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Exclusion decisions of middle school principals

Karen H. Loy
University of Tennessee

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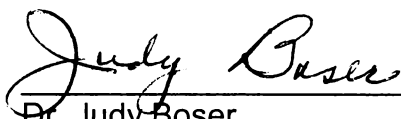(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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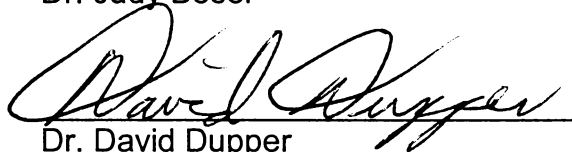
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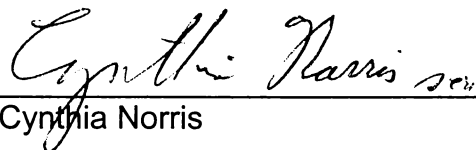
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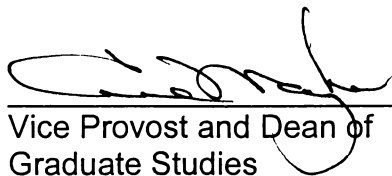
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Graduate Studies

Exclusion Decisions of Middle School Principals

A dissertation presented for the

Doctor of Education Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Karen H. Loy

December 2002

Thesis
2002b
.L68

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my husband, Matthew Loy,

for his faithful support as I pursue my passion for

learning. In addition, the study is dedicated to

my mother, Lucille Heidel, who throughout

my life has modeled a work ethic and perseverance

that has sustained me through this project.

Acknowledgments

A dissertation is credited to the author, but it is much more. It is a collaborative effort of many individuals. A dissertation committee is instrumental in the completion of such a task. For their contribution, I thank Dr. Gary Ubben, committee chair, Dr. Cynthia Norris, Dr. Judy Boser and Dr. David Dupper. Their encouragement and guidance was invaluable during the process.

I am very grateful for the patience and support of my school family. The staff at the school in which I lead are the most dedicated group of individuals ever assembled. It is a pleasure to go to work daily to lead them as they meet the needs of a variety of students. They have been ardent cheerleaders as this dissertation process has evolved and concluded. Furthermore, the students at the school represent the children for which this dissertation was written. All children deserve an educational environment in which they can learn and thrive.

Finally, I need to recognize my faith, which is the foundation of my commitment to students. It is the fire that fuels my passion for education.

Abstract

The decision by a principal to exclude a student from school is a serious one that costs the student gravely. The intent of this study was to understand the phenomenon of how principals make the decisions to exclude students from school.

Twelve middle school principals from a single school district were the participants of this study. A focused interview was conducted and the responses analyzed for patterns and themes using the ethic of care and the ethic of justice as a theoretical template. Other data reviewed included: the school improvement plans; and the schools' majority/minority rate, free and reduced lunch rates, out-of-school suspension rates, in-school suspension rates, special education rates, aberrant behavior rates and mobility rates. These outcomes were compared to the principals' exclusion rates to determine if patterns would emerge.

Based on the participants the principals classified as practicing an ethic of care excluded students from school at a lower rate than the principals classified as practicing an ethic of justice. Principals own values and ethical hierarchy did influence their use of exclusion of students.

Preface

Researcher's Role

In qualitative research the researcher him or herself is the primary investigative tool. Therefore, my role in the research must be delineated. My own educational philosophy was aligned with the qualitative research perspective. Krathwohl (1989, p. 176) presents the primary characteristics of humanistic ideology, as described in detail in the Literature Review of this document, as a partner to qualitative research. This humanistic orientation description aligns with my own way of knowing and world-view. My values as an educator fit into this description. I seek to understand the decision-making process of student exclusion. I have spent 15 years of my 20 years in education involved as a psychologist and an administrator with students of who have been excluded for various reasons from schools.

I currently serve as a principal of a special school in the selected school district in which this study was conducted. One program under my oversight is a middle school behavioral program for students who have been excluded from their zoned schools. As a principal of middle school students, I know the day-to-day pressure of discipline decision-making dilemmas. As a principal of students who are excluded from their zoned school, I know the issues that these students face. I believe this tacit knowledge is important in the research process.

I also practiced school psychology in public and private settings. I have extensively used interview skills in the assessment of students of all ages and of their parents. These interviewing skills will help me in this research process. Furthermore, my psychologist training has honed the abilities for clinical insight and observation. These abilities will be of inherent worth during this study.

My greatest bias in this study is my steadfast belief that all children are entitled to a free and appropriate education. In today's public school environment, many districts are pressured by their constituents (faculty, parents, community, and students) to remove disruptive and potentially violent students from the school environment. Principals in mainstream schools continue to use the exclusion of students as a primary choice of discipline (Cass, 1986).

In addition to removing students with a pattern of discipline problems from the mainstream school settings, districts may expel one-time offenders; students who commit so-called zero tolerance offenses. School districts have a choice to expel and legally deny some students all educational services. On the contrary, the Individual Disability Education Act (IDEA) of 1997 limits the decision-making power of a school district concerning students who are protected as an eligible student. The IDEA eligible student cannot be expelled from school with no services. The IDEA eligible student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) must be implemented. Special education students, by federal law, cannot lose their right to a "free and appropriate public education" regardless of their offenses. I

believe this should be a right of all children. Public education should be available to all students.

Mirriam (1998, p. 22) states, "Because the primary instrument in qualitative research is human, all observations and analyses are filtered through that human being's worldview, values and perspective." The filter I bring to this study is significant for the research itself.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Background

Today's school leaders, principals, have tremendous responsibility. The public depends on these individuals to prepare the leaders, workers, parents and citizens for tomorrow. The decisions these individuals make through their policies, interactions and relationships affect the daily lives of students and staff, as well as affecting the long-term courses of lives.

Decisions are made based on several variables. Their own personal history, educational experiences and professional knowledge direct the school leaders' decisions. Each of these experiences joins to develop a leader's professional values and beliefs. These values and beliefs guide the principal's decision-making processes. School leaders recognize and admit that their own personal values influence and guide their educational practices (Begley, 1996). However, value conflicts are often a part of many decisions made. Research conducted by Leithwood, Begley & Cousins (1992, p. 108) found that school administrators identified two types of value conflicts. Type one involves the administrative conflict between two values vying for supremacy in circumstances. The second type involves the values' conflict between a set of values and the implied action. Often the two values vying for dominance are the values of care

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and justice. If is often these two values that trouble school leaders as they make decisions that impact the lives of staff and students. This study will discover if relationships exist between these values and the decisions principals make to exclude students from school.

Student behavior and student discipline are consistently concerns of the constituents of public education as well as educators themselves. School safety is a pertinent issue from the national level to the local school level. As a part of establishing safe schools, the disciplining of students is a pressing concern. Student discipline is ranked either first or second among education issues by the public at large since 1994 (Digest of Education Statistics, 1999). Managing student discipline is a challenge for most school leaders. Surveys repeatedly reveal that discipline is a significant concern for teachers, principals and parents (Sewall & Chamberlin, 1997). Students may disrupt classrooms. These disruptions may prohibit other students from learning. Discipline typically takes on two forms: rehabilitative and punitive. Rehabilitative discipline includes in-school suspension, special day-long classes, and behavior contracts or behavior management plans. These types of disciplinary means do not exclude students from their education. Punitive discipline includes probation, suspension, expulsion or any measure that removes the student from an educational environment (Adams, 1992). Disciplinary decisions, which exclude students from school thus impairing the learning process, must be critically examined.

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Removing students from their educational environment is a dramatic response to student behavior problems. The method has become more important since the re-authorization of IDEA in 1997. This federal law clearly limits the number of days students who are eligible for special education can be excluded from their educational program. The Safe and Drug Free School Act of 1994 also developed a zero tolerance for all students who possess drugs or weapons, or assault a school staff member. Principals are the school leaders responsible for such disciplinary decisions. Policies such as these seem straight forward, but the individual situations for students are much more complex. The decisions are difficult.

An essay by Moore (1998) discusses leadership theory as it relates to student violence, she suggests that there is a relationship between principals' leadership behavior, school climate, and school violence. However, the strength and nature of the relationship are unclear. She offers two explanations. Chaos theory could be applied in that many violent acts on school campuses are unpredictable and random. The second is that considering the complexity of the issues of student violence and leadership, it is impossible to generalize if a relationship exists.

This research proposal did not examine the relationship between the principal and school violence, but rather the relationship of the principal's beliefs and values and the rate of student exclusion from the school environment. Allen (1981) indicated that the principal is the most significant factor in determining the

school climate. Jenkins, Heidemann, and Caputo (1985) stated that principals who reward academic success, respect students, require good attendance and enforce appropriate student behavior promote a positive school climate. Schools that have a positive school climate have fewer behavior problems. Educators frequently recite the platitude that every student can learn. However, principal disciplinary decisions may not support this idea. Students cannot have an opportunity to learn, if they are repeatedly excluded from learning environments. How do a principal's beliefs and values affect their decisions to exclude students?

Principal leadership is imperative for schools to be effective, in fact, for students to be effective. With the emphasis on improving student academic performance, student behavior is a crucial element. The interplay between the school leader's beliefs and student disciplinary decisions must be considered. The ethic of care and the ethic of justice can be used as a template of discovery. A thorough examination was needed to investigate the exclusion of students and principal's beliefs and values.

Problem Statement

We do not currently have a clear picture of how principals' beliefs and values affect their discipline decisions. Whenever students are excluded from their educational environment, in the form of out-of-school suspensions or expulsions, students' learning suffers. On the contrary, whenever disruptive

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students are allowed to stay in their educational environment students learning suffers due to their disruptions. The goals for effective schools are for all students to learn. A principal's decisions regarding student exclusion has a major impact on student learning. An in-depth discovery of the impact of principals' beliefs and values about discipline decisions to exclude students from the educational environment was needed.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the relationship that exists between middle school principals' beliefs and values and the decisions they make about student discipline using a phenomenological design resulting in a description of themes and patterns. The study was defined generally as a discovery of school leaders' values of caring and justice influence upon their decisions of student exclusion. The study ascertained if the beliefs of principals that use student exclusion at a high rate differ from the beliefs of those principals that use student exclusion at a lower rate.

This study examined the following research questions:

1. How do principals decide to exclude students from educational settings?

   A. Is there a difference in the use of the ethic of care and the ethic of justice of principals who exclude students from the educational

environment at a high rate compared to those principals who exclude students from the educational environment at a lower rate?

B. What policies or practices do principals have in place within the school environment that reflect their beliefs about exclusion practices?

Significance

Principals use the exclusion students from their educational setting frequently as a means of disciplining students. When students are not allowed to participate in the educational process the cost for those students and society is grave. An ill-afforded school practice restricts or denies student access to educational opportunities. Research shows that students' low socioeconomic status, underachievement, low achievement, and residence in urban areas place students at high risk for school suspension. Furthermore, the combination of African American ethnicity, male gender, and low family income increases students' risk for exclusionary disciplinary practices (Townsend, 2000). The beliefs and values of the school leaders that make the decisions to exclude students from schools must be examined. The loss of instructional time that occurs because of students' exclusion from school must be critically reviewed.

Principals as the leader of schools, make decisions daily that influence the instruction of students. Principals are responsible for hiring the very best teachers, for managing the funds of the school, for overseeing the curriculum and

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for making the disciplinary decisions. School safety and orderly classrooms are a necessary part of a culture of an effective school. The need for an orderly, safe school environment and a decrease in student exclusion from school should be reconciled. Data to understand how principals' own beliefs and values affect this relationship were needed. Every remedy available must be used to redeem instructional time for all students. This research will advance the knowledge that we have about these important issues.

The preparation of school leaders is an important part of any college of education's programs. This responsibility is vital for higher education institutions. This study will enhance the principal preparation programs as the beliefs and values of caring and justice are examined as to their impact on student disciplinary decisions. Administration and supervision training programs must consider the ethical training of school leaders. The Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium has developed standards for school leaders (The Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996). (Representatives from 24 state education agencies and various professional associations drafted the standards that were developed by this committee. They were compatible with the new National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) Curriculum Guidelines for School Administration.) Standard two states, "A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the *success of all students* by advocating, *nurturing* and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth" (emphasis

added) (p. 8). Standard five relates to the leaders own ethics. It states, "A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner" (p. 13). As part of standards set forth by school leaders own profession, this study had potential impact and application. This research may influence the training of school leaders in university preparation programs. Through this discovery process insights gained may guide the training of new administrators. This study promotes a strong discourse of the exclusion of students from the educational process.

Methods

Qualitative research methods were used to complete this research project. The selection was made to provide a rich description of the process of making disciplinary decisions.

Qualitative research was appropriate for these research questions due to the essences of the problem: values and ethics. Disciplining students for disruptive, rule-breaking behavior is a leadership process to be discovered and given meaning. This method provided a means to gain the insight into the patterns that emerged from the principals' own stories. The stories were worth the discovery of the research method. Disciplinary decisions are personal and individualized for the student and the school leader. A personal and individual method of inquiry was warranted. The subject matter was value-laden and

biased at its design and so was this research method. Student discipline happens in the school setting, not in a research laboratory; therefore, going into the school setting was the appropriate research location. Naturalistic research involves the use of the five senses plus intuition to gather, analyze, and construct reality from data (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993).

A purposive sample was made for the study. A mid-sized school district with a selection of urban and suburban schools was chosen. The study was limited to middle schools only. Approximately 10-15 middle schools in a single school district was preferred so that the sample would have the same policies governing the schools, yet provide enough school leaders for rich data sources. The principals must have been at least in their second year of service in the same middle school. The exclusion data from the previous school year must be based on that principal's decisions.

Demographic data about each of the middle schools was collected. These data include the student population, minority/majority ratio, out-of-school suspension rate, in-school suspension rate, mobility rate, special education rate, aberrant behavior rate and the poverty rate.

A focused interview was conducted with each of the principals. An interview was useful in discovering what people think, how one perception compares to another perception and in putting responses in the context of common beliefs and themes (Fetterman, 1989). Open-ended questions were used to guide the process, but follow-up questions and probes were used to

clarify and refine (Yin, 1994). A mixture of conversation and imbedded questions were used to facilitate the search for each principal's own voice. The interviews took place in a location chosen by the interviewee at a scheduled time.

Descriptive and reflective notes were taken during the interviews and each was audio-recorded and then transcribed verbatim into a written script. The written document was shared with the interviewees for their review and to provide an opportunity to clarify any ideas or comments in writing to the researcher. A follow-up interview was allowed if the data warranted this extension.

The qualitative analysis was based on a reduction and interpretation of the interview data, demographic data and document review. The ethic of care and the ethic of justice were used as the basis of the interpretation. This theoretical perspective was not to bind these data but only provide a framework for an interpretative beginning. These data were not intended to be a scientific report. The findings of this research study were presented in a matrix form as well as a rich, thick, detailed narrative description of the patterns, categories and themes for the reader to see and hear the principals' voices (Creswell, 1994).

Delimitations and Limitations

This study was narrowed to focus on a single school district's middle school leaders. The researcher examined these individuals' beliefs and values

about their decisions to exclude students from school. Such a scope of study would narrow its application to similar type of settings.

The primary investigator was a principal in same school district selected for study. Certain bias was built into the model because of this factor. On the other hand, this factor also may have enhanced the data.

This study was confined to interviews of middle school principals, as the leaders of their schools. In practice, assistant principals are often the individuals rendering student disciplinary decisions. However, the principal establishes the culture of the school. Discipline decisions are much more far-reaching than the person who signs the suspension notice.

Interviews have distinct advantages as a research method. The informants may provide historical information and expansions of their answers. For the researcher, this method allowed some control over the line of questioning. On the contrary, the data yielded were filtered through the views of the interviewers and interviewees, which limits the views examined. Furthermore, those interviewed do not possess equal talents in articulation and perception (Creswell, 1994).

Whenever a case study approach is used to examine research questions, certain limitations automatically exist. A qualitative study may or may not begin with a theoretical foundation. Nevertheless using this inductive model, a theory or pattern will emerge from the data collection and analysis. This type of

research relied heavily on tacit knowledge (intuitive and felt knowledge) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Definitions

Aberrant Behavior Rate – The selected school district used a classification system of determining the level of student behavior that was abnormal and deviant from the behavior of other students in the same school. The rate was determined by the disciplinary codes the building level administrators used in suspending students out of school.

Exclusion – Any time a student was not permitted to participate in the academic process because of a building level administrator disciplinary decision.

Expulsion – Any time a student was removed from all school activities, academic and extra-curricular, by an agent beyond the building level administrator, as a disciplinary action.

In-School Suspension – A suspension of the student's normal class routine by a building level school administrator as a student disciplinary action. The student has supervision by a staff member. The student was not allowed to attend his/her instructional program, but may be allowed to participate with other students in such activities as lunch, between-class breaks, and dismissal times (Mellard & Seybert, 1996).

Out-of-school suspension – The student was removed from all zone school activities, academic and extra-curricular, for a specific period as a disciplinary action by a building level administrator.

Ethic of Justice – Characterized by the following features: insists on rules, reduces situations to a moral sameness and reduces the importance of relationships and particularities (Katz, Noddings & Strike, p. 22, p. 118).

Ethic of Care – Characterized by the following features: moral attention, sympathetic understanding, relationship awareness, and response (Katz, Noddings & Strike, 1999, p. 118).

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Introduction

The literature review presents the important constructs of the study as they were discussed in relevant research literature. The study had a solid theoretical perspective in the ethics of leaders: specifically the ethic of care and the ethic of justice. The comparison of these two ethical considerations was used as the basis of this study. The ethic of care and the ethic of justice were examined as the basis of decision-making of school leaders. Further constructs upon which the study was based included the school leader's influence on the culture of the school and the exclusion of students from schools. The principal's impact on shaping the culture of schools was vital in understanding the decision-making process of disciplining students. Lastly, researchers have discovered a great deal of whom and why students are excluded from school. These data were also important in developing a clear picture of the decision-making processes of school leaders. The rationale for using qualitative research methods in this study concludes this chapter.

Theoretical Perspective

Ethics in School Leadership

Ethics is the science that deals with conduct as considered right or wrong, good or bad according to Dewey (1902). The word "ethics" comes from the Greek word ethos, meaning customs or usages, especially belonging to one particular group. More recently, ethics has been viewed to mean character, customs and an approved way of acting. However, the leading question must be, "Whose approval?" The answers to this question are varied. Shapiro and Stefkovich (1998) identify three distinct conceptional frameworks that have an impact on public education: the liberal democratic viewpoint, ethics from a critical theory perspective and the feminist ethics. The viewpoint of liberal democratic ethics construes decisions as objective, remote and impartial, while the thinking must be logical and systematic with a focus on laws and rights. The critical theorist perspective intends to challenge the thinker to reconsider important concepts of democracy, social justice, power and privilege. Finally, feminist ethics requires the consideration of relationships as paramount. The issues of continuity, respect, trust and empowerment must be centric in decision-making from the feminist perspective.

Leadership values or ethics do not just appear; instead, these form over time and experiences. Values form by what is rewarded or consequenced, by what is noticed or ignored, by what is learned or modeled (Ubben, Hughes &

Norris 2001, p. 16). A school leader's values about education as a global perspective and particular values about students and teachers were often shaped by the leader's own school experiences.

Values will influence decisions and the toughest decisions are often those that pit one good value against another good value. Right versus right issues are at the heart of the most challenging decisions. Short and Short (1994) wrote, "Administrators and teachers choose the way they respond to discipline. We have found that their expectations, beliefs and previous experience influence their choices" (p. 567). Kidder (1995, p. 23) in the book How Good People Make Tough Choices, detailed shorthand for describing decision-making theories: ends-based, rule-based and care-based. At times, decisions about student discipline create a warring of conflicting values to arise. For others, the student discipline decisions may be simple to make based on a clear hierarchy of values. Ubben, Hughes & Norris (2001, p. 46) describe this task as, "To achieve good decisions, it is necessary to engage in problem analysis and select the best decision process." Denig & Quinn (2001, p. 43) described schools as "ethical organizations whose leaders confront daily challenges fraught with a variety of ethical dilemmas and moral decisions".

The weight of human capital in schools requires intense consideration of morals and ethics. Knox (1996) wrote that school leaders often find themselves "torn between the philosophy of the student as a person and the fact that in the minds of students, staff, and parents all student should be treated exactly the

same regardless of the circumstances involved" (p.7). The quote depicts the conflict of the ethic of care and the ethic of justice. Carol Gilligan and Lawrence Kohlberg's individual work articulated the characteristics of these ethics. Gilligan (1977) described the ethic of care and responsibility to be primarily a tendency to imperfect duties, while the ethic of justice and rights to be primarily a tendency to perfect duties. The premier goals of the ethic of care are simply "the wish to care for and help others, to meet obligations and responsibilities, a concern for others and feelings of compassion, a responsibility to discern and alleviate trouble in this world" (p. 511). The ethics of rights and justice, as defined by Kohlberg, were mainly concerned with rights of the individual and their protection. This perspective is a way of ensuring that rights of individuals will not be interfered with by others (Kohlberg, 1978).

Ethic of Care

Gilligan (1982) described a morality based on the recognition of needs, relations and responses in her work that laid a foundation for the clear articulation of this ethic in today's society. Through her research on the decision-making processes of women who had abortions, Gilligan identified three levels of moral development that centered on the ethic of care. The first level was defined by an orientation to individual survival. One's self interest was the object of concern. The second level was defined by viewing goodness as self-sacrifice. Concern for others, particularly the feelings of others and the possibility of

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inflicting hurt was the major concern at this level. The third level was defined as a morality of non-violence. "Care then becomes a universal obligation, the self-chosen ethic of a postconventional judgment that reconstructs the dilemma in a way that allows the assumption of responsibility for choice (Gilligan, 1977, p. 504).

Moral attention, sympathetic understanding, relationship awareness, and response characterize the basis of the ethic of care (Katz, Noddings & Strike, 1999, p. 118). Noddings (1992) speaks distinctly to her passion for application of this way of relating in school settings.

> "An ethic of care – a needs- and response-based ethic – challenges many premises of traditional ethics and moral education. There is the rejection of universalizability, the notion that anything that is morally unjustifiable is necessarily something that anyone else in a similar situation is obligated to do. Universalizability suggests that who we are, to who we are related, and how we are situated should have nothing to do with our moral decision-making. An ethic of caring rejects this. Next, although an ethic of care puts great emphasis on consequences in the sense that it always asks what happens to the relations, it is not a form of utilitarianism; it does not posit one greatest good to be optimized, nor does it separate means and ends. Finally, it is not properly labeled an ethic of virtue. Although it calls on people to be carers, and to develop the virtues and capacities to care, it does not regard caring solely as and individual attribute. It recognizes the part played by the cared-for. It is an ethic of relation" (p. 21).

