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by

Desiree S. Sabari-Lancaster

May, 2011

TEACHERS' MANAGEMENT STYLES IN A POSITIVE BEHAVIOR  
INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS FRAMEWORK: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

A Doctoral Thesis Presented to the  
Faculty of the College of Education  
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education  
in Professional Leadership

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## DEDICATIONS

First and foremost, this work is dedicated to God. He is the producer and orchestrator of this opportunity, the beacon of hope I rely on as a guide through this and all things, and the foundation of my life. I have achieved nothing without the blessings he has provided.

Primarily, I have to dedicate this work to my loving husband, my rock, Kenneth Lancaster. Willingly taking on this two-year commitment to management all home functions, two teenage daughters, and an insane, working graduate student, was no small undertaking. His encouragement sustained me during this journey. You gently pushed me when I needed to be pushed and held me up when I thought I was falling. Your strength did not allow me to falter along the way. You patiently listened to months of problem solving and out loud processing, always pointing out the positives. I could not have accomplished this without you giving me the much needed space and time. Most of all thank you for having this dream for me. I am grateful that you are my stronger, smarter, better half.

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I dedicate this doctoral degree to my parents. Without their nurturing and modeling the importance of education, I would not be here. To my father, Osman Sabari, who is looking down from heaven and saying, “Job well done”. I will forever remember your tenacity for self-improvement and life-long learning. You were an incredibly strong and dedicated Black Man and I wish you were here to share in this accomplishment. To my mother, Arifah Sabari, a selfless caretaker and model of God’s presence and action in the world. I could not have asked for a better example of a strong, faithful, family-oriented Black Woman. You are my hero and I am proud to have you witness the results of your love and support.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to explore teachers' perspectives on management styles in a Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework, in order to identify teacher behaviors that facilitated reduced school-wide office discipline referrals (ODR's). Using narrative inquiry, the study explored specific tenets of PBIS, from participant's perspectives, that impacted the reduction of office discipline referrals for all students, particularly African American males. All participants, including researcher, were employed at the same suburban Texas elementary school, during the three-year PBIS implementation. European American participants were two teachers and the principal, of varying ages, experiences, and parental statuses. Field notes and transcriptions were developed from one-on-one audio-recorded interviews. Storied experiences of management practices, perceptions and observations were sketched. Using narrative analysis, emerging themes, tensions, and researcher reflections were summarized. Findings support existing PBIS research that identifies consistent school-wide use of positively stated common expectations as most influential tenet toward reduced ODR's., for all students and specifically for African American males. However, findings also suggest the need for ongoing school-wide acknowledgments and announcements, which served as reminders not catalysts for changed adult behaviors. Moreover, findings suggest unvoiced discipline expectations among administrators and teachers, create misalignments in discipline practices. Initial recommendations include

state, district, and campus transparency in discipline data to increase collaborative participation by students, families, and communities. Also recommendations include district and campus development of; specific classroom discipline expectations, adult inventory of discipline beliefs and discipline styles, and individualized teacher discipline plans. Consideration for PBIS staffing, in order to discharge consistent school-wide communications and acknowledgements, is vital in school-wide initiatives. Future research could include qualitative research into adult learning and outcomes in school-wide programs such as PBIS. Comparative studies of adult outcomes in schools, between successful versus unsuccessful school-wide implementation, could also add to the body of PBIS knowledge. Furthermore, both qualitative and quantitative studies are needed on the alignment of administrator's, teachers', and parent's discipline beliefs and expectations. I encourage all districts and schools, in the midst of school-wide initiatives, to continue dialectical practices and action research.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### *Background*

Because identities are the stories we tell ourselves and the world about who we are, and our attempt to act in accordance with these stories,” (Perry, 2003, p. 50), I feel compelled to share the stories of my private life and of my public school experiences. I believe these stories shape not only my identity but also my perceptions of those experiences. This same identity guides my beliefs and hopes about the future of the public school system, of which I am now a part. At the same time, I am reminded by Tatum (2007) that “before we can tell the stories ourselves, they are told to us. Our sense of identity of self-definition is very much shaped in childhood by what is reflected back to us by those around us” (p. 24). Both Perry’s and Tatum’s reflections on identity profoundly struck me. I believe the sense of identity, for all nations, is very much shaped by the stories of the millions of children they educate each day. Among these millions of students are more elementary or primary aged students than secondary students. The adults, charged with their care, contribute to shaping their identities, both academically and behaviorally, on a daily basis. The beliefs, policies and practices of these adults are fundamental in successfully educating these young individuals and hold unique stories that existed before accountability ratings and standardized testing. What reflection is education casting in the elementary school setting and how are students responding to that reflection?

I grew up in a time of educational reform. I am a product of a combination of private school, public school, parental involvement, political policy-makers and statistics, combined with my own decision-making in context as I confronted various mixes of the aforementioned phenomena. While I do not live my life as if being a Black female limits the dynamics of my being, I do believe that diversity engenders labels of identification. Positive or negative, labels shape human perceptions. These identifiers, which are fundamental in American culture, have guided my past and future journeys. In my primary years, pre-kindergarten through fifth grade, I attended private Muslim schools in both Chicago and Texas. My family moved to urban East Los Angeles in the 70s. There, I was bused to a predominantly White suburban school for some of my classes. With another move a few years later, I attended the then predominantly White Junior and Senior High Schools, as opposed to the predominantly Black schools, in a small Southern town. The year prior to my senior year, 1982-1983, the predominantly Black school, that was literally located across the tracks, closed its doors to segregation. "Black teachers and administrators were displaced and represented the rapid loss of role models of academic achievement, for young Black students" in my home town (Tatum, 2007, p. 25). Also in my senior year, despite being in the top ten of my graduating class and a member of the national honor society, the guidance counselor suggested I pursue a career as a cosmetologist. While some of my classmates rarely traveled outside of the state of South Carolina, I had already visited many states between both the western and eastern coast. My parents and I knew that there were more promising educational opportunities available to me than the beauty industry. While I was accepted at several institutions in South Carolina, my father insisted that I attend a university out of the state. So I headed

to Texas A&M University. This shocked everyone, including me. However, today, it never surprises me when people double-speak upon the discovery that I am an Aggie alumnus. They inevitably say, “You did?” or “Really?” in disbelief. I would love to think their shock stems from the academic rigor and reputation of the institution. However, I am all too aware that it is because I am a Black woman, who graduated from a historically and predominantly White, ultra-conservative, male-dominated, Southern institution. Like Roger Wilkins (in Kozol, 2005), I personally learned:

The point is this: Yes, it was hard, but there was wonderful two-way learning going on between me and my classmates. I learned the greatest lesson of my life during those years: that whites were not ‘a master race,’ and not all devils either, but that they were ordinary people like myself.

### *Problem Phenomenon*

In looking back through that time in my life, I never gave much thought to or understood the missing presence of African American male students during my secondary career. In high school, I assumed it was because I was labeled ‘gifted and talented’ and partitioned off from others in my educational milieu. There had always been only a few of us, African Americans, in these classes, and the numbers remained low as I matriculated through secondary and higher education. While the gifted and talented disparities remain today in public education, where were the misbehaviors and dismissals that the data speaks of through the centuries? Have misbehaviors, dismissals, and lack of African Americans in accelerated classes become so engrained in our public school system, that instead of being abnormal, these actions and reactions have become commonplace?

As a psychology graduate and new hire for the Department of Family Services, I began to navigate through many different communities and cultures. I spent a great deal

of time in schools as well as navigating the bureaucracies and legal systems on behalf of abused, neglected, and displaced children. I put my studies of psychology into action along with all the other –ologies; sociology, anthropology, ecology, and biology. I saw a gift in each of the children with whom I worked: intelligence, humor, creativity, and resourcefulness. However, after five and a half years, I had seen enough and needed a different career path. At my interim employment, the Harris County Appraisal District, a coworker suggested the teaching profession and I scoffed. Thoughts of public school evoked memories of cold, unfair places that tried to cram millions of multiple-layered children into square holes. Despite my initial contempt for the idea, over a dozen coworkers enrolled in teacher alternative certification programs. They all frequently crossed my path and invited me to attend an information sessions. Did I have a future teacher target on my forehead? I deduced that the camaraderie I had been seeking was established, yet I was still missing the children. These conversations, stories and invitations led me to attend a session. I have not looked back since.

### *Management Development*

Starting out as a substitute teacher, I quickly discovered that my niche was the elementary age group. I also discovered that at every assignment, my most challenging student relationship was usually a male student. However, it did not deter my studies or slow my progress toward certification. My first teaching assignment came mid-year, when a teacher became chronically ill. She maintained a well-organized, self-contained classroom and appeared to be a master English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher. I had three weeks with her before she left on medical leave, which was more than enough time to get to know her procedures and routines. I knew all the students' names, reading levels and many of their dispositions. I arrived early on the first day, in order to be fully

prepared. The bell rang and I stood ready in the doorway, to greet ‘my’ students. Many of the students approached the classroom with smiles, eager handshakes, and energetic ‘good mornings.’ Then approaching the classroom was Khalil. Despite knowing my expectation of how we were to greet one another, he refused to shake my hand, speak to me, or even look at me. I did not press the issue, but he seemed angry, that day and many days to follow. I referred to my handbook, Wong and Wong’s *The First Days of School* (2000). The Wongs reminded me that “a rule is a dare to be broken, whereas a procedure is not. A procedure is a do, a step to be learned” (p. 169). So there in the face of my first student challenge, I stayed focused on the objectives for the day and planned to visit with Khalil and any other that had difficulty following procedures later. I invested a great deal of time during lunch and recess, monitoring students as they reviewed, practiced, and completed essays about failed procedures.

#### *Discipline Beliefs Development*

Several weeks passed and my re-teaching efforts had become frustrating. While other students seemed to be responsive to my newly established management style, I had not made an ounce of headway with Khalil. I solicited suggestions from his mother (his father deferred all conversations about the children’s schooling to her). She equated his now belligerent classroom behaviors to grief over the loss of his “regular” teacher. She acknowledged that his behaviors were at times disrespectful and offered her support by talking to him and occasionally visiting the classroom. However, I associated his negative attitude toward me as something very different, something I had seen before. Growing up we called it the ‘he don’t like Black people’ look. However, I dared not share that with his parent or anyone at school. At the suggestion of a grade level colleague, I switched my focus from practice and review of the failed procedures to focusing on rewards and

positive encouragement for successful but mostly partial completion compliance. “Kill him with kindness,” was her advice. After several weeks of that style, one student asked, “Ms., why are you acting so funny?” Pollack (1998) points out that no student responds positively to “excessive and unwarranted” praise and my students perceived my insincerity and excessiveness as a joke. At this point, Khalil’s behaviors escalated in intensity, negativity and deliberateness. It also appeared as if his behaviors began to replicate in a few of the other boys. However, I was able to redirect them through one-on-one problem-solving conferences. As for Khalil, he refused to talk to me or even speak when I was in close proximity. I was not affecting positive change with him relationally or academically. Despite my lack of headway, I wanted to continue to try to handle this situation on my own. I was determined to break through Khalil’s defenses. What else did I have in my arsenal?

One school of elementary discipline thought, from a group of teachers, was to make frequent phone calls home and withhold privileges (sit out at recess and silent lunch). I tried that management style, but it too was short lived. It just made Khalil and all the other children that were victims of it more angry and fidgety in the afternoon. Following the lead of another group of teachers, I ignored all of the negative behaviors and poured on nothing but positives. All of my education and life experiences had not prepared me for this level of open defiance and disrespect from a child. I tried yet a third school of thought that gave him responsibilities in the classroom, often attempting to make him a leader. Throughout each management strategy shift, I remained in constant and direct contact with his mother. Despite all my efforts, his anger prevailed. At the

advisement of my teacher mentor and Principal Smith, I prepared to take as much summer professional development as I could in classroom management.

### *Significance of Study*

I had recently received a visit from a district classroom management helping teacher. She had asked me to think about spending more one-on-one time with Khalil. She suggested that despite Khalil's refusal to speak to me or talk with me, I should share my personal story with him. This was not something I felt was necessary as a public school teacher. I held the perception that I was not paid to befriend the children, but to teach them. Therefore, I had no need for personal interaction to be part of my management repertoire. As she was describing the function of this relational style of managing, and giving me an outline for a class meeting, I could not help but think that there would be no 'lunch dates' with my students. She also asked, "Did I know what Khalil's interests were?" Quite frankly, at that time, I did not see a need to know that sort of information about my students. I negated the value of having "...positive interpersonal relationships with students" (Coombs-Richardson & Meisgeier, 2001, p. 26) and instead, dusted off *The First Days of School* and all my Region IV notes. How dare she imply that in order for me to be effective with my students, behaviorally and academically, I had to not only have an in-depth knowledge of the curriculum but also of each of them personally (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Here I was in the throes of one of my greatest professional challenges and trying to balance the complexities of being a wife, mother, friend, sister and student, and this was her advice. I did not intend to share any personal information with children.

Therefore, I turned to the last school of thought, which was to write discipline referrals to the Principal Smith's office. Several weeks had passed and Khalil had

received several office referrals from me, mainly for disrespectful behavior and refusal to comply with repeated teacher requests. He also received several referrals from other teachers during recess for calling other students a “nigger.” I had always received that news secondhand and did not intervene in the recess teacher’s decision to refer him. I had never talked to him about it because it did not happen during my supervision time.

However, the third time it happened, I was done. My patience had been stretched to its outermost extreme. With a look of disgust on my face, and a feeling of defeat, I promised Khalil that I was going to march him down to DMC myself but not until Fine Arts time. I settled the class and got back into the moment of teaching but I was anything but settled inside. As Fine Arts time arrived, I knew I had to escort Khalil to the Principal Smith’s office. My stomach dropped as I walked all the students to Music. Khalil and I walked and I talked our way towards the Principal Smith’s office. I went on and on about how hurt I was and asked him why he called the other student that particular name? He paused as if to speak and I slowed the gait of our pace. “Because she made me mad and all people that look like you are niggers,” he said. His first words to me in weeks and I had not prepared myself for that answer. In hindsight, I had not expected any answer but certainly not that one. I put my hand over my mouth, listened and nodded as he continued in his rage. Khalil had not been the only person that had ever called me a “nigger” in my lifetime, nor would he be the last. Yet, he had definitely been the youngest. As we approached the Principal Smith’s office, I noticed that several students were already waiting, so we bypassed the Principal Smith’s office, and meandered into the library. I grabbed a dictionary and the S encyclopedia (S for slavery), in the hopes of educating my young antagonist friend. However, that day my young antagonist became the teacher.

Instead of walking him through definitions and a history lesson of the word “nigger,” I focused on being a good listener, a skill I had taught my students many times for partner reading. I did not know much about Khalil. What little I did know was that he was Muslim, which I also knew had many Black adherents, one of which I had once been. Secondly, I perceived that he held a great deal of contempt for Black people. Here was that moment the district classroom management helping teacher tried to prepare me for. Like it or not, our interactions were about to get very personal. Having grown up both Black and Muslim, I felt this was an opportunity to get to know more about the little boy that I thought hated me, as well as for him to know a little more about me. If we were going to close the year out doing battle with one another, we should at least recognize our enemy.

