Exploring Middle School Student Perceptions
of the Effects of Different Styles of Discipline

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Abstract

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This study explored the dimensions and parameters of three methods of discipline used at a

public middle school located in western Canada: out-of-school suspensions, in-school

suspensions, and the restorative justice program. Eighteen students, six in each method of

discipline, were interviewed about their perceptions and opinions in order to acquire a well-

developed understanding of each method of discipline and its effects on middle school

students. A variety of participants were included both in the study and within each smaller

group. This provided depth when describing the effects of each method of discipline, as

students interacted with the method of discipline and the context which resulted in unique

short-term effects. After looking at the range of effects of different methods of discipline on

middle school students, one style of discipline emerged as being more effective with more

types of students and in more kinds of situations.

The three main findings of this study were: (1) Based on the effects of the disciplinary

methods, restorative justice was consistently viewed by students as a positive experience

from which they could learn. Restorative justice also appeared to have the most success in

reducing misbehaviour while limiting the unintended academic and social strain. (2)

Offering students a choice and allowing them to participate in their discipline procedure

seemed to be the key that allowed students to view their consequence as a positive and

educational experience. (3) Having several methods to deal with misbehaviour as well as

dealing with rule infractions and determining consequences on an individual basis had some

success in changing student behaviour and limiting the unintended negative repercussions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

If schools are to be safe environments that foster academic growth and social development, it is necessary to ensure that all aspects of the school experience, including discipline, reflect a school's commitment to learning and teaching. But, what are the effects of different styles of discipline on middle school students? Unfortunately, this question, especially when looked at from a student's perspective, has been largely ignored by educational researchers. Neither the short-term effects nor the long-term outcomes for students as well as for society as a whole are well understood. In order to ensure that students are learning to behave appropriately and that the disciplinary measure is not unintentionally disadvantaging students, it is important to have a full understanding of the effects each method of discipline has on students.

The focus of this study is to explore and compare the effects of different styles of discipline as seen through the eyes of middle school students so that we can learn more about effective and appropriate methods of discipline. For the purpose of this thesis, 'effective and appropriate discipline' can be defined as that which reduces repeated misbehaviour while limiting negative, unintended academic and social repercussions. This study intends to provide an in-depth understanding of three current methods of discipline, using one school in a medium-size school district in western Canada as a case in point. It is hoped that the findings will be relevant in other communities, so that this study may contribute to improved school-student relationships, planning, policy formation and further research.

The focus of this thesis is not on how to predict who will misbehave or to prevent

misbehaviour from occurring at the middle school level. Predicting which students will

misbehave is a rather easy task for middle school staff; most of these students have

already been identified in elementary school and arrive at the middle school with thick

official student files. Moreover, it is obvious that schools will never be able to completely

prevent students from misbehaving; a complex mix of home, school, and individual

variables including differences in ethnicity, early childhood socialization, responses to

stress and frustration, hormonal changes during puberty, and a litany of other influencing

factors will always find their way into the classroom. Because schools cannot eliminate

all misbehaviour, it becomes increasingly important that the discipline associated with the

misbehaviour is appropriate and effective. Unfortunately, previous research on

traditional methods of school discipline such as suspension and expulsion suggests that

they are ineffective at preventing repeated misbehaviour and have harmful, unintended

effects such as compounding academic and social problems for students.

This study looked at the effects of three methods of discipline used at Western Middle

School[1], a public middle school located in western Canada: out-of-school suspensions,

in-school suspension, and restorative justice. Out-of-school and in-school suspensions are

fairly self-explanatory if not already familiar. Restorative justice programs are gaining

popularity in a few public schools as an alternative to more traditional methods of

discipline such as suspensions. "Restorative justice involves the identification and

reparation of harms experienced by the victims, an obligation on the part of the offenders

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[1] For reasons of confidentiality, the name of the school and other identifying information
have been changed.

to repair the harm, and a process involving victims, offenders, and communities in sorting this all out" (Shenk & Zehr, 2001, p. 315). Since restorative justice is a new form of discipline being used in some public middle schools and more traditional forms of discipline have rarely been evaluated from a student's perspective, it is important to explore and compare the effects of each method of discipline from a student's perspective.

Though this thesis examines the effects of three methods of discipline used at Western Middle School, they represent only a portion of the discipline options available to staff members and administrators. Out-of-school suspensions, in-school suspensions, and the restorative justice program are the methods used when the misbehaviour is too serious or would take too much time or counselling to be handled by teachers and not serious enough to be taken out of the administration's control. Regardless of the severity of the misbehaviour, all of Western Middle School's discipline strategies are based on a concept called 'cooperative discipline' that aims to connect the student to the school and build self-esteem. Because of this, many of the lower levels of discipline try to connect the student and her/his family with the school in a positive manner. Examples of low-level cooperative discipline include a formal discussion between the teacher and student, a phone call to the parent(s)/guardian(s) to establish parent-teacher-student behaviour goals, a time out in the classroom, a time out in another classroom or a special room, or a meeting between a student and all of her/his teachers. Because not all of these methods are documented and because there is little uniformity to these strategies, it is difficult to suggest that two first-time offences are similar. Mix into that variables such as family

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and peer influences as well as involvement and attachment with the school and a comparison becomes virtually impossible. Consequently, I have compared the effects of out-of-school suspensions, in-school suspensions, and the restorative justice program on middle school students by listening and documenting similarities found in the individual stories.

Since each student consists of a unique web of school and discipline experiences and because many of the participants had been involved in previous offences, each student was asked to isolate one disciplinary experience in her/his memory. It was necessary to do this so the effects could be consciously traced by the student and linked to the method of discipline. Effects of these discipline models were considered to be the short-term results of discipline.

Selecting terminology for this thesis has been difficult. Unfortunately, it is almost impossible to have a discussion about students who have broken school rules without using terms that are heavily laden with negative connotations. The dictionary definition of 'offender' is appropriate for this thesis; however, the word 'offender' is usually coupled with prejudice and stirs up preconceived notions regarding the subject's behaviour and intellect. Synonyms for 'offender,' such as 'delinquent,' 'rogue,' 'reprobate,' 'criminal,' and 'wrongdoer,' all carry similar connotations. I searched for a suitable replacement, but I did not find one that held the same meaning that was also free from negative connotations. However, in the absence of a suitable replacement and since 'offender' is a common term used in the literature on restorative justice, I will continue to

use 'offender' for the remainder of the thesis, albeit sparingly. It must be stated, however, that the school does not use this term to identify or label students either in print or in verbal communication. In addition, though I occasionally use the term 'offender' to describe all subjects, it is in no way intended to suggest similarities among the participants' experiences, social backgrounds, or personalities. The participants were involved in a wide range of offences, came from diverse backgrounds and had varied historical involvement with breaking rules.

Western Middle School separates misbehaviour into three levels: minor, major, and serious offences. As to be expected, the consequences correspond to the level of misbehaviour; consequences become more serious as the offence becomes more serious in the eyes of the school. Classroom teachers generally deal with minor offences; consequences could include a teacher-student meeting, a detention, or a phone call home to inform parents of their child's behaviour and to discuss strategies to improve that behaviour. Major offences can be dealt with by teachers or can be referred to the administration. Consequences for major offences tend to be a time out in a secluded space to catch up on schoolwork, in-school suspension, or referral to the restorative justice program as well as a meeting with staff member(s) and parents to discuss a plan to improve behaviour.[2] Serious offences, as defined by Western Middle School, include use

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[2] For the purposes of this thesis, "administration" dealing with discipline usually includes the school principal, the vice-principal, and a support staff worker whose full-time job is dealing with and coordinating discipline within the school. Depending on the situation and personnel available, this support staff worker may deal with conflicts between students, contact parents, and determine consequences without the input of the principal or vice principal; however, decisions made by this person are usually checked by the administration when time permits.

or possession of weapons, uttering threats, sexual harassment, assault/fighting, truancy, defiance, smoking cigarettes, and vandalism as well as repeat major offences. Serious offences are almost always handled by the administration, but the administration has several options available depending on the student, the severity of the offence, and the timing of the incident. Generally, the administration can choose between an in-school suspension, an out-of-school suspension, or restorative justice as a consequence. Thus, it becomes clear that I have limited this thesis to examining the effects of discipline on middle school students who have committed mostly serious, but also some major offences.

I wanted to limit this study to major and serious offences for several reasons. First, major and serious offences are dealt with the most consistently. This is not to indicate that the school deals with discipline "by the book" with no room for flexibility, but the administration tends to be more consistent when dealing with major and serious offences than the thirty plus teachers dealing with minor offences. Second, the consequences for major and serious offences tend to have more of an impact on the student, which, in turn, has the potential to affect her/his future schooling experience. Out-of-school suspensions, in-school suspensions, and restorative justice all involve a minimum amount of counselling by a staff member, time to reflect upon previous actions, and an interruption to the "offender's" routine. Finally, repeated serious offences and severe serious offences have the potential of being referred to the RCMP or to the school board. When a disciplinary action is dealt with at the RCMP or the school board level, there is usually an interruption in the student's schooling and the student may have to resume her/his studies

at a different school. Therefore, it is of great interest to fully understand the effects of these discipline methods so the school or another researcher can evaluate each discipline model based on a common definition of 'effective discipline' in the future. Future evaluations will hopefully lead to effective discipline that improves behaviour while reducing the unintended effects of discipline such as social and academic strain.

It was my intention to use a few key issues to narrow the scope of the study as well as to provide consistent thematic references throughout this thesis to create a well-organized thesis. Based on the literature review and previous experience with school discipline, three issues became quite obvious. Hence, the effects of discipline on academic, behavioural, and social success first appear in the introduction then re-emerge in most chapters thereafter.

Chapter two, School Context, introduces the study's setting and the philosophies guiding school discipline at Western Middle School. It also provides an in-depth look at each method of discipline. The sub-sections on out-of-school suspensions, in-school suspensions, and restorative justice each present a typical discipline experience: from misbehaviour, to meeting with the administration, to experiencing the consequences, to returning to a regular routine.

Chapter three focuses on previous research done in the area of school discipline. The chapter is broken into four sections. Three of the four sections recap the areas of school discipline most often investigated- the relationship between discipline and academic

success, discipline and behaviour as well as discipline and social relationships. In the absence of significant amounts of data relevant to adolescents in a school setting, the fourth section deals mostly with the philosophy behind restorative justice, with few references to previous research.

Chapter four, Methodology, explains how and why this study is shaped the way it is. It describes why the qualitative, exploratory case study design was necessary for this research problem. The concern for academic, behavioural, and social success of the students is demonstrated in the research design and data analysis techniques described in this chapter. The methodology chapter also includes some short explanations of some of the expected and unexpected issues and concerns that affected this study. And, because this is a qualitative study in which nothing can be taken for granted, some of these concerns that affected the design or data collection reappear in the Results and Findings chapter.

Chapter five, Results and Findings, mirrors the Literature Review by organizing results into three main categories: the effects of different styles of discipline on academic success, behaviour, and social relationships. The three main findings of this study are then introduced and developed.

The final chapter, Conclusions, presents the culmination of this exploratory study. It offers some possible hypotheses generated by this study and makes suggestions for future research. It makes recommendations for scope and breadth of how and where the findings

can be applied with particular reference being made to Western Middle School and middle schools in general.

Chapter II – School Context

Qualitative researchers believe that understanding the setting is an essential part of analyzing and interpreting data. "To divorce the act, word, or gesture from its context is, for the qualitative researcher, to lose sight of significance" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 5). In order to achieve this, I conducted my research at Western Middle School under natural conditions. In addition, I described the setting in this chapter so others could understand the school context these students negotiate on a daily basis. Hence, this chapter describes the study's setting, explains the philosophy guiding discipline at Western Middle School, and introduces the three different methods of discipline examined in this research project. The sections outlining each method of discipline include a description of the discipline experience from the occurrence of the misbehaviour to the resumption of regular privileges.

Setting

This study was conducted at Western Middle School, a public middle school located in western Canada in a city with a population of approximately 100,000. The school is considered average in size, ethnic diversity and language for the city in which it is located. The school's catchment area includes several families with low to middle incomes. Western Middle School would be considered atypical in terms of discipline, as it has one of the highest rates of disciplinary action in the district[3]. Western Middle School has also been innovative and persistent in the area of discipline, oftentimes

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[3] It must be noted, however, this statistic may be misleading for various reasons not discussed in this thesis.

piloting new programs and consistently monitoring and informally evaluating current programs for effectiveness.

Guiding Philosophy on Discipline and School Management

Western Middle School's philosophy on discipline and school management is directly influenced by Linda Albert's (1989) book, *A Teacher's Guide to Cooperative Discipline: How to Manage Your Classroom and Promote Self-Esteem.* In addition to encouraging staff members to utilize cooperative discipline in their classrooms, the administration tries to extend the cooperative discipline principles through all levels of school management.

The goal of cooperative discipline is to create "cooperative relationships in and beyond the classroom" (Albert, 1989, p. 3) through quality student-teacher relationships and interaction. The word 'cooperative' provides a key for understanding Albert's concept; instead of finger pointing and blaming each other, staff, students, administration, and parents work in concert and take a "hands-joined" approach to improving student behaviour. Albert believes that all behaviour is chosen by the student and is done to achieve one of four short-term goals. Albert suggests, however, that these four short-term goals are reached in order to achieve the ultimate goal: a sense of belonging. Once behaviour is thus understood, Albert suggests several techniques for dealing with misbehaviour that build cooperative relationships between teachers, students, and parents. When students misbehave, Albert recommends creating a plan for acknowledging and dealing with the misbehaviour in order to build cooperative relationships.