A qualitative study by Marshall, Patterson, Dwight and Steele (1996) defined three characteristics of the caring school leader: connections, context and concern. These attributes permeated their interactions and decision-making. The interviews conducted of career assistant principals produced data that argued, "Caring is a necessary condition for transforming schools into successful

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living and learning environments" (p. 278). A qualitative study by Brunner (1998) investigating the power and decision-making process of women superintendents through an interview format discovered caring and relationships as primary considerations for defining their roles in their school districts.

Educational leaders who apply the ethic of care to their school settings must address the same set of challenges all school leaders face: improving student academic performance; battling social problems that influence schools; and reacting to the organizational demands of school districts. Strachan (1999) investigated these issues from the basis of an ethic of care through interviews and documents reviews of secondary school principals in New Zealand. These school leaders expressed a passion for social justice and each was outspoken in his or her pursuit of creating an empowering and caring school climate.

A study completed in a suburban middle school that professed to practice an ethic of care used interviews, observations, document analysis and a questionnaire to examine these professed beliefs (Ferreira, Bosworth and Smith, 1995). The findings indicated that the caring culture could be created and sustained at school, but it was difficult for it to be consistent and pervasive in all areas of the school environment.

The application of the ethic of care in educational leadership is a concept that has grown from the feminist perspective to become an educational perspective. The practice of the ethic of care can be observed as context sensitive, has a situated self, and is at its bases a concern for relationships (Katz,

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Noddings & Strike, 1999, p. 22). A school leader that operates with a strong ethic of care will use shared decision-making; will consider the situation and context circumstances of decisions; will consider relationships as reciprocal – a give and take; will respond based on the needs of individuals; and will consider their primary commitment to the individual (Sernak, 1998 & Gilligan, 1982).

Ethic of Justice

The theory of justice at its basis has an emphasis on rules. Katz, Noddings and Strike (1999) defined the theory of justice as a reduction of the concept of self to sameness. The importance of particularities and relationships was diminished. To adequately discuss the ethic of justice, descriptors such as rights, responsibilities, laws, duty, policies, fairness and equality must be applied. Rawls in Theory of Justice (1971) defined the two primary principles of justice:

> First: each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others. Second: social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all" (p. 60).

Kohlberg defined the ethic of justice that outlined six stages of moral development placing at the highest stage, "morality with justice (fairness, rights, the Golden Rule) with the recognition of the rights of others as these are defined naturally and intrinsically" (Kohlberg, 1973, p. 143). The ethic of justice is characterized by human rationality and reasoning, placing credence on disciplined inquiry and rational thinking. The ethic of justice has consideration for

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the application of universal principles to moral decisions. The ethic of justice applies general principles or laws as the guidance for ethical decision-making in specific situations. The principles apply to every situation, there are no distinctions as situations vary. Held (1995) suggested that educational administrators may rely on the ethic of justice because of its emphasis on universal principles and consistent treatment. Furthermore, the ethic of justice helps maintain the status quo.

Grump, Baker and Roll's (2000) study used the work of Kohlberg to establish the ethic of justice indicating that Kohlberg's work was closely aligned to Kantian philosophy that used the principles of justice as the basis of advanced moral reasoning. Adams and Bailey (1989) recognized that traditionally principals have led their schools utilizing bureaucratic leadership behavior. This leadership behavior lends itself to the ethic of justice.

A school leader who operates primarily within an ethic of justice would demonstrate a distinct administrative style. Great considerations would be given to policies and rules when making decisions. This school leader's responses would be based on the rights of the individual. The school leader's relationships with others would be based on fairness and equity. When making decisions a school leader operating within the ethic of justice would place him or herself outside of the situation, removing one's self from the situation so that objectivity could reign. Objectivity would be the primary consideration. Fairness would be

the standard to maintain. The commitment of this school leader would be to duty. Overall policy decisions would be made from the top-down.

<center>Role of the School Leader</center>

Culture of the School

A school's climate is the collective set of attitudes, beliefs and behaviors in a building. The school leaders, the principals, set the climate of the school. Their role is far greater than forecasting the climate conditions of their school, but actually creating the climate by their leadership. Short and Short's (1994) research indicated that the key principal behavior in a well-disciplined school was visibility. Furthermore, principals should expect teachers to solve their own classroom discipline problems and to refer issues to the office only if all else failed. The principal's role was to facilitate problem solving among school participants. These researchers identified that negative student behavior decreased in schools where students felt they belonged and were encouraged involvement.

In terms of the culture of a school, the school is no longer approached as a machine that is fixed and working or broken and in need of repair. Rather the school is a living organism that moves and changes as its members or parts move and change. The entire school environment affects student behavior. Short and Short (1994) concluded that successful school discipline was achieved

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through viewing student discipline as an organizational issue. Disciplinary decisions are part of the school's culture.

Student Discipline

Students are disciplined on a daily basis in schools around the country. Teachers handle much of the discipline from the classroom level. When student behavior becomes disruptive to the learning environment, the school leaders are more apt to become involved in the disciplinary actions. The literature is full of suggestions to school leaders of ideas to diminish disruptive school behavior and to reduce out-of-school suspensions. A comprehensive study of the discipline practices of the Indiana secondary school principals was conducted by Killion (1998). The administered survey indicated that the number one discipline problem was tardiness, while the school leaders deemed the lack of parental involvement to be the primary cause of the student misbehavior. The demographic commonalities of the students supported this inference. Furthermore, smaller schools had fewer problems with gangs, drugs and vandalism, than the larger schools. Disciplinary decisions ranged from some sort of detention placement to removal from the school setting,

Recent research data have clearly described the students who are excluded from schools in our country. The descriptions do not appear complementary to the current norms of inclusion and cultural sensitivity that are espoused in the public school settings. Nor do they support the profession's

tenets that "all students can learn" and "high standards for everyone." In fact, the data clearly indicated that the students excluded from school are of low socioeconomic status, are underachievers, experience low achievement, and reside in the urban areas. Furthermore, the data indicated that African-American ethnicity, male gender, and low family income increase the student's risk for exclusionary discipline practices (Wu, 1980). Discipline practices that alienate students from school were associated with higher rates of voluntary and non-voluntary school withdrawal prior to graduation (DeRidder, 1991). While data supported the factor of establishing a clear code of student conduct, a nurturing environment was also important. Green's (1998) research showed that a caring school culture does have a positive impact on discipline, attendance and achievement. Nurturing schools were schools that meet the needs of individual students, that is, they were student-centered schools.

In a comparative study by Atkins, McKay, Frazier and Jakobsons (2002) students who were suspended or sent to detention in an urban, low-income school were examined over time to determine the effectiveness of the exclusion. The data were not flattering.

> Our data suggest that, for the students whose rates of disruptive behavior accelerated across the year, the high use of detentions and suspensions represented an inappropriate and ineffective use of a punishment procedure. This is consistent with a wealth of evidence that a focus on punishment alone will not impact many of the most severe types of offenses or reeducate the highest rate offenders (p. 366).

Student misconduct has long been perceived as a major problem in public schools. A national trend does exist to get tough on school misbehavior. School district personnel do advocate the use of out-of-school suspension of students for their disruptive school behavior (Cass, 1986). Suspension, in various forms, was found to be the number one disciplinary choice of school leaders. However, over 15 years ago the Children Defense Fund declared that the suspension of children from all levels of school has become a problem of national proportion. As a disciplinary procedure, suspension prohibits students from accessing the education and services they need (Children's Defense Fund, 1985).

While the get-tough mentality exists, a parallel trend has emerged in the educational environment of accountability, high student achievement expectations and high school dropout reduction. At the conclusion of 2001, Congress passed a far-reaching educational improvement act to provide financial support for state departments of education in order to ensure student assessments in grades three through eight in reading and math (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001). The Bill required schools to demonstrate increase in student achievement in disaggregated groups.

Many state and local departments of education are asking schools to reduce suspension rates of students and especially the suspension rates of minorities. Uchitelle et al. (1989) used qualitative methods of research to evaluate the suspension practices of the St. Louis School District. The report

generated lengthy recommendations to reduce suspensions. Five categories of interventions were defined: Communication of Standards; Instruction and Classroom Management; Human Relations and Staff Development; Administration; and Counseling Programs.

Methods Research

Qualitative research methods were used to complete this research project. The selection was made to provide a rich description of the process of making disciplinary decisions. Creswell (1994) defined eight areas to address in the description of qualitative methods: assumptions, design, researcher's role, data collection procedures, data recording procedures, data analysis, verification and findings. These categories were used to describe the methods of the study.

Qualitative Assumptions

A qualitative research project has specific assumptions that separate it from quantitative research. Mirriam (1988) mentions six basic assumptions about this research method. Qualitative research is concerned about the process, rather than the product. The emphasis is on the meaning of the peoples' lives and experiences. In qualitative methods, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. It is the human experience that gives meaning to the research questions. This type of research involves fieldwork rather than laboratory work. The researcher goes to the natural setting.

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Qualitative research is descriptive, relaying through words or pictures meaning and insight. Lastly, these methods are inductive. The researcher builds concepts, ideas, and patterns from the details of the data.

Research Design

Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 226) stated that research design "means planning for certain broad contingencies without, however, indicating exactly what will be done in relation to each." Erlandson, et al. (1993, p. 73) described the design of the study as "an attempt of a researcher to give order to some set of phenomena so that they will make sense to the researcher and so that the researcher can communicate that sense to others." For the purpose of this study, theory driven design was most appropriate. The ethic of justice and the ethic of care were applied to this research as a design base. These two theoretical constructs guided the study, but did not bind it.

Researcher's Role

In a qualitative research project, the researcher is the primary instrument for gathering, and analyzing data. Therefore, the responsibility of the researcher takes on a significant role. My role as an investigator was examined.

My own educational philosophy is aligned with the qualitative research perspective. Krathwohl (1989, p. 176) presented the primary characteristics of

humanistic ideology (See Table 1). The ideology was close with my own research perception.

Mirriam (1998, p. 22) stated, "Because the primary instrument in qualitative research is human all observations and analyses are filtered through that human being's worldview, values and perspective." The filter I brought to this study was significant for the research itself.

Gaining entry into an appropriate setting was imperative for the completion of a research project. For the naturalistic researcher, the ability to gain entry into the social context, to share previously constructed realities with the stakeholders in that context, and to construct new realities that will enhance the knowledge of stakeholders and the researcher are key elements (Erlandson et al., 1993). Entry must be sought with not only from the agency, but, more importantly with the individual participants.

Developing and maintaining trust with the participants is vital for a qualitative research project to be successful. The interview is a very personal mode of research with its own set of ethical considerations. It is a human-to-human interaction that has a certain amount of risks and benefits. As the research instrument, I had to consider that my respondents may have felt their privacy had been invaded, or embarrassed by some questions, as well as they may tell things they did not intend to reveal. At times, they may come to a sense of self-revelation as the interview reveals data. The interviewer must remember that the role is to collect data, not to change people (Merriam, 1998).

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Table 1
Typography of Orientation in Behavioral
Science Knowledge and Methods

Consideration	Humanist Perceptive
Guiding Principle	Find the most powerful images and models that foster human understanding.
Nature of behavioral science knowledge	Largely personal, provides understanding to self and culture in terms of conceptual patterns and schemes that have value in guiding future behavior.
Criteria for excellence	Explanation that mediates well between the world and persons. Provides useful models and examples of analysis.
Preferred research method	Sharing of personal experiences and knowledge by subject and researcher. Action research.
Stereotypes helpful in visualizing types but likely to be controversial	Some clinicians are reacting against the dehumanizing of persons by science.
Role of values	Values are an integral part of knowledge; they help give it meaning and serve as motivators.
Strengths	Emphasizes the personal, human, and historical as a repertoire from which to draw; source of ides for scientific validation; an answer where laws and theories fail.
Weaknesses	Contributes little to consensual knowledge; requires conceptual grasp of large amounts of material to select relevant portions to weave into integrated stories.

Data Collection Procedures

A purposive sample was selected for this study. "Purposive and directed sampling through human instrumentation increases the range of data exposed and maximizes the researcher's ability to identify emerging themes that take adequate account of contextual conditions and cultural norms" (Erlandson, et al., 1993, p, 82).

An interview is useful in discovering what people think, how one perception compares to another perception, and in putting responses in the context of common beliefs and themes (Fetterman, 1989). In a focused interview, the same basic open-ended questions will be used to guide the process, but follow-up questions and probes will be permitted to clarify and refine. (Yin, 1994). The focus of this research was to gain understanding of just how principals make the decisions to exclude students from school. The principals must tell the stories of their experiences and thoughts that lead them to the decisions they make. "My interest lies in the interaction of experience and thought, in different voices and the dialogues to which they give rise, in the way we listen to ourselves and to others, in the stories we tell about our lives" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 2). Gilligan and others have used interviews to learn about "decision-making" with other populations (Gilligan & Belenky, 1980).

Documents pertaining to the demographics of the school, programs and suspension rates were gathered for review. These were collected in order to

provide a triangulation of the interview data collected. The themes and patterns were viewed across more than one area of representation.

Data Recording Procedures

Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined the collection of data along two dimensions: fidelity and structure. Fidelity was described as the researcher's ability to reproduce the data later. The highest degree of fidelity is found in the recording process. However, the recording of interviews is still limited. These devices only record what the researcher chooses to record. The interview process is a dynamic relationship and must explore the human experience in this case: disciplinary decisions.

The structure of the data recording procedures is a more difficult entity to establish. The structure is part of the emergent design of the naturalistic study. Initially the structure of data recording was less focused due to the data and the collection process being new and somewhat unfamiliar to the researcher. However, as the process continued, the questions, observations, and document reviews became more focused as the data were collected.

Data Analysis

The qualitative analysis was based on a reduction and interpretation of the interview data. These data were not a scientific report. The findings of this research study were presented in a matrix form as well as a rich, thick, detailed

narrative description of the patterns, categories and themes for the reader to see and hear the principals' voices (Creswell, 1994). Lincoln and Guba (1985) described the data analysis process of a qualitative study as a non-inclusive phase. It cannot be marked with a clear beginning point or planned to the minute detail due to the nature of the study. "Data analysis will be conducted as an activity *simultaneously* with data collection, data interpretation, and narrative report writing" (Creswell, 1984, p. 153). However, pre-planning occurred to produce good analysis.

The amount of data that accumulated was voluminous. Every word from the interviews is a data point. The task was to organize and categorize the data into themes and patterns. The task was two-fold. The first was to dissect these data, to take them apart into smaller pieces. The second was to re-assemble the data into a larger, consolidated picture (Creswell, 1994).

Matrices or displays of the data were designed around the emerging themes discovered. They showed the relationships among categories, informants, sites, demographic variables and many other possibilities. A graphic display of these relationships was made.

Verification

"The basic issue in relation to trustworthiness is simple: How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?" (Lincoln and

Guba, 1985, p. 290). Do the data and conclusions drawn matter? With this as a monumental task, trustworthiness is imperative in qualitative research. Trustworthiness is measured by external validity, internal validity and reliability

External validity is the extent that the findings of one study can be applied to other settings or situations. In qualitative research, a small non-random sample is used. It is selected because the researcher desires to understand the particular phenomena or event in depth, not to discover if it is generally true of the masses. Readers of qualitative research draw on their own tacit knowledge, intuition and personal experience to look for patterns that explain their own experiences and the experiences of the world around them. An audience may also view the study to determine if its parameters are a good match to their own situation. The researcher has the responsibility to provide enough detailed description so the consumer can determine the fit (Mirriam, 1998).

The data must be described. Sufficient detail must be included in the narrative so that the reader may determine if the research can be transferred to their set of circumstances. External validity can be achieved through the development of thick description in the each area of the report. Methods of a study must be described in a detailed account. The data collection process must be discussed explicitly with evidence of triangulation and authenticity. Lastly, data analysis must be reported in a clear, precise manner that would allow it to be evaluated for its application in various contexts.

Findings

Two major purposes of the findings of a naturalistic project are to raise understanding and maintaining continuity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The findings must be presented with a thick description of the decision-making processes of middle school principals. Actual quotes of the participants and the use of tables or matrices were helpful so patterns can be observed. The narrative outcome was demonstrated by an exhaustive description.

Summary

The literature review described the important elements of the study as they were discussed in relevant research literature. The theoretical perspective in the ethics of leaders, specifically the ethic of care and the ethic of justice, has been described. The comparison of these ethical considerations was examined as the basis of decision-making of school leaders. Furthermore, the constructs of the school leader's influence on the culture of the school and the exclusion of students from schools were discussed. Lastly, the rationale for using qualitative research methods in the study concluded the chapter.

Chapter III

Methods

Introduction

Qualitative research methods were used to complete this research project. This selection was made to provide a rich description of the process of disciplinary decision-making.

Research Design

This study utilized a theory driven qualitative research design. Smith (1987) and Mirriam (1994) described this tradition. With this approach, a theory is used to guide and form the study, but not used to bind it. The application of the influence of values on decisions (Kidder, 1995; Katz, Noddings, & Strike, 1999), theory of justice (Rawls, 1971), and the theory of care (Noddings, 1992) were used in the research design and the data analysis phases of this project.

Data Collection Procedures

Prior to the onset of any research project permission to conduct research was necessary. Permission was sought from the University of Tennessee's Institutions Review Board (IRB). Form B, as designated by the IRB, was submitted (see Appendix A). After the permission from IRB was granted,

permission from a school district that met the parameters of the study was sought. This process involved the submission of the school district's own Permission to Conduct Research Form to the Coordinator of Research and Evaluation (see Appendix B). After permission was granted, the researcher gained access to the middle school principals. The other "gatekeepers", both formal and informal, also were considered in this process (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Beyond obtaining permission from the oversight agencies, gaining entry into the selected school district was imperative for the completion of this research project. Entry must be sought not only from the school district, but also from the principals of the middle schools. Each principal received a letter stating that permission had been granted from the school district's office (see Appendix C). After the principal's receipt of this letter, the researcher made contact by telephone with each principal. A verbal explanation of the purpose of the research project was presented to them, and they were asked to participate in an interview. The contents of the informed consent form (see Appendix D) were shared with each and a verbal confirmation was obtained. A copy of the informed consent was brought to the interview to obtain their permission for the interview prior to beginning the process. The consent form was signed prior to the interview.

A purposive sample was selected for this study (Erlandson, et al., 1993). A mid-size school district with a selection of urban and suburban schools was

chosen. The study was limited to middle schools only. The researcher chose the middle school as the best choice of the three categories of schools: elementary: kindergarten – fifth; middle: sixth – eighth; and high: ninth – twelfth. The decision was based on the patterns of suspensions that typically fall in school divisions. Elementary schools have few suspensions. High schools typically suspend at the highest rate of the three divisions. Middle school statistics fall in the middle (Wu, 1980). The researcher also has the most administrative experience with middle school students. The researcher was also an employee of the selected school district and worked with the middle school principals.

Approximately 10-15 middle schools in a single school district were preferred so that the sample would have the same policies governing the schools, yet provide enough school leaders for rich data sources. The principals must have served at the same middle school for at least two years. This limitation ensured the exclusion data from the previous school year was theirs alone. The selected school district had 14 middle schools for grades six – eight.

Demographic data about each of the middle schools was collected from the school district's student information system. These data included the student population, minority/majority ratio, number of students who qualify for special education, mobility rate, aberrant behavior rate, number of student exclusions from school and the percent of student population on free and reduced meal program. A copy of each School Improvement Plan was obtained for a historical and community perspective.

All of the middle school principals in the school district were asked to participate in the study if they met the longevity criteria. This researcher conducted a focused interview with each of the principals. The interview was used to discover what principals think, how their perceptions compare, and put their responses in the context of common beliefs and themes. The focus of this research was to gain understanding of just how principals make the decisions to exclude students from school. The principals must tell the stories of their experiences and share their thoughts that lead them to the decisions they make. "My interest lies in the interaction of experience and thought, in different voices and the dialogues to which they give rise, in the way we listen to ourselves and to others, in the stories we tell about our lives" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 2). Gilligan and others have used interviews to learn about "decision-making" with other populations (Gilligan & Belenky, 1980).

An interview protocol was developed to guide the interview based on the ethics, values, and discipline decisions of school leaders (See Appendix E). The goal of the interview was to form a dialogue or an interaction to access the abundant store of data the interviewees have concerning their beliefs and values about excluding students from school. The interviews took place in a location chosen by the interviewee to be comfortable and quiet. A two-hour time block was solicited from the participants. The participants' identity was kept confidential for the purposes of this study. Each principal was assigned a letter designation, for example: Principal A, Principal B, etc.

A pilot interview was conducted with the supervisor of the middle school principals in the selected school district. The same procedures of the actual interview were followed: interview protocol, recording, and reflective note taking. However, the data collected were not used in the research study. The purpose was to practice the data collection, data recording process and to obtain feedback from the supervisor about the process. He was selected due to his familiarity with the district's policies and procedures, and he was a middle school principal for 13 years.

After the interviews were conducted, the School Improvement Plans were reviewed for characteristics of the ethical considerations. Each of the five sections of the plan was examined using the matrices as a guide. The last data obtained were the demographic information from the district's student information system. These data were public records of the school district and available for review. These data were presented by the school district in a series of tables and charts.

Data Recording Procedures

Data recording was an important aspect of qualitative research. Certain elements must be considered in the recording procedures. In order to achieve strong fidelity, each interview was audio recorded. The audio recording was transcribed verbatim into a written document. A contracted transcriptionist was used to prepare some of the transcripts. The others were transcribed by the

researcher. The tapes and the transcripts were reviewed for accuracy. The script was shared with the interviewees for their review. They were provided an opportunity to clarify any ideas or comments in writing to the researcher. The informants did not have editing rights of the transcript: only additions to the interview were allowed. The interview process was designed to explore the human experience, in this case: disciplinary decisions.

Descriptive and reflective notes were taken during the interview. Notes were taken in order to record non-verbal occurrences of the interviews, such as gestures, facial expressions, and the environment. It was imperative to also record the researchers own feelings and thoughts during the interview and in the time just following the interview.

The documents collected were used to establish and verify patterns. The demographic data were used to describe the schools and gain understanding of the schools' communities. The exclusion data were charted and compared to the ethical patterns of justice and care of the principals' interviews.

The audiotapes, transcripts, and documents were placed in a secure location for three years after the conclusion of the research project. At the conclusion of the three years, the data sources were destroyed.

Data Analysis

Data analysis of a qualitative study is complicated. The analysis must be conducted simultaneously with data collection, interpretation and report writing

(Creswell, 1984). However, pre-planning must occur to produce good analysis. The analysis was based on a reduction and interpretation of the interview data. It was a job of fragmentation and assembly. A matrix with the categories was initially used in the analysis is placed in Appendix F. These were reviewed and adjusted as the analysis proceeded. They reflected the theoretical framework of this study.