I learned that Khalil’s family had only been in the country a couple of years. His father referred to Black people as “niggers” at home. Khalil shared his assumptions and conclusions that because his father was assaulted by a Black person once and reminds him about how violent Black people are then they must all have to be same. I also found out that Khalil was being picked on by students during recess for being different and it happened last year as well. They teased him about his accent and called him names other than his own. Khalil felt assaulted, yet he had told no one. As he made sense of his childhood experiences, it was easy for him to equate his playground experiences with African-American children and his father’s assault by a Black man. He shared his father’s authoritative declaration that all of the Blacks were “niggers.” Khalil and I covered a variety of topics during that fifty minutes; the power of words, anger, religion, race, family and trust. At the end of that time, we had come to a new level of understanding

about one another. I assured him that I would talk to the bullying children and he assured me that he would ‘try’ to ask for assistance or at the very least talk to me before he used that ugly word or felt that level of anger. We both shook hands and agreed that our relationship, teacher to student, had turned a corner. Making our way back to class, Khalil asked, “Why are Black people were so mean?” “Excuse me,” I exclaimed, as he had caught me off guard yet again. “Look,” he said. I turned to notice something that had apparently escaped me earlier, but had made a lasting impression on him. The Discipline Management Class (DMC) was filled with predominantly African American males, including the three we passed on the way to the Principal Smith’s office. I reminded Khalil that he had been in that classroom, DMC. I reminded him that none of those students were inherently mean and neither was he. The discussion that carried us back to the classroom focused on the role of that space being used for helping students to problem solve. What was I supposed to say? I had little-to-no experience with the DMC, the adults that supervised and taught there, nor the students that frequented that room. However, if Khalil noticed the phenomena, surely other students had as well. How many adults, including myself, had never noticed nor discussed this phenomenon?

Later that afternoon someone came to retrieve Khalil for the Principal Smith. I saw Khalil differently and because of the personal information I now knew about him, I disagreed with his suspension. That afternoon, I learned about the discipline continuum and Student Code of Conduct. Both of these tools were used to aid in the determination about Khalil’s suspension. I began to familiarize myself with the campus discipline continuum and the Student Code of Conduct, as well as plan for summer professional development. That day I was transformed. I vowed not to allow my students to leave my

classroom because of a suspension again. I also began to become more involved in the school and the many stories within the walls of the school. Where were these Black boys where coming from and for what reason?

It took a lot of energy and several days, for me to follow up on my promise to Khalil. I spoke to several parents, mostly of students that were not in my class, and each offered their support. I met with the teacher that wrote Khalil the office referral and thanked her for providing me with assistance. I went on to inform her of the results of my investigation, as well as my follow up plans. I informed her that because of my recent familiarization with the Student Code of Conduct and school discipline continuum, I no longer required her assistance and back-up. Despite her insistence to help me out, because I was a new teacher that just did not know his history, we agreed to communicate student behaviors and possible consequences to one another before referring to the Principal Smith. I shared with her that I was raised, “to keep ‘family’ business in the house not in the streets.” I reminded her that my students were my primary responsibility and I appreciated her support in allowing us to work out as much as we could “at home” or in the classroom. This situation brought to mind the question of teacher perceptions on who is in charge of discipline in the school and in individual classrooms. This particular teacher expressed her concern that I had not followed appropriate practices and policies by not sending Khalil to the office sooner for his disrespectful behaviors. She continued to advise me about; Khalil’s behavioral history, my “legal” responsibility to abide by the student Code of Conduct, and my duty to report incidents to the assistant principal. She failed to consider the victimization of Khalil, the lack of adult supervision at recess, or alternative forms of discipline that did not require the student to miss class time. We

clearly had two different perspectives on our roles as disciplinarians: her view, a much more perfunctory and legalistic approach; and mine, driven by personalization and individual's unfolding stories. She, grounded in her style and beliefs, and me in mine, agreed to disagree.

### *Professional Growth*

In the years that followed, I acquired many hours of professional development in classroom management and attended many seminars for relationship building, managing difficult behaviors and parenting. I have become a facilitator of classroom management courses on my campus and in the district. Through all the training, I have never forgotten the lesson that Khalil taught me about perceptions and perspectives. He encouraged me to notice that the students in our DMC were predominantly African American boys. Khalil questioned and argued all the time. One of his main arguments, during our family time, was that all the women teachers were always mad at the boys. Other male students chimed in as well, with stories of what they perceived to be teacher gender biases. Because of that, he challenged me to analyze my behaviors toward male students. He fortified my stance and my philosophy that “what happens with my class stays in my class” because many other teachers considered his questioning and arguing as disrespectful. Just as I was searching for effective ways to reach my students, both socially and academically, I allowed them to search for effective ways to work with me (Coombs-Richardson & Meisgeier, 2001). He mostly enlightened me to be aware of who was seated in DMC on a consistent basis. Never again did I walk by without peering inside, nor have I stopped noticing the students waiting to be seen outside of the Principal Smith's office. Throughout my ten years of teaching in three socioeconomically disadvantaged suburban elementary schools, the observations of the DMC and the

students that frequented it have remained the same: boys and mostly African American boys.

Also through my educational journey, I have had the opportunity to act in leadership roles for my schools and district through a range of academic and behavioral programs based on student data. One such program is Positive Behavior Support and Intervention (PBIS). Through leading its implementation and coordination for three years, the campus experienced a marked reduction of disruptive student misbehaviors and referrals for DMC, suspension, expulsion, and police ticketing. While on the campus, my role was as an active participant not as a researcher. Yet I have often wondered, from the teachers' perspectives, why there was such a drastic transformation over that time? Of all the programs and professional development that we all had participated in for relationships, social skills, class building, and communication, what was it about this framework that reshaped our schools' discipline?

### *Research Questions*

In their own terms, teachers will share their stories and perceptions of discipline, both classroom and school-wide, before and after the implementation of PBIS. Teachers will also reflect on the tenets of the PBIS framework toward the success of all students, but specifically African American male elementary students. This narrative study addresses the following questions:

1. How do teachers perceive their management style and role as disciplinarians in their classroom (primary, secondary, or tertiary)?
2. What specific PBIS tenets, if any, supported, enhanced or transformed teacher management styles, as well as supported the reduction of school-wide office discipline referrals?

3. What specific tenets, if any, do teachers perceive supported the reductions of office discipline referrals for African American elementary males?

## CHAPTER II

### REFLECTION ON THE LITERATURE

#### *Introduction*

The experiences from that first year directed future professional development and ongoing personal reflections in the following areas; teacher-as-manager, teacher-as-change agent (communicating, translating, and executing, policies, procedures and programs with my students), teacher-as-disciplinarian and teacher-as-parent.

For me, these four areas of focus were not only independent, in and of themselves, but also interrelated to one another and to the success of my students. I continuously flowed through these four areas in order to act as a buffer for my students against the many “out-of-classroom and out-of-school forces” that had daily influences on our “in-classroom and in-school” experiences (Craig, 2009). I will outline the general nature of the research in relation to each of these categories as I traveled through formal and informal professional growth.

#### *Teacher-as-Manager*

My first learning came as a result of my students that were frequently sent to DMC and even sometimes suspended from school, when they were with other teachers. I quickly learned the value of the teacher’s role as a manager. I felt as though my students were becoming a burden on the DMC staff and my role as a leader with my students had been compromised each time (Curwin & Mendler, 1999, p. 111). Wong and Wong

(2000) state that, “Effective teachers manage their classroom and ineffective teachers discipline their classrooms.” They further elaborated that

You need to know about academic learning time, formative and summative testing, criterion-referenced testing, discipline plans, procedures and routines, learning styles, motivation theory, record-keeping procedures, identification of learning disabilities, higher-order thinking skills, due process, privacy rights, grouping, community services, learning for mastery, remediation and correction, prescriptive learning, credibility, and a whole host of other things (p. 83).

I did not go as far as Wong and Wong to insinuate that the other teachers were “ineffective”; however, I quickly came to understand that we all had our own “management” styles and beliefs. Marzano (2003) points out that some “...individual classroom teachers do not necessarily view school-wide management as within the scope of their responsibilities” (p. 104). I initially focused my attention on what the other teachers were doing, because I was a novice. However, my personal mission had taken shape and I realized I could not control their choices or beliefs. Instead, I turned “...my focus on my own sphere of influence” (Tatum, 2003, p. 204). I focused on the type of manager I intended to be, specifically in the area of classroom management and classroom discipline. I was fortunate because my district offered a great deal of diverse training opportunities both in-district and out-of-district. I discovered that between the lines of many of the areas on Wong and Wong’s list and my responsibilities to my students stood local, legal, or in-school policies and procedures guiding my path through training.

My district and school, at that time, focused its staff development and support in the Boys Town Educational Model (1995), which was born out of the work of Father Flanagan. Tenets of that model are still encouraged throughout the district. Those tenets

include: class behavioral or social contracting, social skills curriculum, teaching interactions (relationship building), and establishing motivation systems (Connolly, Criste, Dowd, Nelson, & Tobias, 1995; Coombs-Richardson & Meisgeier, 2001). I discovered remnants of character education within each strand of the social skills training and both rely on the universality of a system of “Beliefs, virtues and norms that guide the best of behaviors for people regardless of time, place, race and ethnicity in general” (Abou-Aish, El-Bassiouny, & Taher, 2008, p. 46). There were many other classroom management courses I trained in throughout my career but none had the impact of the Boys Town model. I cannot say why that is. I do not know whether it was the structure of the lessons, the simple nature of the social skills, or the plain practical language of the program itself, that allowed me to buy-into it. Regardless, it continued to challenge me to communicate and build relationships with my students and to create a community within my classroom (Kohn, 1996). I had just studied Maslow’s (1943) hierarchy of needs, in one of my alternative certification classes, and the correlation between Maslow’s model and the Boys Town Model made sense to me at the time. I had already begun to shift my management style through the following: 1) the campus-based social skills curriculum 2) the prescribed teacher guidance from my mentor and Principal Smith (to continue to read the Boys Town books), and 3) suggested strategies given by a district classroom management helping teacher. Now, after the training, I had planned to shift my style even further away from having to establish dominance and control to gain compliance, to balancing realistic tolerances, competent teaching, and firmness, with care, compassion, and warmth (Connolly et. al., 1995). Already, I had come to agree with the research of Curwin and Mendler (1988, 1999) that reminds educators that most students who

misbehave do not wake up with a plan to be dangerous or malicious. Furthermore, we, the adults, can indeed correct most behaviors with direct and expedient instruction.

Also that summer, I attended a three-day training that also was endorsed by my district, hosted by the Flippen Group. Capturing Kids Hearts (CKH) is based on the premise that “You must first capture a kid’s heart, to get to his head” (Flippen, 2001). We all came from differing districts throughout the state of Texas but shared the same commitment of making a difference in our students’ lives. The facilitator assured us that this program was “research-based” and gave us a few moments to glance over the reference list. I noticed a few names from my studies of social sciences, Bandura’s social learning theory (1977) and behavior modification principles (1969), Merton’s self-fulfilling prophecy (1968), Rotter’s locus of control (1954), and applied behavior analysis theory (Thorndike, 1911; Watson, 1913; Pavlov, 1927; Skinner, 1953). However, there was one that I had only recently encountered: Father Flanagan’s Boys Town (1995). Past the introductions, the CKH program facilitator described an effective teacher as one who increases her positive relationship with students, facilitates cooperation from student-to-student and teacher-to-student, teaches not polices, maintains a low-anxiety classroom, and ultimately enhances students’ academic performance (Flippen, 2001). This description evoked a great deal of discussion from most of the participants but all I noticed was that I was the only Black teacher in the room.

Throughout the three days of learning and sharing personal and professional details, discussions vacillated from energetic and lively to somber and emotional. We were gathered because we had a passion for teaching and making a difference in the lives of our students. However, it was not until the second day that I came to realize we all

brought stories and experiences of students to the sessions, students "...primarily from racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse and poor families" (Nieto, 2000, p.10). I experienced an overwhelming sense of hopelessness that evening, wondering if this conference was the result of our nation's attempt at achieving the "Dream that one day... little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers" (King, 1963). How many conferences and camps like this one were going on throughout our nation? Where else in the world were educators, teachers and administrators alike, gathered to share stories of distress and failure with students that looked like me and came from where I once grew up? Why am I the only Black educator attending this workshop?

Delpit (1995) points out that as demographics in the United States continue to become more increasingly diverse, the teaching force continues to become more increasingly homogenously White (p. 66). Living and working in a suburban district, that continues to increase in the diversity of its student population, I had to become accustomed to attending professional developments that were scarcely diverse. Furthermore, in my life's journey, I have had to navigate many situations where I was the only Black person. Despite the discomfort, anxiety, and sometimes even fear it brought on in my younger years, this time the feeling was different. Despite the lack of extensive diversity in the staff, I had become a member of, we were all on the same journey of being educators, and there was still much to learn about my new chosen profession.

I began to incorporate snippets of other classroom management and discipline models into my teaching repertoire, especially those that naturally flowed into my value system and management style. These models ranged from Canter's Assertive Discipline,

(1972) to Fred Jones' Tools for Teaching (2007). Yet, Love and Logic promised not be a replacement system but totally practical in its application (Fay & Funk, 1995). I signed up with little more information than that. The techniques offered in the Love and Logic model are based on a value-approach, where discipline is individualized. On the other hand, the systems-approach, employed by most public schools, mandates uniform discipline and punishment for all students (Fay & Funk, 1995). I naturally gravitated to the personalization offered in some of the techniques such as setting enforceable limits, delaying consequences, and delivering consequences with empathy. These techniques reminded me of watching my mother in discipline mode with my six younger siblings. When we were younger we received the "wait until your father gets home" speech. She quickly found that technique to be ineffective and later never offered a consequence that she, herself, could not enforce. Also, she always delivered the consequences of her children's choices in a matter-of-fact manner. However, her most powerful consequence was to delay consequences (Fay & Funk, 1995). "Wait until your father gets home," she would say. Anticipation or delay when used properly is one of the most powerful tools to a teacher, yet in my observations, one of the most underused.

I was challenged by Fay and Funk (1995) to 'share control,' 'share feelings,' 'share thinking,' and ask for feedback from students on my performance. "Really?!" I found the best vehicle for these transformational processes was in the form of class meetings (Garrison, Howard, & Sprick, 1998; Marzano, 2003; Kohn, 2006). These class conversations were not only an opportunity for us to discuss expectations and objectives for both social and academic goals, but were also an opportunity for all of us to practice understanding one another's perspectives (Tatum, 2003). From a combination of all the

models, my life experiences, and a will to succeed, I grew as facilitator and manager in my classroom. I cherished the need to cultivate students' self-efficacy and responsibility (Gordon, as cited in Charles, 1996; Glasser, as cited in Charles, 1996; Curwin & Mendler, 1999, Jones, 2007), as well as respectful interdependence with one another. All of the models claim to support the teachers' role in directly affecting students' attention, participation, attitude, emotions, and academic success.

Yet, Kohn (2006) argues that many of the mainstream discipline researchers and writers mentioned here differ from true character education programs because they "...rarely own up to being based on a dim view of human nature" and the premise that children are innately bad (p. 4). This dim view that is referred to by Kohn correlates to Pupil Control Ideology (PCI). Lunenburg and Ornstein (2007) reference the continuum of PCI, custodial to humanistic, in their studies of school climate. They describe a humanistic school and teacher as one rooted in democracy and a custodial school and teacher as being rooted in an autocratic hierarchy. Schools and teachers could humanistically view student behaviors from the sociological and psychological standpoint. Yet the traditional view is custodial, where misbehaviors are viewed and responded to as personal offenses.

Furthermore, humanistic orientation leads teachers to...flexibility in status and rules, sensitivity to others, open communication, and increased student self-determination where both teachers and pupils are willing to act on their own volition and to accept responsibility for their actions. While custodial orientation leads teachers...to view the flow of power and communication as unilateral and a downward, where students must accept the decisions of teachers without question". Teachers do not attempt to understand student behavior but, instead view it in moralistic terms. Students are perceived as irresponsible and undisciplined who must be controlled through punitive sanctions. Impersonality, pessimism, and 'watchful mistrust' imbue the atmosphere of the custodial school (p.88).

Glickman and Tamashiro (1980) encourage educators to complete a discipline beliefs inventory and to reflect on the "...incongruities between beliefs and actions" (p. 463). While I did not fill out an inventory, I experienced the distress they describe. I struggled with the disharmony of my personal values and beliefs and how I had behaved as a teacher. I expected students to sit down, be still, and listen all day. I had child development and child Psychology courses, yet I set unreasonable expectations. I also questioned the same disharmony in my beliefs with the elementary discipline system of public schools. In the beginning, I maintained custodial beliefs and practices in my classroom. However, I believe that distress motivated me to continued growth through "...studying and learning additional strategies and discipline schools of thought that predominates one's beliefs...in order to expand one's repertoire (p. 463).

