

THE USE OF STUDENT DISCIPLINARY
REFERRALS BY HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS AS IT
RELATES TO EMPATHY AND CLASSROOM
MANAGEMENT

By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Background and Rationale

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reported in 2001 that the number of students demonstrating anti-social behavior was steadily rising. Furthermore, educators, parents, and the public remain concerned about the increasing numbers of students exhibiting poor development of pro-social skills (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002; Rose & Gallup, 1999). This increase in disruptive behaviors has led teachers and administrators to establish reactive discipline environments. Rather than avert such behaviors, many schools' discipline structures simply react to these disruptions. Reactive use of negative punishments such as written referrals, detention, in-school suspension, or home suspension continues to be the primary tool to manage students' behavior (Bear, 1998).

There is no single cause for the increase in disruptive conduct; however, there appears to be a relationship between academic stressors and behavior. Since the advent of No Child Left Behind legislation, there has been increasing attention placed on student achievement scores. Children who experience academic difficulties often transfer their frustration into inappropriate behavior (Tidwell, Flannery, & Lewis-Palmer, 2003). Reporting on the increase in disciplinary action in public schools, the Harvard Civil

Rights Project (2000) stated,

Students who are suspended suffer academically. In most instances, they receive failing grades or do not have opportunities to make up missed schoolwork. They fall irretrievably behind, and there is a moderate to strong indication that they will eventually drop out of school. More than 30% of sophomores who drop out have been suspended and high school dropouts are more likely to be incarcerated. (p. vii)

Moreover, the study maintained that students and parents regularly complain that during suspensions and other situations during which students are out of the classroom teachers do not provide missed assignments; consequently, students receive failing marks and completely miss valuable classroom learning experiences. This situation leads to frustration for the student returning to class and often contributes to further disruptive behavior.

The rigid and inflexible classroom disciplinary policies in place in many American high schools conflict with two major developmental needs of students. First, students need to develop strong and trusting relationships with adults central in their lives, in particular teachers and administrators in their school. The second need involves the students' development of positive attitudes toward both fairness and justice (Civil Rights Project, 2000). These findings concur with research that has found reactive discipline structures in most schools are ineffective and can actually contribute to the behavioral problems of students (Tidwell, Flannery, & Lewis-Palmer, 2003).

Furthermore, incidents where forms of punitive discipline, such as in school suspension and out of school suspension, have been arbitrarily used for minor offenses

abound. For example, as a teacher attempted to maintain discipline in a classroom, a fifteen-year-old boy repeatedly threw his pencil up to the ceiling. The student was assigned in school suspension for three days. In another case in Ohio, a teacher alleged that a 7th grade girl had been sniffing the white-out she was using in class. Although the student denied the allegations and drug experts verified that white-out is not a drug, the student was suspended for nine days (Civil Rights Project, 2000). The magnitude of the discipline measures taken once a referral is written do not always appear commensurate to the offense. It appears, for several reasons, the traditional paradigm of punishment is unsatisfactory and may be a detriment to students' success.

These findings have prompted educational researchers to contend that alternatives to disciplinary referrals be developed. Amy Tidwell, K. Brigid Flannery, and Teri Lewis-Palmer proceeded to assert that the root cause of student disciplinary referrals must be determined and prevention strategies applied in order for students to achieve academically. In studying the discipline practices of administrators in Indiana, Killion (1998) found that student detention, which entailed staying after school for up to an hour, was the most often used form of punishment. Although necessary at times, Killion claimed that efforts focused on preventing rather than punishing discipline problems were paramount. The Harvard Civil Rights Project (2000) concluded, in order to combat the growing reliance on referrals and suspensions, teachers' responses to these behavioral issues should be addressed. From four case studies conducted, it was determined that teachers be required to attend training in classroom management and conflict resolution to lower the number of student referrals written. "Because teachers are the first link in the disciplinary process, they should be better equipped to deal with behavioral problems

using innovative strategies that do not shut out students for typical adolescent misbehavior” (p. viii). In addition, the Harvard Project recommended the following actions administrators could take to lower the number of referrals written by teachers.

The case investigations suggest that schools should monitor disciplinary referrals by teachers to ensure fair application of disciplinary codes. Monitoring may expose problems such as poor classroom management, discriminatory treatment, or singling out of particular students. Where teachers overuse disciplinary referrals, additional training should be provided. (p. viii)

This training could include both classroom management techniques and staff development programs that involve empathy exercises.