The interviews were classified using the pre-determined matrices as the first step of the data analysis. The School Improvement Plans were reviewed using the theoretical matrices. Lastly, the demographic and exclusion data were obtained to further describe the schools and determine a ranking of the exclusionary practices of the principals. The exclusion data were reviewed after the principals were characterized according to their ethical consideration in order to diminish researcher bias.

Verification

As this research study was developed, trustworthiness was considered. The data was described in a thick, rich description. Sufficient detail was included in the narrative so that the readers may determine if the research could be transferred to their set of circumstances. External validity was achieved through the development of the description in the each area of the report. The data collection process was discussed explicitly with evidence of triangulation and

authenticity. Lastly, data analyses were reported in a clear, precise manner that would allow them to be evaluated for their application in various contexts.

Findings

Two major purposes of the findings of a naturalistic project are to raise understanding and to maintain continuity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The findings must be presented with a thick description of the decision-making processes of middle school principals. Actual quotes of the participants and the use of tables or matrices were helpful so patterns could be observed easily. The narrative outcome was demonstrated by an exhaustive description.

Summary

This qualitative research study was completed to discover how school leaders make decisions to exclude students from school. Principals from middle schools from the same school district were interviewed to allow them to tell their own stories of the student exclusion decision process. This chapter described the methods that were used to conduct this research.

Chapter IV

Data Presentation and Analysis

Introduction

In this chapter, the data obtained were described and shared. The interviews were described for each principal using direct quotes to support the analysis. The ethic of justice and ethic of care categories were used to develop patterns within the interviews as separate entities. The demographic data (poverty rate, majority: minority rate, school size, special education population, mobility rate, in-school suspension rate and out-of-school suspension rate) were immersed in the discussion. The documents reviewed were summarized by the characteristics of the ethic of care and ethic of justice in the same section as the principals' interviews.

The respondents' identities were kept confidential by referring to the principals using only male pronouns and using an assigned label instead of names. Specific descriptors of the schools were also eliminated from the discussion.

Data Collection

The interview process followed the outlined methodology closely. Variances were few. Twelve interviews began in April and concluded in May. All

principals that were asked participated in the research study. All twelve of the interviews were conducted at the principals' schools. The interviews lasted from approximately 45 minutes to 90 minutes each. Rapport with the interviewees was easy to establish, and the principals seemed to enjoy telling their stories. The interviews were audio taped and field notes taken. During one interview, the tape recorder malfunctioned and part of the interview was lost. That part of the interview was redone with the principal on a later date.

The researcher transcribed the audiotapes. The actual transcription of the tapes proved to be invaluable to detect word emphasis and voice inflection of the stories and direct answers. The transcribed interviews were mailed to the principals for a review process. None of the principals commented back to the researcher on their interviews. No clarifications or additions were added to the initial interviews by the principals.

The School Improvement Plans were reviewed at the school district's central office during the summer. The document review took about an hour per plan. The extenuator data: out-of-school suspension rates, poverty rates and majority: minority data, special education population and mobility rate, were obtained from the school district's central office. The out-of-school suspension data were public record from the school district's student information system.

<u>Data Analysis</u>

The analysis of the data began with the transcription of the audiotapes. As the words were placed in print, the nuances of the interviews were noted: tone of voice, inflection and syntax. The interview process was auditory as well as visual. After the interviews were transcribed, they were read for content; patterns were observed and then compared to the characteristics of the ethic of justice and the ethic of care. The tables designed prior to data collection were used to facilitate this process. Patterns and themes were sought from within the interviews.

The School Improvement Plans were examined as artifacts of the study. The plans were expansive for this period because the middle schools in the district were completing the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accreditation process. These were examined under a narrow perspective of discipline, specifically exclusion practices. Lastly, the principal interviews, artifacts and demographic data were merged to view the overall principal and school data in response to the initial research questions.

<u>Principals' Stories</u>

<u>Principal A</u>

Principal A had been the principal at his suburban middle school for three years. The interview took place in his office with him sitting behind the desk. He described his school and its development, "We all came together and had to

create everything what I call from paper clips to mission statement." He described the processes of the school initially not the statistical facts. He did proudly tell about the school's high test scores and academic excellence. The students were number one in the district on the state writing assessment and have the best attendance record in the district. "We are working hard to be as good as we can be," summarized the goal of the school. When asked what he was most proud of about his school, Principal A had difficulty choosing just one thing. "We have so much going on. I guess I am most proud of how many students are involved in so many things." He went on to describe the activities, clubs and performance groups that the staff provided as a support to the students. "We have 98% of our kids involved in a performance group. That is a big part of what we do around here." A sense of belonging was an identifying factor of this school setting according to this principal's perception.

As the discussion of exclusion began, Principal A described the process of student discipline beginning in the classroom. The path that led to his office and a possible exclusion was long and included several classroom and team interventions as well as parent conferences. The process was typical of the middle school concept that was used throughout the school district. Most administrators divide the disciplining of students. In the case of Principal A, he did one grade level, one assistant did two grade levels and the second assistant handled meetings and curriculum issues. He emphasized the education process of the teachers in the school's policy, "We go about educating all the teachers,

especially new teachers who come in every year what the policy and procedures are." He relayed that few referrals make it to the office due to the efforts of the staff. He had supportive statements about the guidance counselors' impact on students. "Lots of times our guidance counselors will work out problems . . . They will get them up in there and talk it out . . . Our counselors are real good at that and they are not involved in discipline, they are involved in counseling." The principal and the assistants were the only individuals who made exclusion decisions.

Principal A described the communication level about exclusion decisions (speaking about the assistant principal who did discipline.)

> Probably 90% of what he does is independent of me. He can, he always keeps me informed and keeps me up to date. If he has a real tough case or decision he will come to me and say, "This is what is happening, this is what I am thinking 'bout doing. Is that the direction you would go in?" There may be a case that he explains the details and we will have a disciplinary hearing coming up and I will say well what I am thinking of is that it may result in this kind of a suspension. Are you okay about this or you working with the kid more; do we need to do more or less? What are the teacher expectations in this particular case? That kind of thing. It kind of goes that way.

An internal appeal could be used, but was used rarely,

> I say on rare occasions we listen to a parent who has new information from a parent or we have risen to a level of trust or understanding with certain parents to where we might be able to modify an out-of-school to an in-school . . . Based on when we met with parent, we are looking at justice, mercy the whole time for that particular student. We look at our issues; the word punishment is very offensive to me. I react; I react physically, in terms of punishing kids in that kind of things. To me discipline in a whole different concept. It is the concept that there are consequences for your actions when you have aberrant behavior, but it is not the end

of the world. We have to train you. We need to bring consequences to bear on you so the next time you're caught in that situation and you have to make that decision that you will hesitate or you will think twice before you do it again or you will back off and say I don't want that ISS thing again.

Principal A described the purpose of exclusion as first for the student to let them know,

> in a civilized society, there are certain rules and regulations that you have to follow in order to be successful. You can't violate other people's rights and their space and property and that kind of stuff and so it is the idea that we are trying to help you.

Excluding a student did impact the learning environment according to Principal A. In-school suspension gave the students a quiet learning environment so they could get their work done. It also helped the environment by "taking those students out of the classrooms and gives those teachers and students a learning environment that they need to be productive too." The staff and leadership team made recommendations about the process to exclude students from school. Students were permitted to make up their work while suspended out of school.

When asked to describe a situation of exclusion that the staff struggled with more than others, Principal A related that every decision to exclude as student from school is a struggle.

> The situations they get into where it is a gray area, where you are getting lots of information from lots of different sources and it's conflicting information and there is no clear way to pin down exactly what is happened. Those are the ones I struggle with more then most.

He went on to describe a particular student who had been in numerous foster homes.

> We have a young lady here that has been in 10-12 foster homes and her mother passed away when she was young. But she has a big heart and she's real sweet and she can write. She writes poetry that makes you cry. Really bright. No one wants her and she knows it. She would love to have an adoptive parent, have a foster home that would keep her for a while, but she has some real problems. When it comes to a head and it comes to suspending her out of school. I have a real hard time doing that, but I have had to do it a couple of times. And I every time we have done it, she comes back and gives me a big hug and say, "I am ready to behave myself". She really tries and it's enough to break your heart. I guess that's the ones that I have trouble with.

Principal A could clearly recall a situation when an exclusion from school seemed to work for a particular student. A student had seriously threatened another student. After a thorough investigation, the student received in-school suspension and an intensive counseling program within the school setting instead of an out-of-school suspension that some had recommended. "His mom came in a couple of months later and sat there and cried and thanked us for the way we had handled the situation," he related.

Principal A sadly shared a story concerning a time that an exclusion did not have the desired outcome. A male student was suspended out-of-school and he went to visit his father in prison while out of school. The student returned to school with an increased aggressive tendency and wearing a prison shirt often to school. "I don't think that one worked very well."

Principal A described his school's use of exclusion compared to other schools in the district, "We are at the bottom; we had the least number of

suspensions of any other school." He did reflect a downside of the low numbers, "You know I don't want to be seen as too soft and yet I feel like we are doing a tremendous job here with our discipline issues."

As a concluding thought about exclusion of students, Principal A discussed the struggle of what to do with the students who were disruptive in the classroom settings and influenced the learning of others.

> If this group of kids could be taught coping skills or techniques for dealing with their peer relationships and their relationships with adults, too. I think it would really cut down on the number of discipline referrals that we would have and the number of disruptions we would have in a classroom. I think it is kind of frustrating.

In the review of the School Improvement Plan for Principal A's school, a similar picture described in his interview emerged in the school profile. The school was described as one with many students involved in many activities. A sense of students belonging emerged. There was a high level of commitment to academics described throughout the plan. There was no mention of student discipline concerns in the document, a true reflection of the school environment based on the demographics and Principal A's own perspective of his school.

Principal A's school was a large suburban school of approximately 1100 students with a population of 96% Caucasian and 4% other. The poverty level as measured by the free and reduced lunch rate was low at 5%. The special education population for the school was 8%. The

Table 2

Principal A Summary

Principal A: Primary Consideration Ethic of Care	
School Population	1200
Majority : Minority Rate Caucasian : Other	96% : 4%
Free and Reduced Lunch	5%
Students with Disabilities	8%
Aberrant Behavior	3%
Mobility	11%
Out-of-school suspension Rate	2.36%
Incidents of Out-of-school suspension	42
Students Suspended Out of School	27
In-school suspension	.3%

aberrant behavior level was at 3%. The mobility rate was 11%. The Principal reported a use of in-school suspension average rate in the school at four students per day, which corresponds to a rate of .3%. There were 27 students suspended out-of-school for a total of 42 days during 2000 – 2001 school year. The out-of-school suspension rate was 2.36%.

When interview was viewed through the lens of the ethic of justice, Principal A had some statements that could be characterized in this category (see Table 2). He relates a distinct reaction to fights and drugs, "But if we have fights or drugs or those kinds of things, that is an immediate referral to the office and we deal with those pretty cleanly." This type of reaction was typical of the middle schools in the district and county policy governed it. Another definitive reaction was to a student not cooperating with in-school suspension, "if the student misbehaves at all in ISS, they are going home." Principal A also had a

strong commitment to a sense of duty. The commitment was one that seemed to produce a struggle of values, commitment to the individual and commitment to the group.

> You have one or two who are being disruptive and 25-30 that are losing their educational opportunity because of it. We need to be doing something about it. That's rough; that's a hot issue right now. To me, that's one of those things that we need to figure out what to do with those kids.

The overwhelming majority of Principal A's responses fell into the ethic of care categories. He cited examples of situations in which the context of the incident weighted the decisions made: the modification of out-of-school suspension to an in-school suspension when needed. "We have risen to a level of trust and understanding with certain parents to where we might be able to modify an out-of-school suspension to an in school." There was not an automatic exclusion rule in decisions, "We try real hard to counsel and to advise, to me that's discipline and a whole different concept than raw punishment. You broke this rule and so you get three lashes, or whatever. It's a whole different concept." The recognition of "gray areas" in investigations was a consideration for Principal A. The interview indicated the school has a strong emphasis on the needs of students instead of the rights of students. The emphasis was again on the commitment to the individual using individual and group counseling, stressing individual student needs, monitoring students with issues every day, allowing students to do make-up work while suspended, and concentrating on prevention strategies for students.

Throughout the interview, Principal A emphasized the importance of relationships in the school. Relationships were stressed with students, with teachers and with parents. These relationships were reciprocal, a give and take, a community of trust. Lastly, Principal A placed himself into the situation. He spoke of reacting physically to discipline. He noted that it is hard for him to suspend students out-of-school at a personal level, not just as an administrator.

Principal B

The interview with Principal B was completed in two settings. Part one was completed in his office, and the other was completed on the front porch of the school. Principal B completed his third year in his school. He described his school as "the epitome of what a middle school should be about." With a small student population of just over 550 students, Principal B had the "opportunity to get to know the kids one on one." He credited the community and the staff support in the creation of a great school. He was most proud of his staff's accomplishments and the students' cooperation level.

> I think the staff and its dedication and ability to change and to adapt to a changing community and changing times. I also think that the student body itself is a something to be proud of. We have kids that are very cooperative and very willing to work with the staff here at *(the school)*.

Principal B related that the discipline policy of his school was based on strong communication.

> One of the things I wanted to do in coming to (this school) was establish a discipline policy that really focused on communication

more so than anything else did. When I say communication involving the parent, the teacher, the administration as far as dealing with kids who have discipline issues. That has been very successful.

The discipline process was developed within a committee format. The outcome was a discipline process that deals with student behavior at the classroom level,

> A lot of discipline problems we experience here are dealt with at the classroom level or teacher level where those teachers and teams work with the parents to correct the discipline problems rather than referring those to the office.

The discipline process was highly structured at the school consisting of levels of student infractions. The teacher response was dictated at each level. The level system also indicated certain student behaviors were automatic office referrals resulting in out-of-school suspensions. Otherwise, an accumulation of minor infractions resulted in office referrals, which could result in an exclusion of students.

> Level 3 is an automatic referral to the office. Those are things such as fights, just a major class disruption. Things of that nature. Those kids are automatically referred to the office. So basically, if a child gets a level three that is an automatic referral to the office and that results in either ISS or detention or possibly out-of-school suspension.

The one assistant principal at the school is primarily responsible for student discipline of all three grades for behaviors that occur inside the building. Principal B deals with students for bus misconduct. The communication process between the two administrators was informal, but frequent. "We talk quite frequently, she and I will bounce things off of each other to get a feel for what is right for the kid." The parental appeal process of a disciplinary decision could

occur. Principal B indicated he tried to support his assistant, while listening to the parties and being true to a commitment to good communication and the well-being of students.

> If a parent disagrees with something, the assistant has done, that parent is free to appeal to me and if it has to do with detention or ISS or OSS, they come to me and I listen to what the assistant has to say and the parent. I make a decision as far as whether or not what was done was appropriate. I have never had a situation where she has done anything that I considered inappropriate. I agree in the way she has handled those situations. For the most part, I try not to second-guess her because I have been in the position of the assistant principal and try not to second-guess her. I am not doing the discipline and that person is sitting in that seat needs to make that decision . . . If I felt that a child was being mistreated and I am a child advocate before anything else. Whether its dealing with teachers or assistant principals whatever the kids comes first.

Principal B had a clear statement of his view of the purpose of excluding a student from school. The importance of the learning environment was sacred for him. Teachers must have an environment to teach and students must have an environment to learn. The learning environment must be protected.

> I believe that schools should be primarily academic institutions and in being academic institutions, I feel it is very important for teachers to be able to teach and for students to be able learn, and if there are students who are denying teachers the opportunity to teach and denying other students the opportunity to learn, then there are times it is necessary to exclude kids from the classroom and I firmly believe in that. I believe that this is a free country and that people have the right not to be educated, but they don't have the right to interfere with someone else's education. So there are times when you have to exclude kids from the classroom.

He perceived the use of exclusion as a support to the teachers. However, he established boundaries with his teachers not to bring things to the office that should be handled in the classroom.

> They have exhausted all of their options and they have nothing else in their tool kit, then use me bring me, or the assistant to deal with that issue. I have no problem doing that, but when you bring a case like that to me, make sure you have followed the discipline policy and you have communicated to the parents and the parents have not been helpful and try to correct the behavior.

A mandate from the school district to reduce the use of out-of-school suspensions in every school caused some changes in Principal B's decision-making process about exclusion. "In doing so there are some things that we, at one time, would suspend kids for or remove them from the regular classroom, we may try other options now."

Safety was a primary concern and Principal B had strong views concerning these issues.

> Let me say this, drugs, weapons, dangerous instruments with intent of hurting someone or disrupting the educational process then yes, I will remove you from this building. You are removed! You are history. I think this has to be done. I think I have the responsibility to protect almost 600 kids and I take that seriously. If someone is endangering the well-being of the staff or the kids, I will take whatever measures I need to protect them.

Principal B easily remembered an example of a situation that involved a student's exclusion from school. The decision was an actual expulsion. (The policy manual for the school district indicates this decision meant the student could not attend a district school for one calendar year unless the superintendent

modified the time.) His verbal description displayed the troubling conflict this caused for Principal B.

> I had to make a decision to recommend that a student be expelled this year and it was a tough thing to do. It is a thing I don't like to do--suspend kids out of school. I don't like expulsion. Really, that is a struggle, every time you deal with that type of situation, it is a tough decision to make and you don't make those decisions lightly. I don't like being put in those situations, I really don't . . . And there was one kid this year that I had worked with her and worked with her parents numerous times. Just you know, I had given the kid numerous opportunities to correct the behavior . . . Because she had brought that knife to school, I was left with no choice after I had done the investigation, I found out the details and she had it on school property. The mom begged me not to expel her, but I had no choice. This was an eighth grader and her eighth grade year was virtually destroyed as a result. I really did not want to do that.

Principal B did not describe a specific decision to exclude a student from school, which he felt worked out for the student in achieving a goal, but instead discussed one principle he used in decisions. He stated that an exclusion at times allowed students to learn that there are consequences for their actions. As a result of the learning process, the students did not repeat their actions. "There are a number of kids where that has happened and the goal is for that child to understand that in a sense education is about is that no one has the right to interfere with the education process of anyone else."

Again, Principal B stated an overall feeling of dissatisfaction about excluding students from school when the student behavior did not change. Instead, he discussed a group of students.

> Well I can think of a couple of kids where a long term out-of-school suspension, I thought an out-of-school suspension, would reduce the number of times this child would get into trouble. However, with

a couple of those kids that I am thinking of I don't think it made much of an impact on changing their behavior. And that is sad for me to think about that I could not fix them.

In comparison to other schools in the district, Principal B perceived his school as doing the least amount of exclusion of any of the other middle schools. He stated that he thought the other schools also made decisions "centered around kids."

Principal B concluded his interviewing stating an overall philosophy that governed his disciplinary practices.

> Basically, if you treat others the way you want to be treated or better yet, the way you want your children treated, you will do a good job in terms of being a disciplinarian. I have done that awhile and that has never failed me, it has worked for me. You know the parents in this community will say that I am a reasonable person and think I can keep a handle on things. As far as I know, I have not had many complaints about how I do discipline.

Principal B led a school of about 550 students with a minority rate of about 10% African American, 2% Oriental and Hispanic and 88% Caucasian. The school had a mobility rate of 23% and a poverty rate measured by the free and reduced lunch population of 17%. The school had 9% of its students receiving special education services. The school had a 4% rate of aberrant behavior. Students were placed in-school suspension on the average of about four students three days per week, resulting in a rate .4%. Twenty-three students were suspended out-of-school for a total of 50 days for a suspension rate of 3.70% for the 2000 – 2001 school year (see Table 3).

Table 3

Principal B Summary

Principal B: Primary Consideration Care	
School Population	550
Majority : Minority Rate Caucasian : Other	88% : 12%
Free and Reduced Lunch	17%
Students with Disabilities	9%
Aberrant Behavior	4%
Mobility	23%
Out-of-school suspension	3.70%
Incidents of Out-of-school suspension	50
Students Suspended Out of School	23
In-school suspension	2 students / day = .4%

In the review of the Principal B's School Improvement Plan, student discipline was discussed in the school profile. A breakdown of office referrals by reason, ethnicity, gender and grade was listed. Discipline issues were not discussed in any other section of the plan. Discipline was not identified as a problem by any of the school stakeholders, which corresponds to Principal B's own perception of his school.

In exploring Principal B's interview and documents, an overall pattern of the ethic of care emerged. However, he did have a strong commitment to agency policies and procedures. Principal B had a shared power structure in decision-making. A committee determined the discipline structure of the school. He also utilized the assistant principal for discipline decisions. He prominently spoke about his commitment to communication between parents, teachers,

students and administration. His commitment to relationships was strong in this

area. He described his pattern of dealing with parental appeals,

> They come to me and I listen to what the assistant has to say and
> the parent . . . If I felt that a child was being mistreated and I am a
> child advocate before anything else. Whether its dealing with
> teachers or assistant principals whatever, the kids comes first.

Such a commitment demonstrated decisions, which would be contextual in

nature rather than always abiding by a strict pre-described policy.

The actual discipline plan contrived by the school committee developed a

level system of reactions. Furthermore, Principal B has a strong dedication to his

view of the purpose of education. He perceived that exclusion might at times be

necessary, due to the overriding commitment to student learning.

> I believe that schools should be primarily academic institutions and
> in being academic institutions I feel it is very important for teachers
> to be able to teach and for students to be able learn and if there are
> students who are denying teachers the opportunity to teach and
> denying other students the opportunity to learn then they are times
> it is necessary to exclude kids from the classroom and I firmly
> believe in that.

Although Principal B described his disciplinary actions as "centered around kids,"

his descriptions of his decisions processes were influenced by the policies at

both the school and district level. These distinctions corresponded to the ethic of

justice. He is a strict adherer to rules for himself, but takes a softer approach

with students. Although somewhat of a dichotomy of the ethical considerations,

Principal B's basis of discipline fell in the ethic of care. "One of the things I

wanted to do in coming to *(this school)* was establish a discipline policy that

really focused on communication more so than anything else." Although

Principal B has some characteristics of both of the ethical basis examined, the overriding focus for him falls within the ethic of care.

Principal C

This interview was completed in Principal C's office sitting at a round table. Principal C has completed his second year at his middle school, but he had been a school administrator for over 10 years. He described his school as "a good size for a middle school." He described his school in terms of its diversity. "Our population is a slice of Americana. It is diverse." He is most proud of "the way the kids get along."

> I think a lot of the problems that are very rarely fixed in our sister schools concerning kids behavior and aggressive behaviors and things like that, like racial issues; we don't seem to face that very often. When we do it is rather the exception rather that the rule.