1. Pinpoint and describe the student's behaviour.
2. Identify goals of misbehaviour.
3. Choose intervention technique for the moment of misbehaviour.
4. Select encouragement techniques to build self-esteem.
5. Involve parents as partners. (p. 5)

Albert (1989) offers some strategies for building self-esteem while interacting with students: discipline the behaviour and not the student, interact without "commanding, demanding, or threatening" (p. 77), and use consequences that are related, reasonable, and respectful instead of punishments (p. 78-79). Albert believes it is easier for students to understand and see the value in the consequence when it is related to the misbehaviour. Reasonable consequences are those that match the consequence with the misbehaviour in proportion and intensity. Respectful consequences do not contain "name-calling, blaming, shaming, or implied moral judgement" (p. 79). For Albert, punishments differ from consequences, as punishments are not related to the misbehaviour and promote suffering instead of learning. Punishments dissolve cooperative relationships and oftentimes have long-term residual effects that make the mending or maintaining of relationships difficult.

Cooperative Discipline at Western Middle School

Albert's (1989) cooperative discipline provides the structure on which all disciplinary measures at Western Middle School are based. Though much of the day-to-day discipline at Western Middle School is dealt with by teachers through a cooperative discipline model, students who commit major and serious offences are almost always referred to the administrators. Depending on the severity of the offence, one of three people in the office meets with the students: the principal, the vice-principal or a student

support staff worker whose job it is to deal with much of the behaviour management at the school. It is also relatively common to see a combination of these three people working together with students if their schedules allow it.

Because cooperative discipline is a guiding philosophy at Western Middle School, its principles are not only used in daily interactions with students but are also embedded into the discipline process for major and serious offences. All students who are caught misbehaving and brought to the administration's attention are asked to fill in a discipline form that requires the student to pinpoint and describe their own behaviour. This form is then used during meetings between the students and the administration to determine the goals of misbehaviour and to select an appropriate consequence. In order to present related, reasonable, and respectful consequences that connect students to the school and build self-esteem, the administration at Western Middle School deals with each incident individually. Factors such as academic performance, home life, history with discipline at school, and the nature of the misbehaviour all play a role in helping the administration decide on an appropriate consequence even though there is a general format that is to be followed relating the level of misbehaviour and the consequence. In general however, it is safe to assume that the consequences are protracted and more serious as the number of repeat offences accumulates and the misbehaviour becomes more serious.

Western Middle School also takes Albert's advice on appropriate consequences by using the loss or delay of privilege, the loss of freedom of interaction, or restitution. In addition, Western Middle School agrees with Albert on appropriate locations for these

consequences to occur. Albert (1989) recommends that the 'time outs' occur within the classroom, in another classroom, or in a special room designated for such activities. She suggests that a time out in the office should be a last resort and that schools should try to avoid time outs at home at all costs. The administration at Western Middle School concurs with Albert; unless the safety of staff and students are in jeopardy, out-of-school suspensions are always seen as a last resort.

These three methods of school management cannot be placed on a continuum with restorative justice on one end being entirely socially inclusive and out-of-school suspensions on the opposite end being wholly exclusive with in-school suspension falling conveniently in the middle. In fact, these methods of discipline can all be considered as shades of social inclusion because the cooperative discipline principles permeate every level of interaction and discipline at the school.

Out-of school Suspensions

Because the school uses out-of-school suspensions sparingly, it is uncommon to find students who have been out-of-school suspended who have never been brought to the administrators' attention. Usually, out-of-school suspensions are given to students who have gone through all other methods of discipline without improvement or students who present a danger to themselves, staff or fellow students. Out-of-school suspensions usually stem from serious offences as defined by the school: possession of weapons, uttering threats, sexual harassment, assault/fighting, truancy, defiance, smoking cigarettes, and vandalism as well as repeated major offences. Consequences for an out-of-

include a definite amount of time spent away from school and an official letter of discipline included in her/his permanent file as well as a letter sent to the school board.

As mentioned before, a member of the administrative team evaluates each misbehaviour individually; however, a pattern for out-of-school suspensions has emerged. Because out-of-school suspensions are deemed serious issues, the student generally meets with a member of the administration fairly quickly. Students are usually referred to the administration in two ways: by staff members or students who witnessed the misbehaviour or by staff or students who have heard something about a particular student or believe the student to be involved in a serious offence. Once the misbehaviour is brought to the administration's attention, the support staff worker will access the student's file that chronicles her/his past disciplinary actions in order to prepare for a meeting with the student. Because a student's referral may be based on gossip or hearsay, Western Middle School tries to ensure these meetings are confidential. To maintain confidentiality, the principal or support staff worker who meets with the student provides a private office for the meeting to take place. At this meeting the student is invited to tell her/his story and explain her/his motivation for committing the serious offence. If the misbehaviour involves other students, they too are invited into the meeting. The member of the administrative team works with the students to determine each person's role in the misbehaviour. Once the roles have been established, the participating students are asked to fill in a discipline form based on cooperative discipline principles. From here, the support staff worker or principal determines the consequences and discusses with the student(s) why and how the decision was reached. It is stressed to the student at this time

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student(s) why and how the decision was reached. It is stressed to the student at this time that for the duration of their suspension, they are not to be on or loitering around school property, a letter of discipline will be placed in their file as well as forwarded to the board office, that all homework must be completed before classes can be resumed, and that a re-entry meeting is required. Some counselling occurs at this time with particular emphasis placed on what will happen in the future if the student continues to misbehave. A phone call is then placed to the parent(s)/guardian(s) to inform them of the consequences. During this conversation, the support staff worker tries to engage the parent/guardian in a joint brainstorming activity to find ways to help the student. One strategy oftentimes used is encouraging the family to access professional counselling, and the support staff worker will provide the names and phone numbers of appropriate counsellors for the family if desired. At the end of the out-of school suspension, a re-entry meeting is scheduled. The student and a parent or guardian must attend a re-entry meeting at the school with at least one member of the administration the day the student is to begin attending classes again. At this meeting, the student is usually asked what s/he has done during her/his suspension to improve her/his behaviour.

The disciplinary meetings tend to be longer for out-of school suspensions for three reasons. First, the offences are usually more complicated requiring more time to determine each person's role. Second, out-of school suspensions are not taken lightly by the school or the school district, so all efforts are made to impress upon the student the severity of the issue and what will happen in the future if the misbehaviour continues. But most importantly, this is the administration's last chance to counsel the student

before s/he goes home into what sometimes can be an unregulated environment. It is also a time where the school can suggest strategies for helping the student such as recommending professional counselling or in some case, detoxification programs.

In-School Suspensions

In-school suspensions are more common than out-of-school suspensions but would, in almost all cases, stem from similar incidents: major and serious offences. The consequences for an in-school suspension include an official letter of discipline in the student's file as well as one sent to the school board and a definite amount of time spent away from classes and friends. The time a student must spend on an in-school suspension occurs within the school and under school staff supervision.

Typically, the student is either referred to the office by staff members/students or is escorted down to the office by the staff member who witnessed the offence. Because in-school suspensions are less serious than out-of-school suspensions, it is not uncommon for the student to have to wait a few minutes to meet with a member of the administration. While they are waiting they are usually asked to fill in a discipline form; this serves to have the student reflect upon what happened and generally the extra time settles potent emotions. Then one of the administrators meets with the student, and the student is asked to recount what occurred. Once again, if other students are implicated, they too are invited to the meeting. Some low-level counselling aimed at finding ways in which the student can improve her/his behaviour generally occurs at this meeting. As well, the support staff worker tries to impress upon the student that continued

each person's role has been determined and an in-school suspension is deemed the consequence, the student is informed of the rules regulating an in-school suspension. Then, the parent(s)/guardian(s) are contacted and informed of their child's consequences. If the decision is made before lunch, the administrators may consider counting that day as one of the days required in the in-school consequence. If that is the case, the student spends his time in a special room and is dismissed at 4:00. If the decision is made after lunch, the student usually spends the remainder of the day in a special room instead of in classes, and that time is not counted toward the in-school suspension. The student's in-school suspension would start the next day.

For each day of the suspension, the student reports to the special room designated for supervising students involved in disciplinary action at 8:30 am, or as soon as s/he enters the campus. Because all teachers have been previously notified and have provided work for the student, the student has no need to interact with staff or students. For the duration of the suspension, the student is not allowed to interact freely with other students. S/he can leave to go to the washroom, take a quick break, or go for a walk, but it cannot be done while other students are changing classes, on lunch or at nutrition break. Though the student's social interactions are limited, they are not completely withheld. Other students can be scheduled to spend time in the same room and some interaction between these students generally occurs. Teachers sometimes drop by when possible to see if the student needs assistance completing her/his work. Most importantly though, the students in this special room are supervised by a full-time support staff worker who helps students with their homework and talks with the students about their situation, if they are

with their homework and talks with the students about their situation, if they are interested. It is the goal of the school to provide some low-level forms of counselling to students while they are serving an in-school suspension. At 4:00, well after all other students have left the building and school property, the student who has been suspended is allowed to return home. This is repeated for each day of the student's in-school suspension. All of the class-work assigned by the student's teachers must be completed before re-entering classes, but unlike the out-of-school suspensions, a re-entry meeting is not required.

Restorative Justice

In response to Travis Hirschi's Social Control Theory (See page 34 of this thesis.) as well as those of his contemporaries, schools usually have programs in place that encourage students to be involved in and attached to the school. Countless opportunities await students before, during, and after school at every school. These extra-curricular academic and avocational programs are successful in involving and attaching most of the students who take advantage of them. Unfortunately, these programs have traditionally had limited success in attracting many of the students who are not already attached or involved in the school. Because non-participation in these extra-curricular programs can be attributed to so many things, Western Middle School looked for another way to involve and attach students to the school. Thus, in addition to running countless extra-curricular clubs and sports, the school developed a restorative justice program that aims to involve and attach students through a method of discipline.

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Western Middle School added the restorative justice program to its repertoire of cooperative discipline methods in 2003. "Restorative justice involves the identification and reparation of harms experienced by the victims, offenders, and communities in sorting this all out" (Shenk & Zehr, 2001, p. 315). Though the restorative justice program is in its first year of use at Western Middle School, it is modeled after a highly successful restorative justice program that has been running for three years through the Boys and Girls Club located in the same city in which this study took place. Though both programs use restorative justice principles, the goals of these programs are quite different due to the institutions within which they operate. The Boys and Girls Club's program is designed to offer an alternative to legal proceedings with the expressed purpose of keeping adolescents out of courts and jails. The school program, however, is designed to provide an alternative to the oftentimes socially and academically isolating consequence of in- or out-of-school suspension as well as to work within and be complimentary to the school as an institution.

The school decided to limit the restorative justice program to first time offences that have an obvious 'victim' and 'offender' and where reparation is more easily obtained: theft, bullying, and vandalism. This works for the school in two ways. First, it limits the number of students who can access the program, thereby making it more manageable for a first year program. Also, having fewer students makes achieving the goals of restorative justice much easier to accomplish. Second, it was thought to be easier for the students to recognize harm and repair damage within the context of a relationship with another person instead of with herself or himself, as would be the case with repeated

truancy, smoking, drinking, or doing drugs. It is also important to note that some offences that have an obvious 'victim' and 'offender' such as assault or selling drugs are sometimes considered too serious for the school to deal with because they violate federal and provincial laws. If the administration deems the misbehaviour too serious for the school to handle, they involve the RCMP. Because Western Middle School uses their restorative justice program as more of a first level of intervention and prevention with students, the program deals mostly with Grade 7 students (~75%) with Grade 8s making up the rest of the recommendations (25%).

In order for a student to access the restorative justice program, certain procedures must be followed. A non-enrolling support staff worker meets with the students involved in the misbehaviour. If the students are first time "victims and offenders" and are deemed appropriate candidates, they will have the restorative justice process explained to them and asked to choose between an in-school suspension and the restorative justice program. Though it is meant to be an independent choice indicative of the 'offender's' willingness to participate, all adults try to steer the student toward the restorative justice program because it attempts to educate the student on how to deal with conflict and because it is more socially inclusive and keeps the 'offender' in class. The support staff worker then gives the teacher in charge of the restorative justice program the names of the victim and offender. It generally takes about three days for the restorative justice coordinator to arrange a meeting with the students.

The restorative justice program has four main goals: (1) to recognize how behaviour has harmed a relationship, (2) to mend the relationship between the victim and offender, (3) to attach the student to a caring adult within the school and (4) to have the student contribute to her/his community in some form as part of the discipline agreement. Each step in the restorative justice process addresses one of these goals. First, a teacher who is the restorative justice coordinator/mediator meets with the students and teaches the students the common vocabulary and the communication skills needed to participate in the victim-offender mediation (VOM). Next, the students participate in the VOM with the help of the restorative justice mediator. The students are encouraged to talk openly about how they were harmed and why they behaved the way they did. The victim and offender must agree upon a way to mend their relationship. When this decision is made, they present the mediator with their plan along with a timeline for completing the goals. The victim and offender will oftentimes work on the goal together, allowing them to mend their relationship in the process. Because being a positive member of the school community is one of the program's goals, plans for mending the relationship often involve addressing social relationships or social issues. Some examples of goals set by students in the restorative justice program are preparing and presenting a talk on bullying for younger students, volunteering for the school's breakfast program ensuring all students start the day with full stomachs, and creating posters for the school hallways that laude positive messages. Through this entire process, the students become attached to the restorative justice mediator and the school.

The restorative justice program is designed to be educative in two ways. First, students are not taken out of class to either meet with the restorative justice coordinator nor to complete their agreed upon reparations. All of this occurs either at lunch, before school, or after school. This decision was made based on previous literature that linked misbehaviour and social exclusion with limited academic success as well as the recurrence of negative social interactions. Second, the restorative justice program is designed to teach students the communication skills they may be lacking. The mediator plays an integral role in giving students the cultural and social capital[4] they need to interact positively with their peers. The mediator teaches the students a common language with which to use during the VOM as well as the skills and framework of effective communication. Ideally, the mediator participates as little as possible during the VOM, only speaking to guide the students to a solution they both agree upon. In this manner, solutions to conflicts could be different for each VOM, and restorative justice encourages students to develop the skills to solve conflicts in the future.