I purposefully modified and edited the different classroom management and discipline management models based on what was effective for my students and me, at the time. Several years ago, I began harnessing resources from DisciplineHelp.com (2004). Highlighting one hundred and seventeen behaviors, I found this to be a useful tool. Developed by the MASTER teacher, Inc., the organization defines discipline as "The adjustment of unacceptable behavior to acceptable behavior according to our individual standards and measures" (<http://www.disciplinehelp.com/>). While some of the titles for the behaviors took me aback, such as; snoop, loud mouth, and liar, I recognized value in the websites' outlined four steps. These steps appear to be based on the function of behavior model and include information about behavior, primary causes, primary and secondary needs, effects, action, and mistakes. I mainly used it to adjust my teacher behaviors, which were often found in the mistakes section. It also served as a great tool

for some of my parents and as a guide for behavior conferences and planning sessions with students. Glickman and Tamashiro (1980) would rate my discipline style as eclectic on the Teacher-Student control continuum; knowing when and with whom to use the empathy of a non-interventionist, the equity of an interactionalist, and the authority of an interventionist (p. 460). Through all my professional development and personal research, I learned that each researcher and author attempts to codify his or her version of an effective teacher and effective practices, yet I continue to establish my own norm for effectiveness. Much of my continued learning comes from the construction of my own personal and professional stories.

### *Teacher-as-Disciplinarian*

I learned early in my career that all the curriculum expertise, creative teaching strategies or classroom management techniques and theories in the world could not keep my classroom functioning without maintaining discipline. My students taught me that I was not in control of them and I could not enforce anything. For the purposes of this study, discipline is not punishment but the “Training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character” (Merriam-Webster, 2010). Discipline for me evolved through time and became a multi-faceted process of study and practice (Curwin & Mendler, 1999). It did not matter how I organized my room and supplies, how many social skills lessons I taught, or how constructivist I designed lessons in order to reach all of the multiple intelligences and learning styles in my classroom. At the end of the day, it all boiled down to my choices to plan, model, teach and hold my students accountable for their moral behavior toward one another and me.

I always communicated the plan, model, and possible lessons to both students and parents, reminding them that my discipline plan was centered on facilitating behavioral success for all my students until they could manage for themselves and with one another. I did not have any trouble navigating through and combining discipline styles: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, negotiated. Nor did I struggle with moving from my adult voice to my parent voice (Payne, 1998 & 2006). In the beginning of my career, I thought if tell them once at the beginning of the year, they should remember. I learned the importance of the following two areas: (1) consistently communicating and teaching expectations, rules, and my non-negotiables (Charles, 1996; Flippen, 2001); and, (2) establishing a creative and consistent system of in-class consequences, both positive and logical, not negative (Connolly et al., 1995; Coombs-Richardson & Meisgeier, 2001, Dreikurs). Non-negotiables, shared with students and parents, helped me communicate my tolerance level. However, I came to understand that my tolerance level fluctuated based on out-of-classroom influences, curriculum, and individual students. This became a powerful teaching point with my students. I continuously shared this learning with them in order to build community in our classroom. Students, like all human beings have different tolerance levels based on a multitude of factors as well. These factors come from in-classroom dynamics as well as out-of-classroom dynamics, some changing and some stable. Those tolerance levels also manifest themselves in varying behaviors for each individual, adults and students, at any given time. While I monitored the student behaviors, I also allowed the students to help me monitor mine. Some student behaviors that certain teachers valued as non-negotiable; leaning in chairs, always raising a hand for everything, standing while working, and moving through the classroom, just to name a

few, were of no consequence to me. I communicated and expected students to produce quality work and I did not care if they did it standing on their heads and sometimes walking around the room. However, if they fell from their chair, they also knew that I expected them get up immediately, not to cry, and get back to work. If they needed a tissue during direct instructions, I trusted them to get one without permission.

For many of my families and students, even Khalil, who had been sent to the Principal Smith's office and DMC many times, there was no internalization of the rules of "how to do" school or the discipline code. I assumed because parents signed it that they actually read it. Then I realized that as a parent of three school aged-children, I had not read it, in its entirety, myself. Curwin and Mendler (1999) suggest that without clear rules and expectations students are encouraged to test or break them. For this reason, I always began the year with communication to, "...Clearly and specifically inform students and parents of the standards of acceptable behavior before they were violated and what will happen when these standards are violated" (p. 8). How can nine and ten year old students be held accountable for codes of conduct that they do not fully understand? I did not know that these codes are based on penal codes and I am sure my students and parents did not either. As a parent, I was outraged; not at the system or the school that sent this information home every year, but at myself for blindly signing and returning the acknowledgement form, year after year. I assumed the same rang true of many parents. Did my fellow teachers know? The Texas Education Agency (TEA) website, detailing Chapter 37 of the Texas Education Code, which outlines discipline, law and order of schools states, "Please note that references to the Texas Penal Code contain language which may be offensive to some readers. Therefore, this document is

intended for administrative use and not for distribution to children” (TEA, 2010). Public school children, as young as five, are held to these standards of penal codes every day.

Dewey (1938) explains that the traditional scheme of education:

...imposes adult standards, subject-matter, and methods upon those who are only growing slowly toward maturity. The gap is so great that the required subject-matter, the methods of learning and behaving are foreign to the existing capacities of the young. They are beyond the reach of the experience the young learners already possess. Consequently, they must be imposed; even though good teachers will use devices or art to cover up the imposition so as to relieve it of obviously brutal features. (p. 19)

Once parents reviewed the book and returned the signed acknowledgment form, the learning did not stop. This same book was used throughout the year to communicate and build understanding about public school mores about discipline and discipline infractions. The parents of my students were grateful for suggestions and guidance on school discipline systems and discipline strategies. After I learned that 80 percent of all discipline comes from 11 percent of staff and 10 percent of students (Payne, 2008), I made a conscious decision not to be a part of those statistics. While I allowed students to participate in establishing classroom expectations, I constantly communicated that I was the “final authority and the final responsibility for what happened in the classroom” (Payne, 2008, p.8).

I also communicated my beliefs in my discipline approach to students and parents. Rimm-Kaufman (2006) points out that “teachers’ beliefs about teaching often forecast the kinds of behaviors they exhibit in the classroom as well as the academic experiences of the students” (p. 10). I assured them that I would go to every extent to teach them about behavior as much as I would about any of the other subjects. I also shared with parents and students my background and belief “that you never spread the

family business in the street.” I intended for my classroom to be much the same. At first, I used the Principal Smith’s office, DMC, and parents as a threat to get students to conform. Later, I internalized many different techniques and implemented a hybrid of behavior theories and packages in my classrooms. My initial motivation came from never wanting to send any of my students to the Principal Smith’s office for any reason. My second motivation was not to allow office referrals to be a talking point during my annual professional evaluation. I quickly learned that the best discipline did not come from hierarchical authority, implementing one program over another, or employing specific techniques, but from a combination of beliefs, approaches, and unconditional care and concern for each individual student (Delpit, 1995; Curwin & Mendler, 1999; Payne, 1998; 2006).

I would argue that teaching students self-control assumes that students lack the ability for control or that they need controlling. Ladson-Billings (1994) reminds us that most children enjoy coming to school, even when they have a difficult time navigating the rules and when learning is difficult. Furthermore, “When students are treated as competent, they are likely to demonstrate competence” (p. 123). I took to heart that teaching students to navigate or problem-solve academic and social issues, as well as how their actions affect others in and out of the school setting, was an effective use of my teaching energy (Kohn, 2006, p. 10). Ladson-Billings (as cited in Landsman & Lewis, 2006) says, “Feeling with the students builds a sense of solidarity between the teacher and the students but does not excuse students from working hard in pursuit of excellence” (p. 31). I understood their struggles and empathized with them academically and behaviorally, but I was not going to let their lack of academic and social skills prevent

them from being their very best. My in-class consequences ranged from apologies and handshakes to after-school assignments and home visits. The focus was never on punishing the action, but on the academics and relationships (Coombs-Richardson, 2001; Flippen, 2001; Kohn, 2006). Much of the creativity came from the students themselves. When prompted, “How do you plan to repair the heart you just broke or the assignment you just missed?” Students grew to effectively choose appropriate tasks in order to make up work and heal hurt feelings. Rimm-Kaufman (2006) highlights, “Only when children know how to manage themselves and their interactions with others are they free to focus on the academic challenges that lie ahead of them (p. 3). While I focused on keeping my students in class and with me as much as possible to resolve our conflicts, I continued to notice other students going to and from the Principal Smith’s office and DMC. I often wondered, “Did other elementary schools have the same patterns of behaviors and consequences for their male students, specifically, African American male students?”

I learned that American male students, at all levels, are the highest perpetrators of discipline infractions in public schools (United States Department of Education, 2010). African American male students make up less than twenty percent enrollment of the nation’s public school population, yet account for over thirty percent of total suspensions and expulsions in the nation according to the Office of Civil Rights’ (OCR) Elementary and Secondary Surveys of 2000, 2004, and 2006. These numbers are directly reflected in Texas. Of the 4.5 million students included in the 2006 OCR data, African American students made up less than fifteen percent of the population and over thirty percent of expulsions and suspensions. Kozol (1991) probed the underlying theory essential to these actions. He noted: “Throw out the kids who cause trouble. It’s an easy way to raise the

average scores. Where do you put these kids once they're expelled? You build more prisons" (p. 163). These data, which continue to ring with inequities, also agree with a study conducted by Hinojosa (2008), in which she concluded that "African American students are experiencing two and three times the suspension that White students are experiencing" (p.180). These punishments begin in elementary school and thousands of children, some as young as five years of age, are being denied learning opportunities on a daily basis. With all the educational reform, these data have gone unchanged for decades.

Pedro Noguera (2008) argues:

But more often than not, schools treat the removal of students as though it were the only form of punishment available. In so doing, the factors that give rise to misbehavior go unexplored, ignored, and unaddressed, while the penchant to punish proceeds with little thought given to the long-term consequences on students. Schools typically justify removal through suspension or expulsion by arguing that such practices are necessary to maintain an orderly learning environment for others. The typical rationale given for such practices is that by sorting out the "bad apples," others will be able to learn. This is only justification that seems even remotely plausible, because there is very little evidence that such practices actually change or improve the behavior of offending students. (p. 121)

As a product, parent, and practitioner of the public education system, I wonder why these numbers remain unchanged for African American males, particularly with all the calls for accountability, equitability, social justice, and No Child Left Behind.

### *Teacher-as-Parent*

Part of my rationale for becoming a teacher was because I was a mother of three small children. Many parents come to teaching because it allows them to have the same schedule as their children, just as young teachers leave the profession to parent and then return. My first child, my son, was in the fourth grade when I started my journey, and both my daughters were in daycare but soon to be of school age as well. As most parents,

I found parenting to be both a joy and a challenge. My greatest challenge as a parent was to parent differently from my parents. Having come from a stern, no-nonsense, “spare the rod and spoil the child” upbringing, there was not a strong model for open communication between adults and children. I was raised in a generation and culture where children were not meant to be “heard”, literally and figuratively. I was most resentful of the lack of communication in my childhood home and wanted to establish a different parental standard of my own. However, I often times caught myself echoing the words of my forefathers and my father with phrases such as, “Don’t ever ask me why” and “Because I said so.” While I inherited my mother’s “eyes in the back of my head” trait and found it most useful in both my home and my classroom, I lacked the deeper connections as well as the results that I had longed for with the children of my life, in both places. I was great at adult behaviors that exhibited control and intimidation, with procedural components in place to give the perception of a well managed home and classroom. However, the shallowness and coldness that existed between us was not my ideal desired relationship with any of the children in my life. I had no idea that, just as in my home, I would have to break down similar parenting walls in my classroom. As I began to reflect and study my immediate family parenting beliefs as well as my parenting behaviors, those skills and transformed behaviors spilled into my classroom. I had to relinquish my preconceived notion that I was hired to deliver a traditional dose of what Connolly et al. (1995) refer to as “content and control.” For me to be more effective, I had to do more than control students and deliver the content.

I quickly realized that as a teacher we are called to act in loco parentis. Beyond the marriage of home and school, teachers are called to be the home in the school

(Kuykendall, 2004, p. 194). Kuykendall goes on to say that teachers "...must have an understanding of home, peer, and other outside influences, in order to be able to implement appropriate intervention and prevention measures" (p. 148). I was the keeper of my personal children's lives and influences, and came to the realization that it also extended, to a certain degree, to my students. I allowed myself to embrace this philosophy based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. I learned that often times students felt unsafe to learn because of influences that had nothing to do with me or the classroom environment. This philosophy and approach of *in loco parentis* allowed me to easily develop deeper relationships with my students. I developed an unconditional level of acceptance for the whole of all my students, mistakes and all.

However, when acting as a teacher-parent, I was able to also approach my discipline techniques slightly differently. I approached it as a greater responsibility for me to be proactive and not reactive. I also thought that it was most important to keep students in the classroom to problem-solve. I would not send my own children to another adult to correct or scold them, and I did not intend to do that with my students, to every extent possible. If the incident happened on my watch then it was handled solely by me. I called all parents (even of students not in my class), together we worked out an agreement of corrective consequences or restitution, and I followed up with them over time. Contrary to Wong and Wong, it was indeed effective for me to develop creative positive and negative discipline techniques for my students. Just as with my own children, I had to determine what they were willing to work for and avert from. I learned early that I had to invest a great deal of my duty free lunch in order to work with students, and most of that time was spent talking. I let them know that they were worth the

sacrifice, in order to keep them directly connected to the classroom and learning. What had at first been an aversion to them and a sacrifice of my time, turned into cherished moments of refuge. Over time, our relationship reached a level that the only consequence any of my students required was to know that I was disappointed with their behavior or choices, but never with them. As I grew to allow my students' stories to shape me as a teacher, I also had to accept my role as a teacher-parent.

### *Teacher-as-Change Agent*

I learned early in my career that one of my major roles was as a change agent. As the teacher of a fourth grade, ESL classroom, it did not take my students long to see, feel, and ask questions about why we were all in this class together. For some of my more experienced students, those that had always been in 'pure' ESL classes, their responses ran the gambit; "Because we are all stupid" or "Because we are all Mexican." Neither of these declarative statements was true at the time, but spawned a great debate and history quest. The conversations and lessons began there but did not end there. As we began to get to know more about one another and share our goals and dreams, I realized that my eight, nine, and ten year old students, either knowingly or not, felt 'devalued' in school (Nieto, 2000).

We journeyed from Thomas Jefferson to George Bush in our conversations and research on public schools. I started by sharing with them that I was standing before them as a teacher because I believed in the power of change through education, but that I was obviously not from Mexico. We developed a poster of where we all came from as a constant reminder of how history placed us in that space, but I continuously challenged them to redefine and create their own history in it, their own storied identities. Thomas

Jefferson's words that advocated for "freedom through education for all citizens, rich and poor and that no other sure foundation can be devised for the preservation of freedom and happiness..." (Thomas Jefferson to George Wythe, 1786, as cited in Coates Sr., 1995), were indeed eloquent and inspiring. However, in context of larger societal issues, they conveyed a figurative intent and resolve for "all" the people of the 18<sup>th</sup> century nation. We simultaneously discussed the educational ideals of that time not extending to women, enslaved Africans, non-English speaking immigrants, and Native Americans, yet here we all were! Here, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, educational reform, policies and practices continue to grapple with 18<sup>th</sup> century issues such as racism, sexism, curriculum, classicism, in essence "all". Cuban (1990) argues that schools continue to "perform the social functions assigned by the reigning ideologies and elite classes" (p. 10). So as a couple of students developed similarities and differences between the word "all" of Thomas Jefferson and "all" of President Bush's No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001), I thought perhaps they would be leaders of change someday.