The policy and procedures that govern disciplinary actions at Principal C's school were based on the county's Code of Conduct. "We teach the kids for specifically about expectations in regards to behavior of one another." Internally there were limited procedures in place concerning the discipline of students and the exclusion of students. Fighting was the one student behavior that resulted in an immediate action from the office. Principal C operated his school under the premise that every situation was unique.

> But we don't have as much in terms of policy of telling teachers when to send a child to the office. Don't want one. I have had one in the past in other middle schools, but I don't feel the need to have one here. We don't use the three strikes and you're suspended protocol; basically, we look at everything case by case. And the

thing that separates us from other schools in the way we approach discipline and that starts, well it goes all the way back to the way the assistants were chosen and they do the lion share of discipline. The whole thing goes back to a need to change the behavior rather than punish the behavior.

Only the administrators at the school could make exclusion decisions. There were two assistants and one principal. The communication about these decisions was based on a philosophical perspective not a routine. "Our communication among each other is once again about how to target a behavior and change it rather than punish it."

The administrative staff discussed and agreed that communication with the parent was an integral part of the discipline process. The process was to include the parent in the resolution of the problem behavior not to just inform the parent what was wrong with their student.

> One of the things we decided when we *(administrative staff)* became acquainted was when kids are sitting in the office we will contact the family and when we contact the family our approach would be to get the family to help us resolve the behavior, rather than inform them of how their child behaved. I thing that is a far better approach than calling constantly, because you have chronic offenders, but a good portion of the children is a single incident of poor behavior. Parents are a little tired of time and time getting these phone calls telling them how rotten their child is. And it's worked.

When Principal C went to this middle school, he had a distinct plan to decrease the use of out-of-school suspension. It had been successful.

> But that it has been successful and we have a very substantial turn around with the frequency kids are excluded from school. From 1999-2000 and again from 2000-2001 and I think the numbers will reflect that again this year. But I do know we suspended far less this year than we did the year before, very substantial from before.

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The exclusion of a student from school had a distinct purpose for Principal C. "I think the biggest purpose of excluding kids from school is to remove the disruption so class can go on. I think the other thing is to let the child know about the seriousness of their behavior." He did not perceive exclusion to be beneficial for the individual, but was for the teacher and the group. Other interventions must be used so that exclusion was not viewed as an intervention to improve behavior but a reprieve. "If the behavior is serious enough we may consider it, but is something we try to avoid. We try to look at other avenues involving behavior."

The specific policies for the school's exclusion practices were based on the individual circumstances of the student. Patterns of student behaviors were examined to determine the decision. "When you have patterns of behavior of a child and you run it through the whole list of options." Harassment of others was a serious offense in this school. Immediate interventions were needed for these situations.

> But we ask students to let us know when they feel uncomfortable, when they are feeling harassed. Uncomfortable is the key word; we ask them to come talk to us. As a result of that, we deal with a lot of harassment type issues, because the kids are coming to tell.

Principal C had a quick answer to the inquiry about a situation in which the administrators struggled with more than others. "Yeah, every time." He told of a recent situation involving a student. The student's behavior was one that created

some attention from the media and the central office administration. Individuals outside the school suggested a rather intense disciplinary response.

> Basically, what I am concerned about this case is that I think we could have dealt with this and resolved the issue and that child could have never practiced that same behavior again if we had been left alone to deal with it.

He shared about another difficult situation involving several girls and over the counter cold medication. The staff considered a long-term suspension, but instead used a creative pattern of discipline that affected the girls, but kept the girls from a long-term suspension.

> You know things like that I think we don't need to be over reactive and measure things on their own merit. We are going to be wrong and we are going to go easy on some things that we should have gone hard. But we will have another opportunity. But I can sleep a lot better with that way then destroying a child and its family, because of a mistake a child makes. And they all are going to make some mistakes, that's the nature of being a child. Philosophically that is where I stand.

> Principal C also had a story to tell about an exclusion decision that worked out well to accomplish a goal for that student. This incident did not meet the criteria based on the definition of exclusion because the story included the student being placed in an alternative setting outside the base school but was not removed from an educational placement. The principal's perception based on the particular student was that the placement was the best decision to help the student.

> If he had been a brighter more capable kid, that would not have occurred. As a result, we placed him after spring break at the alternative program and will finish the school year there and will return to us in the fall. This boy and his mother were so sorry this

had happened; sorry the other event had happened too. But this one had more bite hopefully and sitting in that M-Team I was ready to put that kid in my car and bring him right back over here.

Principal C could also recall an incident of exclusion that did not work out for the student; a positive outcome did not happen. A sixth grade boy had continued classroom behavior problems. He had poor academic skills and struggled academically. Early in the year, the administration wanted to suspend the young man for more than 30 days so that he could go to an alternative program to be in a small group and receive instruction that is more individualized. The parent refused to allow that to happen.

> That is one of those cases when suspension was not going to work with that child. Alternative school may have worked, but it was not an option because the parent refused to let us do an application and would not provide him to have the opportunity to go to the alternative school and this was a sixth grade boy. A real strong behavior management program would have been ideal for this kid, if he was, as in my opinion, conduct disorder through and through. And no accountability of his behaviors outside what occurs at school. There is not much hope he will make it through his seventh grade year at school either.

Principal C related that he knew that in comparison to other schools in the district that "we are more cautious about it (exclusions)." His middle school looked at every case individually.

> There are too many different personalities and too many different minds out there deciding what constitutes an office referral. How the write-ups are handled, what the difference is between a kid horse playing and being violent for example, there are too many intangibles there.

Principal C's concluding remarks were a request for more options at the school level to help students who have difficulty fitting into the mainstream

Table 4
Principal C Summary

Principal C: Primary Consideration Ethic of Care	
School Population	650
Majority : Minority Rate Caucasian : Other	82% : 18%
Free and Reduced Lunch Rate	35%
Students with Disabilities Rate	15%
Aberrant Behavior Rate	11%
Mobility Rate	23%
Out-of-school suspension Rate	9.95%
Incidents of Out-of-school suspension	145
Students Suspended Out of School	74
In-school suspension Rate	12 Students / day = 1.8% (program not open every day)

classrooms and school settings. "We could have a school system where no child is suspended and we can be tough on discipline. But we have to have some tools to do that."

The School Improvement Plan for Principal C's school was basic for the requirements of the state. It contained no mention of student disciplinary data or mention of special programs available to provide support for students.

For the school year 2000 – 2001 the school that Principal C led had about 650 students, 35% of the students were on free and reduced lunch, and the minority rate was set at 18%. Approximately 15% of the students in this school qualified for special education services. The aberrant behavior rate was 11%. The mobility rate was 23%. In-school suspension rate at the school averaged about twelve students per day, but the school's in-school suspension program is not open every day. This correlated roughly with a rate of 1.8%. The out-of-

school suspension rate for the 2000 – 2001 school year was 74 students suspended for 145 days, which resulted in a rate of 9.95% (see Table 4).

The analysis of Principal C's interview categorized him as principal operating in the ethic of care. He described the decision-making process concerning discipline as a shared one with his assistants and his teachers. Together he and his assistant determined their plan of action with parents of students who are having behavioral difficulty.

> When the assistant and I started out together in the office, she was a brand new administrator and I was coming back into a middle school setting after six years in a special site. One of the things we decided when we became acquainted was when kids are sitting in the office we will contact the family.

He also described that the teachers determined for themselves what actions to refer to the office instead of the classroom. "But we don't have as much in terms of policy of telling teachers when to send a child to the office. . . You have free gratis when you send a child to the office, but when we see a pattern we are going to discuss it."

Principal C seemed to evaluate the situations in their context. He spoke to this issue several times within his discussion of exclusion.

> We try to look at other avenues involving behavior.

> More importantly than that, Karen, we have to have balance on a team; and if you don't have that there are going to be problems on that team.

> There are too many different personalities and too many different minds out there deciding what constitutes an office referral. How the write-ups are handled, what the difference is between a kid

horse playing and being violent for example; there are too many intangibles there.

However, this was not to minimize his commitment to policies the school district imposed on schools or his own commitment to positive student relationships.

> Of course, we use the county's Code of Conduct, which is the basis for everyone. Obviously, we follow that; we are very careful about that.

> Typically, when a child fights they are suspended.

> We teach the kids very specifically about expectations in regards to behavior of one another.

The principal depended on relationships in his disciplinary actions. The administration attempted to develop a reciprocal relationship with parents that would most benefit the student. "We will contact the family and . . . our approach would be to get the family to help us resolve the behavior, rather than inform them of how their child behaved." He also used reflection and empathy in his decisions. "But I can sleep a lot better with that way than destroying a child and its family, because of a mistake a child makes."

Many of Principal C's decisions were based on student needs. His choice of behavioral emphasis was based on his perception of middle school students' needs.

> We teach the kids very specifically about expectations in regards to behavior of one another, especially in terms of harassment of one another and name-calling with those types of things. That seems to be the greatest area that needs to be addressed especially with incoming sixth graders.

> The whole thing goes back to a need to change the behavior rather than punish the behavior.

The specific stories he shared about students also reflected the needs of those individuals.

> He needs to realize that he can't have a pattern of bringing weapons to school. Someone who is 13 years old and a seventh grader, we have to break the pattern.

> A real strong behavior management program would have been ideal for this kid if he was, as in my opinion, conduct disorder through and through.

This principal seemed to have his primary commitment to the individual. He did state that the purpose of a suspension is two-fold for the class and for the individual; both of these purposes were based on needs. The final statement he made about exclusion summarized this thought: "We could have a school system where no child is suspended and we can be tough on discipline. But we have to have some tools to do that."

Principal D

Principal D had been at his school for eight years: three years as an assistant and five years as the principal. The interview took place in his office with him behind the desk. He described his school in terms of its demographics and outlined several problems the school has – primarily staff turnover and staff morale. Much of the initial part of the interview was spent describing the history of the school's difficulty with forming a cohesive school community. The students came from ten different elementary schools and then went to four different high

schools. When asked what he was most proud of about his school, he spoke of the school environment being more orderly. "Just the overall behavior of our kids. You can't teach until you get some kind of order in your building. We do have order in the building."

Principal D stated the typical middle school philosophy about teacher and team concept in handling disciplinary decisions.

> Teachers handle as many problems as they can in the classroom before we remove a student from the classroom. One of the things we have always tried to get our teachers to understand, we are not here to suspend kids or exclude them, even when they want them gone the first day they do something. As administrators, we know that we are here to keep a child in school.

A list of reasons to exclude students from school was not written down indicating some level of flexibility among the principal and three assistants who can make decisions to exclude students from school.

> In the past, we use to say after so many times in in-school suspension you would have out-of-school suspension. That's not the case any more. It depends on what the student has done. We didn't want to tie us down.

However, Principal D also related that even in taking into consideration extenuating circumstances, "we always talk about it and for one reason I want everyone on the same page if it ever happens again. I want them to do the same thing to have continuity."

Whenever a parent questioned an exclusion decision, they could appeal it to Principal D. These decisions were not usually changed due to the investigation prior to exclusion. "Most of the time, and they do a very good job at

it, is investigating before we do any type of suspension." However, the decisions could be reviewed. "And if we need to open back up and look at it, we don't mind doing it. If we think we have made a mistake, if the parent is adamant about it, we will look at it again."

Principal D made a clear statement in his view of the purpose of student exclusion. He viewed the purpose of exclusion of students was so that others may learn and teachers may teach. The decisions were made to support the teachers.

> So that teacher can be able to teach in that class. One of the things we tell teachers is that we don't want one or two kids disrupting so that you can't teach to the remainder of the student body and basically that is all it is. Just to make sure they can have a decent day to teach. And also to send a message to that child. If you act this way, you are not going to be in that class.

Principal D's school did not give the teachers specifics about classroom or team discipline. It is left to the individual teacher what they write up on a student and sends to the office.

> We don't just write it down on a sheet of paper and say this is what you can't do. There are a lot reasons why students are excluded from the classroom, but most of the time, the number one thing is constant. It's just constant, just every day.

When asked to describe a difficult exclusion decision made during the last year, Principal D recalled a situation with a specific teacher. "The teacher at times can be the instigator. They can pick at a child until they can get a child removed. Make him act up. We have had situations with the same teacher two or three times." The factor that made this situation difficult was the teacher being

the primary cause of the exclusion of the student. "The teacher was adamant that she wanted the child out of her classroom. That was a tough one."

Principal D could not describe a situation in which an exclusion decision seemed to work well for a student. Instead, he described a program within the school that worked with disruptive students. The classroom reduced the use of exclusion for some students. Furthermore, he could not describe a use of exclusion in which the decision made a positive impact on the student. "No, most of the kids suspended out-of-school are the same ones that are suspended over and over. It doesn't have much of an impact on them. It doesn't seem to faze them."

In comparing his school's use of exclusion to other schools in the district, he could not make a comparison due to his perception of how varied his school's demographic pattern was from others. "It would be like comparing apples and oranges." Lastly, when asked to make a remark that summarized his view of the exclusion of students, Principal D shared a dismal view of the impact of exclusion of students.

> I don't like to do it. Any of us in this type of environment don't like it, because we know the kid does not get any type of educational benefit out of it . . . but a majority of those kids suspended, they just lose a valuable education opportunity. They really need it. They don't read that well and if you can't read you can't do anything. So we don't really like to expel unless it is absolutely necessary, because we know it is going to be a step backward. They are not going to gain anything.

The School Improvement Plan completed by Principal D's school was basic in meeting the requirements of the state. The school profile section did

Table 5

Principal D Summary

Principal D: Primary Consideration Justice	
School Population	950
Majority : Minority Rate Caucasian : Other	80% : 20%
Free and Reduced Lunch	48%
Students with Disabilities	19%
Aberrant Behavior	25%
Mobility	31%
Out-of-school suspension	21.76%
Incidents of Out-of-school suspension	587
Students Suspended Out of School	223
In-school suspension	8 students / day = .8%

include the discipline reports in table format for the past three years. The profile described the referral process, but did not include the outcome of the referrals. The plan reflected goals to improve student academic achievement for the school. It did not include strategies or programs to assist students in any other manner.

Principal D's school had nearly 950 students with a 48% poverty rate as measured by the free and reduced lunch rate of the students. Approximately 73% of the students were Caucasian, 23% were African American and 4% were other. The mobility rate of the school was 31%. The aberrant behavior rate for the school was 25%. Nineteen percent of the students received special education services. The school averaged eight students attending in-school suspension each day resulting in .8% of student in ISS every day. Principal D

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suspended a total of 223 students for 567 days. These actions resulted in a rate of 21.76% for the 2000 – 2001 school year (see Table 5).

When using the ethic categories for comparison, an ethic of justice pattern emerged for this principal. However, he seemed to respond with conflicting answers. He has an inconsistent response pattern in the area of ethical considerations. His espoused values did not match the examples he gave. For example, decision-making appeared as a top down pattern governed by the administration. However, examples cited indicated a great deal of teacher control even when the principal had concerns over the outcome, illustrated by this example:

> She wanted him gone and she would do things deliberately to get him riled up . . . That one particular stands out. That happens every year at some time to the extreme. She constantly called his mom at work and mom was upset for receiving phone calls. The teacher was adamant that she wanted the child out of her classroom, almost without ceasing. That was a tough one.

Situational considerations were described as important at times to Principal D, but more important were the considerations for policies and rules. Such as the requirement of any students who fight, go home. "Well if a child is fighting, they are going home automatically." The commitment to following rules and policies seemed to be the dominant consideration in making exclusion decisions.

Relationships were not mentioned in the interview process by this principal except to discuss their difficulty. He perceived that it was important for the administrators to react consistently to student behavior. "I want them *(the*

assistant principals) to do the same thing to have continuity. So if one of them suspends for three days and the other suspends for three days." Neither student needs nor student rights were discussed in the interview. Principal D seemed to have a primary commitment to duty of educating the group throughout his discussion. He expressed a need for increased school pride and commitment from his staff and student. His perception was that exclusions did not benefit the individual student, yet were necessary for the overall benefit of the school environment. This view epitomizes his ethic of justice perspective. He was willing to continue to follow the policy even though he saw it as ineffective.

Principal E

Principal E had been the principal at his school for twenty-nine years. The interview took place in his office at the beginning of the school day sitting at a table. He described his school as one that is "trying very hard to follow the county middle school philosophy and program." He described his school in general as one that the test scores of the state mandated assessment are "at the top", exceeding the local, state and national levels on a continual basis. His description of the school included facts and figures that could be verified easily, but also included the importance of relationships in the building. When asked what he was most proud of about his school, he related that his "goal has always been to be a school where the faculty, as a staff, operate as a family, a cohesive unit where we support each other and like each other." He described the high

expectations set by the community for the students and staff, which the staff and students rise to meet year after year.

> We are in a community where there is an awful lot of parental support and often a lot of demanding parents. Very high expectations on the part of the parents and the community, therefore, we have very high expectations in the school. And the teachers rise to those expectations and the students rise to those expectations.

As the interview moved to the discussion of exclusion, Principal E described exclusion practices at his school as the division of responsibilities among the three assistant principals. The assistants did the majority of all student discipline to include exclusions. He related he trusts these assistants to handle matters correctly according to county policy, "they are good people who are dedicated to the well-being of children." He described his assistants as, "three people who love to work with children and enjoy their contact with the students. It is really, really good here because they get to know students, they get to know their parents, the parents get to know them". The communication system about exclusions between Principal E and the assistants was informal, but credited as effective. "It works through no basic design, well."

Principal E perceived the purpose of excluding students was "to provide respite for the rest of the students and teachers. It is not so much to punish, as it is to eliminate a problem or eliminate temptation for the student." Principal E explained the decision to use the exclusion of students normally "takes several offenses before it's going to happen unless it is a major thing such as the drug thing or a weapon of some sort."

When Principal E was asked to share a time that the staff struggled with an exclusion decision, he quickly recalled an incident of a boy bringing a knife to the school. On the surface, this event looked very much like an incident of zero tolerance.

> We struggled over the zero tolerance rule . . . But we decided to not even go anywhere with zero tolerance on it because we are suppose to consider mitigating circumstances and we felt he had done everything he could do here as a child to straighten out the issue.

Principal E identified an incident of exclusion of a student that achieved a desired goal. He shared about a student who came to the office with numerous minor infractions in the classrooms, "the child was full of himself and he was not mean, but he was disruptive." After a few visits to in-school suspension, the student seemed to turn around.

Conversely, Principal E could not identify a specific incident where an action of exclusion did not seem to accomplish a goal; however, his statement was a general one. "I can't give you a specific, but so many times, when they come back to us their behavior has not changed."

When asked about his use of student exclusion compared to other schools in the district, he deemed it as minimal, "but generally when we do suspend it is because it needs, it has to be done . . . it is always our last resort more than it is routine procedure." Lastly, Principal E was asked for any remarks that exemplify his thoughts about the exclusion of students, "I don't think any of us think it is a wonderful thing to have kids out of school. We are doing them no good

Table 6

Principal E Summary

Principal E: Primary Consideration Ethic of Care	
School Population	1200
Majority: Minority Rate Caucasian : Other	90%: 10%
Free and Reduced Lunch	6%
Students with Disabilities	7%
Aberrant Behavior	3%
Mobility	11%
Out-of-school suspension	2.94%
Incidents of Out-of-school suspension	85
Students Suspended Out of School	38
In-school suspension	7 students / day = .6%

academically to be out of school even for a year, but he will learn there are consequences for his behavior."

The School Improvement Plan for Principal E's school was based on academic improvement of the student body. It did not include any data about student behavior or disciplinary actions of the administration. The school profile highlighted the academic success of the student body.

The school in which Principal E led was a large suburban school of approximately 1200 students. The majority: minority was small at only 10%. The poverty rate as measured by the free and reduced lunch membership rested at six percent of the total school population. Only seven percent of the students received any special education services. The aberrant behavior of the student population was three percent. The mobility rate was 11%. Data indicated 38 students received an out-of-school suspension for a total of 85 days. These data indicated a rate of 2.94% for the 2000 – 2001 school year. The in-school

suspension rate as reported by the principal averaged to be seven students per day over the school year, resulting in a rate of .6% (see Table 6).

As the total interview was analyzed according to the characteristics of the ethic of justice and the ethic of care, a pattern of care did develop. The decision-making category fell primarily into the area of a shared pattern. When describing his duties, Principal E stated, "I am in charge, I run the ship." However, the examples he gave, past the description of his own responsibilities, described delegation. The assistant principals were free to make decisions. He indicated he had full trust in the assistants. He referred to them as principals who assist rather than his assistants. The school district required a leadership team in each school, but how it operated was up to the building level administrator. He described that decision-making was shared even at the student level for establishing school rules.

In the area of primary considerations category, an emphasis was consistency, but with an emphasis on shared decision-making. The teachers and students prepared their own plan for each team. A detailed description was explained of the assertive discipline model the teachers used in the classrooms. The assertive discipline model is one of communication and consistency with students. Relationships were important.

> We generally operate under the umbrella of assertive discipline. I
> don't know how familiar you are with that, but there are certain rules
> and regulations that each team of teachers establishes as team
> rules. Each teacher within that team has classroom rules that fit
> under a large umbrella. And with all the school rules and
> regulations that all fit under the county rules and regulations. We

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are pretty much covered as much as anybody can be under those kinds of things. Students have a lot of influence into the classroom rules, some influence into the team rules and lot less into the total school rules and practically none for the county rules. But, it is all like a flow chart that goes from here to here to here and some teams have things written out in very explicit detail and some have in general. That is part of the concept of middle school that each team is able to . . .teachers and students are pretty much able to make decisions on their own. It's a psychological investment in the outcome in what they are deciding. They are much more supportive of what they have agreed upon if they have all had a hand in dealing with it. So that all works pretty smoothly.

Emphasis was made throughout the interview on the expectations the school had for the students, creating a "tradition of excellence" was important in this school. "We don't crucify children, just to make a point. But sometimes it does make a point when there is swift and strong action taken," is a quote that best described the attitude toward exclusion of students. However, Principal E described an incident in which specific context was considered in determining a decision regarding the possession of a knife on school property. "Well, I do remember an issue that was hard, but it was a, it should have been zero tolerance, but we couldn't bring ourselves to do it."

Concerning relationship emphasis, a pattern in the area of justice emerged. This was exemplified by the example Principal E gave concerning the use of exclusion that it did not seem to work toward a desired outcome. The use of exclusion continued even though, "so many times, when they come back to us their behavior has not changed . . . When we suspend, it is because it needs, it has to be done." This appeared to indicate disciplinary actions were governed by fairness and equity rather than reciprocal relationships.

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The comparison of the fourth category dealing with the basis of responses, a care pattern was found. Student needs were viewed as preeminent. It was struggle for him to balance the needs of the single student and the needs for the group.

> That (exclusion) may be a little bit of punishment and may be unpleasant to them, but it gives the rest of the class and the teacher a little time to breathe a little and regroup and move on without the distraction or disruption of the offending students.