Restorative justice also offers a way to limit the amount of labelling that occurs through traditional disciplinary measures in school. Many educators feel that the official letters of discipline in a student's file oftentimes become an albatross around her/his neck. Each time a letter is put into the file, the heavier the label gets and the more difficult it becomes to shed that label. Western Middle School tried to find a balance between enforcing the school rules and limiting the harmful effects of labelling; the school made

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[4] Cultural capital is symbolic money that allows some students, usually those from middle to upper income families, to succeed in school. Capital comes primarily from one's family in the form of early childhood experiences. See page 29 of this thesis for an explanation of Pierre Bourdieu's (1973) cultural capital theory.

restorative justice a legitimate alternative to suspensions where participation in victim-offender mediation and completion of the agreed upon consequences means that no official letter of disciplinary action is placed in the student's file. In this way, restorative justice does not add to the student's official file.

Chapter III – Literature Review

Few studies examine the concept of discipline or the short-term effects of discipline within a school setting. As a result, much of the literature on school discipline or management is not directly related to this topic nor is it applicable to the setting in which this study was conducted. Most theory focuses on predicting misbehaviour outside of school, explaining why it occurs, or examining how institutions such as schools promote misbehaviour by limiting success. Conversely, Western Middle School's staff members actively work to ensure that interaction with students, regardless of the student's history, promote rather than prevent success. The philosophies and theories guiding the school's discipline programs reflect this ethic. In addition, Western Middle School makes every effort to ensure that discipline is fair even though consequences are not always equal for offences.

Many of the previous studies relate discipline and delinquency to socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender, or academic ability. This is done to predict further misbehaviour or to demonstrate that schools induce student misbehaviour by structuring the institution through the dominant group's perception. These types of studies are not entirely related to this case study, as Western Middle School does not have a particularly diverse population where higher levels of disciplinary action involving students from different ethnic backgrounds or socio-economic status would be evident. When effects are examined, the focus is usually on misbehaviour that would end in either permanent expulsion from school or the involvement of local police authorities and not on misbehaviour that is dealt with at the school level. Though this literature review is, in a

few places, only tangentially related to this topic and particular setting, it does highlight two important issues. First, it reveals the inapplicability of broad, generalizing theories on schools. Each school is unique with regards to school culture, climate, population, staff, neighbourhood, and guiding philosophies. Second, it presents a need for research into the results and effectiveness of school discipline procedures, particularly for lower-level misbehaviour that is serious enough to be dealt with by the administration but not serious enough to involve the local authorities or to prevent the student from returning to school.

This chapter highlights some of the existing literature on misbehaviour as well as the theories that inspired much of the research. The chapter is organized into four sections: (1) the relationship between misbehaviour and academic success, (2) the relationship between discipline and behaviour, (3) the relationship between misbehaviour and social relationships, and (4) an explanation of restorative justice. The first three categories have provided the inspiration for many of the interview questions as well as the framework for the data analysis and the Results and Findings chapter. Because there is limited research on restorative justice, and even more limited information on restorative justice being used in schools, this portion of the literature review focuses primarily on the principles and philosophies that support the concept of restorative justice. Links are made between the previous literature on school discipline and my research indicated as appropriate.

Discipline and Academic Success

The literature on school discipline of the past forty years has been consistent in describing the relationships between academic achievement and delinquency. Factors such as school achievement, school commitment, IQ, and future success in life have been shown to be inversely related to delinquency (Hirschi, 1969; Polk & Halferty, 1972; Schafer, 1972; Polk & Schafer, 1972; Pink, 1991; Polk, 1991).

When misbehaviour and academic failure are so closely linked, it is interesting to explore the school's role in promoting academic success. Seydlitz and Jenkins (1998) sum up William Shafer and Kenneth Polk's research on how a school can contribute to academic failure through misconceptions about students, the structure of schooling as well as the content and delivery of curriculum.

> First, school personnel believe that economically disadvantaged children have only limited potential; therefore, they do not help these students...Second, the school curriculum is irrelevant, particularly for economically disadvantaged students, and ignores the social problems that these children face. Third, the teaching methods are often inappropriate, and in addition, remedial education is inadequate. Fourth, testing groups and tracking are biased by class; lower class students are less likely to be college-prep tracked regardless of ability. Fifth, schools are economically and racially segregated to the detriment of educational attainment. Finally, there is a great distance between schools and the community most noticeably in the lower-class communities. (p. 71)

Schafer and Polk (1972) suggest that these factors can contribute to students having a negative attitude toward school. This negative attitude then translates into reduced motivation and effort. This can, in turn, make academic success difficult and may encourage students to misbehave due to the frustration of not belonging. This misbehaviour, depending on severity, may lead to an in- or out-of-school suspension.

Much of the literature that suggests the school induces academic difficulty through discipline procedures has focused on suspensions that socially and academically isolate the student for a definite period of time. Most of this research suggests that suspensions slowly push offenders away from school since it is more difficult to catch up on academic work after each suspension. A 1999 quantitative study conducted in the United States by Rodney, Crafter, and Mupier states that the number of school suspensions is positively related to grade retention. Their findings are consistent with several previous studies and are supported by a qualitative study, also conducted in the United States by researcher Casella (2003). In addition to explaining the relationship between suspensions and grade retention, he describes how suspensions are even more devastating for the students who do not have the economic, social or academic capital to recover from their school suspensions.

> Punishment negatively affects those who are already negatively
>
> affected by poverty, racism, academic failure, and other realities. Tied
>
> to this is the greater difficulty these youth have when trying to recoup
>
> after being expelled or suspended from school. Ultimately then, due
>
> partly to their circumstances and their lack of social capital, these

young people are penalized more severely than those who can bounce

back from a suspension or expulsion. (Casella, 2003, p. 879)

For many students who are not financially, academically or socially supported during

their suspension, academic success after returning to school is unlikely. In addition to

school policies such as discipline procedures, the literature looks at the structure of the

school experience as an important factor in determining academic success.

Pierre Bourdieu's Cultural Capital Theory. In "Cultural Reproduction and Social

Reproduction" (1973) Pierre Bourdieu argues that school achievement is more closely

associated with sociological factors, such as the student's familiarity with the educational

system rather than the student's natural academic ability. The knowledge and skills

included in the school curriculum are legitimized and given value; hence, those students

who obtain or arrive at school already familiar with these skills have a certain amount of

power within the school system. Bourdieu suggests schools value the knowledge of the

dominant culture and transmit this knowledge through methods most familiar to those of

the dominant group. Therefore, student achievement almost always depends on

membership in the dominant group and a certain "initial familiarity with the dominant

culture, [because curricula] proceeds by imperceptible familiarization, [and] offers

information and training which can be received and acquired only by subjects endowed

with the system of predispositions" (p. 494). And, because of this, Bourdieu posits that

schools legitimize social differences as 'natural' academic ones and, therefore, reproduce

rather than control or correct inequality within society.

Bourdieu uses the term capital to explain his theory. 'Capital,' loosely defined as symbolic money. For Bourdieu, capital can exist in several forms: cultural, social, academic, and economic; this capital can be converted into different forms or into services to the benefit of the holder. Students who are familiar with the material and methods used in schools have the cultural capital that can be converted to the academic and social capital needed to succeed in school; this academic and social capital will eventually be exchanged for economic capital later in life in the form of a well-paying job. And schools, in an attempt to provide equal education and opportunities for all students, forget the socio-economic factors that have already stratified the student body prior to entering school and, therefore, rarely adjust teaching methods or policies to accommodate the needs of their diverse population. Therefore, schools do not teach students how to acquire cultural capital nor do they show students how to derive meaning from the schooling experience. Moreover, since families are the main source of cultural capital, the knowledge and socialization a child experiences in the home prior to attending school is the most important factor determining academic and social success at school. Therefore, students unfamiliar with the dominant culture not only have insufficient cultural capital to convert into academic or social capital but also have no opportunity to acquire it; these students cannot participate in school to the best of their ability and are soon perceived as incompetent, lazy, or troublesome. The grades and the curricula these students receive make it incredibly difficult for them to accrue the academic or social capital necessary to obtain well-paying jobs. In addition, these students, frustrated by their inability to succeed, start to exclude themselves from educational opportunities further solidifying social inequality. Therefore, those who enter

the school system as disadvantaged or underprivileged exit the system in the same state and inequality is reproduced.

If obtaining capital is directly related to academic achievement and academic success is one of the factors linked with misbehaviour, then it is of interest to examine discipline policies with an eye on how each policy supports a student's academic endeavours.

Robert Merton's (1938) work builds on Emile Durkheim's concept of anomie. Merton suggests that it is the stress and strain felt by individuals that cause them to act in deviant manners. He posits that society prescribes what is important and valued, and middle-class institutions such as school, entertainment, and work reinforce these commonly held values throughout one's lifetime. As well, society supports only a few legitimate means by which to attain these goals. This theory is of particular interest to educators because success in formal schooling is one of the methods by which individuals can attain these commonly held goals, and the school is one of the most important reinforcers of these goals during a child's development. Though these values are intended to be universal, not all citizens have equal access to means by which to attain such goals as wealth, power, and prestige. With an emphasis on attaining goals and only limited means by which to achieve them for people of lower status, a 'strain' occurs. Merton suggests that when people break from conventional values, they do so in three ways: through innovation, retreatism, and rebellion. Innovation occurs when the individual embraces the middle-class goals but uses illegal methods by which to attain them. Retreatism occurs when the individual shuns both the goals and the means to attain them. These people generally

'retreat' from society in order to cope with the strain of limited opportunities. Merton suggests that rebellion occurs when the individual rejects both the goals and the methods by which to attain them; however, the individual wants to replace society's values with new ones. Subcultures where there is less strain on the individual are created based on Merton's description of rebellion.

Discipline and Behaviour

Work done by Schafer himself or in concert with Polk (Polk & Schafer, 1972a, 1972b; Schafer, 1972) has focused on the relationship between the school's response to misbehaviour and delinquency. In "Influences on Delinquent Behaviour" Seydlitz and Jenkins (1998) summarize Schafer and Polk's research nicely:

> This increase in delinquency occurs for a number of reasons: school personnel assume that students intend to misbehave because either they are bad or they are from a dysfunctional family, school personnel label students, school rules are often vague, and discipline procedures result in labelling and bad feelings about the school. (p. 74)

Labelling theory. Building on G. H. Mead's work on the 'self,' Cooley put forth the idea of the looking glass effect. This theory suggests that people come to see themselves as they believe their friends, parents and others see them. This can occur through interactions with these people or through what people believe to be true. As well, teachers, parents, and peers are prone to labelling others as "smart", "dumb", "cool", or "trouble-makers". People's understanding of these labels then affects how

they interact with these labelled individuals. Hence, for students who are labelled "trouble-makers," interactions with teachers are likely to reinforce the negative identity rather than change it. The result of this is that students fulfill the negative expectations.

Albert Cohen's (1955) social frustration theory is usually linked with Merton's as a type of strain theory, but it is difficult to ignore the similarities between Cohen's theory and Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital. Where Bourdieu suggests that the discontinuity between home and school leads to unequal academic success, Cohen links that discontinuity to the student's inability to behave 'properly' and consequent frustration and lack of success. Cohen suggests that because schools are structured and operated through the dominant middle-class perspective, school rules and expected behaviours are often most familiar to students from a middle-class background. Hence, students who have been socialized by middle-class norms and values are more likely to be considered bright, well behaved, diligent, and polite by their teachers. These perceptions lead to more positive relationships with those who can offer opportunities and support. Conversely, students from lower-income families and different cultures are generally unfamiliar with the norms and values supported at the school and thus fail to meet the middle-class standards of behaviour. Because of the discontinuity between family and school expectations with regards to behaviour, it is difficult for a student to improve her/his at-school behaviour without being explicitly taught or socialized through the school. Therefore, methods of discipline that simply punish students for misbehaviour without explaining the importance of the school rule or teaching the

necessary skills to observe the rules may not only socially frustrate students but also reproduce social inequalities.

Discipline and Social Relationships

Travis Hirschi's Social Control Theory

One way educators have tried to reduce the need for discipline is by understanding why students misbehave. Travis Hirschi (1969) tried to discern the causes of delinquency by exploring what prevents most people from engaging in delinquent activities. In *Causes of Delinquency*, he offers his social control theory as an explanation. For Hirschi, "delinquent acts result when an individual's bond to society is weak or broken" (p. 16). According to Hirschi's theory a bond has four components: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief.

In Hirschi's opinion (1969), attachment to others brings with it moral restraint because the individual is influenced by those to whom s/he feels attached or connected. Commitment to an activity or group of people involves investing one's time and energy. Hirschi posits that the higher the level of commitment, the less likely one is to risk her/his investment by committing a deviant act. The level of involvement in conventional activities is inversely related to the likelihood of committing delinquent acts. Quite simply, the more involved one is in conventional activities, the less time, energy, and opportunity one has to misbehave. Finally, individuals who believe they share a common value system with society are also less likely to misbehave. Hence, each of these four components must be present for a strong bond with society to be formed and the

likelihood of delinquency reduced. Hirschi names attachment to parents, the school, and peers as most important for reducing delinquency.

In *Causes of Delinquency*, Hirschi (1969) suggests those students from working-class backgrounds find it difficult to succeed in school because the school is essentially a middle-class institution that inadvertently punishes those who are different and makes social mobility difficult. He believes that this is a factor that contributes to delinquency, but he does not include it in his "causal chain" leading to delinquency; instead, Hirschi emphasizes other factors. He offers data to suggest that delinquency is negatively correlated to academic ability, academic achievement, enjoyment of school and acceptance of school rules and authority. Hirschi uses this data to present his "causal chain" by which he explains deviance. "The causal chain runs from academic incompetence to poor school performance to disliking school to rejection of school's authority to the commission of delinquent acts" (p. 132). For Hirschi, the key to controlling misbehaviour lies with the social relationships that support academic success; therefore, discipline guided by conventional values that assists strong social attachments to the school and peers would be considered effective discipline.