At the time, I did not consider that some of the other teachers would perceive our conversations and learning as sensitive or provocative. Ladson-Billings (1994) points out that there exists a pervasive dismissal of one of the most salient features of the child's identity (race and ethnicity) that should be accounted for in curricular planning and instruction within public schools (p. 33). Some of the teachers strongly advised against conversations about race and ethnicity because of possible parent calls or getting off track with curriculum pacing. However, I was quite comfortable discussing such matters with my students and their families. Dewey (1938) asks, "How shall the young become acquainted with the past in such a way that the acquaintance is a potent agent in

appreciation of the living present” (p. 22)? We all knew who we were and where we came from. What came into question was who, out-of-classroom and out-of-school forces, truly believed in how much we could achieve inside this diverse classroom? How do we, as a nation of accountability testing and data-driven decisions, reach the very populations of people we are not comfortable talking about in schools? Ladson-Billings (1994) and Weiner (2006) refer to this phenomenon in education as deficit paradigm approach, the enveloping assumption that underachieving students are not capable of or should not be challenged to tackle such major issues. “Deficit theories assume that some children, because of genetic, cultural, or experiential differences, are inferior to other children” (Nieto, 2000, p. 10). It is indeed a false assumption for educators to blame the problem with education on the students and families they serve (Foley, Sloan, Valencia, & Valenzuela, 2001; Delpit, 2006). As I continued to observe, teach, and learn, from adults and students alike, I agree with Kozol (1991) who states, “...Pedagogic problems...are not chiefly matters of injustice, inequality or segregation, but of insufficient information about teaching strategies” (p. 51). Milner suggests that teachers’ good intentions are not enough and they should study deficit theories and philosophies in order to “improve and change their practices” for the sake of affecting positive change in the lives of students of color (as cited in Landsman and Lewis, p. 81).

### *School-wide and PBIS*

Several years of teaching, mentoring, and facilitating professional development for classroom management prepared me to become a campus leader for a school-wide initiative. When propositioned about the campus position to lead the implementation of Positive Behavior Supports and Intervention (PBIS), I was apprehensive to say the least. I

had become confident and comfortable in my classroom and grade level. To permanently step out of the classroom was daunting, but the thought of being able to positively impact more teachers and students was exciting. I had some homework to do before I could make a decision. Would this be just another adopt-a-program or would it be something significant for the future of the adults and young men who will walk the path to DMC?

My initial research led me to school-wide initiatives. Many proponents argued that, “Community building must become the heart of any school improvement effort” (Curwin & Mendler, 1995). While others attribute student success to a direct relationship to students feeling safe, creative and comfortable to learn (Kohn, 2006), all agree that any school-wide initiative’s success must involve the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders; staff, students, parents, and the community. Students are our most important stakeholders and Lunenburg (1984 & 2007) reminds us that “...the less the custodial the pupil control ideology of a school, the higher the student’s perception of his motivation with respect to tasks he or she faces in the classroom situation, and the higher the student’s overall self-concept as a learner. Lunenburg refers to the range between custodial and humanistic schools, as sick or healthy, when establishing its organizational health (2007).

PBIS was born out of research and guidelines established by the three-tiered model of Response to Intervention (RtI). This framework is primarily used in the special education arena. Described by Sugai (2008), “RtI appeared as policy in IDEA and has empirical foundations in, applied behavior analysis, curriculum-based measurement, diagnostic prescriptive teaching, data-based decision making, early universal screening, and team-based problem solving. “It was developed to improve the effectiveness of the academic environment for all students” (Hilton, 2007). Furthermore, Hilton argues that

not only is RtI a federal mandate for change, but also in all probability will be embodied in both Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and NCLB. Hilton considers RtI to also be best practice. The six systems of belief of this framework include a screening process, constant monitoring, student performance, evidence-based strategies, data-driven intervention, and set procedures for coordination (Office of Special Education Programs, OSEP, 2008). With the implementation of RtI, a correlation was discovered with early reading and social behavior (as cited in Sugai, 2008). The social behavior framework was designed on a three-tiered model of prevention logic. Crone, Hawken, and Horner (2004) outline positive behavior supports (PBS) in the following way:

This continuum includes positive behavior support at three levels: (1) universal, school-wide positive behavior support strategies; (2) targeted interventions for students at risk; and (3) individualized interventions for students engaging in severe problem behavior. (p. 6)

The positive strategies are for 100 percent of the students, while the targeted interventions are for, on an average, 20 percent of students.

A school must have staff buy-in of 80% in order to be considered for the formal PBIS training by a PBIS certified trainer. The campus facilitators of the framework are predominately a team of teachers, ideally representatives from each grade level, along with campus administration, a support staff member, and a district level coach. The PBIS leadership team undergoes an intensive training and is then responsible for shepherding the program and training all the campus staff throughout the year, including custodial and cafeteria staff. The training is completed in modules specifically for universal, tier-one, or level I implementation and include: three-tiered approach, positive common expectations, classroom vs. non-classroom settings, pre-correction, active supervision,

data-based decision making, and acknowledgement systems. The team initially guides the staff through the development of the school's PBIS motto and PBIS matrix. The matrix contains the developed expectations for each campus setting, classroom and non-classroom. The positively stated and measurable expectations contain three to five identifiable steps (ex. being respectful in the classroom means hands and feet to self, using your manners, and listening to learn). Equipped with a Team Implementation Checklist (TIC), the team navigates office discipline referrals (ODR's) data monthly, which also serves to guide implementation of regular discipline data dissemination, professional development, acknowledgements and interventions. The ODR's are disaggregated, analyzed and reported monthly by number of referrals, problem type, time, location, and proportion of students (based on number of office referrals). Individual teacher reports are analyzed by administrators. The team designs staff meetings or professional development presentations in response to increases in ODR's in any area. The PBIS team is also responsible for developing and communicating school-wide acknowledgments and incentives that include school PBIS tickets, prizes, pep rallies, and acknowledgements on the morning announcements, to name a few. As part of this responsibility, the team must also develop a PBIS dissemination plan for parents and the community.

When campuses move to Level II and Level III, Secondary and Tertiary, discipline plans involve evaluating the DMC procedures, setting parameters for identifying students that will require individualized interventions, and establishing a team that will provide the individualized supports. In the secondary and tertiary planning, the PBIS leadership team enlists support from specialists, usually district staff, and

establishes roles for creating and supporting individualized student behavior education plans (BEP) and student functional behavior assessments (FBA). Both of these systems are methods of collecting data on not only daily behavior patterns, but also events that precede and follow both positive and negative behaviors (Crone, Hawkins, Horner, 2004). One study of PBIS suggests incorporating the BEP and FBA framework into the development of discipline codes as a means of “proactive not reactive” disciplinary measures (Fenning et al., 2004). Furthermore, the study recommends “...continued and meaningful involvement of key stakeholders in the development, monitoring and modification of discipline policies; examining data in a collaborative fashion; and, examination of curriculum as a variable of discipline policy” (p. 56). The correlation of behavior outcomes to academic outcomes are reported in many PBIS studies. “If done wisely in the context of other initiatives and interventions across classroom and non-classroom settings, improving student academic and social behavior outcomes can become a reality for all students and the needs of struggling students can be met early” (Sugai, 2008; Hilton, 2007). Could it be that PBS stemmed out of the national data indentifying the disproportionate overrepresentation of African American males in special education programming and discipline infractions, as well as having the lowest accountability test scores (McMillan, 2003; Monroe, 2005)?

One case study conducted by Anderson-Hariss, Bohanon, Carney, Culos, Fenning, Hicks, Kasper, Minnis-Kim, Moroz, Pigott, and Sailor (2006), encountered challenges and came away from the two year study “encouraged” by their findings. While PBS was only being used in a sample group within the school, negative behaviors decreased. They went on to say that PBS works for all people, adults and students alike.

An urban elementary case study by Franzen and Kamp (2008) noted findings of notable reductions in inappropriate student behaviors during interventions for all three grade levels (2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup>). They elaborated on the results that suggested the intervention served as a prompt for both students and teachers to engage in more appropriate behaviors and interactions on the playground (Franzen & Kamp). With the framework, teachers are held accountable for active supervision more closely and the results of their effectiveness or ineffectiveness are reflected in the data. While most of the studies provide similar conclusions and information, Epstein, Atkins, Cullinan, Kutash, and Weaver supports PBS as both a feasible and advisable approach for many schools (2008). While findings in Epstein et al. (2008) concur with other PBIS research that suggests reductions in discipline reflected changes in school practices and adult behaviors.

### *Summary*

In this reflection of the literature, I have examined four areas critical to my inquiry into teachers' management styles and perception of discipline; the teacher as a manager, the teacher as a change agent, the teacher as a disciplinarian, and a teacher as a parent. Teachers' beliefs and practices originate from many different personal experiences and behavioral theorists, but they all converge in schools that "...must deal with all of America's children" (Marzano, 2003, p. 45). Teachers' beliefs and practices, withstanding policies and legislations, also converge in school-wide frameworks such as Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports. I have chosen to group my experiences and theories into these four categories based on my learning and practices through the years as outlined in chapter one. These components of adult behaviors were instrumental in my discipline success with students over the last ten years. Also influential to my professional growth have been the stories of my colleagues and students. These

experiences and stories have helped to ignite this inquiry into teacher management styles within a PBIS framework. When implemented at Ocean Elementary, the campus serving as the focus for this study, there was an overall reduction of ODR's for all students, particularly African American males. While the empirical data exist to support the reduced office referrals, the remainder of this study will address the "why" from the teachers' perspective, "...the so what and who cares questions important in all research undertakings" (Clandinin & Huber, 2010, p.8).

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### *Introduction*

Quantitative results are too gross of measures to get at subtle and not-so-subtle qualitative changes. Therefore, the research tradition I have chosen for this study is narrative inquiry. From this starting place, I situated myself in a more or less relational way with participants and they acted as co-composers of this inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, in press, p. 5). Although an intricate research approach to navigate, it best honored the storied and shared lives used to "...fill our world with meaning and enlist one another's assistance in building lives and communities" (Clandinin & Connelly, in press, p. 2). Although bordering an autobiographical narrative inquiry, my perspectives and stories alone are not enough to address the 'whys' of change that occurred in our shared experiences.

#### *Purpose of Study*

Along with archival data, to identify a decrease in discipline referrals, I include brief descriptions of several "out-of-school" and "out-of-classroom" events that "...infringed on in-classroom places shared by teachers and students in subtle and not-so-subtle ways" (Craig, 2009, p. 1042). These events highlight changes in the school's demographics over the course of the study that shifted discipline on the campus. Ocean Elementary's overarching goal was to specifically improve strategies and actions toward decreasing office discipline referrals in classrooms and across the campus. The campus in

effect conducted ongoing, dialectical, action inquiry, where practices informed research, and research guided practices. Under the framework of PBIS, we deliberately navigated through individual practices, as well as the school-wide social dimensions of our campus (Gore & Zeichner, 1991). Change happened and the numbers reduced, however, I missed the ‘stories’ within the reduced data (Horner, 2010).

Through the results of this narrative inquiry, I hope to add to the body of knowledge on the implementation of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports. I intend to share any insights gained throughout this study with other elementary campuses, specifically those in the midst of school-wide PBIS. I plan to present this information to my district and hopefully ignite discussions into effective discipline interventions that support all elementary students, but specifically African American male students. I also hope to encourage continued research and professional development in the areas of teachers’ discipline management styles and practices.

### *Research Design*

Unlike the investment of time used in ethnographic and case studies, I focus my attention on a small, convenience sample of two teachers and the principal of Ocean Elementary. I worked alongside all three participants from 2005-2009, one year prior to and three years during the implementation of PBIS. I solicited for participants by using a popular social networking website as well as hosting an open house on campus. I did not require any specific identifiers for participant selection such as age, gender, years experience, grade level, or ethnicity. I selected the two teachers that exhibited an interest and willingness to invest their time and stories. I included the Principal Smith’s story, along with the setting (place and time), in order to place the study in contextual three-dimensional space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin & Huber, in press). This

research received approval from both the institutional research board and school district. Because narrative inquiry involves relational aspects, the researcher honored ethical guidelines by obtaining participants' informed consent prior to each interview session. Assigned pseudonyms were used for each participant in order to protect their confidentiality. Participants shared not only their professional stories but also their personal stories, therefore every measure was taken throughout the narrative process and text negotiations process to not only protect their identities but also the integrity of their stories. Furthermore, participants had the choice of public locations that allowed for their comfort and well-being during the interview process.

Through a combination of one-on-one interviews, I sought to gain insight into any emerging themes of influences on teachers' discipline practices during the implementation of PBIS. Research focus also included any specific adult behaviors or social interactions that guided teachers' discipline decisions during the three-year implementation. Furthermore, the interviews looked to gain participants' perspective on the role, if any, of tenets that specifically supported the decrease of office discipline referrals for the campus as well as African American males. While sample questions were developed, they merely served as a researcher guide to stimulate conversations. The participants were not provided with the questions and the interview format remained unordered and unstructured.

I was the primary instrument of data collection, through tape recordings, field notes, and compiling of interview text. The informal face-to-face interviews were recorded and transcribed. After each interview, the participants received a copy of the transcript in their desired mode, either through email or in person and these transcripts

were used to negotiate the inquiry text. Despite our close working relationship in the past, I remained cognizant of monitoring my reactions, in order to remain unbiased by participants' responses and honor our existing and future relationships. A research journal was used to capture personal reactions and responses during the interview. Those reactions or responses are outlined in the reflections section of the inquiry. "Differences in views of reality, knowledge developed from an inquiry, the relationship between experience and context, and the relationship between researcher and participants all shape borders" (Clandinin & Rosiek, as cited in Clandinin & Connelly, in press, p. 14).

I analyzed the information narratively through storying, re-storying, member checking and reflexivity (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Carlson, 2010). I recorded, listened, transposed and analyzed data for emerging common themes or patterns to either "...develop or confirm existing taxonomies or conceptual systems" (Clandinin & Huber, 2010, p. 14-15). I then summarized and interpreted emerging themes, "...tensions, bumping place and temporal threads" (Clandinin & Huber, in press, p. 6). The emerging themes or patterns will either corroborate with the existing arrangement of knowledge; my own, the research, and the profession of education. However, the interpretations may also bring about new questions and alternatives to the each knowledge base. I utilized the strategy of fictionalization in analyzing and reporting shared stories. Furthermore, participant's accounts and reports of the past made in context of the present may not be complete accounts of reality (Ketelle, 2010, p. 549). Through the process of member checking and text negotiating, I provided participants options for receiving transcripts as directly spoken or "...in particles from the narratives they contributed from the interview sessions." (Carlson, 2010, p. 1105). Text negotiations with participants were vital in

allowing participants the opportunity to "...edit, clarify, or elaborate, and at times, delete their own words from the narratives (p. 1105). Negotiated text dictated participants' text in this study in order to honor their signature and voice (Clandinin & Connelly, in press, p. 14).

### *Social Implications*

In 2006, Peg Tyre reported on the "The Trouble With Boys" (MSNBC). She reminded her audience that, "Boys have always been boys, but the expectations for how they're supposed to act and learn in school have changed" (p. 1). Boys historically had men at home, in their family or in the community, to look up to and emulate. Some researchers attribute the desegregation of schools to the beginning of the decline for African American males, despite most students "...not being prepared for anything but menial labor" (Losen, 2010). Discussions point out that no longer were African American males taught by African American teachers from the community, with African American communication skills native to the community, but they also were exposed to classroom management and discipline management skills that were culturally acceptable and expected by the community. These same discussions point out that along with desegregation and equal opportunity legislation, African American teachers and professionals alike left communities. Despite the decline of African American teachers, these communities continue to maintain a unique culture with similar pre-desegregation expectations of classroom and discipline management. With the decline in African American communities, businesses and educational leaders as role models for success, African American male success has also decreased.

I grapple with the thought that perhaps the federal government does not fund and support qualitative analyses in education because it will force the nation to face ever-present social ills that vociferate throughout our nation but specifically in public education. Furthermore, perhaps it is why in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, educational reform continues to grapple with 18<sup>th</sup> century issues of; racism, sexism, classicism, and curriculum (Cuban, 1990). Clandinin and Connelly (1989) remind us that, “In school, as in life generally, one’s personal history, the traditions of which one has been a part, and the social and community relations in which one engages, form the plot outline of day to day life” (p. 3-4). Yet, for a large number of African American males, schools continue to function as a “pipeline to prison, where school alienation creates delinquency” (Skiba, 2010).

