed books, wouldn't help them with their class work, had them stand up beside their desk when they talked, and told them it wasn't her responsibility to get their work into ISS. In stark contrast, Ms. Arthur, at Tate Middle School, was described by students at that school as someone who not only helped them with their class work, but who evidently was good at the help she gave. Two students, Bam and Jonathan, felt that they learned something for the first time because of her help. This new understanding made them feel smart and capable. While I admit that these two characterizations may be unrealistically dualistic, the juxtaposition does help us to see the vastly different experiences students had with each ISS teacher and the difference that the ISS teacher can make for students.

Given the prominent role that the ISS teacher played in participants' experience with ISS, there are implications for both practice and for future research. First, if we are to develop

therapeutic models of discipline that address students' challenging behaviors as opportunities to teach, to solve problems, and to make things right, as discussed above, we need ISS teachers who act as more than simply wardens or guards; they need to be patient, knowledgeable about content and about students' development, and willing to listen and guide as students develop self-discipline and responsibility (Cassidy & Jackson, 2002; Dupper, Theriot, & Craun, 2009; Leone et al., 2003; Osher, et al., 2010; Sullivan & Keeney, 2008). One way to practically implement this might be to provide professional development opportunities for ISS teachers that provide information about the links between academic failure and student behavior and that help them see their potential role in helping students become more successful, both academically and behaviorally.

Secondly, in that there is virtually no recent research related to the ISS teacher, we need to examine how this person is chosen and what makes them qualified to interact with students who have a history of academic and behavioral frustrations? Do they have the knowledge to help students with their academic work or with the development of social skills that will enable them to be more successful in school? How are the goals of school discipline and the overall goals of schooling in general aligned with therapeutic, punitive, and/or academic characteristics of ISS? In other words, as Noblit and Short (1985) noted, are our claims and promises about ISS being implemented in order to help students develop self-discipline merely rhetoric and not reality? How does the ISS teacher contribute or detract from those claims? These are questions that need to be considered in future research on the topic of ISS.

Recommendations for Future Research

Throughout the implications above, I made suggestions for future research. Primarily, I believe that the findings of this study should lead us to more seriously consider the perspectives of students in educational research, specifically including them as co-researchers on disciplinary issues. Such research might involve documenting both students' and teachers' perspectives around individual disciplinary incidents, focusing on ways to facilitate mutuality and respect within these often difficult conversations. Further, in light of students' repeated connections between their experiences in ISS and their relationships with adults in their schools, I believe that it is important to extend our discussions about student-teacher relationships to include students who have historically exhibited challenging behaviors, helping teachers to understand students' perspectives and helping students to understand teachers' perspectives about classroom expectations and behaviors. Previous research on student-teacher relationships has primarily centered on classroom climate and instructional practices; more research needs to be conducted related to exclusionary discipline practices and how those relationships are facilitated with students who are the recipients of such discipline.

A related area for future research relates to the difficult issue of teacher bullying. While only a few students shared stories that might fall under the category of bullying, I believe those few accounts warrant further research. There has been some quantitative research conducted, particularly surveys, that have examined the phenomenon of teacher bullying, but I believe qualitative research with both teachers and students around the nature of antagonistic interactions between them is necessary.

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Further, based on the findings of this study related to what happens while students are in the ISS room, I recommended that we need to rethink and research the ways in which we are designing disciplinary interventions. Specifically, I believe we need to re-consider the ways in which we design ISS programs such that more therapeutic/pedagogical and less punitive models might be adopted, models that are less exclusionary and allow students to keep up with their academic instruction. More research needs to be conducted related to how those types of models can be implemented, the barriers to such implication, and resources and suggestions for overcoming those barriers. This research should include policy implications for schools and school districts.

Related to this recommendation is the importance of the ISS teacher and the need for more research related to the ISS teacher's role in students' disciplinary experiences. There is virtually no research that specifically investigates the role of the ISS teacher; based on the findings of this study, her qualifications, training, and disposition seem to matter. We need more research that examines how schools make decisions about how to staff their ISS room and the types of professional development that are afforded, or not afforded, to the ISS teacher. Again, this research should include policy implications.

Final Conclusions

Several years ago, interested in teacher attrition and burnout, I ran across research that pointed to issues of student discipline as one of the top reasons why teachers leave education (Gonzalez et al., 2008). Desiring to find ways to practically help teachers to thrive in their careers, I began to research issues of classroom management and discipline. Around that same time, I became aware of restorative justice and began to study restorative approaches to school

discipline (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005; Hopkins, 2004; Zehr, 2002). Soon thereafter, I began

mentoring middle school pre-service teachers during their one-year internships required for

middle school licensure. As I walked the halls of middle schools each week, the research about

teacher burnout, student discipline, and teacher preparation all seemed to converge. As I

continued to study the research on student discipline, I found a glaring hole in the literature that

seeks students' perspectives on school discipline.

Having observed extensive disciplinary interactions between students and teachers, I find

myself in a constant tension between advocating for students and defending teachers. I hold a

moral commitment to advocate for students who are daily being deprived of educational

opportunities due to, among other things, teacher incompetence in areas of pedagogy and the

creation of classroom climates conducive to learning; and yet, as a teacher educator, I also have a

strong commitment to support teachers who, without sufficient training and mentoring, are

increasingly being held accountable for things they cannot possibly be responsible for. On most

days, my commitment to students wins out over my commitment to teachers, especially in light

of the findings of this study.