Of the four components of a bond, attachment and involvement seem to be the two over which schools have a level of control. For example, schools may offer after-school athletic or club activities in which students can be involved. Further, educators can share their time and energy with students outside of class, thereby offering opportunities to increase levels of attachment. Unfortunately, schools seem to have less control over

levels of commitment and belief. Along these lines, Huebner and Betts (2002) explore

social control theory, particularly involvement and attachment, with adolescents. Their

findings suggest that "although several of the involvement bond variables of social

control theory are predictive of both delinquency and academic achievement for both

genders, only the attachment bond variables provide such an overall protective function

for females" (p. 123). As well, a 1995 study by Jenkins supports school commitment as a

viable means by which to reduce delinquency. "School commitment mediates much of

the effects of personal background, family involvement, and ability grouping on the

school delinquency measures" (p. 221).

Though Huebner and Betts's as well as Jenkin's studies supported Hirschi's theory, there

have been many that either downplayed its importance or rejected it (Matsueda &

Heimer, 1987; Thompson, Mitchell, & Dodder, 1991). Thompson, Mitchell, and Dodder

tested Hirschi's social control theory by using 724 students in four high schools and three

correctional facilities. Contrary to Huebner and Betts's findings, Thompson, Mitchell

and Dodder's results suggest,

> Hirschi's contention is only supported when the variable of delinquent
>
> companions is included; that is to say the extent of explained variation in
>
> delinquency is greatly enhanced when delinquent companions is
>
> introduced as an additional antecedent variable in Hirschi's causal scheme.
>
> In addition, the findings are more consistent with a social learning or
>
> differential association theory than the original theory proposed by Hirschi
>
> in *Causes of Delinquency*. (p. 144)

Similarly, Matsueda and Heimer (1987) find differential association more useful than social control theory when explaining the findings of their study on the relationships among race, family structure and delinquency.

Another criticism made in discussions of Hirschi's (1936) theory is that originally he downplayed the importance of peer relationships in causing or preventing delinquency. However, it has been noted through research and anecdotal evidence from teachers and parents that during adolescence the teenager places less importance on her/his relationship with her/his family and more importance on relationships with peers. Other theories such as the differential association theory and the social learning theory have demonstrated the importance of peer relationships. As numerous studies have shown, adolescents who have delinquent peers are more likely to commit delinquent acts (Agnew, 1991; Matsueda & Heimer, 1987; Warr 1993, Warr & Stafford, 1991). In his study, Warr (1993) used data from the National Youth Survey on persons aged 11-21 and suggests that the importance individuals place on peers is at its highest during mid-adolescence, approximately the time they are in the last years of high school. However, there was a sharp increase at the age of 13 suggesting that middle school is an important time for friendship formation and maintenance. Warr's study also demonstrates that delinquent friends tend to be "sticky" friends – those that are difficult to lose. These data are especially relevant when examining the relationship between delinquent behaviour and peers. A study by Agnew (1991) suggests that the impact of delinquent peers is related to the strength of three variables: attachment to peers, time spent with peers, and the extent to which peers present delinquent patterns. When these variables are at high

levels, their impact on delinquency is considerable; however, when these variables are at their mean or lower they have little impact on delinquency. A study by Warr and Stafford (1991) demonstrates that peers' behaviour had more of an effect on causing delinquency than peers' attitudes. These data support social learning theory or differential association theory more than social control theory.

Edwin Sutherland's (1947) differential association theory "argues that criminal behaviour is learned through words and gestures in interactions with other persons in a process of communication" (Gomme, 1995, p. 163). In addition, the impact of this communication is related to the intimacy or the value one places on the relationship. This theory gives the adolescent agency in creating her/his values and beliefs. Bandura's (1977) social learning theory suggests that the individual has less control over values and beliefs because s/he can learn from social settings without interacting or communicating with another person. "Children learn vicariously by observing and imitating the behaviour, beliefs, and norms held by those closest to them" (Barakett & Cleghorn, 2000, p. 94). Thus, the child's environment is crucial to the development of her/his values and behaviours.

From the studies that contradict Hirschi as well as from the perspectives of the social learning and differential association theories, both out-of-school and in-school suspensions should reduce the likelihood of repeat offences. In an out-of-school suspension, students are not permitted to be on school property at any time. Considering the student's friends are enrolled in school, the amount of time a student on an out-of school suspension can spend with her/his 'delinquent companions' is greatly reduced.

However, based on the conclusions drawn from social learning theory and differential association theory, in-school suspensions should be the most effective method of discipline since the student's contact with 'delinquent companions' is limited and s/he is supervised by a staff member for the six hours s/he is at school. A staff member ensures that contact with 'delinquent companions' is impossible and positive social interaction is increased. The restorative justice program would not be considered a viable method of discipline because interaction with 'delinquent companions' is not limited.

Restorative Justice

In *Changing Lenses*, Howard Zehr (1990) uses a photography metaphor: He asserts that justice can be seen through a variety of lenses. Each lens affects how one views crime and punishment and it affects the outcome, or final picture, produced through that lens. Zehr makes a bold statement by entitling his book *Changing Lenses*; he believes society needs to change from a retributive lens to a restorative lens if justice and healing are to take place. In his book, Zehr outlines the differences between how justice is viewed through the retributive lens and the restorative lens:

Retributive Justice
Crime is a violation of the state, defined by lawbreaking and guilt.

Justice determines blame and administers pain in a contest between the offender and the state directed by systematic rules.

Restorative justice
Crime is a violation of people and relationships. It creates obligations to make things right. Justice involves the victim, the offender, and the

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community in a search for solutions which promote reconciliation and

repair. (p. 181)

Zehr (1990) elaborates on the differences between the two frameworks, suggesting that

retributive justice centers around blame-fixing instead of problem-solving, focuses on the

past instead of the future, and places an emphasis on the offender with little consideration

for the victim or the relationship between the victim and offender (See Appendix C for a

complete comparison.). Though the victim and the offender may not be known to each

other before the incident, Zehr maintains that the crime creates a relationship between

them. This relationship, in his opinion, must be acknowledged and dealt with for justice

and healing to take place.

Through the retributive lens, taking responsibility is seen as meeting the conditions of the

punishment that have been decided by others. Zehr (1990) argues that when a judicial

system decides the conditions and severity of the punishment, the offender is not

obligated to take responsibility for her/his actions, but is obligated to accept the guilt and

take the pain inflicted by the judicial system. Through the restorative lens, taking

responsibility is a key element in allowing the victim to experience justice and

empowering the offender to change.

> Justice has to be lived, not simply done by others and reported to us.
>
> When someone simply informs us that justice has been done and that we
>
> should now go home (as victims) or to jail (as offenders), we do not
>
> experience that as justice. (p. 203)

Zehr (1990) also believes the justice process must empower both the victim and the offender for healing to take place:

> For victims, disempowerment is a core element of the violation.
> Empowerment is crucial to recovery and justice. For offenders,
> irresponsibility and a sense of disempowerment may have been some of
> the bricks on the road to the offence. Only by participating in the
> 'solution' can they move toward responsibility and closure. (p. 204)

It is crucial to involve a mediator who does not hold a hidden agenda and who refrains from manipulating the restorative justice process and outcomes. When the victim and offender are allowed to find a solution with only minimal help from a mediator, empowering both the victim and the offender is possible. Through this type of arrangement, Zehr argues a win-win solution can be found.

Though *Changing Lenses* (1990) was written to challenge how traditional legal systems view and dole out justice, its message can also be applied to schools as they serve the dual purpose of educating and socializing citizens. It is also relevant considering many forms of school discipline fall under Zehr's description of retributive justice and numerous studies have shown that traditional punishments such as school suspensions rarely educate or socialize students effectively. Because restorative justice can easily be used in any setting or institution where explicit rules govern behaviour, schools can implement restorative justice programs.

Many educators feel that the issues that are left untouched by school suspensions are being addressed through restorative justice: encouraging the offender to understand the effects of her/his actions and take responsibility for them, teaching offenders how to mend and maintain positive social relationships, and focusing on the inclusion rather than exclusion of the offender from class. Though restorative justice strives to accomplish all of these objectives, very little research has been done examining the success of restorative justice programs being used in schools. Since restorative justice is a new form of discipline being used in public middle schools and more traditional forms have rarely been evaluated from a student's perspective, it presents an interesting and important opportunity to conduct this research.

Due to the relative youth of restorative justice programs in Canada, few field studies have been completed and very little empirical data evaluating the effectiveness of these programs have been collected. Of the published studies, most data have been collected on adults. Bonta, Rooney, and Wallace-Capretta's 1998 study reports positive findings when restorative justice was used as an alternative to incarceration. Rates of recidivism went down among participants enrolled in the restorative justice program, but these differences only became statistically significant after two years of being involved in the program. A more recent study by Latimer, Dowden, and Muise (2001) provides a meta-analysis of restorative justice programs by looking at victim satisfaction, offender satisfaction, restitution compliance, and recidivism among adults. Their data concluded that restorative justice programs outperform traditional methods such as incarceration in

all categories. The differences were statistically significant in all areas except for offender satisfaction.

The one article that presented an empirical study of restorative justice had a negative view of victim-offender mediation (VOM – a form of restorative justice). VOM occurs when only three people, the victim, the offender, and a mediator, openly discuss the harm that has been done and agree on the steps to restore the relationship. The mediator is to take a minimal role in the discourse between the victim and the offender. Arrigo and Schehr (1998) believe the goals of restorative justice are not being met because "VOM discourse advertently or inadvertently marginalizes juveniles" (p. 629). The authors suggest that the mediators could be more sensitive to the juveniles' language and ways of knowing: The language the mediator encourages the victim and offender to use is unfamiliar to them so the process is oftentimes "staged" or "manipulated" instead of liberating and fluid. From this perspective, Arrigo and Schehr believe that restitution is difficult to accomplish with this style of discourse.

Most of the information on restorative justice being used with adolescents is overwhelmingly positive (Bazemore, 2001; Braithwaite, 2001a, 2001b; Karp & Breslin, 2001; Shenk & Zehr, 2001; Walgrave, 1995). Unfortunately, none of these articles are supported by empirical data. As well, no findings are available from studies conducted with adolescents in school settings. Consequently, restorative justice has yet to be linked to academic development or to an offender's attitude toward the schooling process. Several schools using restorative justice or restorative justice principles in the United

States have done informal research or are in the process of conducting longitudinal field studies. The preliminary findings are quite positive. Of the available data, schools have reported reduced rates of delinquency since using restorative justice programs or principles (Karp & Breslin, 2001; Maloney & Holcomb, 2001).

Chapter IV - Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology of the study. First, I will discuss why a qualitative, exploratory, case study design was essential for this research project. Next, I will explain how the phenomenological perspective provides the theoretical underpinnings of the study. Then, I will share my research design and show how the previous literature shaped my interview questions and the data analysis. Finally, I will describe some of the issues and concerns that affected the study's design and its implementation.

Qualitative, Exploratory Case Study Research

In *Qualitative Research for Education*, Robert Bogdan and Sari Biklen (2003) list five characteristics of qualitative research: naturalistic, descriptive, concerned with process, inductive and focused on meaning. Though this study incorporated all five of these characteristics, two of them need to be highlighted. "Qualitative researchers assume that human behaviour is significantly influenced by the setting in which it occurs" (p. 5). Hence, understanding the setting including the staff, students, neighbourhood, as well as the guiding philosophies was essential to understanding the students' discipline experiences. I conducted naturalistic research where my understanding of the context was enhanced by information gathered through a variety of data collection methods. I conducted informal interviews with a staff member beginning in January via telephone and e-mail in order to garner an understanding of how restorative justice principles were used within the school and how the restorative justice program integrated with the school's philosophy on discipline and other discipline methods. This initial familiarity

served as a foundation of knowledge for when I arrived at the study's setting in mid April

and allowed my informal observations and conversations with staff to be meaningful and

relevant to the study. Thus, I had an elaborate understanding of the setting when the

formal student interviews commenced in June.

The descriptive nature of this study is obvious in its title, research design, and especially

in its written format. The Results and Findings chapter contains numerous quotations

taken from the student interviews. It was important to me to use as much of the students'

voice as possible in order to reflect the essence of the study – the effects of different

styles of discipline from the students' perspective. To paraphrase or tabulate in chart

format the participants' responses would have diluted the potency of their comments and

devalued the importance of their thoughts and feelings.

Exploratory

In their book, *Fundamentals of Educational Research*, Anderson and Arsenault (2001)

define an exploratory case study as one that is descriptive and "aims at generating

hypotheses for later investigation rather than illustrating (p. 155). Merriam (1998) defines

a descriptive case study as one where the final product is "a rich, 'thick' description of

the phenomenon under study" (p. 29). This research project falls neatly into the

descriptive category as it focuses on the effects of different discipline procedures from a

student's perspective. A thick description of the effects students feel from being involved

in a particular discipline method is necessary for schools and educators to understand the

discipline experiences of their students. It is also important to do an exploratory study

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because even though in and out-of-school suspensions are commonplace in all middle schools, restorative justice is a relatively new program and the effects have yet to be formally documented. Understanding the effects of all three methods of discipline can generate hypotheses for future evaluative studies such as "Is one method more effective than the other when dealing with a particular serious offence? Or, with girls? Or, with Grade 7 students? Or, with repeat 'offenders'?

Case Study.