#### *Professional and Practical Implications*

As a developing school leader, I am challenged by the tensions and bumping places between policy and practicality (Clandinin & Connelly, in press, p. 6). I am on the educational leadership path under the tutelage and encouragement of a Principal Smith whom I consider to be a visionary leader. This Principal Smith closely monitored and reminded staff of their responsibility in setting the climate of the school “...to include; safety, change, attitudes, communication, human relations, collaboration, and public relations” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 44). Stepping out of the classroom into a leadership role for the first time, I quickly learned that schools and school leaders deal with very complex issues that do not always lead to simple answers. Sergiovanni (1999) encourages leaders to develop alternatives to these complexities that maintain relationships with all stakeholders. He calls it, ‘moral community’. He identifies ‘moral community’ as a binding agent for all and a catalyst towards self-management. “Unlike

the other theories that connect individuals with contracts, bartering, and reinforcers, leadership is established through collaboration of ‘shared ideals and moral connections...’ (p. 99). Sergiovanni’s collaborative research offers an exemplar of the movement away from educational leaders as not only managers but also as active participants in visionary leadership, “...directly affecting academic, developmental, social, and cultural needs as part of the campus culture and climate” (Wilmore, 2003, p. 57). The ultimate decision to remove a student from the learning environment, as a discipline consequence, lies not only in policy but also in leadership. Horner reminds us that the single strongest predictor of academic gains is the number of minutes of effective academic engagement and removing a student from school is a serious decision (2010). For this reason, I believe the story of Ocean Elementary (pseudonym) and the district it is located in will be vital to establishing the details of the situation and place (Dewey, 1938; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This story might also serve to encourage elementary campuses and districts to reflect and converse on current discipline practices. It may also stimulate research that supports alternatives to some of those practices.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) (2002) reminds educators and communities of the largest responsibility our nation has faced in its young history and that is to educate all its children (Cuban, 1990). This is not just federally mandated but stated clearly in district goals and campus improvement plans across the nation. Yet African American males remain among the highest group referred to administrators for Special Education and severe discipline. Some researchers, like Smith (2005), charge school board members and superintendents to take the lead in decreasing the gap by targeted effective budgeting, upgrading professional training courses, and evaluating their

own contracting and accountability scales (p. 47). She encourages salary growth for superintendents and administrators be tied with the success of the most at-risk group of students. Minority leaders and scholars have also responded to NCLB with debate and research focused not only on student achievement but also leadership and culture. Despite the fact that most agree that standardized testing should not be the only measure of achievement, federal funding is essential to student success. Funding would allow for states and school districts to not only invest in effective programs but would allow for the purchase of effective databases (Ali, 2010). Regardless of any interventions or reform, it is teacher beliefs, ability to build positive relationships, and ability to create a community within the classroom, which regulates student success (Kohn, 1996).

Gore and Zeichner (1991) argue that teacher research or “inquiry-oriented teacher education,” along with all forms of reflective research “...have become fashionable throughout all segments of the U.S. teacher education community” (p. 119). As a result of self-reflective research, I came to education and continue to use this method as both a practitioner and a mentor teacher. For three years, I discovered and described the ‘storied’ discipline beliefs of teachers within the landscape of an elementary school (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Craig, 2004). The context in which the campus operated was under the implementation phase of Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) framework. Of all the programs and professional development that staff (administrators, teachers, and classified staff) participated in for relationship building, social skills, class building, curriculum and communication, what was it about implementation of PBIS that kindled movement toward reshaping and reducing campus office discipline referrals (ODRs)? Perhaps this study could act as a catalyst for teacher

reflections of discipline beliefs and, if needed, modify or enhance teacher discipline practices.

*Personal implications*

As an African American mother, this issue is of personal interest to me. I believe that discipline at the elementary level sets lasting precedence through to secondary school and higher education. While my son is doing well, discipline was and remains an ever-present concern. My main concern has been the zero-tolerance discipline that vociferates in secondary schools and is funneling down to the elementary level. My son was teased and bullied throughout school for being larger and taller than his classmates and sometimes for being smart. This teasing and bullying very rarely became physical until once in his sophomore year. We spent a great deal of time talking about different scenarios on how to handle the situation as well as working with school personnel. My son was put in a position where he had to defend himself or wait for school personnel to take action to protect him. However, initial conversations with the school were all about the consequences that would befall my son for defending himself, to include suspension, at the very least, to placement in an alternative educational setting at the very most. It took us several weeks of working with the school and them getting to know our story to realize that we were not going to allow the possibilities of consequences to be the focus of our relationship but the mandates of student safety. This had been our result, because we knew the language of school. However, for so many of my son's acquaintances and their families (from all backgrounds but primarily White and African American) that were not so familiar with that language, the outcome was always different and ran the gambit of consequences.

My son survived that tumultuous time and continued to watch my home community in the South crumble under the loss of influential African American role models and disciplinarians. Growing up, my grandfather's farm was the rehabilitation camp for many of my wayward cousins that had gotten involved in gangs or lost their way in school. They would come and spend a summer working the farm and living up to the expectations of my grandparents but left richer and more successful for it. My generation of cousins had that stability of strong, hardworking, male role models in my grandfather, father, uncles, and extended family of older cousins. Today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, my home city and community is known as the "murder capital" of my state. While my family has not been the only contributor to this title, the primary perpetrators of these crimes are young African American males. They are not only the perpetrators but also the victims. Many of these young men found themselves frequently suspended or referred to alternative schools for disrespectful language or threatening other students or the teacher. Instead of going to the alternative school, where they were responsible for their own transportation, many men settled into street life; hustling, dealing, and stealing.

My sister called me last fall, totally upset and dismayed at the discipline events that had left her son, my nephew, suspended. After providing her the opportunity to vent and gather her thoughts, I offered her some suggested approaches to handling the situation. Her first attempt was to meet with the Principal Smith that had suspended her son. This conference resulted in her increased anger and frustration with the administrator that admittedly did not do an investigation. She saw my nephew smack another student in the back of the head and take off running. She called him to her, walked him to the office, and had him call his mother to pick him up. My nephew and two of his friends had been

horse playing in the hallway but the only one she saw was my nephew. The assistant Principal Smith never asked him what happened and suspended him for one day. After the conference the next day, the assistant Principal Smith then tacked on another day to his suspension because my sister used profanity in the conference. At that point, my sister contacted the Superintendent's office. Later on the second day, my nephew was allowed back into school and the office referral was rescinded. Regardless, he missed almost two whole days of school. Despite the rules stating that a suspended student does not have the opportunity to make-up missed work, my sister continued to struggle with the school in order to remove a zero he received and to allow him to make up his work. Why did she even have to go through this ordeal? To ask her, she would say, "The school didn't care enough to even ask what happened and that it is just another Black boy on the streets. The saddest part is the young Principal Smith is Black too." My sister's comments echoed those of many other parents "who see schools as insensitive, disinterested, punitive, and uncommitted" (Kuykendall , 2004, p. 187).

More recently, I lost two cousins, one twenty and the other, twenty-six years of age. These young men both lived in my hometown. One died from a congenital heart defect. The other died from gunshot wounds inflicted in a shoot out with another cousin. As I stood at the gravesite of one cousin and listened to the reports from family members of the other, I asked myself what was the measure of these young men's lives. They both died so young. Did they have unaccomplished dreams? They never finished school nor to my knowledge, were they gainfully employed. They left behind girlfriends, children and family members who loved them deeply, but what was their legacy? For that matter, what will be the legacy for their sons and all the young African American males in my

hometown community, which was once dubbed as the “murder capital” of the South?

These incidents are not the sum of my immediate or extended family experiences, nor are they used to overshadow a rich history of male successes throughout my family and for generations to come. They only serve to highlight the personal implications and motivations for this study.

### *Summary*

How do we, as educational leaders, researchers and practitioners, quantify and justify research that does not address the unobservable, diverse, and dynamic aspects of being humans? I believe that human beings, as social creatures, must be honored by the stories they hold and tell (Dewey, 1938; Clandinin & Connelly, 1989). As an educational leader, I am compelled to honor the value in both quantitative and qualitative research methods. However, in my professional experience, quantitative data meet the highest criteria for standardized methodology, but do not always practically address or answer necessary questions (Neuman, 2010, p. 14). Quantitative methodology strips away human characteristics and particularities that are vital in addressing human issues. My life and professional experiences have led me to believe that the only way to come to an understanding about other human beings is to live, observe and dialogue with them, both individually and collectively.

Eisenhart (2005) encourages us to be mindful of the interdependence within all designs and that “both variance and process approaches are needed to build a good understanding of causation in education” (p. 245). While I believe that interdependence is valuable, I view qualitative research as a much needed extension of the quantified “picture of reality” (Caine & Caine, 1997). Caine and Caine argue that qualitative research maintains a power and “all-embracing newness” to gathering, analyzing, and

“...describing trends and patterns over time” (p. 55). These “new” trends of educational research are not new and have over time have been encouraged by the likes of Dewey (1938) and Schwab (1962), to honor both the continuity of experiences and interactions toward inquiry. These inquiries, “...ethnographies, case studies, discourse analyses, and narrative analyses,” offer a realist’s theory of causation (Eisenhart, 2005, p. 245). While some of these methods vary in knowledge claims and knowledge produced, they all offer analyses toward varying degrees of change; social, professional, and personal.

## CHAPTER IV

### INQUIRY

#### *Introduction*

This inquiry is designed to ascertain the perceptions and shared stories of the researcher and three participants from Ocean Elementary. In order to establish the landscape in which these perceptions and stories were formed, I highlight some quantitative data along with qualitative reflections of the history of the school. I began in the “midst” of the narrative story of Ocean Elementary in the context of the community in which it is located (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The researcher’s role is included as both the motivation for the study and as a participant of the landscape. Using guiding questions, within the context of the research questions, steered one-on-one interviews.

1. How do teachers perceive their management style and role as disciplinarians in their classroom (primary, secondary, or tertiary)?
2. What specific PBIS tenets, if any, supported, enhanced or transformed teacher management styles, as well as supported the reduction of school-wide office discipline referrals?
3. What specific tenets, if any, do teachers perceive supported reduction of office discipline referrals for African American elementary males?

Transcriptions were prepared, negotiated with participants, and edited (Appendix B). Along with transcriptions, field notes, and researcher’s journal, participant stories are retold, in part, and within the context of the three research questions. These interviews, along with researcher reflections and interpretations, are then woven together using

textual collages in an attempt to bring meaning to the text. I focus my narrative analysis on the emerged themes, interactions and “bumping places” of our stories, the research, and the profession of teaching.

### *Participants Overview*

Although our professional encounters were infrequent and brief, Sierra and Ashley were familiar colleagues of mine. Along with Principal Smith, we all worked to navigate this program called PBIS during the same time period. These ladies are all European Americans, with varying ranges of age and years of experience. Sierra and Ashley both have Special Education certifications. One worked primarily with a small pull out group of students and the other worked both with a pull out group and as an in-class Special Education support teacher. Three of us have varying years of parenting experience and two of us had a child at the school during the study period. Principal Smith was the active lead PBIS administrator and I served all three years as the lead teacher. My knowledge of the participants is limited to our infrequent and brief professional encounters.

### *Interview Process*

Sierra and I met in two face-to-face interviews, at a local coffee shop, where we shared both coffee and her story. Ashley preferred a local eatery, for our three interviews and meal. Principal Smith agreed to an impromptu meeting in her office at the school. The first interview with Sierra and Ashley lasted between two and four hours. We shifted across borders of time and place, as well as between personal and professional experiences. The interviews were audio-recorded, uploaded into the researcher's

computer, and transferred to a compact disc to be stored in the researcher's safe, for the prescribed number of years. A contract service provider transcribed the audio-recordings.

In order to address the three research questions, twelve open-ended questions were developed and used as a guide, not as the foundation of the interviews. Participants were not provided with the questions. Each interview was initiated by reviewing the district provided summary of the study and consent form. Interviews flowed continually in no specific order to allow participants to arrange their own stories and responses. Furthermore, this form of questioning was free of predetermined answers and allowed topics to develop naturally. All participants agreed to receive transcribed text as spoken. Sierra and Ashley preferred to member check and negotiate text with the researcher. Sierra and Ashley agreed to a third meeting to negotiate the previous interviews and text to be used for study, but asked to receive phone calls for any further clarifications. Principal Smith requested to check and negotiate through email and by phone. All participants' text can be found in Appendix B of this study. These shared perceptions lend to enriching the text and context of this study. The audio-recordings and transcriptions were analyzed in four segments; storying, re-storying, member-checking, and reflexivity (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000; Carlson, 2010; Clandinin & Huber, in press).

### *Setting*

Ocean Elementary is located in a suburban area of what was once referred to as the most rapidly growing area of Texas. It is in a district that has had a long history of maintaining consistently high ratings by the state's accountability standards. The district also has a history of leading the way in research-based programming and supports for

both its staff and students. Over a five year span this district's student population exploded. Along with its rapid growth, its diversity of students and families shifted as well. Throughout that time its state rating fluctuated and gains for every subpopulation dipped, with the exception of Whites. Since then, the district remains in a continuous problem-solving cycle in order to increase its student success for all subpopulations, as measured by the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) achievement tests. Some of the interventions include: READ 180, an intense reading intervention developed by Scholastic District Awards for Teacher Excellence (DATE) grants and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

In the school year 2005-2006, Ocean Elementary opened its doors for a second year, with an enrollment of almost nine hundred students. The year started out with a small influx of student survivors of hurricanes Katrina and Rita. While the Katrina and Rita students were a small increase in the overall population, it marked the beginning of change in the diversity of the school. This change was also marked by the school being surrounded by a surplus of empty land for planned developments and the affordability of home mortgages. Ocean Elementary was one of several schools, within a small radius, that experienced a growth of hundreds of students within one year's time. By the end of the school year, Ocean was home to over fourteen hundred students. Prior to the end of that school year Principal Smith presented an opportunity to pilot a program designed to support staff and students in reducing office referrals, called PBIS.

She shared, "We were adding new staff and students so fast throughout that year that we could not equip teachers fast enough. We needed something else, something positive, because we did not have enough time build relationships." The excitement and energy of

the beginning of the year wafted away, as the months progressed and the population continued to grow. Near the end of that year, the campus appeared to be in survivor mode and the staff overwhelmingly voted to adopt PBIS. Over the course of the next three years, despite new elementary schools opening nearby and redistricting to relieve the overcrowding, Ocean's student population lingered around twelve hundred students.

### *Researcher's Role*

At the end of that tumultuous year, my Principal Smith offered me a position as a behavior support teacher. That meant leaving the comfort of the classroom, my students, and my team. My Principal Smith impressed upon me the impact my role could have not just for more students but also for more teachers. She reminded me that as an administrator we have the opportunity to impact so many more lives. I had to consider that although the position was not administrative, it might serve as an internship. The job description was vague and unwritten. We preliminarily discussed possible tasks such as; monitor teacher classroom management, facilitate classroom management professional development, supervise the DMC and the paraprofessional support staff assigned there, write student support plans, and conference with parents, to name but a few. My primary function in the first three years was to be the lead teacher of the PBIS leadership team. This position would encompass so many unknown and foreign variables. I apprehensively accepted a new chapter of my life and career began.

As a both an administrator and practitioner during that time, 2006-2009, my role was as a collaborative leader (Wilmore, 2008), as well as, a teacher liaison. I constantly traveled between the two worlds, and was challenged not to get lost in either. As a member of the campus administrative team, I coordinated the DMC and the assigned

support staff. I also responded to daily discipline issues and supported teachers and students in the areas of discipline and classroom management. Along with support, I provided teacher and student intervention plans. I worked closely with district staff in developing and communicating intervention plans and facilitating campus professional development. Along with the day-to-day support, I inputted, disaggregated, analyzed and disseminated monthly discipline data to the campus and the district, in both my role as behavior support and member of the PBIS leadership team. However, different members of the team not only supported with the campus PBIS professional development, but also with the data dissemination process, through creative skits.