An ethic of care was strong in Principal E's concluding remarks, "We are here because they are children and to help them grow and mature to be contributing members of society." He seemed to view that educators' job was produce responsible citizens for society. His used the metaphor of the family many times in his responses.

> However, my goal has always been to be a school where the faculty as a staff operates as a family, a cohesive unit where we support each other and like each other and work together and in so doing I believe the students will benefit as a result. We are in a community where there is an awful lot of parental support.

Principal F

The interview with Principal F occurred at the end of the day in his office while he sat behind his desk. Principal F had been at his school for eight years; five and a half as an assistant and two and a half as the principal. He described his school in terms of its stability: a stable community, a stable staff and a stable student body. The school received students from four elementary schools and the students all went to the same high school that shared the campus with the

middle school. Principal F was most proud of his test scores of his student body. "Probably the academic accomplishments, we are basically in the upper portion of the middle in TCAP scores and test scores."

As the conversation moved to disciplinary decisions made at the school, Principal F described the classroom and team concept of all the middle schools in the district. Consistency and parent involvement at this level were important to this principal. The principal and the two assistants were the only individuals, who could make decisions to exclude students, which meant in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension. One assistant did one grade level each year and the other assistant principal did the discipline for the other two grade levels. The majority of disciplinary decisions were made independent of Principal F. A rather structured format of disciplinary action leading to student exclusion was followed at the school. Teachers made referrals to the office for inappropriate classroom behaviors. Several levels of student actions, such as fighting, tobacco, a continuation of problems and more than three stays of in-school suspension per semester, were automatic exclusion from school.

> Parents are given the option of attending classes with their student instead of having their child be excluded from school. We always, on an out-of-school suspension, give the parent an option. If they want to come and stay with the child, he can come to school, but they have to be with him all day long. If they can't do that, then we send him home.

An appeal process did exist in Principal F's school. The assistant principal's decision was upheld unless, "it is some unusual circumstances they were unaware of or something like that is brought to our attention." Excluding

students from school was perceived as a support for the teachers, "I think it *(a support)* is. I think they want to see something done, some of them want heads handed to them on a platter for everything that goes on." Exclusion was used when students were disruptive to the learning environment, but other classroom strategies were encouraged. "We spend a lot of time as staff trying to talk about different creative ways to keep all students involved."

The decisions to use exclusion of students were based on a mixture of student needs and student rights.

> They need to feel safe; they need to feel secure. We try to instill it in them. We show them if you are not here to learn and behave yourselves and do what you are suppose to be doing, you are going to lose that opportunity. I can't make anyone learn, but you don't have the right to prevent someone else from learning. Inappropriate behavior can cause you to lose that opportunity.

Principal F reported every time the administrative staff sends a student home, they struggle a great deal. He specifically described an incident with a young man whose behavior resulted in a long-term suspension.

> We had a young man who was an 8th grader that was involved at the weight room after school and was under the supervision of the football coaches and was involved with their activities that we had to suspend him for. We had to suspend him from school for those activities. That was hard. That was a tough decision . . . And that was probably this past year one of the toughest for a good kid. I mean top kid who made bad decisions. That happens.

When asked to describe a situation when an exclusion seemed to accomplish a goal for a student, Principal F quickly had a story to tell.

> Probably two years ago, we suspended a young man who was being disrespectful, being non-compliant to any rule or any adult. And after the suspension, we met with him and his parents and told

him if it occurred, we would be looking at long-term. But he was able to maintain and hold it together. He learned that he knew if it was getting too bad, we gave him the right to come in. He had an open door policy basically. He could come to the office and teachers would not say anything to him if he got up and walked out. He had to come down and we had to send him back with a note but he made it though the year and he had a successful two years.

Principal F also had a story about a situation in which exclusion was used and no goal was achieved as a result of the school's decisions. "We took a firm stand . . . she did not have a good year all year long. She never got any better."

In comparison to other schools in the district, Principal F perceived his school as typical. "For the same type of behaviors, I would say we are right there with the average." Lastly, Principal F described his view of exclusion, "as a last resort." However, he has a strong commitment to students' right to learn in a proper environment. "I can't make you learn, but you don't have the right to keep someone else from learning. And your behaviors do that and you don't have the right to infringe."

The School Improvement Plan for Principal F's school did not contain any discipline or exclusion data. The surveys for the constituents, staff and students contained several questions regarding the appropriateness of the rules of the schools. "Rules for student behaviors are consistently enforced." It further stated, "Students are held responsible for their actions." In addition, it said, "Student discipline is administered fairly and appropriately." These are in concert with the views and goals that Principal F articulated for his school. There was no mention of programs or goals to provide student support.

Table 7

Principal F Summary

Principal F: Primary Consideration Ethic of Justice	
School Population	950
Majority : Minority Rate Caucasian : Other	99.2% : 0.8%
Free and Reduced Lunch	19%
Students with Disabilities	11%
Aberrant Behavior	11%
Mobility	12%
Out-of-school suspension	10.98%
Incidents of Out-of-school suspension	296
Students Suspended Out of School	112
In-school suspension	5 students / day = .5%

Principal F had a middle class suburban school of about 950 students with a poverty rate near 19%. The minority rate was minute at .8%. The school had eight minority students; two of them were African Americans. Eleven percent of the student population had a disability. Aberrant behavior was measured at 11%. The mobility rate was 12%. One hundred and twelve students were suspended out-of-school for a total of 296 days. These numbers gave a rate of 10.98%. Principal F reported they use in-school suspension for five students on an average day resulting in a rate of .5% (see Table 7).

As the interview was examined from the ethical perspective, a pattern of justice emerged. The interview indicated that Principal F made decisions using a typical middle school team concept and was traditional in that many of the decisions were made in the office by the administrative staff. Principal F considered policies and rules with greater importance than he did variance in situations.

Relationships were important to this principal: relationships with parents, the community, the PTA, teachers and students. However, these were always tempered by the policies that govern situations. Students forfeited their right to learn when their behaviors impeded the learning of others. Principal F had a strong commitment to this belief.

Principal G

The interview with this principal took place in his office with him seated behind his desk. Principal G reported he had been a principal at his school for eleven years. He shared of his own professional history and of the school's history. Several closures and combinations of schools produced the origin of his school. He was most proud of "the diversity of our students and how well they have been able to make this school what it is." He perceived that his school had one of the "widest ranges of any school in the county, probably, and they *(the students)* have really done a great job working together and making it truly a community school."

Only the principal and the three assistants made disciplinary decisions. Each of the assistants governed a grade level in disciplinary actions. A limit was placed on the use of in-school suspension; only one day at a time was used. In addition, after a student had been in in-school suspension three times, an out-of-school suspension would follow.

Communication was informal with Principal G, "unless it is really something I need to know and then we will work together. I usually do not get involved in those things too much." The assistants had "total leeway" in their decision-making. However, there was an appeal process for the disciplinary decisions. "Generally speaking we are really, we always error on the lenient side."

It was difficult for Principal G to recall a specific incident resulting in an exclusion of a student in which the administrative staff struggled. Instead, he offered the global statement, "Well, you know we really do that quite often, and that is why we are pretty lenient." He went on to share family issues the students of his school may face. There are extenuating circumstances, which must be considered.

> There is no one home and they are living with a relative, which happens all the time or they are living in a car or that type thing. All sorts of things that are going on in kids' lives. I don't know how they are doing as well as they are sometimes.

Again, it was difficult for Principal G to recall a specific incident that the exclusion seemed to work to achieve a goal. He generalized that "a lot of ours work." In addition, when he was asked to recall a specific incident that the exclusion did not work, that no goal was achieved, he could not give a specific incident. He made a global statement, "and we have some students that act just like the same."

Principal G expressed that the purpose of exclusion for a middle school student was social punishment. "Denying the interaction with other kids and that

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is the biggest punishment our kids really have is not being able to talk and be around their buddies every day." He related that the use of exclusion "sets the tone of the school that actions have consequences."

In comparison to the other schools in the district, Principal G could not make a judgment. He perceived his school as innovative.

> We have quite a few innovative programs and I brag on us a little bit. We are pretty open-minded and we really try lots of things . . . So we have been real creative around here in my years of being here of the teachers coming up with some really good ideas to do with our students.

The School Improvement Plan for the school, which Principal G governed, included evidence of the specialized programs the school had to assist students in improving their behaviors. A quote from the plan defined these programs, "At an October 2001 school board meeting, a member, who does not represent our district, openly commended (*the school*) in its attempts to assist students instead of making suspension 'one size fits all' punishment." The other aspects of the plan were focused on the academic improvement of the student body.

Principal G governed a school of 1200 students that had a broad zone serving a mix of urban, suburban and rural areas of the county. The poverty rate, as measured by the free and reduced lunch rate was about 45%. The school had about a 15% minority rate with African Americans as the primary minority. The school has approximately 15% of its students qualifying for special education services. The school had an aberrant behavior rate of 15%. The mobility rate was also 15%. He estimated that six students were in-school suspension on

Table 8
Principal G Summary

Principal G: Primary Consideration No Clear Pattern	
School Population	1200
Majority: Minority Rate Caucasian : Other	85% : 15%
Free and Reduced Lunch	45%
Students with Disabilities	15%
Aberrant Behavior	15%
Mobility	15%
Out-of-school suspension	14.17%
Incidents of Out-of-school suspension	318
Students Suspended Out of School	171
In-school suspension	6 students / day = .5%

average indicating a rate of .5%. During the 2000 – 2001 school year, 171 students were suspended out-of-school for a total of 318 days for a rate of 14.17% (see Table 8).

No distinct pattern emerged when using the ethic of justice and ethic of care categories. His answers to the interview questions fell fairly equally across the categories. Principal G had an emphasis on rules, rights and responsibilities by the disciplinary predetermined decisions: three-day limit in in-school suspension per semester and one-day limit in in-school suspension. These characteristics were aligned with the ethic of justice.

Conversely, he spoke of the necessity of looking at the extenuating circumstances when they were known. The individual student was important to this school at times. Principal G could give not examples about specific students. He appeared removed from students.

The school also had several programs in place to assist students in learning the skills they need to be successful in the school setting. "We had a great little program after school. Everything from anger management to getting along with others." Statements from the principal and from the School Improvement Plan were aligned with the ethic of care. The conflicting views rose from the Principal's personal impact on disciplinary decisions versus the programs others in the school program implemented.

Principal H

Principal H had been at his school for two years. He described his school in terms of the demographic data and the middle school concept. The school operated with a different schedule at each grade level. The teachers chose their own schedules.

> So, I give the teachers some flexibility. That way as part of their own schedules is concerned. I do a master schedule of when related arts and lunch will be and the teachers have the option of their own academic schedule at that point. Well, it's an older staff age wise and experience wise.

He was most proud of the test scores of his school. "Test scores and the family atmosphere that is exhibited." The school also had a strong sense of community. Three elementary schools fed into the school and all the students go to the same high school. "It makes us more of a community school and that community feeling carries over into the building itself inside." While Principal H speaks

positively about his staff's experience and community support, he also realized other implications.

> We are in the process of trying to bring in new blood and any time you are dealing with an older more experienced staff and we have to be slow to change philosophy the way things go. Especially in the realm of discipline.

> We do have community support for us. I don't always agree with it. But it is still support.

As the interview turned to exclusion practices, Principal H described the typical middle school team concept in the district. He went on to discuss the many ways the school informs students about their rules and regulations that govern. He described the use of exclusion "as a last resort." Only the administrative staff, principal and two assistant principals, could exclude students from their academic program. The discipline of the school was delegated to the two assistants. "When I stepped into this role, I found myself as more of a CEO rather than the aspect of being a disciplinarian type of thing." The assistants had freedom to make decisions within the confines of the policies of the school. Fighting and profanity toward staff are an automatic three-day out-of-school suspension. An appeal process did exist if a parent is dissatisfied with a disciplinary decision. However, Principal H had clearly defined parameters for those situations. A united front was important. When asked if he would change a disciplinary decision, he stated emphatically,

> No. I support my assistants. They have to do it on a daily basis. They know the students, they know the parents and I don't know them. If I feel they are being too hard on them or something of that nature I might, after the meeting, mention it to them, but in here, we

are a united team. When those parents have pleaded their case to me, there is only one person who can change that decision, my assistant. I am not going to do that. I might tell them they are wrong after the meeting.

At Principal H's school, the purpose of exclusion was to demonstrate to the students that their behaviors are wrong. "It is an attempt to show them as far as acceptable and unacceptable behaviors concerns. It is a learning process." He described the out-of-school suspension action similar to a parent grounding a child. "It is almost like a parent in their discipline saying you are grounded for what you have done. It is that type of thing." Principal H did not think the exclusion of students was beneficial, but necessary. "Unfortunately for us an exclusion from a child's educational program is the only thing we can do. That's the world we are in at this particular point in time."

Principal H had difficulty describing a situation with which the administrative staff struggled. He finally spoke about two students who are involved in a fight.

> But in this case, both parties were swinging and if both parties swing both parties get to go home for us. And one had continual trips to the office to get help with the situation. The other one would not work it out and I think that was one of the most difficult decisions.

He also described a global situation that occurs when teachers refer students to the office for minor infractions.

> Sometimes you get picky kind of things from your teachers that you wrestle with whether or not to exclude them or not, whether or not to put them in ISS when that is our concern. That is failure to do work in class is one we struggle with, but classroom disruptions in class, but if the exclusion of a child will really benefit the child or

benefit the class and the teacher. So you wrestle with that type of situation.

Principal H shared about an incident where he felt an exclusion seemed to produce a positive outcome. However, in the story the exclusion was not the primary factor, but the assistant principal's intervention with the student.

> We had a gentleman last year that was in sixth grade that practically lived in the office. Now he has not been, well he has not turned over completely a new leaf, to say he is a goody two-shoe type of thing that we never see, but he did learn there are times when he can come up here and speak to us and stay out of trouble. He is, now if he finishes his work, he is given the opportunity to come up here and see if there is anything that needs to be done. What we found out was when he had idle hands, it was the devil's playground. So we were able to and we learned that and he has learned that if he asks and gets his work done he can come up here and help us some.

On the reverse, Principal H told about the students who did not benefit from an exclusion. For many situations, the benefit was for those who are able to continue in class after the disruptive student left.

> Any time you look at the repeat offenders, I think you feel like you accomplish or you wonder if you accomplish anything by that exclusion for that student. Other than removing them from the program. That is something you wrestle with. You try to figure out ways to get their attention, to make them understand that this is your last resort. And then they come back and do the same thing over again. You know that is not going to succeed.

Principal H was not proud to say that in comparison to other schools in the district that his school had a high suspension rate.

> We have a high in-school suspension rate. The reputation of *(the school)* is that it is a safe environment and it is an educational environment. And we are going to have education. We are trying things to change some of the philosophy, but there are certain things I am not going to give on as far as removing a child from

their program, as far as excluding a child from their program. If they are a disruption in their class, they are going to be excluded from that program for a while to show them that is not going to happen.

Principal H's concluding view about exclusion of students was the need for additional programs at the school level to help the students who were not successful in the traditional school setting.

The School Improvement Plan was typical of those required by the state. It contained a general description of the school, much as the one Principal H gave during the interview. The data was descriptive of the school's academic attainment. The main goal subsequently followed the same pattern to improve student academic achievement.

Principal H governed a school of about 850 students with a poverty rate of 19% as measured by the free and reduced lunch rate. The school had a minority rate of 5%, below the county average. The mobility rate for the school was 16%. The aberrant behavior rate was 25%. Eleven percent of the students need special education services. The in-school suspension rate as reported by the principal averaged 12 students per day resulting in a 1.4%. For the 2000 – 2001 school year, 132 students were suspended out-of-school for a total of 351 days resulting in a rate of 15.07% (see Table 9).

The responses of Principal H were definitive for the ethic of justice throughout the interview. The school's disciplinary decisions take policies and rules as the primary consideration. There were pre-determined reactions to student behaviors and a detailed plan of the in-school suspension routine.

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Table 9

Principal H Summary

Principal H: Primary Consideration Ethic of Justice	
School Population	850
Majority : Minority Rate Caucasian : Other	95% : 5%
Free and Reduced Lunch	19%
Students with Disabilities	11%
Aberrant Behavior	25%
Mobility Rate	16%
Out-of-school suspension	15.07%
Incidents of Out-of-school suspension	318
Students Suspended Out of School	132
In-school suspension	12 students / day = 1.4%

Fairness and equity were important in relationships with students. The rules and policies were preeminent instead of the interest of personal relationship and circumstances. "We are going to have education," was the primary focus of the Principal H's school, such a statement is a strong commitment to duty rather than the individual student. The statements Principal H made about disciplinary appeals clearly declared the ethic of justice commitment. Even if he viewed the assistant principals' decision as wrong, he would not change the outcome. His commitment to the "united front" was preeminent. His commitment of loyalty to the staff overruled his commitment to the student.

Principal I

Principal I had been in public school administration for 20 years. He had been the principal at his current urban middle school for eight years. His

description of his school was a factual one. The students came together from a variety of elementary schools and all feed into a single high school. He was most proud of the teachers' ability to work with the varied student population.

> I think it's the teachers' rapport with each other and their ability to work with a lot of kids that come from dysfunctional families and to work with them on a daily basis. To encourage them and try to get the best out of them with not only the academic, but the other social type skills.

The school had a mixture of veteran teachers as well as new teachers. The school secretary had worked in the school since it opened. He looked for a wide variety of staff to be positive role models for the students.

The disciplinary practices at Principal I's school use a system of demerits. After a number of demerits, kept by the teachers, the administrative staff would intervene in the situation. The school had a principal and two assistants. Each was assigned a grade level to handle the student discipline. The staff's first interaction with a student would be a conference to review student expectations.

In-school suspension was the first exclusion that takes place after the fifth or sixth demerit. When the problem became more constant, an out-of-school suspension would be used. The teachers made the referrals, but the administrative staff made the decisions to exclude. "A teacher just makes a referral. Of course, we listen to them but they don't determine what the outcome is. Once they turn it over to us, it's ours." The assistant principals could make decisions independent of the Principal I, but the communication was tight. "They don't talk to me every time, but if they have something that's going to be touchy,

they have always talked to me about it because I am going to get involved in it anyway." There was an appeal process for parents who were dissatisfied with a disciplinary decision. Principal I would overturn a decision when needed.

> They have the right to appeal to me. I'll be happy to listen to anything to see what their concerns are about. If I uphold it, I rarely see an assistant principal making those decisions incorrectly, but if I do, I will change it.

> Principal I perceived that the purpose of exclusion of a student was to calm the learning environment. "If the teacher has done everything that we believe, then we have to remove them from that situation for a while, from that classroom, if it's constant and persistent; no regard for what the teacher has to do." He perceived an exclusion as a support to the teacher as well as students.

> The teachers were frustrated enough trying to teach their lessons and get their stuff. When they have a kid acting out, they lose all sight. Of course, we can only do what is human. We can't do all their discipline for them. Young teachers in particular have a problem. A lot of time they may go home crying, because they can't deal with things. They are frustrated. They don't know how to deal with it. Sometimes we don't know.

The administrative staff made exclusion decisions after talking with the teachers and the parents. "Then we have to make a decision, if it's a long term suspension, if we have done everything humanly possible."

Principal I quickly was able to discuss a situation when the school staff struggled with a decision to exclude a student. He described the adherence to the zero tolerance policy of the school district in a case involving a young girl who brought marijuana to school in her purse. "But the policy is very clear on that, that

falls under zero tolerance. Now we struggle with that one all the time, but they have the ability to modify that, we just have to follow through."

Students who received a long-term suspension for 30 days or longer were allowed to attend the district's alternative programs. Principal I included this as the story of a successful exclusion of a student from school. He related,

> The goal is to give the student a different environment. I guess to try to get him into the alternative program. Now sometimes the students who go there come back in a better frame of mind when they come back. I guess because they have better one on one contact or where they mature or whatever. They come back here and do well. We have been surprised about some of the kids that has happened to. We see some; we need more alternative programs to help us with that because some kids need a wake up call. They don't need to be drug over the coals. They also don't need to out there causing trouble out here right and left.

Principal I clearly described the situations that exclusion did not seem to benefit. The story was not student specific, but circumstance specific.

> Well the kids that are hooked up on drugs, unless they get some outside agency to help them with their habit, I see little hope for them. We have several that we've had to deal with where that was their problem.

When asked to compare his school to the other schools in the district, this principal perceived that a comparison cannot be made between an inner city school and a suburban school. "As how we compare to others, I don't know. It's apples and oranges to compare." Principal I's concluding remarks about exclusion practices went back to his commitment to the educational environment.

> Well I think our bottom line is we want to have school as our first concern. We want other students in the classroom to have the ability to learn without constant disruption. And we have to take

that into consideration. I think that is a consideration, but we also take into consideration the individual and try to get them some help.

The School Improvement Plan for the school reflected, "Many students are not given adequate opportunities to appropriately develop character and social behaviors." However, there was not any plan of action to assist the students in the development of these behaviors. The goals of the plan were about student academic achievement.

Principal I was in charge of a school of approximately 600 students. The school had a high poverty rate at 58% of the student population. The minority rate was near the county average at 15.8%. The school had on the average four students per day attending in-school suspension indicating a rate of .6%. The rate of out-of-school suspension for the 00-01 school year was 18.39%. The school suspended 110 students for 305 incidents (see Table 10).

Table 10
Principal I Summary

Principal I: Primary Consideration Ethic of Justice	
School Population	600
Majority : Minority Rate Caucasian : Other	84.2% : 15.8%
Free and Reduced Lunch	58%
Students with Disabilities	23%
Aberrant Behavior	21%
Mobility	32%
Out-of-school suspension	18.39%
Incidents of Out-of-school suspension	305
Students Suspended Out of School	110
In-school suspension	4 students / day = .6%

As the overall interview was examined for patterns in the ethic of justice and the ethic of care, a pattern of justice emerged. Principal I seemed to have a more top down method of decision-making. "A teacher made a referral . . . Once they turn it over to us it's ours." "I am going to get involved in it anyway."

Policies and rules seemed to be the primary consideration over the particular situations. Lastly, Principal I had a commitment to his duty as he saw it to educate. He expressed concern over the student excluded from school, but the "bottom line is we want to have school as our first concern." Over the needs of the individual was the duty to educate the group. "We want other students in the classroom to have the ability to learn without constant disruption."

On the contrary, Principal I did have a commitment to meeting the needs of his student body. "I think we also take into consideration the individual and try to get them some help." The school used many outside resources as referral sources for the student population. A conflict did exist for this principal.

> We involve those agencies with kids who need that extra help. Sometimes these agencies are helpful when we are looking at the overall program. We have to be concerned with the group success over the individual that causes the constant disruption. We have these agencies that will help.