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) define a case study as "a detailed examination of one setting, or single subject, a single depository of documents, or a particular event" (p. 258). Though this study compares the effects of three different methods of discipline, all three methods are used in a single setting - Western Middle School. Despite all the similarities between public schools such as provincial regulations on curricula and teacher certification as well as extra-curricular opportunities such as sports, each school is unique. The staff, the administration, the students, the neighbourhood, and the guiding philosophies that influence the structure and delivery of programs determine the school culture and climate. Hence, this is a case study of the effects of discipline at this particular school, with this staff, with these students, in this neighbourhood. Though this does limit the generalizability of the results, it does not limit the value of this study for other schools in terms of improved planning and policy formation considering out-of-school and in-school suspensions tend to look similar across the region. As well, this information will continue to be applicable at this school for a few years as the staff, the

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socio-economic status of the neighbourhood, and the guiding philosophies will not have changed too significantly.

Phenomenological Perspective

The phenomenological perspective, greatly influenced by Edmund Husserl and Alfred Schutz, was the most useful lens through which to view the data as well as the entire study. Phenomenologists posit that people's ideas of truth are really an interpretation of reality, and "researchers in the phenomenological mode attempt to understand the meaning of events and interactions to ordinary people in particular situations" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 23). The phenomenological foundation was absolutely crucial to this study because it is the students' interpretation of their reality and the meaning they assign to events that will affect all future action, interaction, thoughts and feelings within this school setting. Hence, it becomes essential to understand the effects of different styles of discipline from the students' perspectives if future research on effective discipline is to take place.

In *Qualitative Research: A Personal Skills Approach*, Gary Shank suggests that researchers who use the phenomenological perspective end up interpreting the participants' interpretations (2002, p. 81). Because qualitative research relies so heavily on subjective data, it is important to ensure the meaning one has gleaned from the interpretation of data is accurate. To do this, I had two staff members check the accuracy of the School Context chapter. As well, all student participants were given the

opportunity to check their transcripts for accuracy and to evaluate my interpretation of their data.

Research Design

In order to garner a sense of the effects that each method of discipline had on middle school students, I developed four research questions. These four questions created the four phases in which the research was conducted. The first phase was conducted by distance prior to arriving at the school in mid-April; the second and third phases were conducted on site between mid-April and the end of June. The final phase took place by distance between June and August. Time was spent between each phase reflecting on and interpreting the data collected, researching previous literature and studies conducted in this area of research, and re-evaluating my emic perspective.

Phase I - What are the goals of each method of discipline? Research question one was answered in the first phase of my research when I conducted informal telephone and e-mail conversations with a support staff member regarding the three methods of discipline between January and March. The staff member explained how the school was applying the restorative justice principles to the school setting, how the restorative justice program was being integrated into the school's discipline model, as well as the similarities and differences between the restorative justice and other methods of discipline for which it can be substituted. These conversations helped shape the research design and streamlined formal and informal data collection once on-site.

Phase II - What does each method of disciplinary experience typically look like?

I conducted informal observations as well as several formal and informal conversations with administrators and staff members who deal with discipline at the school from mid-April to the end of June. These two data collection techniques were used to answer research question 2 as well as to supplement information already collected for research question one. These conversations focused on four main topics: the school's philosophy on discipline, the purpose of each method of discipline, factors that determine who gets which method of discipline, and the typical experience in each method of discipline. This information was used mostly in the School Context chapter, but also helped shape my emic perspective, my understanding of the school's climate and culture as well as the interview questions.

Phase III - What issues/needs are addressed through each method of discipline for the adolescent? What is not addressed? Research question three was addressed through the student interviews that took place in June. Students were involved in two interviews; the goal was to develop an understanding of the students' perceptions of the effects of discipline. The first was a semi-structured interview comprised of nine or ten open-ended questions relating to a particular experience of being suspended or involved in the restorative justice program (See Appendix B for a complete list of interview questions.) and was approximately twenty minutes long. Based on prior experience as well as the previous literature written on school discipline, I focused this research question on three factors most commonly associated with discipline: academic success, behaviour and social relationships. Thus, in addition to asking open ended interview questions regarding the needs and issues addressed through discipline, I also asked

specific questions relating to the effects of discipline on the student's academic success, behaviour and social relationships. Follow-up questions and probes were asked to clarify a student's answer when necessary. The second interview took place once a transcript of the first interview was completed. At the second interview students were given the chance to make changes, additions, or deletions to their transcripts.

Phase IV - How do these three methods of discipline compare with each other when examining the effects on adolescents? Research question four was addressed when analysing the interview data and writing up my results and findings. The fourth phase was done between June and July.

Analysis of data

As the previous research in this area demonstrates, misbehaviour is negatively correlated to academic and social success. Therefore, specific questions inquiring about the students' perception of the behavioural, academic, and social effects of discipline were asked. And, data taken from these questions as well as more general questions were coded looking for information to fall in these three areas. Data were also analyzed for emerging themes.

Though some, such as Travis Hirschi (1969), have tried to suggest a linear path or "causal chain" students follow to misbehaving, the vast majority of the literature on school discipline does not present a clear, reliable formula. Here, the phenomenological perspective became increasingly useful suggesting that academic and social factors

affecting behaviour are unique unto each student and particular to that point in time. The phenomenological perspective also made me aware of my personal lens through which I view the students and their answers. Therefore, data were analyzed through both emic and etic perspectives.

This analyzed data was then applied to our definition of "effective discipline" in order to suggest hypotheses and possible topics for future research as featured in the Conclusion chapter.

Issues and Concerns

Gaining Access and Building Rapport. Unfortunately, like all public schools, Western Middle School does not have the time or money to run full-scale, formal research studies. Therefore, gaining access to this setting was rather easy; the school was eager to have me conduct my research at their school especially considering the restorative justice program was in its first year of operation. However, due to the sensitive nature of discipline, the school was understandably cautious about the study's design, issues of confidentiality, and the methods of gaining permission from parents and guardians. In order to address these issues, some key staff members and I worked in concert to create a consent form sensitive to the presumed parental concerns, to develop pertinent interview questions, and to arrange the optimum times for the interviews to take place.

Recruitment. Recruiting participants for the study was also a sensitive issue. Because I was not an employee, the school could not provide me with a list of students who had been involved in disciplinary action without first getting the student's consent. Since, the students were under the age of consent, parental/guardian permission was also necessary to obtain. As well, because it was necessary for the school to be involved in the selection of participants, it was difficult to ensure that the students' identity would not be revealed to the school through the publication of this thesis. This meant that we had to devise a way to limit the number of staff members who were involved in selecting participants as well as design an elaborate coding method in order to maintain the participants' confidentiality during the study and in publication.

Two staff members within the school who hold different but pertinent positions relating to disciplining students checked their records for all students who had been involved in an out-of-school suspension, an in-school suspension, or the restorative justice program between September 2003 and December 2003. From these lists, these two staff members selected 24 students to participate in the study. This list was then checked and approved by the school principal. The two staff members then contacted all the potential students and their parents/guardians explaining the purpose of the study, the rights and responsibilities of the participants, as well as the school's role in the research once the study commenced. If the parent/guardian and the student showed interest and agreed to be in the study, a meeting was scheduled for the student and me. I then met with the student to build rapport, answer questions, and offer more information about the study. If the student wished to continue their involvement in the study, I conducted an interview.

Confidentiality. To ensure confidentiality, I was not given the student's name; instead, students were assigned an alphanumeric code. Of the forty plus staff members, only three knew which students were involved in the study and only one had access to a list that showed student names corresponding to their alphanumeric codes. If any correspondence was needed between this staff member and me, the alphanumeric code was used to refer to students. Also, to ensure the confidentiality of the students' identities in print, I changed the students' alphanumeric codes to pseudonyms in this document.

Participants. Only 18 of the possible 24 students were formally interviewed and included in this study because of typical factors that usually affect participation in research projects: students losing or forgetting their consent forms and finding convenient times to conduct interviews. The study involved 18 students from Grade 7, Grade 8, and Grade 9 who had experienced an out-of-school suspension, six who experienced an in-school suspension, and six who were involved in the restorative justice program. Though not controlled for, each category of students was comprised of students who varied in age, gender, academic achievement and previous discipline experience. Each group had at least one first time 'offender' and one student rather familiar with a variety of disciplinary methods used at Western Middle School. However, the out-of-school suspensions group had more multiple 'offenders' and restorative justice had more first time 'offenders.'

Method of Discipline	Gender	Misbehaviour	Discipline History
Out-of-school suspension	4 boys 2 girls	Smoking marijuana: 3, Fighting: 2, Repeated defiance: 1	Multiple offences: 2 Limited offences: 2 First time offence: 2
In-school suspension	4 boys 2 girls	Fighting: 2, Theft: 1, Possession of a weapon: 1, Defiance: 1, Drinking alcohol: 1	Multiple offences: 2 Limited offences: 1 First time offence: 3
Restorative Justice	4 girls 2 boys	Bullying: 2, Fighting: 4	Multiple offences: 1 Limited offences: 1 First time offence: 4

Time

This study was conducted at the end of the 2003-2004 school year. Though this was

originally decided for reasons of convenience on the part of the researcher and the school,

it turned out to be a fruitful time of year to be discussing the effects of discipline with the

participants. First, June marks the end of the school year; final exams and year-end

report cards are natural times for many students to reflect upon their experiences

throughout the year. In addition, many teachers create culminating year-end projects

where students must reflect on their personal and academic growth throughout the year.

Second, interviewing students after time has past since the disciplinary action meant that anger and other emotions had abated and it allowed for a more cooperative interview so the participant could fully assess the effects and effectiveness of that disciplinary action.

Unfortunately, allowing this time between the disciplinary action and the interview to pass may have affected the accuracy of the participants' memory. Though this did concern me, I reconciled this in two ways. First, having a cooperative interviewee who may have forgotten some minor details was more important than a participant who remembered all the minor details but was uncooperative and hostile during the interview. Second, because I was using a phenomenological perspective I was more concerned about how these students understood and ascribed meaning to their disciplinary actions than an accurate and careful recalling of names, dates, and places.

Informal interviews and observations along with information gathering began in mid-April, and the formal student interviews were scheduled in June. Because misbehaviour and academic achievement are so closely related, the school was concerned that many of the students I would be interviewing would be behind in their work or possibly in danger of failing at the time of the interviews. Even though all interviews were to be scheduled before school, during lunch, or after school, the school and I agreed that not only was it unfair to these students to take up time they may need for getting extra help from their teachers, but it was also placing the school in a difficult position. At the end of the school year, some parents could be upset with the school because of their child's lack of academic success; to add on top of this a request to interview their child about discipline

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issues might have been overwhelming and frustrating for some parents. To prevent this from occurring, we tried to arrange interviews for the students who were behind in their work or in danger of failing to take place once students had completed all of their required class work and as close to the end of the study as possible. The students who were not having academic difficulties were scheduled to be interviewed first. Though this structure was not strictly followed once formal interviews commenced, it is important to include this information as it hints to the sensitivity of this issue for all involved.

Chapter V – Results and Findings

This research project was structured around four main research questions:

1. What are the goals of each method of discipline?
2. What does each method of disciplinary experience typically look like?
3. What issues/needs are addressed through each method of discipline for the adolescent? What is not addressed?
4. How do these three methods of discipline compare with each other when examining the effects on adolescents especially from the perspective of the students themselves?

Though there were four research questions, this chapter only outlines the results and findings of research questions three and four, as research questions one and two were addressed in the School Context chapter. The first few sections of this chapter focus on the results of my data analysis with particular focus being placed on research question three as well as the academic, social and behavioural effects of each method of discipline. Whenever possible, excerpts from the students' responses have been used to support my findings and to breathe life into what would otherwise be a flat and impersonal document. Finally, the three main findings of this study are introduced and explored in the final section of this chapter. These findings are based on the results of the data analysis and the definition of 'effective discipline' introduced in the first chapter: discipline that reduces repeated misbehaviour while limiting negative, unintended academic and social repercussions.

Throughout my research, I was repeatedly reminded with how sensitive an issue discipline is for all involved: staff, students, and parents. Before I even started to formally

collect data, the sensitive nature of this topic had affected the research design, the

wording of the consent form, the timing of the data collection, the selecting of

participants, as well as the order in which participants were scheduled to be interviewed.

And, when speaking with educators in and around the city where this study took place, I

found that this is not uncommon. I found it surprising that more research on school

discipline has not been published considering discipline is a sensitive issue at many

schools.

Discipline and academic success

Understanding the effects of discipline on academic success from a student's perspective

is important for two reasons. First, as indicated in the Literature Review, academic

achievement and misbehaviour have been consistently linked in previous research.

Second, these two factors can create an unhealthy cycle for some students: the student

misbehaves in class to avoid failure, and then the method of discipline takes that student

out of the classroom. When the student returns to class, s/he finds that their understanding

of concepts and course material is still underdeveloped. The student responds to this

realization by misbehaving again. Thus, many educators believe that in addition to

reducing misbehaviour, discipline must address academic issues and limit academic

strain. To address the well-known link between misbehaviour and academic

performance, Western Middle School ensures that students have their assigned class-

work while on an in- or out-of-school suspension, and insists that it is completed before

returning to class. However, as indicated by the students' responses, some students felt

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as though certain methods of discipline such as in- and out-of-school suspensions negatively affect their academic performance.

Out-of-school suspensions seemed to be the most ineffective method of discipline when examining its effects on academic performance since more of these students commented that they were academically disadvantaged than either of the other two methods of discipline. Although previous research indicates that this could be attributable to many factors, this study was not designed to examine the causes of academic difficulty in relation to discipline. Thus, only the effects of out-of-school suspensions on academic performance can be described.