As a practitioner, I had the opportunity to build relationships with the entire campus of teachers, students and parents. However, I spent the majority of time with the teachers, students, and parents that had multiple discipline referrals. As such, I remained cognizant of my management style, floating in and out classrooms, including the DMC. My floating, however disconcerting to teachers, allowed me to observe many different classroom and discipline management styles and thus my inquiry began. The majority of my interactions with teachers and students were necessitated when teacher management styles collided with student behaviors. When the three questions of Boys Town (1995) fell on deaf ears, or the Fred Jones' (2007) whisper was responded to with students huffing and puffing, I responded to assist. I modeled varied classroom management and discipline management techniques, some of which are highlighted in Chapters 1 and 2. I also learned new strategies to add to my repertoire from teachers, students, and parents.

Along with campus behavior support to include professional development, I also implemented several school-wide acknowledgements developed by the PBIS leadership

team and staff; compliment walls, acknowledgment displays, PBIS adult and student tickets, adult and students ticket drawings and ticket winner announcements. We, the PBIS leadership team, learned that layering the acknowledgments was most effective to keep teacher and student buy-in high. Implementing and managing acknowledgements, maintaining and disseminating discipline data, and interactions of student conflict and discipline balanced outlined my day-to-day interactions. In response to working solely with campus discipline and the DMC, the DMC paraprofessional and I also contributed office discipline referrals to the data, of which I was the keeper. I created monthly and yearly comparison graphs for display, and each year we experienced declines. While fluctuating monthly, which was addressed by all staff and PBIS leadership team, the overall yearly office discipline referrals continued to drop year after year, as shown in Figure 1.

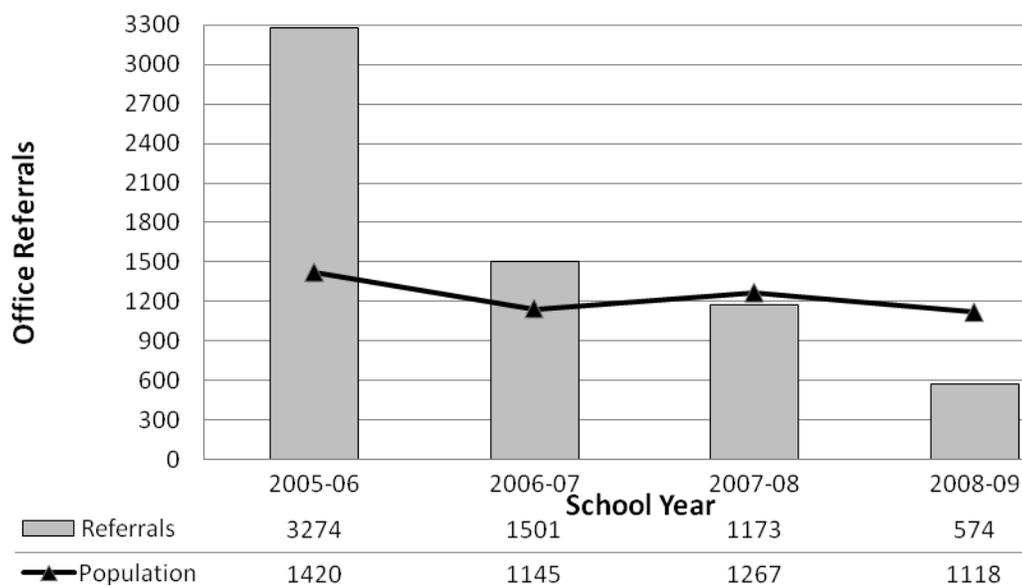


Figure 1. Office Discipline Referrals From 2005 to 2009 with Population Trend Line

*Interviews***RQ1: How do teachers perceive their management style and role as disciplinarians in their classroom (primary, secondary, or tertiary)?**

Having evolved as a teacher in my management styles, the view of my role as primary disciplinarian in my classroom also evolved as evidenced in Chapter 1. In the position of campus behavior support, I often wondered if the teachers I now served had undergone a similar evolution. Student office discipline referrals are primarily initiated by teachers because students spend the majority of their time at school, in class. With the goal of adopting PBIS to reduce discipline office referrals, I mainly spent my time at the source of those referrals, the classrooms. This put me directly in the center of the phenomenon. PBIS implementation focuses on collecting and evaluating office discipline data in the following areas; number of referrals, problem type, time, proportion of students (based on number of office referrals) and location. Principal Smith and I had very intimate knowledge of the discipline data, which was a catalyst to adopting the PBIS program. We shared similar visions of effecting positive change for our campus to include staff, students, families and our surrounding community. She invited me in her office and without prompting, began to share her most prominent lesson and management style shift.

When I was hired for my first principalship, at a Title I school, I realized that my management style or approach to kids was not effective with all students. I struggled with some of the most at-risk students, especially African American boys. I seemed to set them off more than defuse them. I began to analyze my approach and observe some of the teachers of these students. I found that some of

the most soft-spoken teachers were very successful with all their students but specifically African American boys. I grew up in a time where children were supposed to respect adults just because they were adults and that was my approach. But I had to learn something different. I knew of Randy Sprick but decided to attend Capturing Kids Hearts. There the one thing that made sense to me was that the more you draw lines in the sand the deeper you dig yourself. I was also reminded about the power of communicating belief in kids. That was a shift in my style. I believed in all my students. However, how often did I directly communicate that? I began to communicate that belief. I was conscious to lead with belief statements, into discipline interactions with students, but with my African American boys in particular, instead of, “You do it because I said so, I’m the Principal Smith.” It takes time to equip teachers with a new skill set and not all respond the same way. Some teachers came back from various trainings and professional developments unchanged. They wanted to send the students to the office to be fixed. Others came back with new strategies or attitudes and it showed with their students. They assumed a more primary role with their students.

In my initial interview with Sierra, she appeared uncertain about her role as primary disciplinarian and moved the conversation directly into her training and style. She shared lengthy stories about both classroom management and behavior modification techniques used, as part of her journey. She could not remember specific management or behavioral models or theories she had studied. However, Sierra was steadfast in not adhering to any one particular classroom management or discipline style. In fact, she

strongly expressed that there is a distinct difference between the two and, “That they have different layers and foundations. In order to be effective at either you must have a relationship with your students and know them.” During member checking and text negotiations of the second interview, Sierra interjected her perceptions of her role as primary disciplinarian.

I guess you could say that I am. I try a bunch of different things before I expect someone else to step in. I do expect parents to participate but I guess not in my class. It is different now that I am in a regular classroom. When I was with the smaller group, I really got a chance to know the kids and their families. I think that makes a huge difference with disciplining kids when you know them more and especially their families. But there is no time to really get to know the kids with the jam packed curriculum. I believe teachers have to fill different roles as needed. In the beginning more structure helps build a foundation. Then manage and help as needed. It’s common sense, right?

However, Ashley, without hesitation and very passionately, maintained a confident perspective on her role as primary disciplinarian in her classroom.

Ideally it's the parent's job but they don't see the different behaviors at home that we see at school. In my classroom I am primary. In my classroom, in my domain, I am primary. I am primary but the parent is co-primary. Because the parent sends that child to school for learning and they have, whether they believe it or not, they have given me the responsibility and the position of parent at the school. I see them more than they do during the week and that's my job to make sure that they

are safe in the school, safe in my classroom and that their learning and being respectful, responsible and productive citizens.

**RQ2: What specific PBIS tenets, if any, supported, enhanced or transformed teacher management styles, as well as supported the reduction of school-wide office discipline referrals?**

During my classroom interactions and interventions as a behavior support staff, I found teachers at various degrees of willingness, as well as, ability to adopt and implement PBIS. Some teachers struggled with stating the expectations positively versus authoritatively or with the importance of consistently stating the expectation before the task, in order to be proactive. While a few other teachers that mastered the positively stated expectations and proactive use of the matrix, may have struggled with the need to give out the school-wide tickets. While still others found that the framework, as a whole, naturally flowed with their existing style. Teachers, who had not quite solidified a classroom management or discipline management style, adopted the PBIS framework as a foundation. It appeared to provide them with a classroom management and discipline management identity, centered on the school-wide expectations. I quickly discovered that just as the three-tiered interventions and supports applied to the campus student population; it also applied to the campus adult population. Perhaps the eighty percent of teachers that had in effect implemented the framework, completely or in part, mitigated the reductions in ODR's?

Principal Smith attributes the reduction of office referrals to the foundation of positively stated expectations. She believes it that it made the rules "relational" and not personal.

Sometimes we (educators) get caught up in the, ‘because I said so’, with kids and take behaviors so personal. With PBIS systems in place, we communicate common and clear expectations that help kids know how to do school. I believe that some kids come to school that have never been in a situation or system grown-ups call school and they are not mind readers. Of course if you leave pieces of the system out it breaks down. Positives help us focus on recognizing what kids are doing right and good more than always pointing out what they are doing wrong or bad. I think it was and is the systems in place more than the stuff we gave them that makes it work, but the stuff is important as well. We haven’t been as focused on that, as much as the system itself. When there is a break down in an area of the system, we address it on announcements and teachers re-teach.

Sierra and Ashley had similar perceptions of the tenets that made the most impact in reducing ODR’s. Sierra shared the following:

Yeah, I mean even without all of the extras, keeping it fresh and the entire extra layers of acknowledgements, just the foundation level of PBIS is clear and consistent expectations. That alone, even without all the extras built in, that’s something to speak of all by itself. I mean, for the most part people were always accepting of that foundational level. Yeah, exactly that. I think that base level will always be there. Looking at the data, it came down to, and still does, to those kids that really need that extra reinforcement.

Ashley alluded to the common language and “consistency of the matrix” repeatedly, throughout both interviews. She stated, “It works” and keeps teachers from saying “different things more like mom and dad.”

Along with the consistency of common expectation and common language, Sierra, Ashley, and Principal Smith also referred to the school-wide acknowledgements as an integral PBIS tool toward the reduction of ODR's. Sierra communicated her thoughts on acknowledgments.

I think that was the recognition, and the reinforcing, and the encouraging parts that it's like part of the reinforcing aspect that takes it beyond the groundwork of rules. Which is good, because again the whole consistent, common language. But that's where the buy-in piece comes in for the kids. It's like the teachers may have the consistent language and expectation part but where is the motivation for the kids to actually adhere to it. They get a like who cares attitude, and then it becomes a more punitive type thing instead of reinforcing the positives. And I mean it's like for any kids that are middle-of-the-road or naturally good kids and they get some of that regular you know consistent guidelines, regular rules and regular acknowledgment. They have some stability; they know what to depend on, all that kind of stuff.

Sierra expressed that she "...gave out one ticket and as soon as the first one started just about everyone if they were listening, would get back to where they were supposed to be. So incentives really work. I just had to remember to do them because I got into the groove of teaching."

Sierra and Ashley shared perceptions that PBIS was more supportive or enhancing to teachers' management than transformational. Sierra stated, "I think the cycles of highs and lows in implementation and with redistricting every year it (PBIS) was sometimes more routine." Sometimes the PBIS team was not as visible but that is

part of the cycle. Start strong, get confident, lax a little, get some kind of big wake-up call, and start over.” Ashley shared several stories of experiences of her own, as well as, observations of other teachers that implied that PBIS “verbiage” was inconsistent at times. She admitted that sometimes she”...hated bubbling compliment circles and giving out tickets, because I knew the kids didn’t have to be 100%. I found myself not being happy about that at times and not doing anything, and it was too much to change too many problems, too much effort for me to change it.” She went on to say:

The skits and presentations that the leadership team put together were a healthy reminder sometimes about the need for us to be more consistent. The data was the why but they talked about the how with PBIS. They acted out some of the less positive behaviors or attitudes they saw going on at the time, like testing time or holidays, and although it was comic relief, we all saw ourselves or someone else doing those things. It was a great way to point out what we (teachers) needed to do better or be more consistent with.

Contrary to Sierra’s and Ashley’s perspectives and stories, Principal Smith implied that perhaps PBIS was indeed the culture of the school. “You look at some of the kids that have been in PBIS for three years and they know what to expect and it shows.” She continued on to share stories of grade levels that have reduced ODR’s. She explained, “Not only do the kids get it but so do the adults.”

**RQ3: What specific tenets, if any, do teachers perceive supported reduction of ODR’s for African American elementary males?**

I thank Khalil for opening my eyes to the phenomenon of the DMC being filled predominantly with African American males. It was transformational for me. Passing by

lines of boys in the hallway or glancing into the DMC, my culturally biased responses often times superseded reasonability. “How could all “my” young boys be sitting there and not in class learning?” Was it unreasonable for me to take it personally, because we share heritages? Perhaps each of them had really violated the rules so grossly and created situations so unsafe, that they indeed needed to be sitting right there? My past male students had already identified gender biases they had encountered and teacher beliefs they had established as a result of those perceived biases. However, my greatest challenges, as well as, greatest rewards were as a behavior support teacher working alongside teachers. I entered into the position with little knowledge of how other teachers functioned in their day-to-day profession, but with existing discipline biases of my own related to a gender and ethnicity. I always wondered, “Who were the teachers sending all the Black boys to the office?” Not being an expert, how will I find my place and identify my role as an effective and competent behavior support teacher? I had the opportunity to finally meet with Sierra and Ashley and all my preconceived racial biases went out the window. We were all working to help each student and our colleagues to be successful, day in and day out. We just approached it with our own style and skills, with just as many varying outcomes.

In the first interview, Sierra shared that she “...saw that African American males were there and I recognized that but...” She continued on in the midst of a story that blurred between past and present and discipline and curriculum interventions based on subpopulations. “What about the kids that don’t fall into any of the subpopulations, but still need the interventions, they seem to slip through the cracks and don’t get acknowledged for being good most of the time,” she stated. In the second interview, she

responded more directly when the topic of African American male students came up in conversation. She continued:

But you know, it was and still is about consistency with the teacher and across the campus, across the board, the common language for everybody that made a difference for everybody. African American kids weren't any different than any of the other kids. They all test limits, especially when they find an inconsistency in the system that they can exploit or push. Like with their parents, they know who they can get away with stuff with and who doesn't play. They all do the same thing here.

Ashley "...noticed that the majority of the students sitting outside the office were Hispanic and Black boys. Sometimes we get tunnel vision, and if it is not your student you are going from task to task." In the second interview she stated,

I think it was the matrix expectations. The similar language but using it consistently. When you put it all back on the matrix and that these are the schools' expectations not mine and everybody is saying the same thing everywhere and kids are doing the same thing, there's no argument about it. It's not personal. It's not something I just made up to be unfair or start an argument.

Principal Smith shared her moment of transformation with increasing her capacity in working with African American males earlier in the study but shared further, later in the conversation. She elaborated, "Life can be very punishing and send negative messages to African American boys. When faced with having to come to a place that has perhaps

been negative for them or for their parents, it helps when they know someone believes in them and sees the good in them. Belief is a powerful thing.”

### *Emerging Themes*

Through storytelling, re-storying and member checking three emerging themes repeatedly surfaced. These themes were repeated in each of the three research question areas. All participants view the teacher's role as primary disciplinarian. Furthermore, each of the participants attributed three tenets of the PBIS framework to be most effective toward the reduction of ODR's for both school-wide and specifically for African American male students. These tenets were; consistent use of common language, authentic positive use of common language and school-wide acknowledgments.