Principal J

The interview with Principal J was conducted in the conference room of the school. Principal J realized the heavy weight of the history and tradition of the school he served. He had lead his school for five years and described that his time "has certainly been a journey. However I do believe this is where I am

supposed to be at this point in my career". He began to describe his philosophy of education that wove a picture of the disciplinary and thus, exclusion practices. Principal J was most "proud of what we are becoming, the evolution if you will . . . So I am really proud of what we are becoming year by year."

The school used "the agenda book, it goes over the policies, procedures and expectations" at the middle school. The school used the typical middle school structure in which the teachers set up disciplinary practices within their team. When the behavior moved beyond the team level,

> It becomes an administrative decision. At the grade level, a meeting with the parents is required. After that, it is a teachers, parents and administrators to decide how best to meet the educational needs for that particular child. You notice I did not say discipline, but educational needs for that particular child.

This may exemplify Principal J's basis of student discipline. Only the principal and the two assistants were able to exclude students from school. Each principal oversaw a grade level for disciplinary actions. "I believe in a team structure, yet delegating . . . so basically we work collaboratively." The assistants were able to operate independently, "but at times they will consult with me and many times I will offer my advice especially being planted in the community for so many years dealing with and knowing the clientele and give them my wisdom, if you will."

The school was open to parents who have questions about exclusion practices. Principal J encouraged parents to talk with them at the school level or at the central office level.

> We always leave the door open for the building level appeal process, because parents always like to make sure, they like to feel

like, about being heard and neither assistant principal take offense to a parent who says I want to appeal at the building level. And neither do I take offense to a parent who says they want to appeal at the Central Office level. In fact, I encourage it. If you are not pleased with my decision, you have the right to appeal to the building level principal. I too say if you have a problem, if you are not pleased with my decision, you have the right to appeal to Central Office.

Principal J saw the purpose of exclusion of students from school as a method of discovering a way to meet the child's educational needs.

I think the intent or the purpose is after a child and the parent, along with educators have exhausted every opportunity at the classroom level to find a creative way or a more creative way to meet the educational needs of that child. I do not see exclusion as discipline. I see it as a creative way to reach that child socially, whether it's academically, whether it's emotionally and maybe there could even be a breakdown in the family unit. Somewhere that child's needs are not being met.

Excluding a student from school at times occurred because of a particular student disrupting the learning environment of others; however, such behavior did not preclude the commitment that every student had the right to learn.

When there is a break down for the entire population to learn, then we need to look at what impeding that 99% from learning? And we are going to give you a chance. We are going to work with you. However, every child, even that child has a right to learn. Not just a privilege, but the right.

Principal J described the teachers' involvement in an exclusion action as one of responsibility. "The referral process puts a lot of responsibility on the classroom teachers." Emphasis was placed on the teachers learning classroom management strategies and "getting a buy in from the parents." Prior to the administrative staff using an exclusion of a student, the teachers had distinct

responsibilities. "There has to be documentation and more or less a plan in place to meet that child's needs, more of a behavior plan in place." An exclusion decision was only made "when we have exhausted every opportunity at the team level." In addition to the behaviors covered by the county's zero tolerance policy, Principal J did not tolerate fighting. "Students fight and it's an automatic out-of-school suspension."

When asked to describe a situation in which the staff struggled with an exclusion of a student, Principal J spoke of his own continual struggle with these decisions.

> There are times it may or may not be child's fault. Sometimes it may be a lack of support from the family; sometimes it may be a classroom teacher and part of their issues and problems and concerns. And there may be times when I am going to say I'm going to put grace in motion and give them another chance to use compassion. There may be circumstances and I may need to use that mother's wit. There is a hodge podge, but the answer to the question is yes. There are times I have struggled and there are times I have to say, we need to let rubber meet the road because it is about the betterment of the entire population.

Principal J provided a story about a student where an exclusion seemed to achieve a purpose for that student; the exclusion had a positive impact on the student. She described a situation when a student received a long-term suspension that eventually resulted in a placement in an alternative school. The student did well while there and returned to the base school and began to have problems again. The administration had a parent conference. The mother described the problem as a school-based issue. Principal J reported the school responded to the child's needs and the student's behavior improved.

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(The mother said) you're not providing enough hands-on material and enrichment and engagement for my child. The mother was right; she was really, really on target. The child went to UT a couple of weeks ago with a mouse trap competition as a group and I shared with the classroom teacher what a difference there was in this child. She could not believe it.

Principal J described the situations in which the exclusion did not work; at times, the school could not meet the students' unique educational needs. He deemed it as a joint responsibility of the school and the family to work together to solve these problems.

So yes, we have repeaters and the thing about repeaters, it goes back to home life, parental support . . . Sometimes I do it to hold the parents accountable. You exclude to do it to get the parents' attention. The parent has to miss work and find alternative placement for their kids. If they get stopped on the street without suspension papers, it becomes a hardship on the parent. Soon that parent comes around and that parent becomes an ally, if you will, instead of rebellious and very negative of the school.

Principal J was reluctant to make a judgment concerning the other schools in the district. He perceived his school as very different from the others. He did have a definitive view of the broad issue of exclusion. "But I think it helps knowing the community, knowing your clientele." The concept of knowing the parents and student population was vital for this principal.

In the review of the School Improvement Plan, the description of the school contained the typical information concerning the demographics of the school and the community. The emphasis was on the improvement of academic skills for the students as required by the state's system. However, the last section contained a goal of student growth outside the realm of academics. "The

student will demonstrate the appropriate life skills to enable them to become respectful and productive citizens." This student goal was aligned with the mission statement of the school.

Principal J did lead a school that was different from others in the school district. It was the only completely urban school. The school had about 600 students and an African American population of 66% and 34% other. It had a free and reduced lunch rate at 65%. Twelve percent of the students at Principal J's school qualified for some special education services. Aberrant behavior was measured at 30%. The mobility rate of the school is at 33%. The in-school suspension rate reported by Principal J averaged 12 per day. There were 452 incidents of suspensions during the 2001 – 2001 school year. These decisions resulted in a suspension rate at 25.38% (see Table 11).

Table 11
Principal J Summary

Principal J: Primary Consideration Ethic of Care	
School Population	600
Majority: Minority Rate Caucasian : Other	34% : 66%
Free and Reduced Lunch	65%
Students with Disabilities	12%
Aberrant Behavior	30%
Mobility	33%
Out-of-school suspension	25.38%
Incidents of Out-of-school suspension	452
Students Suspended Out of School	182
In-school suspension	12 / day = 2%

As the interview was viewed through the categories of the ethic of justice and the ethic of care, a clear pattern emerged. Principal J led the school from an ethic of care perspective. He had a focus that is context sensitive. Principal J began the interview developing the historical framework for the school and ended the interview with the same message: community was important.

The principal focused on relationships. There was an emphasis on helping "each child know that he or she is a member of this building." Developing relationships with parents was vital in this middle school. "Soon that parent comes around and that parent becomes an ally." The relationships were also reciprocal and developed a give and take association even in matters of conflict. "We always leave the door open for the building level appeal process." He summarized his view concisely about relationships, "about 70% of what we do is about relationships. It is about networking and working hard."

This principal had a deep placement of himself into the school setting. He spoke of his journey in the opening of the interview. He gave examples of the intimate involvement with the students and the families. "I'll say pick up the phone and call mom or I can call the kid in and rake him over the coals, 'I remember when you were a shiny head kindergartner'." It was important enough for this principal to be a part of the community that he moved to the community to live. "I've worked in this community for 14 years and when I received the appointment, it was no doubt in my mind that I needed to move into the

community. I believed I needed to live in the community." This was an immersing of self into the situation.

Principal J had the district's middle school philosophy of teachers working in teams to develop classroom discipline strategies and interventions. The shared leadership commitment went beyond this to a collaborative relationship with the assistant principals. "It is a collaboration of strategies, working as good team members."

The needs of the individual students were an overwhelming consideration in the disciplinary actions of the school.

> After that it is a teachers, parents and administrators to decide how best to meet the educational needs for that particular child.

> Educators have exhausted every opportunity at the classroom level to find a creative way or a more creative way to meet the educational needs of that child.

> Sometimes it may be a lack of support from the family, sometimes it may be a classroom teacher and part of their issues and problems and concerns. And there may be times when I am going to say I'm going to put grace in motion and give them another chance to use compassion.

Principal J had an emphasis on policies, procedures and expectations within the school. He spoke proudly. "One thing you see in this building from the time you walk on our campus . . . you will see order, neat and cleanliness. And you will see, to the best of my ability with leadership, excellence in education." These characteristics are aligned with the ethic of justice, but the primary ethical commitment is to the ethic of care.

Principal K

The interview with Principal K was conducted with the two of us sitting at the couch and chair area of his office. Principal K had been a principal at his middle school for nine years. He described his school as,

> A more diversified school than most. Right now we are an old established community that many of the families that have been here for generations and then we have a great income division. We have very upper class with professionals: doctors, judges, lawyers and we have a large middle class. The community is a changing community. And then we have a lower income population that includes two housing projects.

The school had a strong sense of community and tradition, and the building was the old high school. Subsequently, the building and its history were the areas he was most proud of about his school.

> I think that we are proud of the building itself and the tradition of being part of the community. This is the old high school. It is a base of the community. They still view this as the base of the community as their school building and campus. We try to keep that in focus and take pride in the building.

Principal K described his disciplinary action as "set procedures." He went on to describe the procedures that combine teacher responsibilities, parent contact and eventually administrative decisions. Communication among the administrators was routine, yet somewhat informal. "They usually, if they do a suspension, unless it was a fight, I am consulted." Teachers had input through their referral to the office, but only the principal or two assistant principals made those decisions.

> We have a disciplinary referral that some teachers will jump in and say he needs to be suspended but that is not their prerogative. We

don't ask for their, on an occasion we might. But once it comes to the office, we make the decisions. A few teachers will come in and say, 'this guy needs to be suspended', but most of them don't. They turn it over to us and let us see what needs to be done.

Exclusions were not done specifically as a support to the teachers, but at times, it was an outcome of the student being removed.

Well, it may be a support for some because it gets some of the constant problems out of their classrooms for a while. It is very common for a teacher to come by and say class is really going great since he or she has not been here. I get the same thing as a last resort for them of getting some of the disruptive behavior out of their classrooms, at least temporarily.

There were some students' behaviors that resulted in automatic suspension: fighting and threatening a teacher. Typically, in-school suspension was used prior to an out-of-school suspension. Out-of-school suspension was used for repeated student problems.

When none of our interventions work and they continue to come back, we have to make that decision when we are not being successful in what we are doing so it is the end of the road and we have reached our end with them. Nothing we have done has been successful. It's an attention getter for them and their parents. And some times, it works and some times, there is no effect.

Principal K could not recall a specific incident that was a significant struggle for the administrators. However, he did recall general situations that the exclusion of students seemed to work to accomplish a goal. Many students who were suspended for fighting realize that the next time they fight, it may cost them dramatically, "it will be more than three days, it may be 10, 20 or long term." Unfortunately, Principal K related that the use of exclusion did not typically have a positive impact on student behavior.

Principal K perceived that his school's use of exclusion is in the lower third of the middle schools in the county as indicated by the statistics generated from the central office. His concluding remarks about excluding students from school were a commitment to reduce this disciplinary action.

> We try our best to not to suspend . . . So we are seriously trying. We don't want to put kids out-of-school. That takes away from their educational process and that is not good. That is not what we are about. So that is our basic philosophy; we try not to suspend. We look for alternatives instead of suspension.

The School Improvement Plan for the Principal K's school was typical of that required by the state. It was also reflective of the Principal's own view with a thorough description of the school's history and tradition. The plan included an emphasis on the students' expectations. The plan focused on academic attainment for the student body.

Principal K was the administrator in a school of about 750 students with a minority rate of 11%. The free and reduced lunch rate had grown in the past three years from 32% to its current level of 39%. Fifteen percent of the school student population qualified for special education services. The school data indicated a 14% rate of aberrant behavior in the student's. The mobility rate was 21%. The principal reported an average in-school suspension rate of about eight students per day. The out-of-school suspension rate for the 2000 – 2001 school year was 12.77%. There were 171 incidents of out-of-school suspension that involved 100 students (see Table 12).

Table 12
Principal K Summary

Principal K: Primary Consideration Ethic of Justice	
School Population	650
Majority : Minority Rate Caucasian : Other	89% : 11%
Free and Reduced Lunch	39%
Students with Disabilities	15%
Aberrant Behavior	14%
Mobility	21%
Out-of-school suspension	12.77%
Incidents of Out-of-school suspension	171
Students Suspended Out of School	100
In-school suspension	8 students / day = 1.2%

The characteristics of the ethic of justice and the ethic of care were used to categorize the components of the interview. The interview was a clear presentation of the ethic of justice in practice. The prominent decision-making style is a top down model. The assistants generally checked with Principal K when exclusion decisions were made. The teachers shared data, but at that point, the administrative staff took over. "We have a disciplinary referral that some teachers will jump in and say he needs to be suspended, but that is not their prerogative."

The school had many policies and rules that governed the disciplinary actions of the school. There were no examples of statements that could be classified in which specific student situations were considered. Policies were the primary factor considered in exclusion decisions.

Furthermore, Principal K related no comments with an emphasis on relationships. In fact, the principal could not recall any specifics about students to share. The statements made were general. Student needs were not discussed as a consideration in the interview or related in the documents reviewed. However, the principal did share about a special program within the school that seemed to make a difference with students disruptive in classroom. This program was an alternative to out-of-school suspension. He reported that for some students the program was productive. The intervention did not meet the criteria as an exclusion, because the student remained in an educational program. The principal did discuss a need to reduce out-of-school suspensions. However, this was needed because of a mandate from the middle school coordinator not as a result of students' needs.

Principal L

The interview with Principal L was conducted at the end of the day with him seated behind his desk. Principal L just completed his second year at his current school. He had been a school administrator for over 20 years. As he described his school, he related numbers and facts. He also immediately turned the conversation to discipline.

> The thing that impresses me about this school is we have the best discipline in the middle school system out of 14 middle schools because I go around to all of them, and I can tell by observing. Of course, that's always been one of my trademarks, running a tight ship as well as getting along real well with the kids.

Principal L was most proud about his building. It was recently renovated completely. He was also proud of the conduct of the students, "but I'm most proud of the way the students conduct themselves after the reputation that this school had before I arrived."

Principal L described the policies of the school that apply to student behavior. His goal was to leave nothing up for discussion. Clarity was important. "We have the handbook that specifically states what a student can do and can't do, and we're real clear here. There's not any confusion at all about what you can do and what you can't do." Parents were also informed of the requirements of their students. "We make these policies known to the parents. They have to sign off on this as well as the students."

In terms of exclusion, only the administrative staff made these decisions. The two assistant principals had leeway in their plans for students. However, many decisions are pre-determined with a set of disciplinary restrictions.

> We have two types of referrals. One stays within the classroom or the area. You know we are in teams over here. We call that in-house. Then after a student has, let's say three in-house write ups for that six weeks, then they put it on a referral, unless it's a major something that needs to come directly.

Major was defined by the principal as insubordination, cursing and fighting. Out-of-school suspensions had a similar type of expectation usage. "And then we carry a record (discipline record) from one year to the next. And OSS, we're pretty good. We'll give a student three chances on OSS, but on the fourth we go long term." Regulations also existed concerning the use of in-school suspension.

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"We'll try ISS, but I have a rule here. I do not let a student go to ISS any more than three incidences per semester." In-school suspension had its own set of procedures. The students must complete their assignments. Acceptable behavior was also a requirement.

> Yes, well now, we're quite emphatic on this, that work has to be approved by that classroom teacher, or they have to stay an extended time. It's whatever happens. Plus, if something happens and I assess where they're not cooperating, sometimes, but not much, we'll send them home, but when they come back, guess what, they still have to go back in there and spend that time.

Communication between the administrative staff was a formal process. The staff ate lunch together on a daily basis and they talked again at the end of the day. For more difficult cases, the assistants consulted with Principal L. There was an appeal process within the school if a parent had a disagreement with a decision. However, no decision had ever been changed. "I've never overridden an assistant in all my career."

The purpose of excluding a student according to Principal L was to, "wake that student up to let them know that this behavior is not acceptable." He explained that, "It's (exclusion) really not a healthy situation for a student. And anyone who thinks that it is, I'd really have to disagree with them."

While discussing the exclusion process for this school, Principal L explained at times some extenuating circumstances could be taken into consideration within the confines of the strict discipline policies. A student's severity of problem would be considered as well as the student's frequency in the

office. The student's past behavioral difficulties were always a consideration in the decision-making process.

> Well, okay. In ISS for instance, if a student is doing what we call a misdemeanor, a speed bump in the road like disturbing class in a low-key way. Sometimes we will put students in ISS to make up their work if they're getting behind. And we insist on students trying to stay up on their work so we'll put them in there if just to let them catch up their work, but we're real strict here about being in an unauthorized area. So we'll use an in-school suspension for that. Or we'll use an in-school suspension for, maybe it wasn't real insubordination, but it was bordering, so we take that into consideration. We also take into consideration if we've never seen student. We try to work – we'll treat them a little bit differently if they've had a record with us.

Principal L was asked to describe a situation that the administrators struggled with during the past year. He shared about a sixth grade girl that was mature for her age and "she was always stirring up something that had sexual content." The teachers worked with her some, but Principal L drew a line with her disruptive behavior.

> Finally, I just got tired of it. I told the assistant, "we've suspended her three times and the next time she came in he had to" – a beautiful girl. He had to send her home for good for she was disrupting class, and we have a pet peeve here, and we promised these teachers when we came in here that class disruptions would be at a minimal. And we followed through with that in a very strong fashion.

Next, Principal L was asked to describe a situation in which an exclusion of a student from the educational environment succeeded in some desired goal. He reported that he felt exclusion for students never has a positive outcome. The decision may have benefited the rest of the classroom, but not the individual child.

Most students are habitual offenders that we suspend. They just never – you'd think one suspension would do it but it doesn't. Now from the teacher's standpoint teachers say, "Hey, it makes a difference in the room," but we rarely ever do one where I think the student learned from it.

In comparing his exclusion rate to other schools in the district, Principal L perceived himself as having "great control" over the students. He was very comfortable with his suspension rate. The school staff was working hard to decrease it each year, but without "sacrificing any of our principles in doing it."

Principal L's concluding remarks about exclusion of students discussed the need to do thorough investigations before making decisions about students. He believed it was always better to make a mistake on the side of the child.

I'd rather be wrong than at the student's expense, we know that that student has done that, we can't quite prove it, but we will not suspend that student unless we have hard evidence fact, it's beyond a shadow of a doubt.

The School Improvement Plan for Principal L's school included the necessary components required by the state. The plan included a statement of student personal responsibility. It also contained a goal of reducing office referrals resulting in suspensions. The plan included the use of Character Counts!, counseling and peer mediation to reduce the number of suspensions. Reviewing the rules and expectations with parents and students was also included as a key factor in reducing suspensions.

Principal L's school had a student population of about 950 students. The minority students were counted as individual students rather than a percentage of the population. The school only had 28 minority students. The student

Table 13

Principal L Summary

Principal L : Primary Consideration Ethic of Justice	
School Population	950
Majority : Minority Rate Caucasian : Other	97% : 3%
Free and Reduced Lunch	20%
Students with Disabilities	11%
Aberrant Behavior	12%
Mobility	19%
Out-of-school suspension	11.18%
Incidents of Out-of-school suspension	243
Students Suspended Out of School	111
In-school suspension	10 student / day = 1%

mobility rate of the school was 19%. The free and reduced lunch rate was 20%. Eleven percent of the students received special education services. Aberrant behavior was measured at 12% based on school data. The in-school suspension rate as reported by Principal K averaged about 10 students per day. There were 243 incidents of out-of-school suspension. One hundred and eleven students were suspended out-of-school resulting in a rate of 11.18% in the 2000 – 2001 school year (see Table 13).

A clear pattern of the ethic of justice emerged for the interview with Principal L using the predetermined categories. He thoroughly demonstrated a top down method of decision-making. He stated he was not a micro manager, but gave several examples of his direct intervention. "Finally I just got tired of it. I told him we've suspended her three times and the next time she came in, he had

to. . ." Furthermore, he described the disciplinary action as his own. " Down through the years, I've added, I've deleted." There was also day-to-day accountability for the assistants and their decisions. "I do that day-to-day. I always ask them at lunch. I eat lunch with them everyday. And I ask them, 'What have you done this morning?'"

The major considerations for this principal were the policies and rules. He emphasized the importance of the student handbook stating out student expectations. "We have the handbook that specifically states what a student can do and can't do, and we're real clear here." The policies for the school governed the number of teacher referrals before the office reacts and then how the office reacts. The policies governed how many times a student could be assigned to in-school suspension prior to a mandatory out-of-school suspension. The policies governed how many times a student was suspended out of school, before a long-term suspension was used. "Teachers like working where you have set rules for the students."

Fairness and equity were governing factors for Principal L. Consistency was vital for this principal. "But I find that the thing that has worked here, as it would anywhere, is that we're consistent from the first day of school until the last day."

Relationships took a lower priority than the commitment to policy. "Now sometimes the parent will get a little upset if they're not familiar with the

procedure *(exclusion procedure).* But that's just the way it goes." It was clear to

Principal L that the students must align themselves with the expectations.

> And by the end of the year, due to the fact they had eliminated themselves – we always have a real good closing because we don't have anybody here causing any trouble by then. They're all gone. We had about ten probably, that we had gone at closing.

> Principal L has a strong sense of duty. He stated he felt that the exclusion

of students did not help the individual student, but continued to operate in this

manner. "But we rarely ever do one *(exclusion)* where I think the student learned

from it." This principal was committed to the adults involved in the educational

process. This was a part of his prescribed duty.

> The teachers – "I am a teacher's principal . . . I have one simple rule. That is, the teacher is the coach, the quarterback in the classroom, and what they say goes."

> The parents – "I can tell, and I can tell if when the parents leave, if they are smiling or not and that worries me. I'm not paranoid, but I'm real big on parents having a good impression when they leave here."

> The PTA – "When I came in here I told the PTA what I was going to do and that it would be rough for a while. We had this place in order in about five weeks."

> The community – "I've already thanked the community for another great year, thanks for another great year."

Discussion

The primary question of this research project was, "How do principals

decide to exclude students from educational settings?" Underlying questions

were examined to explore the decision-making process from a theoretical perspective. This section is the discussion of those research questions. Each research question was addressed individually with examples of the supporting data provided. A table was used to summarize these data (See Table 14).

Defining Exclusion

Two data points were considered in determining the exclusion rate of the school: in-school suspension and out-of-school suspensions. The in-school suspension rate was a self-report by the principal of the school. The question asked each was, "What is the average attendance in the in-school suspension over the course of the year?" An independent source could not verify these data. The school district's student information system supplied the out-of-school suspension rate for each school. This is an independent data source not based on the principal's memory. The out-of-school suspension rate is the more powerful of the two pieces of information.