The six students who experienced out-of-school suspensions gave a variety of answers regarding the relationship between the method of discipline and academic success. Four of these six students who experienced an out-of-school suspension felt as though they experienced academic difficulties due to the method of discipline. Either they did not understand the material sent home by the teachers, the material sent home did not correspond with the material covered in class during their absence, or they avoided doing the assigned work until the last possible moment making it not only difficult to complete but also difficult to retain.

> R: How do you think this suspension affected your class work or your grades?
> Jason: *Well, I got work to do at the out-of-school... but I didn't really understand what to do when I came back. And then I got some help. And then I am doing better and everything.*
> R: So when you were on suspension you couldn't do the work?
> Jason: *Yeah, they just wrote things down to do and I had to do it and I didn't really understand how.*

R: Did you understand it when you came back?
Jason: *I just got help and asked how to do it.*
R: In the month or week after coming back, you didn't notice if your grades were better or worse.
Jason: *Nah, I didn't really notice. They were just regular. And, I kind of been getting better closer to the end of the year.*

For the two students whose work at home did not correspond to the classroom work completed by their peers, their body language and the tone of their voice during this portion of the interview indicated that they were still upset that they had not benefited from the work that they had done.

R: How do you think this suspension affected your class work or your grades?
Kevin: *It made me fall behind in work.*
R: Because of?
Kevin: Me being out-of-school and not giving me all the work.

However, not all of the students who received an out-of-school suspension felt as though their schoolwork had suffered. One student thought that the suspension had no effect on her/his class-work and grades. The final student felt as though his class work and grades benefited from the experience and expressed appreciation for the time he was given to catch up on all of his work.

R: How do you think this suspension affected your class work or your grades?
Gabriel: *It let me get caught up on all my work and stuff. It was actually better.*
R: You had all the work at home you needed?
Gabriel: *Yeah. It got sent to me.*
R: You appreciated that at the time?
Gabriel: *Yeah, it was pretty good.*

Results from the in-school suspension method were also mixed with regards to effects on academic performance. However, unlike the out-of-school suspensions, none of the

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students who had experienced an in-school suspension had negative comments linking the method of discipline with academic difficulty. Three of the six students suggested that the in-school suspension made little or no difference in their grades or class work. Two students suggested that they benefited from the in-school suspension because there was "nothing else to do besides school work" while on an in-school suspension. Of these two students, one even felt as though the skills he learned during the in-school suspension even transferred to his daily routine when he returned to classes.

> R: How do you think this suspension affected your class work or your grades?
> Mike: *Um, it made me work a little harder. Instead of like taking the time to teach and explain it all, they just gave the work and you had to do it. So I got a lot more done.*
> R: Did it affect your class-work after?
> Mike: *Sort of because like when I did homework, I worked harder and got it done faster.*
> R: Why is that?
> Mike: *Cause I was just used to doing it three days straight.*
> R: Made it a lot easier?
> Mike: *Yeah.*

The final respondent mentioned that she felt as though her teachers looked down on her once she returned to class and this affected her ability and/or motivation to work.

The results from the student interviews seem to indicate that restorative justice does not academically advantage or disadvantage students. This contrasts with both in- and out-of-school suspensions where answers were given ranging from being disadvantaged to benefiting from the discipline experience. Five of the six students who experienced restorative justice felt as though their consequence had no impact on their grades or their class work. This was a bit surprising considering restorative justice consequences are completed before school, after school or during lunch – the times most students meet

with teachers to get extra help, study for tests and complete homework. However, since students were not removed from class to complete their consequences, most felt the disciplinary action had no impact on their grades or schoolwork.

> R: How do you think restorative justice affected your class work or your grades?
> Brian *I don't think it affected my class work or my grades because it doesn't teach you how to do your homework. It teaches you how to be social with other people that you don't know and not to call people names.*
> ...
> Lindsay: *I don't think it did because we meet at lunch and after school, so it didn't affect my schoolwork or my grades.*
> ...
> Jane: *I don't think it affected my class work or my grades. Cause she is in one of my classes, it made me work better with her. Like, we don't hate each other now so that is good.*
> ...
> Luke: *It didn't affect my class work or my grades or anything in my life really. To a really large extent, the only thing was getting up early in the morning to get to school. Besides that, my grades stayed the same, I was getting all my homework done, everything was fine. If there was anything to come from it was an upside because you're learning more stuff, so you can't really go down from learning.*

The one student who suggested that her class work might have slipped blamed it not on the method of discipline but on the anxiety she felt from getting into trouble.

Essentially, schools can use these results when determining what type of consequence would best suit a particular student. For example, if the goal of the consequence is to assist the student with their schoolwork in addition to modifying behaviour, then in-school suspensions seem to be the most effective method of discipline. It was the only method where students did not give negative responses suggesting the method of discipline affected their academic performance. However, if the student does not require

any academic assistance, then restorative justice appears to be a more effective method of discipline due to the consistency of the answers given by the students.

Discipline and behaviour

As indicated in the Literature Review, the methods of discipline typically used in schools rarely reduce misbehaviour and other factors such as peers and group membership have a more serious impact on misbehaviour. However, reducing misbehaviour is normally the school administration's main goal of most discipline. Hence, the responses from the students regarding the relationship between discipline and behaviour should be of great interest to educators.

Of the six respondents who received an out-of-school suspension, half stated that it affected their behaviour while the other half suggested it had little to no effect on their day-to-day behaviour. The three students who admitted that the consequence did affect their behaviour, stated that it only did so when they found themselves in the same situation they had been suspended for previously or if they knew they were likely to get caught.

> Jessica: *I've learned to look ahead. And I learned not to do anything stupid before school.* (Before school was the time this student was caught breaking a school rule.)
> ...
> Jason: *Like when your teacher asks you to do something, you're more... You understand why she asked you to do that. You don't want to argue back. You just know why because teachers have a hard time dealing with kids.*
> R: If a teacher asks you to do something now does your mind kind of flip back to what happened before?
> Jason: *Yeah, it does.*
> R: Almost always?

Jason: *Yeah, most of the time.*
R: What about a different situation? Let's say two of your friends are roughhousing, and roughhousing is turning into a little bit into fighting. Do you think you would think about your suspension?
Jason: *Uh, not really. I would probably just tell them to stop. Or I just wouldn't care about it.*
R: So, you think about it when it is you in that same type of situation?
Jason: Yeah.

...

Gabriel: *I guess something. I don't go off school grounds anymore to smoke pot. Other than that there is nothing.*

Three of the six students who experienced out-of-school suspensions were told by the administration that if they continued to engage in serious or major offences and receive suspensions, they would eventually be looking at changing schools. For these three students it was not the method of discipline that had encouraged them to change their behaviour but the thought of getting a more serious consequence such as being asked to leave the school. The students offered different responses as to why the idea of being expelled from school or changing schools was important to them.

Caleb: *They said, "Three strikes and you're out." Then I was like, I don't want to do anything else stupid, so I have been holding myself back. There are a few people that go to this school that just make me angry, but whenever I feel that kind of emotion coming on I just walk away and I never come back.*
R: So it has affected your behaviour.
Caleb: *Yeah it has, and I don't want to leave this school it is such a great school I have friends here, all the teachers are nice. Compared to my other school I came from. It is a great school. I just don't want to leave it.*

Although, this student's greatest concern was losing the social relationships he had formed while at Western Middle School, another student indicated very little attachment to the people at the school and had more academic concerns. He indicated that the only reason he did not want to be asked to leave Western Middle School was because he did not want to have to repeat the grade. But, he also mentioned that since it was the end of

the school year they could not fail him if he was asked to change schools because he had completed so many of the Grade 8 requirements.

In-school suspensions seemed to have approximately the same success rate as out-of-school suspensions when encouraging students to modify their behaviour. Half of the respondents stated that the method of discipline did have an effect on their behaviour, while the other half said that it had little or no effect. Like out-of-school suspensions, a variety of answers were given. Some students indicated that they had changed their behaviour because their consequence showed them it was inappropriate behaviour whereas others had modified their behaviour simply to avoid receiving another in-school suspension.

> R: How has this suspension changed you or your behaviour?
> James: I changed my behaviour by not bringing a weapon to school and not to do anything stupid like that again.
> R: What do you think you learned from this experience?
> James: *Not to do that again and don't do anything like that again.*
> ...
> Mike: *I didn't like it at all so I don't want to do it again.*
> R: So do you think about that?
> Mike: *And when if someone is calling* me names and I get real mad I just think, um I don't want to be in there again.
> R: So it kind of prevents you from doing things.
> Mike: *It's a long time like seven and a half hours.*
> R: It's a long time?
> Mike: *Yeah.*
> R? What made it really long?
> Mike: *Not being able to talk or go out or talk to other people. Just sitting there doing your work.*
> R: Just because it is so different from your usual day?
> Mike: *Yeah.*

Three of the six respondents who had an in-school suspension suggested that the method of discipline had little to no effect on their behaviour at school.

James: *Not by much. I am still acting the way I do. I'm not going to turn into some street guy and carry a knife.*

...

Samantha: *It didn't really that much. I'm kind of a mouthy person. I talk back a little but it didn't really change me that much. I guess it changed more at home than it did at school.*

Based on student interviews, restorative justice significantly out-performed both in- and out-of-school suspensions, as all six respondents indicated a change in behaviour whereas both suspension methods only logged fifty percent success rates. Because most of the misbehaviour that leads to restorative justice involves a 'victim' and 'offender', many of the students' comments echoed one another: they all felt restorative justice allowed them to improve the way they interact with other people and that they learned skills to create and maintain positive relationships.

R: How has being in restorative justice changed you or your behaviour?
Lindsay: *I think it helped me understand that fighting is not a good idea and I think more positively instead of negatively about people. I think that's helped a lot because even with other kids I have been thinking more positively.*
What do you mean by positively?
I tend to think about the good things about them instead of the bad things. It's got me not talking behind people's backs. I think that's good.
...
Brian: *It changed me by letting me be more social with other people, not to bully or be racist to other people. Stuff like that.*
...
Jane: *It has changed my behaviour I would never... I would think before I do something and hear the whole side now instead of jumping to conclusions. He said; she said. I would just ask the person; I wouldn't go by what everyone else said. I would actually ask the person if that was true.*

At first, these results seemed distorted by the participants who comprised each group. Four of the six students involved in restorative justice would be considered first time 'offenders;' this was either their first misbehaviour or the first major/serious offence for which they were caught. By contrast, more repeat 'offenders' were in the other two

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categories since the consequences usually escalate with every repeat offence. However, a

few of the students involved in the study had experienced all three methods at some time

during the school year. Without any prompting or probing from me, three students who

were interviewed for either the in- or out-of-school suspension sections commented on

how effective restorative justice had been in changing or modifying their behaviour in

comparison to the suspension methods. Even some students who had not experienced

restorative justice mentioned that they would have preferred restorative justice instead of

doing 'nothing' on their suspension.

> R: How has this suspension changed you or your behaviour?
> Jessica: *I don't think it did anything. Restorative justice is good because you are learning stuff, but suspensions you just go home and sit around. You get in trouble from your parents, "Oh, well." But that only lasts a day and you still have two days to just do nothing. I don't think I even thought about it. "Wow, I am at home – fun."*
> R: The time away didn't force you think about it?
> Jessica: *No.*
> ...
> Luke: *Restorative justice is something that kids really benefit from and I'm not saying that just cause you don't get suspended or punished...but, coming from a person who's gone through it... I've been through both forms, suspensions and restorative justice. I've got lots more out of restorative justice than I ever got out of suspensions...*

Discipline and social relationships

Though the three methods of discipline were different in terms of their effects on

academic performance and modifying behaviour, the most significant difference between

the methods of discipline seemed to be the effects it had on social relationships – both

with peers and with staff members. The effects ranged from students consciously

choosing new friends, to making strained relationships tolerable, to suspecting that

something had changed but never having those suspicions confirmed, to the method of

discipline having absolutely no effect. This section on social relationships is thus of

special interest considering all of the literature that suggests having delinquent friends greatly increases the likelihood of an adolescent engaging in misbehaviour. As well, this section on the relationship between discipline and social relationships speaks to the work of Hirschi and others who claim attachment to the school and caring adults is essential for reducing misbehaviour.

With respect to friendships, none of the six students who experienced an out-of-school suspension thought the method of discipline had significantly affected their relationships with peers. Each of these students indicated that they still had the same friends - including those students who were caught misbehaving with their friends and the one who was suspended for fighting his best friend. Only one student commented that her friendships had been slightly strained during the time of her disciplinary action. However, she clarified that it was what she was caught doing and not the method of discipline that affected her friendships.

> R: How do you think this suspension affected your friendships?
> Jessica: *My friends don't care. Like they kind of looked down on me because all my friends don't really do drugs. But they just said, "Oh, you got suspended cool." I don't know; it wasn't really a big deal to them.*

For many of these students, the suspension had more of an effect on their relationships with adults in the school than it did on their peers. Though three students felt as though their relationships with teachers had since improved, all six of the students felt as though their relationships with teachers were initially strained due to the out-of-school suspension. For many, articulating the difference between their relationship with teachers before the suspension and after the suspension was difficult. And most

recognized that they couldn't be certain of their teachers' thoughts and feelings but guessed that they were now different.

> Caleb: *The first suspension put me on thin ice.*
> ...
> Jessica: *They were all disappointed in me.*
> ...
> Jason: *It changed it, so they are not as friendly I guess in a way...*
> ...
> Courtney: *All the teachers, it didn't really affect, but the one teacher he is kind of...he gets on my case every time I get in trouble. He is just one of those teachers. He... I don't know...I will go to class the next day and he will be on my case constantly because I had been in an in-school the day before.*
> R: So you feel like with that teacher your relationship has really changed.
> Courtney: *It hasn't changed but he has been like that all year. But he has been more watching me, but which isn't really fair for him to pick on me.*

Responses given by the students who had experienced an in-school suspension were similar to those given by the students who had an out-of-school suspension. Four of the six students said that the in-school suspension had no effect on their friendships regardless of whether or not the friends were involved in the misbehaviour. For the one student who stated that it had significantly affected his friendships; it was not the result of the school's action. One his guardians forbid him from seeing the friends with whom he committed the serious offence. This seems to hint that if the goal of discipline is to separate a student from her/his friends to prevent further misbehaviour, consistency between home and school discipline may be important. However, further research would be needed to confirm this suspicion.