Sierra, Ashley, and Principal Smith shared the same perspective of the teacher as the primary disciplinarian in the classroom. All agreed that it requires multiple strategies and varying styles to be an effective disciplinarian. Variations of teachers' role arose with both Sierra and Ashley. Ashley stated, “I believe teachers have to fill different roles as needed. In the beginning more structure helps build a foundation, then manage and help as needed.” Repeated references were made by both Sierra and Ashley to the importance of “knowing” their students. Sierra shared at length the importance of not only knowing the students but also of knowing “...their families.” While Ashley confidently assumes the role of primary disciplinarian, she also highlighted her role as teacher-as-parent. She stated, “...whether they (parents) believe it or not they have given me the responsibility and the position of parent at the school.” Everyone shared stories of specific or non-specific training that extended their classroom management and discipline management repertoire. Both Sierra and Ashley exuded a confidence in their ability to handle most in-classroom discipline situations. They each shared lengthy stories of multiple discipline

encounters with both students and teachers that required multiple strategies. These stories somewhat mirrored my same experiences in developing as a teacher-as-manager, teacher-as-disciplinarian, and teacher-as-parent.

Common expectations and consistency were repeated numerous times by Sierra, Ashley, and Principal Smith, throughout each interview. They concurred that the consistent use of the PBIS common language, both school-wide and in classrooms had the most impact in the decrease of ODR's. They perceived these two tenets alone supported and enhanced most teachers' management styles, not necessarily transformed them. Furthermore, stories corresponded in favor of the "foundation" of common expectations and consistent use of the matrix as medium to the reduction of school-wide ODR's. While they each indicated that declines in implementation were caused by periods of inconsistent school-wide and classroom use of common language, all agreed that use of the matrix of expectations, school-wide announcements and acknowledgement systems acted as a prompt for both students and staff to use them more consistently. These prompts, when used consistently, served to support most teachers' classroom and discipline management expectations through modeling, re-teaching, and acknowledgment systems in their classroom.

During those years, Sierra and Ashley recognized a pattern of African American males frequently sitting outside of the principals' offices. Sierra and Ashley agreed that the same PBIS tenets of consistent common expectations and language, along with acknowledgments, attributed to the reduction of ODR's for African American males as well. While Principal Smith acknowledged her awareness of a need to enhance her management style when working with African American male students, Sierra and

Ashley perceive themselves to be competent strategists and managers with all students, including African American males. They did not indicate difficulties in their management approaches with African American males. Sierra stated, “All kids have different needs, regardless and we have to respond with different approaches. That is why we need to vary strategies.” Sierra and Ashley, expressed self-assurance in their varied management skills and it appeared that an issue of African American males remained disconnected from their stories. Both were unaware of discipline disproportions for males, principally African American males. Sierra was aware of the Student Code of Conduct being based on penal codes and had experience with students that had been ticketed. However, Ashley was not aware of the particulars of the Student Code of Conduct. When asked if she knew it was based on penal codes, her response was, “Really?!” On the contrary, Principal Smith, who had intimate knowledge of the discipline data, implied a desire to seek out a program to equip teachers and aid in the reduction of school-wide discipline. PBIS supported the campus in achieving its overall goal of reducing ODR’s for all students, including African American males. However, does disproportionality continue to exist in the discipline data for males, but especially African American males?

### *Tensions*

I am reminded by the words of Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994), “Although a classroom is a complex and dynamic place, the primary enterprise must be to teach” (p. 124). All participants’ stories about classroom and discipline management spiraled around its effect on teaching. Along with stories of past successes, they each also shared classroom management and discipline management tensions. These tensions stemmed from out-of-classroom and out-of-school forces (Craig, 2009). These tensions included those perceived forces that appeared to compromise teacher confidence and effectiveness

in their management and discipline roles as primary disciplinarians. The second recurring tension was inconsistencies in school-wide PBIS implementation for all teachers, as well as, specific supports for a few. These inconsistencies, referred to by both teachers, appeared to be obstacles to maintaining teacher and student motivation during respites in PBIS implementation.

The initial tension from the interviews and analysis revealed was the notion of who is truly responsible for discipline in the classroom. Sierra and Ashley identified themselves as the primary disciplinarian in the classroom, yet conversations often drifted into uncertainties concerning that role. At some level each implied that they wanted campus administration to support them differently in that role. Principal Smith pointed out that some teachers want to send them to the office for us to “fix them.” Contrary to Principal Smith’s perception, Sierra and Ashley shared similar concerns and frustrations during both interviews on how to more effectively be supported with discipline. Sierra indicated, “Sometimes we felt supported and sometimes we didn’t, even when teachers were able to present the PBIS discipline log to show hey we’ve tried this and this and this and this now it’s your turn to try something. Then it seemed like nothing would happen even after all the different strategies we tried.” During one interview, Ashley paused and appeared to have made a connection in her thinking of primary, secondary, or tertiary. It appeared as though she had related her perceived needs for administrative support, to lengthy conversations we had previously about the role of her parents. If she her style was more like her father’s, “stern” and “no-nonsense”, when intervening with a discipline behavior in the classroom, what if the administrator’s style was more like her mother’s,

“sympathetic and empathetic”, when called in to act as support. She looked puzzled as she shared. During that looking backwards reflection, she stated:

When I step back and look at it they are coming into a situation where they really don't know what's going on. They don't know the dynamics of the class or all the things I've tried. And in the heat of the moment I just want them to take him and become a stricter disciplinarian than even I am, because they are administration, they are Principal Smiths. They need to say stop it right now. I tell them what's going on but they need to say stop it right now, not it's okay. I guess I always wanted administration to be more like my dad. Stern, no-nonsense and not going to sit there and sympathize or commiserate. The sympathy and commiserating was my job.

As we continued to delve into the notion of educators and their parental roles, the Student Code of Conduct and penal codes came up briefly again. She appeared to be very concerned. For fear of interrupting her, I did not stop and ask about her bewilderment. Sierra and Ashley have differing styles and personalities. Sierra admits to being “logical” in managing her classroom and discipline with cause and effect relationships. She did not attribute this to her Special Education training but her past experiences at a law firm. She logically worked through our interviews but required a great of prompting. Ashley, on the other hand, referred to herself as a reactionary. “Passionate,” is what I called her in the interview. Our interviews were extremely free flowing and at times lost in lengthy temporal moments. Some of those moments, either remained or negotiated out of the text, were very personal and life altering. Yet all contributed to both her passion and her self-described compliant nature. She admittedly managed her classrooms and discipline styles

more from an emotional level. She has always considered herself to be a “rule follower.” Sierra and Ashley, two very different teachers with very different styles but both highly invested in their students in the midst of teaching. All the while on the border of their classroom landscapes lie administrators, policies, procedures, and parents. Each of these out-of-classroom influences with stories of their own that they wish to meld with in-classroom experiences.

Principal Smith referred to the administrative goal of equipping and empowering all teachers to be the primary disciplinarian in their classrooms. One way she attempted to grow teachers’ relational capacity was by providing professional development opportunities like one she had attended. Principal Smith sought out the training, from experiences and reflections of her discipline encounters with African American males. Her motivation came from the desire to increase her own skill-set because she identified a style that at one time appeared ineffective. I believe Sierra, Ashley, and Principal Smith, through educating themselves and a process of self-awareness indicated a keen attentiveness of their values, beliefs, and behaviors acting as important variables in student discipline interactions. Does every educator metacognitively approach their management style? I think just as there is a continuum of beliefs, skills and tolerances, there also lays a continuum of teacher metacognition, perhaps triggered by a connection of past and present experiences. How can we encourage or even assess this level of management style metacognition? Would it yield the same results of motivating struggling teachers and administrators to want to enhance their management capacity? How do we bridge the gap of teacher, administrator, family, and community discipline expectations in order to support one another, but most importantly the student?

The need for continued consistency presented itself as a point of contention in both school-wide implementations but also individual teacher implementation, which is supported by PBIS research. Sierra and Ashley shared their challenge to remain consistent in the midst of a school-wide initiative where not everyone teacher was making the same effort. Both teachers agreed that this inconsistency specifically affected teacher and student motivation to maintain implementation. This tension came up in each interview with Sierra. She stated,

At those moments where there was inconsistency you know, not enough on the announcements. Everyone knew them and had the same expectations and since sometimes they didn't see it working as much, so then they stopped implementing and reviewing. Then there was the subculture that disagrees with tangibles you know reinforcers not being the way to go and they will always exist. I don't know.

Ashley echoed similar concerns when she voiced the following:

Anyway, I feel like some teachers could have had more personality with these kids with the matrix. Everyone was different with how they approached it. If they couldn't be bothered to enforce it what was the point. There were some that couldn't be bothered to participate and never bought in. It doesn't make it any less frustrating. Some teachers with great management and parent communication would get in some non-classroom areas and get lax with expectations like the playground and cafeteria. It's just frustrating.

Sierra and Ashley agreed that more teacher support was needed for those teachers that struggled with classroom and discipline management as well as PBIS implementation. Each agreed that the inconsistencies of; implementation, effective classroom

management, and effective discipline management, of a few teachers affected the climate of the grade level and the school. This tension of inconsistency included the notion of authentic or scripted positively stated expectations and implementation. While both Sierra and Ashley referred to the affect of inconsistencies as they related to the implementation process, Sierra summed it up best with these carefully chosen words:

It's like they see fakeness and some of it which then detracts from the real areas you know... as a teacher the annoyance factor of other people just, throwing out compliments or comments or expectations you know regardless of what's happening. It's like that undermines when you're trying to get your class consistent and when you're trying to get things a certain way. That can really take away from what you're trying to work for. Unfortunately not all the kids can see that, they're just frozen in that layer of inconsistency. So that part can be very frustrating. And I didn't want to be the enforcer! Why is it I have to be the enforcer? Come up to my expectations please. The expectations of the matrix. It's not that hard.

### *Researcher Reflections*

The narrative process for me was most challenged in the areas Clandinin and Connelly (1989) refer to as reflection and deliberation. More questions arose than my mind was able to process at times during the repeated listening, reading of transcripts, and attempting to interpret and analyze. I often stalled, "...moving back and forth in time carrying uncertainties" (p. 9). Did I ask the right questions? Did text negotiations retain the context of participants? Will I honor the participants' signature and voice in the final text? Is it ready for an audience? While these and hundreds of others uncertainties blurred

my thinking at times, I will only share the few that lend to this study and frequently recurred in the margins of my field notes and text of my journal.

The repeated theme of lack of ownership in PBIS and fakeness of expectations during dips in implementation, signaled me to check my field notes. Written in one margin was the word “Cuban.” Is PBIS really a 21<sup>st</sup> century reform or just another program? One “bumping up” place was this whole notion that PBIS, as a fixed and stable framework, was the cure the ailing campus discipline. It was really the complex and fluid human interactions that made it effective. The quantifiable data and framework alone could not have reduced ODR’s. This qualitative process has enlightened me on the value of such studies in education. We did not just implement the procedures and processes of the linear framework. Yet, the framework guided our dialectic practices. Sierra outlined the action research that took place during implementation, when she reminded me of the “cycles.” The PBIS leadership team initiated the monthly reflective process with lengthy conversations about the data, observations and feedback. We then shared these conversations. Along with staff and student input. We devised a plan of action which often times had several available options and carried it one option or another. We never presented information as a solution to the problem or a mandate but as an option. We always justified the need for change based on the PBIS prescribed data perimeters.

Perceptions and assumptions are powerful and do not define belief systems. While I had no preconceived hypotheses teachers’ perceived role as primary disciplinarians, I held generalized personal biases that perhaps they would perceive administrator’s or parent’s as primary disciplinarians. This narrative process, of sharing teacher stories and reliving those stories, allowed me to see the value of widening my lenses to others’

stories. In seeking to understand other's interpretations and perceptions of teachers' management styles in the context of PBIS implementation, I came to see that teachers' beliefs are not defined by a generalization of teacher behaviors or discipline circumstances. Through the narrative process, the participants' stories helped me to realize that they value the same roles; teacher-as-manager, teacher-as-disciplinarian, teacher-as-change agent, and teacher-as-parent. That journey, while unique to me, is a similar journey they too lived. Despite their lack of awareness of all the out-of-classroom forces like the penal code, each participant is dedicated to being a change agent in their sphere of influence. They all value knowing students and appeared metacognitive in subtle degrees where their daily practices were concerned. My story and my experiences, while personal to me, are no more or less life altering than theirs. We all went back in time and unknowingly linked one moment after another of past experiences to the development of our present selves as managers and disciplinarians at Ocean Elementary. Sierra and Ashley shared very detailed past learning from their childhood or previous employment that led them to teaching and the establishment of their belief systems. Quite frankly, Principal Smith's story about "setting off" African American boys and learning from that experience was the most unexpected. Yet, it reminded me of some wonderful conversations and problem solving moments with both European American and African American teachers who had lived similar student experiences. They appeared to be metacognitive about their behaviors and student interactions, with boys and African American boys in particular. They confided in me and recognized a need to pursue new strategies. I wrote in one margin, "I would have never known." I worried at first, about putting my former colleagues on the defensive by asking them if they noticed the African

American boys sitting in the hallway. Why had we all noticed but few talked about the phenomenon? The word “common” marked those reflections. While there were a few hesitant moments in broaching the topic of ethnicity, my fears were dispelled by the participants. They had stories of their own that allowed them to feel confident and speak freely. I would have never known that many of their personal and professional beliefs and stories mirrored my own vaguely separated by ethnicity. In many places within the body of this study, I could very easily take out "I" and insert Sierra, or Ashley, or Principal Smith. While many of our experiences coincided in similar temporal spaces, each carries a uniqueness of lived, living, and knowing, yet no one had more or less impact than another.

Collaborative two-way communication builds trust and unity. I wrote my former assistant Principal Smith’s name in one margin and recalled a longer story in my journal of a picture. Although I did not track the number of times the word stern or father came up in participant interviews, it was evident that we all started out with similar management beliefs and style. Stern seemed to be the style we all defaulted to, even if it was not necessarily the style we trained studied. Like Ashley and Principal Smith, I attribute that frequently to my upbringing and my father. I believe we all shared stories of reverting back to that style when all else fails. However, in those stories, like in our daily profession, some situations necessitate a stern style. I thought of him often, in both my internal and in text moments, when those words and stories were shared. I believe I wrote my former assistant Principal Smith’s name in the margin because she was my administrative counterbalance. She knew my discipline beliefs and I communicated my strategies and needs. Sometimes she acted as mom and sometimes she acted as dad.

Shortly after that was written a brief memory about a picture. Through the collaborative efforts of a conference with me, a mom, and an assistant principal, we developed strategies to help her child understand our partnering, the partnering of teacher and parent as well as between home and school. Of all the strategies we outlined, the mom's suggestion made the most impact. She gave her child a picture to keep on the desk. The picture represented her love and shared expectations of success at school. I did not believe in bombarding parents with phone calls about behavior, especially when we have already identified that as an area of growth for the student. I did believe in keeping documentation about behaviors, strategies, and goals for success. I was disappointed to find out at the end of that year that all that would carry to next year's teacher would be an updated picture and updated grades. No one would ever know the whole story from that school year.

Although Sierra and Ashley perceptions did not indicate teacher management style transformations, I would argue that point. It is almost impossible for transformations not to happen in the framework of PBIS. The framework itself mandated a dialectical process. We reviewed the data monthly, shared ideas, developed plans, implemented strategies, and returned to the data, month after month. Because much of that process was school-wide, various groups of teachers identified and requested professional development. I facilitated brief classroom management and discipline management courses based on staff needs and requests. I saw teachers' management styles change or transform. If nothing else for many the whole notion of positivity was transformational for many of us. Perhaps participants perceived that aspect from a different perspective? Maybe their perceptions were based on the continued life they share navigating PBIS? I

would like to believe that I helped some teachers grow. Even still, I know some teachers transformed in their beliefs and added strategies for the benefit of themselves, their students, and their families. Perhaps, for others, the resistance came from a conflict with PBIS and individual teacher belief systems or management styles?