Middle School Concept Influence

Each of the principals interviewed were employed in the same school district as required by the methods of the research. Each principal espoused the commitment to the middle school concept of team organization within each grade level (National Middle School Association, 2000). These teams organize and

Table 14

Ethical Commitment & Data Table

Principal	Ethical Commitment	Exclusion Rank (low to high)	ISS Rate	OSS Rate	Student Programs Included in Interview	SIP Contains Support for Students
Principal A	Care	1	.3%	2.36%	Present	Present
Principal E	Care	2	.6%	2.94%	Present	Absent
Principal B	Care	3	.4%	3.70%	Absent	Absent
Principal C	Care	4	1.8%*	9.95%	Present	Absent
Principal F	Justice	5	.5%	10.98%	Absent	Absent
Principal L	Justice	6	1%	11.18%	Absent	Absent
Principal K	Justice	7	1.2%	12.77%	Present	Absent
Principal G	Mixed	8	.5%	14.17%	Present	Present
Principal H	Justice	9	1.4%	15.07%	Absent	Absent
Principal I	Justice	10	.6%	19.39%	Present	Present
Principal D	Justice	11	.8%	21.76	Present	Present
Principal J	Care	12	2%	25.38%	Present	Present

*ISS program not open every day of year

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made decisions concerning their team together. This organizational pattern lent itself to an ethic of care organizational trait based on shared leadership of the principal. This strategy of management was a requirement of the district not a choice made by the individual. Therefore, this characteristic was not considered as patterns emerged.

Categorization of Principals

Ethic of Care Principals

The interviews, documents and demographic data were used as a basis of the categorizing each of the twelve principals. Five principals clearly fell into the category of the ethic of care: Principals A, B, C, E and J. Four of these principals: A, B, C, and E, had the lowest out-of-school suspension rates in the school district. Three of the five, principals A, B and E, also had the lowest in-school suspension rates of all the principals. Principals C and J's rate were higher than the rates of some of the ethic of justice principals. Principal C indicated in his response that his in-school suspension monitor was frequently absent; therefore, the number of students was higher when the program was open. Four of the five ethic of care principals suspended at a lower rate than the ethic of justice principals.

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The principals who were committed to an ethic of care demonstrated a shared form of leadership. All the principals interviewed in the study mentioned the use of an academic team related to the middle school concept. However, these principals discussed shared leadership past this point. Principal C actually stated that he gave power to teachers to make the decision of when to send students to the office instead of having specific guidelines dictated to them. Principal E gave extensive details of the team concept in his school. He considered the teams as having the power to establish their own disciplinary actions. He described a system that gave ownership of classroom structure and the power to establish rules to all constituents, even students. He described students' input in all areas of school rules except those dictated at the central office level. Principal A described his shared decision-making through the leadership team that assists him and the assistant principals. Principal C described in his interview the process he used in establishing the student expectations. Teachers put the plan together with his guidance. During the interviews, each of the ethic of care principals shared examples of their shared leadership. Principal J described his relationship with his assistants,

> We are a, I believe in a team structure yet delegating . . . basically we work collaboratively . . . I have full confidence in both assistance, but at times they will consult with me and many times I will offer my advice especially being planted in the community for so many years dealing with and knowing the cliental and give them my wisdom, if you will.

These principals had a strong focus on the context of disciplinary decisions. The particulars of each case were important in their decision-making processes.

> The situations they get into where it is a gray area, where you are getting lots of information from lots of different sources and its conflicting information and there is no clear way to pin down exactly what is happened. Those are the ones I struggle with more the most. (Principal A)

> And it has to do with the kid too. If it's the first time, we have seen the student and they did something stupid and they got in trouble for it they might deserve 3 days out of school, but we might decide to give them four to five days in school. Based on when we met with the parent. We try to we are looking at the justice, mercy, what's kind for that particular student. We look at our issues; the word punishment is very offensive to me. I react; I react physically, in terms of punishing kids in that kind of things. (Principal A)

> They come to me and I listen to what the assistant has to say and the parent . . . If I felt that a child was being mistreated and I am a child advocate before anything else. Whether its dealing with teachers or assistant principals whatever, the kids comes first. (Principal B)

> We don't use the three strikes and you're suspended protocol; basically, we look at everything case by case. And the thing that separates us from other schools in the way we approach discipline . . . The whole thing goes back to a need to change the behavior rather than punish the behavior . . . I can't say there is a typical crime or misdemeanor that leads to an exclusion from school. Except to say if the behavior is serious enough we may consider it, but is something we try to avoid. We try to look at other avenues involving behavior. (Principal C)

> We are certainly not going to say that the third time you chew gum you are going to the office and if you are in the office three times you automatically go to in-school suspension. No, that's not going to happen because there are too many different personalities and

too many different minds out there deciding what constitutes an office referral. How the write-ups are handled, what the difference is between a kid horse playing and being violent for example, there are too many intangibles there. (Principal C)

But we decided to not even go anywhere with zero tolerance on it because we are suppose to consider mitigating circumstances and we felt he had done everything he could do here as a child to straighten out the issue. (Principal E)

I always try to be a good listener. I am very reflective. Many times, I may not make a decision on the spot. I will tell the parent I really need to think about it. I need to look at my notes. I will tell them I need to look at my notes and take that time to reflect. I will need time to go through a stack of notes. There are times it may or may not be child's fault. Sometimes it may be a lack of support from the family, sometimes it may be a classroom teacher and part of their issues and problems and concerns. There may be times when I am going to say I'm going to put grace in motion and give them another chance to use compassion. There may be circumstances and I may need to use that mother's wit. There is a hodge-podge. (Principal J)

These same principals had a strong commitment to relationships. Communication with parents, teachers and students was significant to each of these principals. The involvement of students and parents in the school program are also key considerations for these principals.

About 70% of what we do is about relationships. It is about networking and working hard. (Principal J)

I guess I am most proud of how many students are involved in so many things. Our teachers stay after school. They come before school. They do things during the day. We offer so much for these kids to be involved in. (Principal A)

One of the things I wanted to do in coming to *(this school)* was establish a discipline policy that really focused on communication more so than anything else. When I say communication involving

the parent, the teacher, the administration as far as dealing with kids who have discipline issues. (Principal B)

Our communication among each other is, once again, about how to target a behavior and change it rather than punish it. The key determination in that is communication and communication with parents about the child . . . One of the things we decided when we became acquainted was when kids are sitting in the office we will contact the family and when we contact the family our approach would be to get the family to help us resolve the behavior, rather than inform them of how their child behaved. (Principal C)

My goal has always been to be a school where the faculty as a staff operate as a family, a cohesive unit where we support each other and like each other. (Principal E)

The five ethic of care principals emphasized the needs of students repeatedly in their interviews. They discussed programs in their schools that were present to meet the needs of students. They also shared their personal time commitment to individual students who were experiencing difficulty.

We also have a guidance program to where kids . . .might have issues that become discipline issues. They can be sent to guidance for individual or group counseling out there. Lots of times our guidance counselors will work out problems. Like, if it's one of these girl fights kind of things, where you got six to eight girls who are going after each other. They will get them up there and let them talk it out. If it takes an hour or whatever. Our counselors are real good at that and they are not involved in discipline; they are involved with counseling. Helping these girls grow up and learn skills to work through their issues. (Principal A)

Principal E discussed the nature of his in-school suspension program built on meeting student needs rather than a punishment model.

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That space is a regular size classroom with individual study carrels and a teaching assistant who supervises this . . . She teaches them manners. She has a table in the room where they have to practice table setting. And they love her and they will do anything she says, but she will not mess around and won't take any nonsense. But they respect her a great deal; you don't need a warden you just need someone who takes care of them. And my teachers say it is too nice in there. It is suppose to be a place they don't want to go. Essentially, they don't like to go there because they are not with their friends and they have to work all day. But she cares about them and they know it. They can sense it.

These ethic of care principals struggled with their sense of duty. They each had strong sense of duty to the need for a strong educational environment, but each espoused the personal commitment to meet the needs of the individual student as well.

I believe that schools should be primarily academic institutions and in being academic institutions, I feel it is very important for teachers to be able to teach and for students to be able learn and if there are students who are denying teachers the opportunity to teach and denying other students the opportunity to learn, then they are times it is necessary to exclude kids from the classroom and I firmly believe in that. (Principal C)

Right now, we are struggling with that in terms of what do we do with these disruptive kids in the classroom. You have one or two who are being disruptive and 25-30 that are losing their educational opportunity because of it. We need to be doing something about it. That's rough, that's a hot issue right now. (Principal A)

Well, we have tried to keep that *(suspension reduction)* in the forefront of our decision-making, but generally, when we do suspend it is because it needs, it has to be done. It is not just something we are doing willy-nilly. I don't think, as I recall, it is always our last resort more than it is routine procedure. (Principal E)

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I think the intent or the purpose is after a child and the parent, along with educators have exhausted every opportunity at the classroom level to find a creative way or a more creative way to meet the educational needs of that child. (Principal J)

Each the ethic of care principals discussed, either in their interviews or in their School Improvement Plans, programs in their schools designed to provide support for their students. Four of the five School Improvement Plans stated a commitment to the total student. The plans focused on more than just academic attainment. Student benefits beyond achievement were a part of their plans. Principal C summarizes the ideas espoused by the other principals concisely, "The whole thing goes back to a need to change the behavior instead of punish the behavior."

The principals with the lowest exclusion rates demonstrated a commitment to the ethic of care in all categories considered. Their patterns were distinct and evident. Their decision-making processes were different from their colleagues with higher exclusion rates.

Ethic of Justice Principals

Six principals' responses were categorized as falling into the ethic of justice pattern. Principals D, F, H, I, K, L were school leaders with clear ethic of justice emphasis. The out-of-school suspension rates for these principals were all higher than all but one of the principals with the ethic of care commitment.

These principals spoke of top down decision-making patterns. Principal F described himself as the CEO, "When I stepped into this role, I found myself as more of a CEO rather than the aspect of being a disciplinarian type of thing." Principal I gave a clear message of administrative control, "A teacher just makes a referral. Of course, we listen to them but they don't determine what the outcome is. Once they turn it over to us, it's ours." Principal K reflects a similar view, "We have a disciplinary referral that some teachers will jump in and say he needs to be suspended but that is not their prerogative." Communication between Principal L and his assistants was very tight. The group ate lunch together daily and spoke again together at the end of the day.

Policies and rules were the prominent consideration of this group of principals. Principal L's commitment was to clarity of rules and regulations for the students and parents.

> We have the handbook that specifically states what a student can do and can't do, and we're real clear here. There's not any confusion at all about what you can do and what you can't do . . . We make these policies known to the parents. They have to sign off on this as well as the students.

The other principals had similar commitments. Rules, policies and requirements of the district were prominent in the decision-making process.

> We have a set procedure that teachers are suppose to follow when there is a discipline problem. (Principal K)

> We have a regular system of demerits that, teachers keep those. Minor offenses, they usually do not even turn those in, but they write them down and have students sign them . . . And after four,

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five or six demerits they'll turn them in and we will have a conference with the student, with the teachers. (Principal I)

We have the overall Knox county code of conduct as well as the state code that we are able to use. The students are informed of that by means of the agenda book. Every body gets a copy of that. The rules and regs for the school are put out within that. (Principal H)

They've (*the teachers*) had to write the kid up 5 times before we even think about it, removing them from the classroom. Unless it's extreme conditions, fighting, throwing something, profanity toward a teacher, fighting, something of that nature. Just general kid behavior they have to be written up five times. (Principal D)

The principals that had a strong ethic of justice viewed relationships as a matter of fairness and equity. Little give and take were represented in their interviews. Roles were defined with a clear hierarchy identified. During the interview with Principal K, he made no mention of relationships with parents or teachers. He also did not give any specific student examples about exclusion. His interview seemed one removed from the people. His emphasis was on policies, procedures and tradition. Following the correct process was more relevant than the people involved were. Principal K had a series of statements confirming his commitment to equity.

But I find that the thing that has worked here, as it would anywhere, is that we're consistent from the first day of school until the last day.

Yes, now sometimes the parent will get a little upset if they're not familiar with the procedure. But that's just the way it goes.

And by the end of the year due the fact they *(disruptive students)* had eliminated themselves – we always have a real good closing because we don't have anybody here causing any trouble by then. They're all gone. We had about ten probably, that we had gone at closing.

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Principal F had a similar stance about violation of policy. His school had a strong reaction to fighting. There is no investigation. If a student hits, the consequence is across the board for all students.

> Anything that violates school board policy, but if you fight you go home, no questions asked. You hit, you start, it does not matter. You are going home no matter.

These principals with strong commitments to the ethic of justice focused on rights, specifically the right to learn.

> One of the things we tell teachers is that we don't want one or two kids disrupting so that you can't teach to the remainder of the student body and basically that is all it is. Just to make sure they can have a decent day to teach. (Principal D)

> There are going to be rules and regulations you are going to have to follow in any job that you have. If you don't follow those, there is a good chance you will end up losing that job. It is a skill you have to acquire. For some it is difficult . . . That usually, one individual does not have the right to disrupt the entire learning process. So they are removed from that situation if they are and disciplinary action is taken. (Principal H)

> We show them if you are not here to learn and behave yourselves and do what you are suppose to be doing, you are going to lose that opportunity. I can't make anyone learn, but you don't have the right to prevent someone else from learning. Inappropriate behavior can cause you to lose this privilege. (Principal F)

> Well, I think our bottom line is we want to have school as our first concern. We want other students in the classroom to have the ability to learn without constant disruption. (Principal I)

The ethic of justice principals demonstrated a commitment to the rights of education. These rights were emphasized as the rights of the group rather than the rights of the individual.

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That usually, one individual does not have the right to disrupt the entire learning process. So they are removed from that situation if they are and disciplinary action is taken. (Principal H)

One of the things we tell teachers is that we don't want one or two kids disrupting so that you can't teach to the remainder of the student body and basically that is all it is. Just to make sure they can have a decent day to teach. And also to send a message to that child. If you act this way, you are not going to be in that class. (Principal D)

I can't make anyone learn, but you don't have the right to prevent someone else from learning. Inappropriate behavior can cause you to lose this privilege. (Principal F)

Each of these principals had strong statements to make concerning their commitment to duty. They viewed their number one commitment to the group as a whole not to the individual student, even when they felt that exclusion was not beneficial for a student and even harmful. Their commitment to the learning environment won out over the individual student.

They *(disruptive students)* impact everybody else. I guess I have a big thing about that. I can't make you learn, but you don't have the right to keep someone else from learning. And your behaviors do that and you don't have the right to infringe. (Principal F)

(Does suspension ever achieve a purpose?) No, I can't. Not for the students. Most students are habitual offenders that we suspend. They just never — you'd think one suspension would do it but it doesn't . . . but we rarely ever do one where I think the student learned from it. (Principal L)

We have, I am not proud to say but I am not ashamed to say it, we have a high suspension rate. We have a high in-school suspension rate. The reputation of this school is that it is a safe environment and it is an educational environment. And we are going to have education. (Principal H)

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Mixed Pattern Principal

One principal exhibited a mixed pattern of ethical representation. Principal G's responses were categorized across the matrices of the ethic of care and the ethic of justice. Of the five categories examined Principal G demonstrated no clear commitment. In fact, his responses were conflicting at times. For example, he related, "there are some things *(student behavior)* that have no excuse. Whatever your excuse is, it is not acceptable". On the contrary, he related, "we don't have a flat policy if you do this it is an out-of-school irregardless, because we really try to treat every case individually, as an individual case." This principal's school had exclusion rates higher than the ethic of care principals. The school's exclusion rate was also higher than four of the six ethic of justice principals in the study. The interview, documents and observations reflected that Principal G, himself, had a strong commitment to the ethic of justice when he was directly involved. However, others in the school were instrumental in instituting programs directed toward meeting student needs. Several of the examples given were of programs and initiatives that various staff were able to implement in the school. This factor appeared to be the reason Principal G could not be clearly placed in one of the two ethical considerations.

Summary

These data collected through the research process were presented in this chapter. These data were organized by individual principal and school. The

principal's interviews were described first, followed by the description of the School Improvement Plan, and lastly the demographics of the school were described. The findings of the discussion about the individual principals were based on the application of the ethic of justice and ethical of care categories. An analysis of each principal's ethical considerations was completed. The section on each principal was concluded with a table representing the data discussed. Lastly, the patterns were discussed from the data analysis process.

Chapter V

Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary of Methods

The purpose of this study was to describe the relationship that exists between middle school principals' beliefs and values and the decisions they make about student discipline. A phenomenological design was used, resulting in a description of themes and patterns. A primary research question was developed to guide the study: How do principals decide to exclude students from educational settings? Two subordinate questions were developed to define further the study. First, was there a difference in the use of the ethic of care and the ethic of justice of principals who exclude students from the educational environment at a high rate compared to those principals who exclude students from the educational environment at a lower rate? Second, what policies or practices do principals have in place within the school environment that reflects their beliefs about exclusion practices?

Qualitative research methods were used to complete this research project. The data were collected through focused interviews of a purposive sample of twelve middle school principals working in the same school district with urban

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and suburban schools. The study was delimited by the use of a single school district so that the subjects would have the same policies governing the schools. Secondly, the principals must have served at least two years in the same middle school.

Interviews with the selected principals were conducted over a two-month period. Descriptive and reflective notes were taken during the interviews. Each was audio-recorded and than transcribed verbatim into a written script. Demographic data about each of the middle schools were also collected. These data included the student population, minority: majority rate, out-of-school suspension rate, in-school suspension rate, mobility rate, special education rate, aberrant behavior rate and the poverty rate. The School Improvement Plans of each school were reviewed for references to discipline and programs for students. The data obtained were described through a detailed, narrative description of the patterns, categories and themes observed using the ethic justice and ethic of care theoretical perspective,

Summary of Findings

- A pattern of difference was discovered between the exclusion rates of principals using the ethic of care and the ethic of justice.

Five principals were classified as ethic of care principals as their interviews and documents were examined for patterns. Four of the five principals had the lowest

out-of-school suspension rates in the district. Three of these five principals also had the lowest in-school suspension rates in the school district. These principals also had programs and policies in place at their schools that supported the care of students.   Six principals were clearly classified with ethic of justice considerations. These principals had higher out-of-school suspension rates than four of those categorized as ethic of care principals. One principal demonstrated an unclear pattern.   His responses and documents were conflicting.   His exclusion rates were also higher than four of the principals with ethic of care considerations.

- One principal demonstrated an ethic of care commitment, but had the highest exclusion rate in the district.

Principal J's exclusion rate was the highest in the district.   His school had demographic characteristics that were extremely different from the other schools in the district. The racial difference was significant. The majority of the student population was African American at 66%. The school ranking next in terms of the African American population was 20%. The poverty rate of Principal J's school rested at 65%, also the highest in the county. The other schools in the districts were more culturally aligned.   Mukuria (2002) completed a study comparing the role of principals in predominantly African American urban middle schools with suspension rates. He discovered that the principals with the lower suspension rates had care and concern for the students.   These principals

followed the district's suspension policy, but did so with a contingency approach to discipline. They modified rules as they saw fit depending on the circumstances. Merkuria's findings align with the ethic of care framework. Not having a school with a similar demographic profile hinders the ability for a comparison to the other schools within the district.

- The ethic of justice and the mixed pattern principals stated that exclusions were used to preserve the educational environment and that it was not beneficial for the student excluded.

These principals espoused a dislike for the exclusion of students, viewed it as a last resort and saw it as a hindrance to students' learning. Excluding an individual student was chosen in order to preserve the overall educational environment and as a support to teachers. They consistently chose to sacrifice the learning of the one student in order to protect the learning of the group.

- The principals with a commitment to the ethic of care could identify other avenues of intervention before exclusion was used or instead of using exclusion.

They described individual commitments and programs by support staff and teachers that were attempts to meet the needs of students. Principal C described his use of guidance counselors to help students resolve issues. Principals B and C described emphasis on parent – teacher conferences as a

prerequisite to a disciplinary action. Principal E described the use of in-school suspension to teach new skills and demonstrate a caring relationship. Principal A described his and his assistants' personal involvement with students, including checking with them on a daily basis and being a confidant for troubled students. Principal J actual described curriculum changes made in order to help students be successful instead of using an exclusion. These principals spoke frequently about student needs rather than punishments of behaviors. They also viewed exclusion as a reaction of last resort.

- All of the principals espoused a strong commitment to the educational process, specifically students' learning.

Several issues were important to the principals that did not seem related to the ethical considerations or to their exclusion rates. The School Improvement Plans exemplified this concern. All of them had plans to improve student academic performance. Their personal statements also reflected this commitment. Principal C, an ethic of care principal, said, "I believe that schools should be primarily academic institutions. I feel it is very important for teachers to be able to teach and for students to be able learn." An ethic of justice principal, Principal I, made a similar statement. "Well, I think our bottom line is we want to have school as our first concern. We want other students in the classroom to have the ability to learn without constant disruption."

- School safety was another issue all the principals viewed as a primary responsibility of the school leader.

A key consideration for all the principals was student behavior that was dangerous to the overall student population. The principals agreed in a strong commitment in providing a safe learning environment for the students and staff. An ethic of justice principal said, "The reputation of this school is that it is a safe environment and it is an educational environment." Similarly, an ethic of care principal said, "I think I have the responsibility to protect almost 600 kids and I take that seriously. If someone is endangering the well-being of the staff or the kids, I will take whatever measures I need to protect them." A dividing line did appear, however, between the two ethical considerations in the classification of disruptive behavior and than the subsequent appropriate administrative response to such behavior.

Conclusions

- The values held by principals have a direct effect on the way exclusion policies were implemented in schools.

School district policies, procedures and mandates seemed to be considered by most principals in the school district, but professional judgment was used to temper or accentuate these. Policies and practices influence the principals' exclusion practices, but the principals' ethical commitments did influence their

decisions. The ethic of care principals used the individual circumstances of student behaviors to influence their decisions. While the ethic of justice principals viewed the policies, procedures and mandates as more binding. They viewed decisions as dictated by these forces without much room for wavering.

- Principals have more direct influence and control over the practices and policies of their own schools.

A difference was also found in the programs and supports available to students prior to disciplinary actions. While both categories of principals viewed the exclusion of students from school as a last resort, the ethic of care principals used more frequent and varied interventions with students. After an exclusion decision was made, the ethic of care principals were more open to parental appeals of the disciplinary actions. They actually considered a parental appeal, listened for mitigating circumstances and overturned decisions of an assistant. The ethic of justice principals viewed parental appeals generally as necessary, but a united front of administrators was the important factor in these meetings. The ethic of care principals also were more directly involved with students personally. The ethic of care principals gave lengthy, detailed stories about exclusion actions with students. The ethic of justice principals also had difficulty sharing stories about students. Their stories were general in nature, not pertaining to a specific student.