Once again, four of these students felt as though the quality of their relationships with teachers had decreased since their misbehaviour.

> David: *The teachers weren't really friendly anymore.*
> ...

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Chris: *I might have thought they'd have thought less of me. I'm not a bad student. I get A's and B's, so I thought they might think I'm reckless now which I really don't like.*

...

Samantha: *Mostly my teachers...they maybe lost a little respect for me.*

The impact restorative justice had on social relationships, both with peers and adults, distinguished it from the other two methods of discipline. Being involved in restorative justice forced some students to question the values that are important to them, be reflective during times of emotion, or to try to understand another person's point of view. Some of these responses show great maturity for students at this age.

R: How did restorative justice affect your friendships?
Brian: *Um, I lost a couple of friends but I made a bit more, so I think I made more friends than I did lose. It was good.*
R: Why did you lose those friends?
Brian: *Because they thought it was fun to bully other people and make fun of kids and to be racist so then I just left them and went to hang out with other people.*

...

Jennifer: *Um, some made it better, but this one girl I bullied with, we don't really get along anymore. We don't really talk because she tried to get out of it and blamed it all on me and I didn't like that. She just doesn't talk to me anymore.*

...

Luke: *With my friendships, maybe not too much with my friends because I don't get into quarrels with my friends, but it makes me think twice when I do stuff. When I was doing anger management, it teaches me to keep my anger down and how to know all this stuff. When I was with my friends, you know, say one of my friends was like pissing me off, then it would pop into mind (restorative justice), not like "what happened on day three, page whatever." It just like oh yeah, he's just trying to get a rise out of me. So it didn't benefit, or affect, me too much, but a little bit. It wasn't a big factor though... my friends.*

...

Jane: *It got better I guess because we understand what the other person was going through.*
R: The girl you got in a fight with - would you consider her a friend?
Jane: *Not a friend because we don't talk out-of-school, but we talk during school.*

When comparing each method of discipline, the results from the restorative justice interviews indicated that students reflected on their relationships with their peers and

made conscious choices to either mend, maintain, or sever friendships. The types of offences with which restorative justice deals probably had an effect on the results: theft, bullying and vandalism. These offences have obvious 'victims' and 'offenders,' and social relationships need to be examined in order for conflicts to be resolved. With in- and out-of-school suspensions and in offences where the victim is also the offender, examining social relationships was not usually a top priority. Social interaction seemed to be a factor with almost all of the participants in the study regardless of the method of discipline experienced. Only one of the eighteen students involved in this study did not misbehave with someone or against someone. Hence, even when there is not an obvious conflict between students, the link between misbehaviour, discipline, and social relationships seems to be something that needs to be explored further.

For middle schools looking for ways in which to reduce bullying and to promote pro-social behaviour, restorative justice appears to be an avenue worth investigating.

Other factors

One of the most surprising results of this study was the disparity between the students' feelings and emotions at the time of the incident as compared the emotions a few months after the misbehaviour. All eighteen respondents involved in the study stated they had negative feelings of time of discipline: disappointment, anger, guilt, worry, and anxiety. Of the twelve respondents who had experienced in- or out-of-school suspensions, these feelings had dissipated by the time of the interview. Most of the twelve said they felt "nothing" about it and that the incident no longer mattered to them because it had happened so long ago. By contrast, all six respondents for restorative justice commented

that those negative feelings had dissolved but had been replaced by positive feelings as compared to the very neutral feelings expressed by students who had been suspended. Many of the six students expressed relief or happiness that the original conflict that sparked the bullying or fighting had been resolved.

> R: Looking back on the incident and restorative justice how do you feel now?
> Lindsay: *I feel better because we got to talk about what happened and I think if we got suspended we would all still be hating each other still and we wouldn't be able to walk in the hallways without giving each other bad looks and calling each other names. So I think it kind of resolved the problem instead of... We learned something from it instead of being suspended. We wouldn't have learned anything if we had gotten kicked out-of-school.*
> ...
> Brian: *Actually I'm relieved now because I don't have all that tension, that "Oh, my gosh. I was bullying. Why did I do that?"*

Findings

Based on the data analysis and my definition of 'effective discipline,' this research project had three main findings.

> *Finding 1*: Based on the effects of the disciplinary methods, restorative justice was consistently viewed by students as a positive experience from which they could learn. Restorative justice also appeared to have the most success in reducing misbehaviour while limiting the unintended academic and social strain.

The results from the students who experienced restorative justice were the most promising when examined in light of the previous research and given my definition of effective discipline. This became evident from the consistency with which these students answered the interview questions. None of the students who experienced restorative justice felt academically disadvantaged by the method of discipline; all of these students stated that the method positively affected their behaviour, and all reported an improvement in social relationships albeit at varying degrees. By contrast, instead of

consistent answers students who experienced in- and out-of-school suspensions gave a

variety of answers in all categories.

The most obvious element of restorative justice that differentiates it from suspensions is

the effect it has on social relationships. With the help of an adult, restorative justice

allows students to understand their emotions and actions in order to improve their

relationships with other people. This difference was not lost on any of the students who

experienced restorative justice.

> Jane: *I think that them giving us a choice between out-of-school suspensions and restorative justice was really good, because like I said before, restorative justice you actually get to know the person and get to know how they felt and what role we played and what we should do next time and everything. But if we just got suspended, we would have stayed at home or at school and did nothing and we probably would have did it again because we didn't understand what the other person thought. I would take restorative justice way before suspension.*
> ...
> Luke: *With a suspension, you sit there and you get mad, you come back and you don't really learn anything. But this (restorative justice) you learn how to deal with what you did, if it comes up again, properly.*

Out-of-school suspensions were viewed positively only when the student believed that

time away from the school was necessary to gain perspective on the situation,

acknowledged that the misbehaviour was serious, and believed the punishment to be

fitting.

For the students who experienced in-school suspensions, their consequence was viewed

more positively when they felt as though they benefited from it in some way and when

they formed a connection with the support staff worker. However, the benefit of having

time to work on missing assignments and homework was negated if more than a few

students have an in-school suspension on the same day and when the support staff worker

assisting the students was too busy to connect with the students. Many students

mentioned that they enjoyed working in their assigned space during the in-school

suspension only because the support staff worker was 'nice' and 'helpful'.

> *Finding 2*: Offering students a choice and allowing them to participate in their
> discipline procedures seemed to be the key that allowed students to view their
> consequence as a positive and educative experience.

As Linda Albert (1989) and Howard Zehr (1990) suggested, giving students choices and

allowing them to participate in the justice experience appears to be important for students

to benefit from the discipline experience. Having choice was important to all the students

who received restorative justice as it was mentioned in all six interviews. And, not

surprisingly, students chose to participate in restorative justice for a variety of reasons: to

avoid a suspension, to solve the conflict they were having with another student, to avoid

having a 'record', and to remain with their friends during school hours. Not only did

having choice make students feel as though they had some degree of agency in their

school experience, it also created a positive bond between the student and school

personnel. Responsibility and trust seemed to be a recurring theme for the students

involved in restorative justice. Three of the six interviewees all proudly commented that

teachers now see them as leaders in the school and within their classes.

> R: How do you think restorative justice affected your relationships with
> adults in the school?
> Sarah: *Um. Well all the adults, when there are new students coming into
> the school they always get me called down to the office to show them
> around the school because they think I am a good influence.*
> R: Did that happen before restorative justice?
> Sarah: No. After restorative justice.

Also, by allowing the students to participate, the students felt as though they were

improving and investing in themselves by learning. In fact, "learning" is a word that

came up in all six interviews with students who had experienced restorative justice as

compared with in- and out-of-school suspensions where students described their

discipline experiences as "boring" because they had "nothing to do". This is important

because in the phenomenological perspective how these students view their consequence

then impacts how they act and interact in the future within this school context. Of course,

this would then have an influence on the effects of the discipline procedure whether it is

academic, behavioural, or social.

> R: How much do you think that having that choice made you take
> restorative justice more seriously?
> Luke: *Having that choice made me take it a lot more seriously because
> I'm the kind of person... I didn't want to take restorative justice and goof
> off and get it done with and not learn anything and totally ruin the whole
> thing for Mrs. J. Because they're teaching me this and I want them to feel
> that what they're doing is helping me, which it was, so I took it a lot more
> serious because these people were giving up their time and felt that I have
> enough responsibility, or maturity, that I can pick something and handle it
> maturely and wisely and do it responsibly. By letting me have a choice, it
> made me take it a lot more seriously because they kind of put a load on my
> back. "We're giving you this choice, you take it full on and be mature
> about it and you do it with all that you can." They gave me this choice
> instead of just putting me in it.*
> R: What do you think you would have felt if you didn't have a choice?
> Luke: *Then I think, just being a teenager, a lot of kids would take it
> differently because they're being so forceful with it... no one likes to be
> told what to do. I would take it more rebellish. "I don't want to make you
> happy, I don't want to do what you say, so I'll give you heck." It's all how
> you present it to kid, it made me take responsibly for what I did, be mature
> about it. If it was a suspension, then I'd probably taken it all differently.
> When a suspension is forced on you I took a whole different role. I didn't
> like it at all. It's all how who present it to a kid.*
> R: In your opinion, how much of participating in your justice allowed you
> to benefit from it?

Luke: *It affected me a lot because I'm putting my input in. I'm getting my knowledge out there. It's when you're doing stuff and take part in a group discussion. You're putting your info out but you're getting tons back. So you're really learning a lot. In suspension you're not participating at all. You're sitting in a corner doing schoolwork. You're not learning anything. With restorative justice you're benefiting yourself.*

Based on the wide variety of answers garnered from my interview questions, it is evident that what works well for one student may not work for another thus,

> *Finding 3*: Having several methods in which to deal with misbehaviour as well as dealing with rule infractions and determining consequences on an individual basis had some success in changing student behaviour and limiting the unintended negative repercussions.

For my data analysis, I divided the student responses and compared them under singles factors – academic performance, behaviour, and social relationships. However, in real life it is impossible to tease apart and neatly categorize all of the factors impacting a student's life. As well, the academic, behavioural, and social factors do not impact students consistently or uniformly; thus, it is recommended for schools to take into consideration all factors and be flexible when deciding a student's consequences. This, however, is impossible if the school does not offer multiple ways of dealing with misbehaviour and if the school makes no effort to match a student's needs with an appropriate consequence.

Some students needed the time away from school to calm down, to put things in perspective, or to absorb the serious nature of the disciplinary infraction whereas others felt it necessary to process their experience with staff members in order to benefit from it. Hence, to meet the needs of the diverse student population, several methods of discipline

must be at the administration's disposal. Though this finding would not be surprising to the staff members at Western Middle School, other schools that are less flexible in their disciplinary procedures may benefit from this information.

Though Western Middle School tries to make decisions on a student's consequences based on their knowledge of that particular student, sometimes it is not successful. The following are excerpts from interviews where the students suggested that the relationship between their personalities and the method of discipline was either congruent or incongruent.

> R: How has this suspension changed you or your behaviour?
> Caleb: *It calmed me down; it actually did calm me down. Like the first one I just got loose and I just relaxed, and I was fine.*
> R: Do you think the time away from school was necessary for you to cool down?
> Caleb: *Yes. Yes, I thought it was extremely necessary because I am like a walking time bomb; you don't know when I am going to go off.*
> ...
> R: How has this suspension changed you or your behaviour?
> Jason: *It told me that I needed to change my attitude and be different at school. And, it's not like at home or with my friends.*
> R: So you understood that because of the out-of-school suspension?
> Jason: *Yeah.*
> R: Think you would have understood that if it was...
> Jason: *In-school? Maybe, uh, I don't know. It is being away from school that made me think about it more.*
> ...
> R: How do you think this suspension affected your class work or your grades?
> Jessica: *I didn't really do anything, so it affected my marks. It brought me down because I was like so behind after three days. That's why I was hoping to get maybe a longer in-school suspension so I actually have my work in front of me and I have to do it.*
> R: You didn't have your work at home with you?
> Jessica: *Well. I had it but I just didn't do it because I was like at home and I could sit and watch tv. I was way behind and then my marks went down. And like, oh my god. And like it is fairly hard for me to work my marks back up.*

Therefore, it seems important for the school administration to have a strong understanding of the student with which they are dealing, a clear sense of what it is they would like to accomplish with the consequence, and knowledge of the effects of each method of discipline.

This finding is relevant to all methods of discipline examined in this thesis. Because the 'victim' and 'offender' decide the consequences of restorative justice with the help of an adult mediator, the consequences can be different for each set of 'victim and offender's even if the misbehaviour was the same. Determining consequences on an individual basis allows the students to customize what they learn from their restorative justice experience. Though it is difficult to recommend another method of discipline when the results from restorative justice were so positive, there will always be situations where in- or out-of-school suspensions would be more suitable such as when a student presents a risk to her/himself or others. As well, it is important to recognize that not all schools would be able to dedicate the time and effort to creating, implementing, and maintaining a comprehensive restorative justice program.

Chapter VI - Conclusion

This chapter concludes my thesis by recommending topics for future research that can be linked to or built on this thesis, generating hypotheses for future research, offering suggestions for Western Middle School based on the results of data analysis, and making suggestions for middle schools in general. It is hoped that in addition to sparking some interest in this type of research, this thesis will also have an impact on educators working with adolescents in school environments.