My father, my family, legacies do matter. I thank Khalil and all the students in my first few years of teaching, for opening my eyes and encouraging me to learn. My students were not Black. Maybe I would have never noticed. Just because I am Black, I did not notice and just because they are not Black does not mean they do not care. These children, all of them we teach, belong to all of us and will be our legacy. There is no denying, hiding, or ignoring it. I used to think ill of my father and his strong words of disdain for the “establishment” and all the forces that keep poor people and people of color down. I never understood his tirades and choices sometimes that put me in the middle of his belief systems, like making me go to Texas A&M University. He had knowledge and first-hand experiences in this world that I truly did not understand. He used to say of so-called experts, “Buy you books, send you to school and all you do is sit and eat the covers off.” He’s gone now, but his most valuable lesson of the importance of education lingers on. He believed education to be transformative in a life-altered way, but not just theoretical education extracted from books and achieved in schools. My father was a talker and a reader, who valued education learned from talking to people and listening to what they say back, their stories. I am proud that I learned that lesson and many more. Because of those lessons, I heard Khalil and the other students when they spoke. Their sincerity and honesty was difficult to digest at times, almost like my father’s

lectures. Just like all humans, personal observations and experiences shaped their stories moreover, their worlds.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

#### *Summary of the Study*

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was to explore teachers' perspectives on management styles in a Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework, in order to identify tenets, if any, that possibly enhanced or transformed teacher behaviors or management styles. Furthermore, the study was to establish teachers' perceptions on which tenet, if any, facilitated reduced school-wide office discipline referrals for all students and specifically African American elementary males. Along with archival data, to indicate a decrease in discipline referrals, I included brief descriptions of several "out-of-school" and "out-of-classroom" events that contributed to the adoption of the PBIS framework. I outlined my role at the school during the time and solicited participants from a social networking site, as well as a campus open house.

Sierra, Ashley, and Principal Smith were employed, along with the researcher, at the same suburban Texas elementary school during the first three years of PBIS implementation. Sierra and Ashley were teachers and a Principal Smith was the principal of Ocean Elementary before and during the three-year implementation of PBIS. Sierra, Ashley and Principal Smith were European American, of varied ages, varied years of experience, and varied ranges of parental status. One-on-one interviews were conducted with each participant, at a public location of their choosing, in order to share their perceptions and stories of management style experiences and observations. Interviews

were audio-taped, transcribed in whole, and shared with participants. Using a narrative analysis approach of storying, re-storying, member checking and reflexivity were used to analyze field text, audio-recording, transcripts and researchers journal for themes. Emerging themes, tensions, and researcher's reflections culminate in the findings, implications for change, and recommendations for the future sections to follow.

### *Summary of Findings*

The findings of this study support research on the importance of beliefs systems and the relationship of beliefs in adult behaviors (Abou-Aish et al., 2008; Marzano, 2003; and Rimm-Kaufmann 2006). It suggests that regardless of teachers' perceptions of discipline management separate from or integrated with classroom management, teachers maintain a strong sense of themselves as primary disciplinarians of their classrooms. It also implies that they value their roles of teacher-as-manager, teacher-as-disciplinarian, teacher-as-change agent, and teacher-as-parent, but also honor the importance of collaborating with administrators and parents toward the success of their students. Despite all the participants having shared goals and expectations, findings identified ongoing tensions with out-of-classroom influences; administrators, discipline policies, and parents, that may cause teachers to question their role and challenge their confidence as primary disciplinarians. While Sergiovanni (1999) suggests "Leadership mindscapes are shaped by what we believe and value and by our understanding of the world" (p. 101), this study also supports the same for teachers. The study found that teachers and administrators, like Sierra, Ashley, and Principal Smith, share beliefs of all students' discipline success. Yet, opportunities for sharing those beliefs and outlining specific

expectations, in direct conversation and perhaps in a written format, only arise, if then, in discipline crises.

This study finds that the common language and common expectations of PBIS not only supports and enhances teacher management styles but also directly contributes to the reduction of school-wide office discipline referrals for all students, specifically African American males. Clear discipline expectations that are communicated on a consistent basis between administrators, teachers, students and parents could contribute to increasing teacher confidence and implementation of in-class discipline management strategies. This study adds to the body of research that reveals a need for PBIS consistency with not only the common language but also the expectations to maintain fidelity of the framework (Epstein et al., 2008; Franzen & Kamp, 2008; Hilton, 2007, Sugai, 2008). While the study supports the common language and common expectations act as a cue, prompt, or reminder for adults, it also implies a consistent need for the visibility of the PBIS leadership team. Furthermore, PBIS supports in maintaining ongoing and consistent implementation of school-wide announcements and acknowledgements were highlighted. Along with that, the study supports the growing body of research that "...explores teacher thinking from the perspective of teachers themselves" (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008, p. 459).

In addition, this study suggests that the PBIS framework along with various teacher strategies effectively reduces school-wide ODR's for all student and specifically African American elementary males. Consistently used common language within the PBIS framework was identified to encourage school-wide discipline shifts. However, these same findings suggest that teachers have varying levels of awareness of state,

district, and school discipline policies as well as school-wide discipline student demographics. While the use of school-wide common expectations and acknowledgements act as a signal (Franzen and Kamp, 2008) for all teachers to be more consistent with the language and mores of PBIS, teachers with dysfunctional management styles produce negative affects to the consistency and climate of school-wide implementation. Teachers' perspectives in this study reveal a continuing need for discipline collaboration, along with, support and monitoring of teacher resistance during PBIS implementation.

### *Practical Implications for Change*

In order for districts and schools to produce more healthy discipline outcomes for elementary students, there must be continued change. I agree with Horner (2010, November 17) that "school effectiveness is related to building a school-wide social culture that is predictable, consistent, positive and safe." PBIS has the potential to be the catalyst that engages all the stakeholders in meaningful and ongoing discussions for change. However, how do schools more effectively navigate their discipline missions without criminalizing elementary students? Districts and schools across the nation are charged to continue to set high expectations for not only for students and families but also for themselves, by being a model of healthy discipline practices. Educators are challenged to share their beliefs and involve students and families in developing discipline systems that support successful growth. While school-wide programs and frameworks imply building community within schools and shaping positive school cultures, quantitative data alone cannot address continued human tragedy. Sergiovanni (1999) reminds us that "Communities are not defined by instrumental purposes, rationally

conceived work systems, evaluation schemes designed to monitor compliance, or skillfully contrived positive interpersonal climates...but through the centers...the repositories of values, sentiments, and beliefs that provide the needed cement for uniting people in a common cause” (p. 102). The “cause” starts and exists in elementary schools across the nation and until it is acknowledged, educational systems will continue to act in words not deeds.

Administrators and teachers need to continue to build forums for open discipline and management discussions. Administrators, like Principal Smith, who have the vision and belief in change, need to continue to establish platforms for all stakeholders to rally around that vision. I have come to know that the majority of teachers desire to be primary disciplinarians and effectively assume their roles of; teacher-as-manager, teacher-as-disciplinarian, teacher-as-change agent and teacher-as-parent, regardless of training. While many administrators and teachers have a clear discipline visions and internalized discipline beliefs, those visions and beliefs often go unvoiced and unshared. The administrative and teacher relationship is inherently interdependent in all matters school. This relationship necessitates communication, collaboration, and implementation of shared discipline goals, or sharing of stories. Perhaps, clearly defined and communicated school and teacher discipline expectations could be the first step in not only supporting teachers but also students and families. Opportunities for administrative and teacher reflections on discipline, aside from the numbers, is vital. Perhaps in clearly defining district, campus and teacher discipline expectations, outside of the Student Code of Conduct, new structures, procedures, and site-based policies could be put into place that reduce the need to resort to the Code. Districts, schools, and teachers could begin where

Glickman and Tamashiro (1980) suggest, with discipline beliefs inventory. The same process, of developing consistent and common PBIS expectations, could in effect reduce the ambiguity, miscommunications, and frustrations in schools' discipline practices.

### *Social Implications for Change*

The whole notion of schools as “pipelines to prison” (Skiba, 2010) disturbed me. However, it summed up my personal and professional motivation to remove office discipline referrals from my classroom discipline interventions, as well, as my motivation to support teachers' discipline capacity to do the same. Widening my lenses from my classroom, campus, district, even state, to see this phenomenon as a national issue, has been an incredible journey. It is a journey that African American communities need to become more aware of and involved in, for lasting change to take place. Families and communities need to equip themselves with all the information that affects their child in the school system. Current disaggregation of data indicates a continued disproportionality in discipline for African American and Latino male student at all levels. While this study did not focus on disproportionality specifically it did raise the question of awareness. While Ladson-Billings (1994) believes there exists a pervasive dismissal of one of the most salient features of the child's identity (race and ethnicity) from curriculum and instruction (p. 33). I would argue that the same could be said of discipline. Many African American students and families are in defense mode, without knowing the exact disparities that exist in the numbers. Many are living out the story entangled in the current discipline system, especially in elementary schools. The system as it is today needs to change for elementary students and their families. It continues to breed distrust, frustrations, and obstacles toward positive change. These same families that become

locked in a cycle of schools' discipline systems in elementary schools, like Ocean Elementary, appear to have lasting stigmas of social deficiencies or delinquencies. Once in the system, the parents' frustrations in navigating educational discipline systems are broadcast to the student, family, the secondary school system and often times throughout their community systems. While the topic of disproportions may be sensitive and uncomfortable, it is vital issue to improve school success for African American males, specifically at the elementary level. I believe many administrators and teachers at the elementary level, when equipped with opportunities to enter into honest discussions about discipline disparities, would be active participants, alongside students and families, in problem solving, planning, and implementing change. I agree with Principal Smith who said, "Belief is a powerful thing."

#### *Recommendations for the Future*

Districts and schools, defining themselves as data-driven decision making collaborative organizations should consider transparency in disaggregating, reporting, and analyzing the data. All stakeholders should be equipped with all the data, especially when adopting school-wide programs, such as PBIS, to meet the needs of those most at-risk in the data. National, state and local achievement data is reported by ethnic, economic status and gender. Skiba et al. (in press) suggests, "...disciplinary outcome data should be disaggregated, in order to explicitly evaluate whether SWPBS, or indeed any general intervention, is equally effective for all racial/ethnic groups." (p. 24). There appears to be a glancing over of discipline disparities for males, especially African American males. Federal and local mandates to reduce office discipline referrals focus on the overall number in order to rate schools safe or unsafe. Districts and schools adopt programs out of a need to improve organization health and climate, along with complying

with mandates to reduce overall discipline referral numbers. Even with tremendous decreases in overall school-wide ODR's and organizations that are rated as healthy and safe, is that the extent of making data-driven decisions? Perhaps, discrepancies remain in the data of reduced office referrals that continue to lend to human tragedy? Is it possible for schools and districts to be both transparent and courageous about reporting and analyzing discipline data? Without transparency, there can be no awareness, discussion, or plan for change. Public education will continue to perpetuate disproportionate discipline cycles, even if it is at a lowered rate.

Districts, schools and teachers should consider reformulating discipline practices and policies in elementary schools throughout the nation. Disproportionality in school discipline begins at the point of referral to the office (Skiba et al., in press, p. 20). An indistinctness of discipline expectations lingers between administrator's and teachers' common goal of effectively intervening, supporting, and reducing classroom discipline. Clearly defined and communicated, in-classroom discipline expectations, interventions, and discipline plans may offer a solution. This would involve all staff learning about legislation and policies about discipline. Furthermore, built in time to communicate and reflect on identifying their discipline beliefs and styles, would prove beneficial.

Discipline belief surveys, discipline intervention assessments, and teachers' in-classroom discipline plans should be an integral part of every school and classroom. These plans would be an additional layer to the general goals of the campus and district improvement plans. Teacher discipline plans would be specific to their beliefs, styles and skills. While districts and schools plans would be broad, teachers' plans would be living documents shared and developed with students and parents at the onset of school and periodically

throughout the school year. The plan itself could be based on a student development model and consist of a combination of academic, social, and emotional areas to include; interests, learning styles, student strengths, and areas of growth.

Discipline plans would allow administrative staff to be aware of specific teacher expectations of support as well as areas of needed growth. Parents and students would be equipped with clearly communicated expectations of teachers' style and tolerance levels and well as baseline strategies. This would clearly communicate to students and parents a planned partnering for student success, regardless if either chooses to act as a silent partner. A clearly outlined and communicated discipline plan could in effect allow all teachers to be confident primary disciplinarians in their classrooms. Conceivably, these could act as student development plans and not discipline plans at all. These development plans could grow with and follow the student. Although they would change every year, they could be shared with the next teacher and provide a glimpse into the lived story of the collaborative relationship of the previous year. This would alleviate some of the mystery teachers undergo each year in discovering the stories of their students and families. It would also give teachers an immediate connection to both without Student Code of Conduct labels. These plans could also be used to inform and steer district and campus discipline committees. There must be "continued and meaningful involvement of key stakeholders in the development, monitoring and modification of discipline policies; examining data in a collaborative fashion; and, examination of curriculum as a variable of discipline policy" (Fenning et al., 2004, p. 56)

With the present deficits in educational funding, I hesitate to recommend a staffing consideration for school-wide programs such as PBIS. Campus-based PBIS

leadership teams are instrumental in maintaining the fidelity of PBIS and are comprised of full-time teachers and administrators. Ongoing and consistent campus-wide professional development and acknowledgment systems, despite being a part-time job, require planning, creation, implementation and maintenance. I recommend schools utilizing the PBIS framework prioritize staffing or funding for a PBIS staff liaison. Other viable options would be to enlist a team of parent volunteers to create PBIS announcements and commercials? Under the supervision and direction of the PBIS leadership team, volunteers could maintain tickets, rotate PBIS incentives, discharge drawings and prizes, and develop student celebrations. Perhaps students from the upper grade levels could rotate each month to allow students to fulfill some or all of these roles? Would parents and students be willing? I think so. I believe parents and students would jump at the chance to be an active presence toward supporting the implementation of school-wide acknowledgements.

Recommendations for future research could include qualitative and quantitative research into adult learning and adult outcomes in school-wide programs such as PBIS. Perhaps, research could also include comparative studies focused on adult outcomes in schools with successful versus unsuccessful implementation of school-wide programs or frameworks. Furthermore, future research could involve both qualitative and quantitative studies on the alignment of administrator's and teachers' discipline beliefs and expectations. I encourage all districts and schools, in the midst of school-wide initiatives, to continue dialectical practices and action research. The focus of the research should not only include student goals and outcomes but also adult goals and outcomes, to include all stakeholders.

### *Conclusions*

This study adds to the growing body of narrative inquiries on teacher management styles but also to the implementation of school-wide programs such as PBIS. Narrative inquiries are truly valuable in educational research. Reality within schools does not exist solely in numbers but in the human stories and experiences within the walls. Ongoing opportunities to assemble teachers in order for them to share their stories are vital to the success of not only a school-wide program or framework but also to the achievement visions and missions. Regardless of teachers' belief systems or management styles, I believe all educators have the same goal of student success for all students. I believe all educators are in the profession to influence positive change in the lives of their students and families. I am honored to be in the profession of education and surrounded by caring and committed professionals, who put in endless hours to make change happen every day. Change, rapid or slow, is the inevitability of human experiences. While parts of experiences can often be measured by numbers, numbers only capture a minute portion of the multitudes of human interactions within and outside of schools. Narrative inquiries are vital to bring identity and meaning to the numbers. I believe that despite public education's growing focus on the numbers, there exists courageous district leaders, campus administrators and teachers throughout the nation who continue to search for the stories of their stakeholders. Willingly and genuinely sharing their stories, along with listening to those of stakeholders, these educators' and communities' mere visions and goals become reality.

Stories are powerful. The stories of my young human students have forever shaped my life and future. Their stories ask us older humans to remember. Remember

that young humans make mistakes for they are just starting out. Their stories ask us old humans for forgiveness, guidance, and the opportunity to make it get better. Their stories remind us old humans, who have had a chance through experiences to err, be forgiven, and get back up again. Their stories should remind us old humans that we too had to learn to make choices, through trial and error, even when it hurt others. Young human beings deserve more forgiveness than the public education system allows for sometimes, especially in elementary schools. Young human beings in elementary schools, realistically and morally, deserve more from adults than zero tolerance and penal codes. We must be tolerant enough to accept and acknowledge not only student mistakes and behaviors but also our own. We are only human. Once acknowledged, it is imperative that we honor ourselves, students, and communities with time to learn from and teach one another.

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