The research, as reviewed in Chapter Two, extensively demonstrates that suspensions are

overused and often capriciously assigned; further, virtually all of the research on exclusionary

discipline demonstrates that suspensions are ineffective and result in unintended consequences

for students who are the recipients of those disciplinary interventions. The American

Psychological Association (2008) has come out against exclusionary forms of discipline and has

called for a repeal of zero tolerance policies. Thirty years of research on disciplinary

interventions has demonstrated that exclusionary discipline is disproportionately applied, with

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male students of color being grossly over-represented. With all that we "know" about suspensions, exclusionary approaches to discipline continue to be the primary recourse for teachers and principals. I continue to ask myself what is missing; in light of overwhelming evidence that exclusionary discipline is harmful to students, we continue to engage in the practice. After conducting this study, I am more committed than ever to involving students in future research related to school practices; I believe that their input is what is missing.

The 13 students in this study represent countless students who are experiencing exclusionary forms of discipline and who are enduring the consequences of such discipline. While the argument made by teachers and administrators might be that there are no other options than to suspend them, there is a great deal of research that suggests otherwise. It is my hope that this research project becomes for me the first of many where students themselves are invited to be a part of decisions that are being made on a daily basis that affect their lives in consequential ways.

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APPENDICES

STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES WITH SUSPENSION
Parental Consent Form

Dear Parent,

I am writing to ask your permission to talk to your child about his/her experience of being suspended from school this year. I work at The University of Tennessee, teaching future middle school teachers. A lot of people have studied school discipline, but not many have asked students about *their* opinions about discipline. I hope to learn how students understand and respond to being suspended from school. In order for your child to participate, I need your permission. Please read this form and feel free to call me if you have any questions.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY
I plan to interview students who are enrolled in Knox County middle schools who have been suspended more than once during this school year. If your child meets those criteria, I would like to talk to them about what that was like for them. This will be a casual conversation that will take place at their school, in an office or conference room, before school, during breakfast, during lunch, or after school. Your child will not miss any class time. The conversation will be recorded so that I have a good record of what he/she said. Your decision to allow your child to take part in the study is voluntary. You and your child are free to choose to take part in the study or to stop taking part in the study at any time. If you choose to allow your child to participate, simply:
      1) Sign this form at the bottom of the page, keeping the second copy for your own records
      2) Fill out the contact information requested
      3) Mail the form to me using the enclosed stamped envelope
RISKS
Though there does not appear to be any risks related to your child's participation in the study, I will let your child know that he/she may withdraw from the study at any time without any penalties.
BENEFITS
The benefits of participation in this study are incidental; no incentives will be provided for participating. Participation is voluntary and the informed consent is regarded as a statement that the individual feels comfortable participating.
CONFIDENTIALITY
The interview and your child's identity will be kept confidential. I will use a pseudonym during the interview that will be known only by me and your child. Your child's name will be removed from any of the data. Any information that could identify your child (name, school, etc.) will not be revealed. All information will be stored securely in a locked office at The University of Tennessee and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless you give permission in writing to do otherwise. Data stored digitally will be stored in a password protected file. It will be securely stored for a 10-year period, after which time it will be

permanently destroyed. Data derived from this research could be used in reports, presentations, and publications; your child will not be individually identified. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link your child to the study.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions about the study or the procedures, or if at any time, you desire to withdraw from this study,) you may contact the researcher, **Katherine Evans** at 529 Bailey Education Complex at The University of Tennessee, by telephone at **770-856-0029** or by email at **kevans18@utk.edu**. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-3466.

CONSENT

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I agree allow my child to participate in this study. I have been provided a copy of this form.

Student's name _____

Parent's name _____

Phone number where you can be reached (optional) _____

Parent's signature _____   Date _____

Researcher's signature _____   Date _____

STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES WITH SUSPENSION
Student Assent Form

Hi, my name is Kathy and I am doing a study about classroom discipline. I want to talk to you about your experience with being in in-school suspension this year. I work at UT, teaching future middle school teachers. A lot of people have researched school discipline, but not many of them have asked students about *their* opinions about discipline. One of the things I hope to learn through our conversation is about your experience with in-school suspension. Your parent already gave me permission to talk with you, but in order to participate, you need to sign this form saying that you agree to talk to me.

If at any point, you decide that you don't want to participate anymore, all you have to do is tell me and we will stop the interview. You also get to choose a pseudonym, a fake name, and I'm going to use that name in the interview and in my study, so that anything you tell me will be confidential. In other words, no one but you and I will know what you said.

I am going to record our conversation, so that I can remember what you tell me, but only I will listen to the recording. And I'll be using your pseudonym as we talk, so again, what you say won't be linked to who said it.

Do you have any questions?

Do you agree to participate in the study?

I agree to participate:

Name _____Date _____

Signature _____

Researcher Signature _____

CONTACT INFORMATION
If you have questions about the study or the procedures, or if at any time, you desire to withdraw from this study,) you may contact the researcher, **Katherine Evans** at 529 Bailey Education Complex at The University of Tennessee, by telephone at **770-856-0029** or by email at **kevans18@utk.edu**. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at (865) 974-3466.

VITA

Katherine Evans grew up in Jackson, Mississippi and graduated from Jackson Academy in 1984. Graduating from Baylor University in Waco, Texas, in 1988, she obtained a Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education with a major in Special Education and a minor in Sociology. After working in churches for nine years as a youth minister, she transitioned to education, where she taught middle school resource classes for four years and high school resource and inclusion classes for four years. Seeking to understand more about the motivation of students who had disability labels such as *emotionally disturbed*, *learning disabled*, and/or *behaviorally disordered*, she began her doctoral program in Educational Psychology and Research at The University of Tennessee in Knoxville in August of 2005. While at The University of Tennessee, she taught an educational psychology course to pre-service teachers for three years and a course on knowing and learning to undergraduate math and science majors. She also supervised middle-grades pre-service teachers during their one year internships for three years. In August 2011, she will join the faculty at Eastern Mennonite University as an assistant professor of special education.