Implications for Future Research and Hypotheses

Throughout this research project, several interesting and relevant research topics presented themselves. Due to the limitations of this exploratory design, these issues could not be explored concurrently. Hence, many of these suggestions for future research are directly linked to this study's three main findings. I have included five possible topics for future research in this area as well as hypotheses for those research topics based on the findings and results of this exploratory study.

First, a longitudinal study examining both the perceived and documented effects of these different styles of discipline is necessary. It would be necessary to triangulate the students' comments with input from teachers and parents. This would be important considering on subsequent visits to the school I saw a few of the students who told me they had changed their behaviour in the office again for misbehaving. Based on the findings and results of this study, I would insist on future research being naturalistic in design so that a control group does not receive only one model of discipline. Though a

longitudinal study conducted in a school under naturalistic circumstances would take more time, effort, and organization to complete, it would allow for the flexibility and individual nature of school discipline that appeared to have some success in this study. I hypothesize that restorative justice would continue to outperform other forms of discipline in terms of reducing repeat offences of a similar nature while having fewer negative academic and social repercussions.

Second, restorative justice appears to be a promising method by which to deal with student misbehaviour. Unfortunately, restorative justice may not be piloted in schools or districts that could benefit from this program because it is relatively unknown and tends to be more time consuming for the school. Hence, it would be beneficial to do an in-depth program evaluation of restorative justice. A study examining parent, teacher, 'victim' and 'offender' satisfaction as well as tracking repeat offences would be necessary to further substantiate the positive findings of this exploratory study. My hypothesis would be that all stakeholders involved in the restorative justice process would report significant "satisfaction" with this method of discipline. Other schools and districts could use this type of elaborated information to increase funding, time, and/or space for programs such as these in public schools.

Third, what is the relationship between choice and participation and effective discipline? Having choice and participating in the discipline experience seemed to be the catalysts that encouraged students to take restorative justice seriously and be willing to learn from the experience. It would be interesting to see if giving students some choice and allowing

them to participate in their discipline experience would increase the likelihood of students viewing in- and out-of-school suspensions positively. I posit that students would view the discipline experience in a more positive light if they were given some form of choice or were allowed to participate somehow during the decision-making. Being able to view the consequence as a positive experience and feeling as though one's voice was heard and valued could then translate into the student's everyday functions upon resuming regular activities and classes.

Fourth, how much of restorative justice's success is due to the social component? Because they were excluded from school activities on a day-to-day basis for the duration of their consequence, students who experienced in- and out-of-school suspensions frequently commented that they missed their friends. The students in the restorative justice program, however, were included in classes and in school functions. As well, with restorative justice, the victim and offender may not have been friends, but they were not alone when meeting the requirements of their consequence as would be the case with in- or out-of-school suspensions. They worked together on a common project and shared the responsibility for mending the relationship. My hypothesis would be that the social relationships (being included in day-to-day school activities for the duration of the consequence and sharing the responsibility of fixing the relationships) play a significant role in students viewing restorative justice as a positive experience.

Fifth, it is necessary to explore the peer dynamic in relation to behaviour modification and discipline procedures. Because almost none of the twelve students who had received

either an in- or out-of-school suspensions suggested it significantly affected their friendships and all six students who received restorative justice stated it did, it is necessary to establish the influence of peers in relation to behaviour modification and discipline procedures. Previous studies have been done examining the relationship between peers and delinquent behaviour, but what about between peers and successful behaviour modification?

Sixth, one of the differences between suspensions and restorative justice was the effect it had on social relationships with adults in the school. Many of the students who experienced suspensions perceived these relationships as strained when initially resuming classes. It would be of interest to see how students' perceptions of their relationship with their teachers translate into classroom motivation and academic performance upon the resumption of regular classroom attendance. Does the perception of a strained relationship prevent students from asking for help or participating in class to the best of their ability? The findings of this type of study could play a significant role in reducing the academic difficulties some students feel upon returning to class after a disciplinary action. Considering only students who had received in- or out-of-school suspensions felt academic difficulties, this type of study would be essential for schools that cannot or are not interested in exploring discipline options other than in- or out-of-school suspensions.

Suggestions for Western Middle School

Because this was an exploratory research project using Western Middle School as a case in point, I have included some suggestions for this school in particular. In my opinion

many of Western Middle School's programs and policies are successful, and therefore, a few of my suggestions are simply in line with what is already occurring. However, because successful programs and policies can always be improved upon, thus I have included some recommendations as well.

Based on the positive comments shared by all students who had experienced restorative justice, I would recommend continuing this program. Though time and money are always in short supply for programs such as these, I believe it would be beneficial to maintain this program and to give students a chance to participate and experience justice in order to learn from it. If it were possible to expand the restorative justice program, I would recommend using the program to give students leadership opportunities within the school. This could increase a student's attachment to and involvement in the school. One participant who was involved in the restorative justice program as mentor to a younger student was proud of his accomplishments; he was happy to have helped and to have been responsible for another student. Second, I would recommend trying to include 'repeat offenders' in addition to first time offenders. 'Repeat offenders' would certainly understand and appreciate the significance of not being suspended and not having an official letter of discipline included in their file. As well, having a positive discipline experience may spark in these students a fresh outlook on the school and their school experience on the whole. And, if previous studies are correct and delinquent friends simply increase a student's chances of misbehaving, restorative justice may offer a way for a student to critically analyze her/his relationships with peers.

If the restorative justice program cannot be maintained, I recommend continuing to utilize a variety of discipline methods and to evaluate each offence on an individual basis. This is crucial for limiting the unintended effects of discipline. If suspensions must be used, I would recommend trying to use some of the restorative justice principles that were effective such as offering the students some choice and allowing them to participate in and experience 'justice'. Of course this would be limited choice based on what the school felt was appropriate, but offering the students a voice in the disciplinary action may allow them to look at the school and the disciplinary action in a more positive way and increase the likelihood of the student remaining connected with the school.

Suggestions for Middle Schools in General

Most of the suggestions for other middle schools come directly from the main findings of this study. Even though many middle schools already use developmentally responsive disciplinary methods, sharing ideas between schools is always a positive experience.

First, take time each year to evaluate the goals as well as the effects of the discipline programs running at your school. Traditional styles of discipline have been used for so many years that they sometimes go unquestioned. These traditional methods such as suspension may not be working well for your school, your staff or your students. If you are dissatisfied with the results of your informal evaluation, try looking for alternative methods. Talking to educators in your district or province, reading relevant teaching magazines, or looking on-line may give you some ideas that could be incorporated into your current system or used to improve your programs.

Second, explore restorative justice as a discipline option. The restorative justice principles can be applied to a school setting in a variety of ways; find a way to incorporate the principles so that they work within your school, as well as with the staff and students. A good introductory book to explore the restorative justice principles is *Changing Lenses* by Howard Zehr (1990). Though your school may not be ready for a full-scale restorative justice program, this book may encourage a re-evaluation of disciplinary practices or offer a fresh perspective on current discipline programs. Another alternative is to explore restorative justice programs that are occurring in public schools already.

Third, try to find a way to make these types of projects work. Western Middle School found a way to include restorative justice in their discipline repertoire even though much of the contact with students occurred before or after school as well as at lunchtime. Funding is always in short supply; decide what long-term benefits are most important to your school and staff. If it is important, it is possible.

Fourth, as mentioned in the findings as well as in the recommendations for Western Middle School, having a strong understanding of the student with which you are dealing, a clear sense of what it is you would like to accomplish with the consequence, and knowledge of the effects of each method of discipline are important when determining consequences. If suspensions are being used, try to be flexible when determining consequences by taking the student and her/his situation into consideration. As well, try

to have a variety of disciplinary procedures so that flexibility is possible. And, if

possible, try to offer the students some choice and allow them to participate in their

discipline experience.

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May 19, 2004

Dear Student:

Please read this letter with a parent or guardian.

I am a graduate student at Concordia University in Montreal, and I will be conducting research at your school from May 20th to June 30th. I will use the information from this study to write a thesis that will fulfill part of the requirements needed to complete a Master of Arts in Educational Studies. I am conducting my research with School District 23's approval as well as the school's knowledge and support. The purpose of my study is to look into the effects of different types of discipline on middle school students. This letter outlines the purpose of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

Participation or non-participation in this study will not affect your progress at school – academic or otherwise. Your participation will be voluntary, confidential, and be a valuable part of my research that will hopefully add current and important information to a growing body of knowledge on school discipline.

Your participation in this study will include two interviews: one made up of approximately ten questions and one follow-up interview. The first interview will be approximately fifteen to twenty minutes in length. Between interviews a research assistant, who is also bound by the same confidentiality rules, or I will prepare a transcript of your interview. At the second interview, I will give you the chance to check your transcript for accuracy. As well, if you want to change, add or delete anything, you can do so at this time. If you and I are unable to find a convenient time to have this second meeting before the end of scheduled classes, we can meet during I week or at any time on Thursday, June 24th.

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time about the nature of the study and the methods I am using. Your suggestions and concerns are important to me; please contact me at any time at the school either by phone or in person.

I guarantee that the following conditions will be met:
1. Your real name will not be used at any point of information collection, nor in the written report. Instead, you and any other persons and place names involved in this assignment will be given pseudonyms that will be used in all verbal and written records and reports.

2. If you grant permission for audio-taping, no audio-tapes will be used for any purpose other than to complete my research, and will not be played for any reason

other than to do this study. Upon completion of this study, these tapes will be destroyed. Tapes will be kept locked in my home at all other times.

3. Your participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any point of the study, for any reason, and without prejudice. The information collected from you will be destroyed at your request.

Do you grant permission to be quoted directly?   Yes _____   No _____

Do you grant permission to be audio-taped?   Yes _____   No _____

I agree to the terms:

Signature:

Student: _____   Date: _____

Dear Parent(s) / Guardian (s):
In brief, signing this form gives me consent to interview your child about her/his social and academic development since disciplinary measures were completed. Your child's participation in this study will be voluntary and confidential. All recordings and documents will be destroyed upon the study's completion. If you have any questions or concerns that are not addressed by this letter, please feel free to contact me at the school by phone. You may also contact my graduate advisor, Dr. Cleghorn, at Concordia University: (514) 848-2424 extension 2041.

Signature:

Parent/Guardian: _____   Date: _____

I agree to the terms:

Signature:

Researcher: _____   Date: _____

Appendix B – Interview Questions

Interview questions for students: out-of-school suspensions
1. What happened? Why were you suspended?
2. For how many days were you suspended? And, how many suspensions have you had in the past?
3. How did you feel at the time you were suspended?
4. How do you feel now?
5. How do you think this suspension affected your class work or your grades?
6. How do you think this suspension affected your friendships?
7. How do you think this suspension affected your relationships with adults in the school?
8. How has this suspension changed you or your behaviour?
9. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience of being suspended?
10. What do you think you learned form this experience?
11. What did you like or dislike about your out-of-school suspension?

Interview questions for students: in-school suspension
1. What happened? Why were you suspended?
2. For how many days were you suspended? And, how many suspensions have you had in the past?
3. How did you feel at the time you were suspended?
4. How do you feel now?
5. How do you think this suspension affected your class work or your grades?
6. How do you think this suspension affected your friendships?
7. How do you think this suspension affected your relationships with adults in the school?
8. How has this suspension changed you or your behaviour?
9. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience of being suspended?
10. What do you think you learned form this experience?
11. What did you like or dislike about your in-school suspension?

Interview questions for students: restorative justice
1. What happened? Why were you recommended to the restorative justice program?
2. How did you feel at the time you were in restorative justice?
3. How do you feel now?
4. How do you think restorative justice affected your class work or your grades?
5. How do you think restorative justice affected your friendships?
6. How do you think restorative justice affected your relationships with adults in the school?
7. How has being in restorative justice changed you or your behaviour?
8. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your restorative justice experience?
9. What do you think you learned form this experience?
10. What did you like or dislike about restorative justice?

Appendix C – Retributive vs. Restorative Justice

Understandings of Justice

Retributive Lens	Restorative Lens
Blame-fixing central	Problem-solving central
Focus on past	Focus on future
Needs secondary	Needs primary
Battle model; adversarial	Dialogue normative
Emphasizes differences	Searches for commonalities
Imposition of pain considered normative	Restoration and reparation considered normative
One social injury added to another	Emphasis on repair of social injuries
Harm by offender balanced by harm to offender	Harm by offender balanced by making right
Focus on offender; victim ignored	Victims' needs central
State and offender are key elements	Victim and offender are key elements
Victims lack information	Information provided to victims
Restitution rare	Restitution normal
Victims' "truth" secondary	Victims given a chance to "tell their truth"
Victims' suffering ignored	Victims' suffering lamented and acknowledged
Action from state to offender; offender passive	Offender given role in solution
State monopoly on response to wrong doing	Victim, offender, and community roles recognized
Offender has no responsibility for resolution	Offender has responsibility in resolution Outcomes encourage offender irresponsibility

Rituals of personal denunciation and exclusion	Rituals of lament and reordering
Offender denounced	Harmful act denounced
Offender's ties to community weakened	Offender's integration into community increased
Offender seen in fragments, offence being definitional	Offender viewed holistically
Sense of balance through retribution	Sense of balance through restitution
Balance righted by lowering offender	Balance righted by raising both victim and offender
Justice tested by intent and process	Justice tested by its "fruits"
Justice as right rules	Justice as right relationships
Victim-offender relationships ignored	Victim-offender relationships central
Process alienates	Process aims at reconciliation
Response based on offender's past behaviour	Response based on consequences of offender's behaviour
Repentance and forgiveness discouraged	Repentance and forgiveness encouraged
Proxy professionals are the key actors	Victim and offender central; professional help available
Competitive, individualistic values encouraged	Mutuality and cooperation encouraged
Ignores social, economic, and moral context of behaviour	Total context relevant
Assumes win-lose outcomes	Makes possible win-win outcome

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