Recommendations from the Data

Recommendations for School Leaders

- This research should be reviewed by school leaders in an effort to examine their own beliefs and values.

The principal is the most significant factor in determining school climate (Allen, 1981). Principals exclude students from their educational setting frequently as a means of disciplining students. The loss of instructional time that occurs because of students' exclusion from school must be critically reviewed. School leaders must reflect how their personal and professional values affect their exclusion decisions. If a culture of care in the school setting will help redeem instructional time for students, then these values must be considered.

- School leaders should use alternate behavioral interventions instead of exclusion practices, if they profess a commitment that every student should have the opportunity to learn.

As Principal J stated, "Every student has the right to learn, not just a privilege." A plethora of research is available for principals of initiatives that can be instituted in school settings to reduce students' exclusion. The principals identified in this study as operating in an ethic of care used their guidance counselors to counsel students who were having conflict, required parent and teacher communication and became personally involved in developing and implementing support

services for their students. The need for an orderly, safe school environment and a decrease in student exclusion from school can be reconciled. Principals operating in an ethic of care demonstrated this reconciliation. Research data have indicated that students are motivated to learn in classrooms with teachers they perceived as caring and when the students have a sense of belonging (Finn, 1989). Furthermore, Goodenow (1991) found that students' sense of belonging in a classroom influenced their academic effort more than their interest in the academic subject. As these factors of care influenced learning in the classroom, the impact of these characteristics of care could influence the school learning environment.

- School leaders should reflect on their use of exclusion decisions. The difference in timing of these decisions depended on the principals' commitment to meeting the needs of students or punishing the students.

From this study, the principal of both ethical considerations described using exclusion of students from school as a last resort. However, the ethic of care principals required that more interventions and support be implemented by the school prior to making an exclusion decision. While the ethic of justice principals established a predetermined number criteria of student offenses (after the fourth teacher referral a student was suspended), which would than trigger an automatic exclusion. Sauter (2001) suggested that any form of suspension be based on (a) the student's best educational interests, (b) conducted in a manner

that teaches the student more appropriate behaviors, (c) supported by empirical research, and (d) used as a last resort. Discipline strategies must incorporate the learning and behavioral needs of each child with the desired outcomes, if they are to correct maladaptive behaviors.

Recommendations for School Districts

- Discussion of decision-making practices should be a part of the professional development of principals.

If a commitment to the ethic of care will help to reduce these exclusion practices, then staff development in the area of ethics must be considered for school leaders who are currently employed.

Recommendations for Leadership Training Programs

- Higher education institutes should promote a strong discourse in the practice of excluding students from the educational process.

This research could contribute to the discussion of exclusionary practices by school leaders. The patterns found in this school district could be discussed and applied to other school districts and individual school leaders. Qualitative research methods were useful in examining specific situations. After completing research on the ethical decision-making of principals, Denig and Quinn (2001) recommended that every administrative training program contain a component of collaborative decision-making. They contend that future leaders should be

trained to analyze the ethical dimensions of problem situations, preparing them to work with others to make decisions that are moral.

Recommendations for Future Research

- A need exists for research in the area of decision-making processes of school leaders

The research of decision-making processes of school leaders is difficult to assess. The use of a qualitative research methodology to understand these processes would be appropriate. More specifically, research that challenges the manner in which disciplinary decisions are made that lead to the exclusion of students should be conducted. The exclusion of students from school should go the way of corporal punishment. Just as most school districts view corporal punishment as barbaric, adults prohibiting students from receiving an education when compensatory attendance is the law is inappropriate.

- The research methods employed in this study should be replicated in other school districts in order to discover whether the pattern holds true.

If a more expansive body of work was completed it could help determine if the pattern of this selected school district could be generalized. This knowledge could help under gird the current movements in education of the full service school (Dryfoos, 1998) and the challenge to care in schools (Noddings, 1992).

- Additional research is needed across several school districts in which the schools are matched demographically.

If these factors are held constant, then the principal influence could perhaps be seen more distinctly. In this study, Principal J led a school so different from the other schools in the district; it was difficult to distinguish the effect of the ethical consideration of the principal as an overriding influence in exclusion decisions. A study should be conducted that matches the demographic characteristics of the schools and a similar discovery process used. These school leaders should be researched to see if the elements apply.

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Appendices

Appendix A

FORM B
APPLICATION
FORM B

IRB # _____

Date Received in OR _____

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects

I. IDENTIFICATION OF PROJECT

1. Principal Investigator Co-Principal Investigator:
Karen Loy
625 Gamble Drive
Heiskell, TN 37754
Home: 947-1818
Work: XXX-XXXX
FAX: 539-3039
E-Mail: KELOY625@yahoo.com
Faculty Advisor:
Gary Ubben, Dissertation Committee Chair
Phone: 974-6154
E-Mail: ubben@utk.edu
Department:
Department of Education Administration and Cultural Studies
Project Classification:
Dissertation

2. Title of Project:
Exclusion Decisions of Middle School Principals

3. Starting Date:
Upon IRB Approval

4. Estimated Completion Date:
August 2002

5. External Funding
None

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II. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study is to describe the relationship that may exist between middle school principals' beliefs and values and the decisions they make about student discipline using a qualitative design resulting in a description of themes and patterns. The study will be defined generally as a discovery of school leaders' values of caring and justice influence upon their decisions of student exclusion. The study will ascertain if the beliefs of principals that use student exclusion at a high rate differ from the beliefs of those principals that use student exclusion at a low rate.

III. DESCRIPTION AND SOURCE OF RESEARCH PARTICIAPANTS

A mid-sized school district with a selection of urban and suburban schools will be chosen. The study will be limited to middle schools only. Approximately 10-15 middle schools in a single school district is preferred so that the sample will have the same policies governing the schools, yet provide enough school leaders for rich data sources. The principals must be in at least their second year of service in the same middle school. This will insure the exclusion data from the previous school year is theirs alone. All of the middle school principals in the school district will be asked to participate in the study if they meet the longevity criteria.

IV. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

An interview will be conducted by this researcher with each of the principals individually. In a focused interview, the same basic open-ended questions will be used to guide the process, but follow-up questions and probes will the permitted to clarify and refine. The interview will take place in a location chosen by the interviewee to be comfortable and quiet. A two-hour time block will be solicited from the participants. The participants will remain confidential for the purposes of this study. Descriptive and reflective notes will be taken during the interview and each will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim into a written document. The written document will be shared with the interviewees for their review and to provide an opportunity to clarify any ideas or comments in writing to the researcher. A follow-up interview may be needed if the data warrants this extension.

V. SPECIFIC RISKS AND PROTECTION MEASURES

The school district and the participants will remain confidential for this research process. Only the IRB, the dissertation committee, the principal researcher, the school district and the principals interviewed will know of their participation in the study. The school district will be described only in general terms and the principals will be given a number for identification within the study. The demographic description of the schools will be

general so as not to identify the schools locations. The specific risks are minimal to the participants. The suspension data is a matter of public record that is released on an annual basis. Only the interview data will be original and the discussions will be completed at the willingness of the participants to divulge their information. The interview data will be kept at the home office of the primary researcher. There should be no fear of reprisal from the investigator. There is no risk of harm to the student population. No student descriptions will be used.

VI. BENEFITS

Principals use excluding students from their educational setting frequently as a means of disciplining students. When students are not allowed to participate in the educational process the cost for those students and society is grave. An ill-afforded school practice restricts or denies student access to educational opportunities. The beliefs and values of the school leaders that make the decisions to exclude students from schools must be examined. The loss of instructional time that occurs because of students' exclusion from school must be critically reviewed. Principals as the leader of schools, make decisions daily that influence the instruction of students. School safety and orderly classrooms are a necessary part of a culture of an effective school. The need for an orderly, safe school environment and a decrease in student exclusion from school needs to be reconciled. Data to understand how principals' own beliefs and values affect this relationship is needed. We must use every remedy we have to redeem instructional time for all students. This research will advance the knowledge that we have about these important issues. The preparation of school leaders is an important part of any college of education's programs. This is a vital responsibility for higher education institutions. This study will enhance the principal preparation programs as the beliefs and values or caring and justice are examined as to their impact on student exclusion decisions. Administration and supervision training programs must consider the ethical training of school leaders. The Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium has developed standards for school leaders. Two of these specifically deal with ethical treatment of students and a commitment to provide a learning environment so students may learn. As part of standards set forth by school leaders own profession, this study has potential impact and application. This research may influence the training of school leaders in university preparation programs. Through this discovery process insights may be gained to guide the training of new administrators. Principals choosing to participate in this study will help promote a strong discourse on the exclusion of students from the educational process.

VII. METHODS FOR OBTAINING "INFORMED CONSENT" FROM PARTICIPANTS

Beyond obtaining permission from the IRB, gaining entry into the selected school district will be imperative for the completion of this

research project. Permission to conduct research in a selected school district has been sought and received for this project. A copy of the approval is attached as Appendix A. Entry must to be sought with not only from the school district, but also more importantly with the individual principals of the middle schools. Each principal will receive a letter stating that permission had been granted from the school district's central office (see Appendix B). After the receipt of this letter, the researcher will make contact by telephone with each of the principals. A verbal explanation of the purpose of the research project will be presented to them and will be invited to participate in an interview. The contents of the informed consent form (see Appendix C) will shared with each of them and a verbal confirmation will obtained. A copy of the informed consent will be faxed to them for their review prior to the interview appointment. A copy of the informed consent will be brought to the interview by the researcher to obtain their permission for the interview prior to beginning the process. The consent form will be signed prior to the interview. The informed consent documents will be stored in the Cultural and Leadership Studies Department at University of Tennessee.

VIII. QUALTIFICATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATOR(S) TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

The primary researcher is a doctoral student at UTK and has been a school administrator for 10 years. I have completed research classes in qualitative and quantitative methods as a part of my doctoral program. I was trained during my EdS program as a school psychologist in the skills of interviewing and observing. I have read current literature about qualitative methods.

IX. FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT TO BE USED IN THE RESEARCH

The research data will be collected at a location chosen by the interviewees. The informed consents will be kept at the University of Tennessee in the Cultural and Leadership Studies Department. The interviews will tape-recorded. The tapes and the transcripts of the interviews will be kept in the home office of the primary researcher. The data will be stored on the hard drive and on floppy and compact discs. All data and information pertaining to this research will be kept for two years in the home office of the primary researcher.

X. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PRINCIPAL/CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S)

By compliance with the policies established by the Institutional Review Board of The University of Tennessee, the principal investigator(s) subscribe to the principals stated in "The Belmont Report" and standards of professional ethics in all research, development, and related activities involving human subjects under the auspices of The University of Tennessee. The principal investigator(s) further agree that:

1. Approval will be obtained from the IRB prior to instituting any change in this research project.
2. Development of any unexpected risks will be immediately reported to Research Compliance Services.
3. An annual review and progress report (Form R) will be completed and submitted when requested by the Institutional Review Board.
4. Signed informed consent documents will be kept for the duration of the project and for at least three years thereafter at a location approved by the Institutional Review Board.

XI. SIGNATURES

Principal Investigator: Karen Loy

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Student Advisor: Gary Ubben

Signature: _____

Date: _____

XII. DEPARTMENT REVIEW AND APPROVAL
The application described above has been reviewed by the IRB departmental review committee and has been approved. The DRC further recommends that this application be reviewed as:

[ ] Expedited Review – Category(s): _____

OR

[ ] Full IRB Review

Chair, DRC: Jeff Aper

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Department Head: Joy DeSensi

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B

Seeking Permission to Conduct Research
In the Selected School District

1. Karen Loy, Primary Researcher
    HOME:
    625 Gamble Drive
    Heiskell, TN 37754

2. Home Telephone: 947-1818
    E-Mail: KELOY625@yahoo.com

3. As the primary researcher, I am a doctoral student in the Department of Leadership and Cultural Studies in the College of Education at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

4. Dr. Gary Ubben is my advisor for the doctoral research project. He is a full Professor in the Department of Leadership and Cultural Studies in the College of Education at UTK. Other committee members include Dr. Cynthia Norris, Dr. Judy Boser and Dr. David Dupper.

5. TITLE OF RESEARCH:
    Exclusion Decisions of Middle School Principals

6. The purpose of this study is to describe the relationship that exists between middle school principals' beliefs and values and the decisions they make about student discipline using a phenomenological design resulting in a description of themes and patterns. At this stage of the research, the study will be defined generally as a discovery of school leaders' values of caring and justice influence upon their decisions of student exclusion. The study will ascertain if the beliefs of principals that use student exclusion at a high rate differ from the beliefs of those principals that use student exclusion at a low rate.
    This study will examine the following research questions:
    1. How do principals decide to exclude students from educational settings?
    A. Is there a difference in the use of the ethic of care and the ethic of justice of principals who exclude students from the educational environment at a high rate compared to those principals who exclude students from the educational environment at a low rate?

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B. What policies or practices do principals have in place within the school environment that reflect their beliefs about student behavior and the school environment?

Qualitative research is appropriate for these research questions due to the essences of the problem: values and ethics. This method will provide a means to gain the insight into the patterns that will emerge from the principals' own stories. Student discipline happens in the school setting, not in a research laboratory; therefore, going into the school setting is the appropriate research location.

A purposive sample will be made for the purpose of this study. A mid-sized school district with a selection of urban and suburban schools will be chosen. The study will be limited to middle schools only. Approximately 10-15 middle schools in a single school district is preferred so that the sample will be have the same policies governing the schools, yet provide enough school leaders for rich data sources. Your school district meets these research criteria. The principals must be at least in their second year of service in the same middle school. This will insure the exclusion data from the previous school year is theirs alone.

Demographic data about each of the middle schools will be collected from the school districts information system. This data will include the student population, minority/majority ratio, number of student exclusions from school and the percent of student population on free and reduced meal program. A copy of each school improvement plan will be obtained for a historical and community perspective.

All of the middle school principals in the school district will be asked to participate in the study if they meet the longevity criteria. A focused interview will be conducted by this researcher with each of the principals individually. In a focused interview, the same basic open-ended questions will be used to guide the process, but follow-up questions and probes will be permitted to clarify and refine. The interview will take place in a location chosen by the interviewee to be comfortable and quiet. A two-hour time block will be solicited from the participants. The school district and the participants will remain anonymous for the purposes of this study.

Descriptive and reflective notes will be taken during the interview and each will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim into a written document. The written document will be shared with the interviewees for their review and to provide an opportunity to clarify any ideas or comments in writing to the researcher. A follow-up interview may be needed if the data warrants this extension.

At a recent School Board Meeting, a presentation was made by your Middle School Coordinator representing a committee report about alternatives to suspensions. This was done at the request of the Board since the school district has a high suspension rate according to our system report card. These research data can be directly helpful as the district designs and implements its plans to

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reduce suspensions. While the identity of the system and the principals will remain anonymous to the readers, the system may glean helpful information for its own plans.

7. A copy of the Principal Questionnaire is attached as Appendix A.

8. A copy of the Informed Consent Form is attached as Appendix B.

9. The interview data will be collected from November 15, 2001 with a conclusion date of December 22, 2001. Data may be collected after Winter Holidays if necessary. The research should conclude in time for a May graduation for the primary researcher.

Appendix C

November 8, 2001

Karen Loy
625 Gamble Drive
Heiskell, TN 37754

Dear Ms. Loy:

You are granted permission to contact appropriate building-level administrators concerning the conduct of your proposed research study entitled, "Exclusion Decisions of Middle School Principals." In the ██████████ schools final approval of any research study is contingent upon acceptance by the principals at the sites where the study will be conducted. Include a copy of this permission form when seeking approval from the principals.

In all research studies names of individuals, groups, or schools may not appear in the text of the study unless *specific* permission has been granted through this office. The principal researcher is required to furnish this office with one copy of the completed research document.

Good luck with your study. Do not hesitate to contact me if you need further assistance or clarification.

Yours truly,

Coordinator of Research and Evaluation
Phone: ██████████
Fax: ██████████

Project No. 129

Appendix D

The University of Tennessee
Office of Research
Research Compliance Services

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Exclusion Decisions of Middle School Principals

INTRODUCTION
The purpose of this study is to describe the relationship that may exist between middle school principals' beliefs and values and the decisions they make about student discipline using a qualitative design resulting in a description of themes and patterns. The study is generally a discovery of school leaders' values of caring and justice influence upon their decisions of student exclusion. The study will ascertain if the beliefs of principals that use student exclusion at a high rate differ from the beliefs of those principals that use student exclusion at a low rate. You are invited to participate in this research study

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY
Qualitative research methods are appropriate for the purpose of this study. This method provides a means to gain the insight into the patterns that will emerge from the selected principals' own stories. A mid-sized school district with a selection of urban and suburban schools was chosen. The study is limited to middle schools only. Approximately 10-15 middle schools in a single school district is preferred so that the sample will have the same policies governing the schools, yet provide enough school leaders for rich data sources. The principals must be in their second year of service in the same middle school. This is to insure the exclusion data from the previous school year is theirs alone. Demographic data about each of the middle schools will be collected from the school districts information system. This data will include the student population, minority/majority ratio, number of student exclusions from school and the percent of student population on the free and reduced meal program. A copy of each school improvement plan will be sought to provide a historical and community perspective. All of the middle school principals in the school district will be asked to participate in the study if they meet the longevity criteria. An interview will be conducted by this researcher with each of the principals individually. In the interview, the same basic open-ended questions will be used to guide the process, but follow-up questions and probes will be permitted to clarify

_____ Participant's initials

responses. The interview will take place in a location chosen by the interviewee to be comfortable and quiet. A two-hour time block is requested from the participants. The participants will remain anonymous for the purposes of this study. The audiotapes and transcripts will be kept for two years for verification of the study in a secure location. Descriptive and reflective notes will be taken during the interview and each will be audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim into a written document. The written document will be shared with the interviewees for their review and to provide an opportunity to clarify any ideas or comments in writing to the researcher. A follow-up interview may be needed if the data warrants this extension. The qualitative analysis will be based on a reduction and interpretation of the interview data. The findings of this research study will be presented in a matrix form as well as a rich, thick, detailed narrative description of the patterns, categories and themes.

RISKS
Risks appear to be minimal in this research study. The identification of the interviewees will remain anonymous for the study. The interview is designed to cause no duress.

BENEFITS
Excluding students from their educational setting is used frequently by principals as a means of disciplining students. When students are not permitted to participate in the educational process the cost for those students and society is grave. The loss of instructional time that occurs because of students' exclusion from school must be critically reviewed. Data to understand how principals' own beliefs and values affect this relationship is needed. We must use every remedy we have to redeem instructional time for all students. This research will advance the knowledge that we have about these important issues. This study will enhance the principal preparation programs as the beliefs and values of caring and justice are examined as to their impact on student exclusion decisions. This research may influence the training of school leaders in university preparation programs. School leaders themselves may be challenged by considering view points that may differ from their own beliefs or values. This study will promote a strong discourse of the exclusion of students from the educational process.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The information in the study will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to persons conducting the study. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link participants to the study.

_____Participant's initials

CONTACT-INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study,) you may contact the researcher, Karen Loy, 625 Gamble Drive, Heiskell, TN 37754; and 947-1818. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact Research Compliance Services of the Office of Research at (865) 974-3466.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

- -

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

Appendix E

Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. The purpose of this interview is to discuss exclusion practices of your school. Please feel free to elaborate your answers to your satisfaction, but I will try not to take any more than two hours of your time. (Each interviewee will be given an index card with the definition of exclusion on it.) We will spend our time primarily talking about the exclusion of students based on the definition on the card. Do you have any questions about how exclusion will be defined?

1. Tell me how long you have been at _____ Middle School and about your school in general?

2. What are you most proud of about your school?

3. What kind of practices do you have to govern student disciplinary decisions, specifically exclusion?

   - Who is able to exclude students from the school?

   - Have you ever told an assistant principal whether to exclude or not?

   - How much leeway do your assistant principals have?

   - Are you aware of these decisions?

   - Is there an internal appeal process?

4. What do you see as the purpose of excluding students from school?

   - Support teachers?

- Help with learning environment?

- Get disruptive students out of the learning environment?

- School safety?

5. The school district has specific policies, but principals have some discretion in their decisions, how do you decide to use exclusion of students from your school?

6. Can you remember a decision involving the possible exclusion of one of your students last year that you struggled with more than others? Tell me about it.

7. Will you share with me a decision that you made last year to exclude a student from school that you felt was successful to achieve your goal for the exclusion? What was your goal for that student's exclusion? How did it work out?

8. Will you share with me another time that you made a decision to exclude a student from school last year that you felt was not successful to achieve your goal for the exclusion? What was your goal for that student's exclusion? How did it work out?

9. How do you perceive your use of exclusion at your school in relation to the other schools in the system?

10. Is there any other comment you would like to make about your use of student exclusion that exemplifies your thoughts.

Appendix F

Data Analysis Matrix

Definitions of Justice and Care

(Katz, Noddings & Strike, 1999 p. 22.)

ETHIC OF JUSTICE			ETHIC OF CARE		
Category 1 Focus on Rules/Rights/ Responsibilities	Category 2 Focus on Sameness	Category 3 Placement of "self" outside of situation	Category 4 Focus is Context Sensitive	Category 5 Focus on Relationships	Category 6 Placement of "self" in situation

Behavioral Characteristic of Care and Justice

Sernak, K. (1998), Gilligan, C. (1982), Rawls, J. (1971)

Category 1 Decision Making		Category 2 Considerations		Category 3 Relationships		Category 4 Response Base		Category 5 Primary Commitment	
Shared	**Top Down**	*Situational /Contextual*	**Policy Rules**	*Reciprocal Give and Take*	**Fairness / Equity**	*Needs*	**Rights**	*To the Individual*	**To the Group**

VITA

Karen Loy was born and raised in East Tennessee. She received a B. S. in Secondary Education in Communications from Tennessee Technological University in 1980. She taught high school English for two years. She completed an Ed.S. in School Psychology in 1986 at the University of Tennessee and was licensed as a Psychological Examiner. She practiced school psychology in public and private school settings.

Karen's professional and personal life has demonstrated her on-going commitment to at-risk students. She worked in residential treatment programs, therapeutic day cares, private schools and public schools with an emphasis on children and adolescents with emotional and behavioral problems.

In 1998, she began her doctoral studies in the College of Education, University of Tennessee – Knoxville. She was part of a cohort for practicing administrators. She was employed as a school psychologist, behavioral specialist and principal in special schools.

Currently, she is the principal of a special school serving students from pre-school through high school with a variety of unique needs. Karen co-authored a chapter entitled, "Educating Trouble Youth in Alternative Settings" in a book entitled, **Working with Troubled Youth in Schools: A Guide for All School Staff** (McAuliffe, 2002).

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