To transform a school’s learning environment from one of reactive punishment in which students are continually removed from the classroom environment into one in which students and faculty work together to modify disruptive behaviors requires all adults in the school to analyze both their own behaviors and those of the student body. Faculty and staff must be open to changing the negative culture that pervades schools today (Civil Rights Project, 2000).

Research Problem

Various factors have contributed to the increase in disruptive behavior in public schools. In the school district this study examined, such behavior warranted a teacher to write a student disciplinary referral, which was then sent to the administration. When students did receive a referral, it was probable that they would be required to be absent during class time. This absence occurred when student were later called to the administrator’s office. In addition, depending whether in-school or home suspension was

assigned a student could be absent from class for an extended period. On an average day at one of the participating schools which has an enrollment of 700 students, 25 to 30 students are called to the administration office, 20 to 25 students are serving in school suspension, and 15 to 20 student are suspended. The number of students missing class time is becoming increasingly detrimental to schools' learning environments and is exacerbated when students miss valuable classroom experiences because of the excessive number of disciplinary referrals written by teachers for incidental behaviors. The dynamics between teachers and students is complex and predicated on psychological phenomena that are paramount to this vital relationship.

This study examined the relationship between the number of disciplinary referrals teachers wrote and both the teachers' level of empathy and their classroom management style.

Purpose Statement

Discussions regarding the increase in discipline problems in secondary public schools continue. Various behavioral intervention programs or disciplined instruction formats have been suggested as a means of alleviating these problems. However, research has not thoroughly examined the role of teachers' behaviors in lessening discipline problems in the classroom. The purpose of this mixed-method design study was to understand the relationship between the number of referrals written by teachers and teacher empathy levels and classroom management style.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed.

1. Is there a relationship between the number of disciplinary referrals a teacher writes and a teacher's level of empathy as measured by the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale?
2. Is there a relationship between the number of disciplinary referrals a teacher writes and a teacher's classroom management style preference as measured by the Classroom Management Profile?
3. Is there a relationship between a teacher's level of empathy as measured by the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale and a teacher's classroom management style preference as measured by the Classroom Management Profile?
4. Is there a difference between a teacher's level of empathy as measured by the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale and a teacher's authoritarian and authoritative classroom management style preferences as measured by the Classroom Management Profile?
5. What are the perceptions of teachers in a secondary school environment regarding various disciplinary scenarios?

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions were used.

Student Disciplinary Referral: In this study, a student disciplinary referral refers to the document issued by a teacher to an administrator when a student displays behavior that constitutes a rule infraction as outlined in the student code of conduct. The referral document is completed by the teacher specifying the behavior of the student and the respective conditions in which the behavior took place.

Empathy: Throughout this study, the definition of the word empathy will be derived from the psychoanalytic literature of Heinz Kohut and Carl Rogers. The phenomenon of empathy is that which allows an individual to experience the emotions of another person. This definition combines those noted in the empathy section in chapter two of this study.

Classroom management styles: For this study, classroom management styles will follow the categories developed by the Center for Adolescent and Family Studies at Indiana University Center for Adolescent Studies. The categories include authoritarian, authoritative, Laissez-faire, and indifferent.

Delimitations

This study has been narrowed to include three high schools in a single school district. This decision was determined in order to provide a common background of disciplinary procedures.

The condition that was held constant by the purposeful sample was the district wide disciplinary code of conduct and discipline procedural form.

The study has also been narrowed with time constraints by allowing participants only two weeks to complete and return the survey packet.

Limitations

The study was limited by the purposive sampling size that decreased the generalizability of the findings. The findings of this study can be applied to other districts that possess similar disciplinary procedures.

In addition, the study was limited by the relationship of the researcher with one-third of the sample set. These participants had prior knowledge of the researcher.

Significance of the Study

Researchers' analyses indicate that there are various levels of empathy that people exhibit. In addition, teachers employ varying classroom management styles using a variety of discipline techniques. These two findings become significant when considered with the number of teacher referrals written. If a teacher who demonstrates a greater degree of empathic understanding is likely to write fewer student referrals, then professional development that includes empathy exercises becomes vital. Furthermore, if a teacher with a more authoritative classroom management style writes fewer referrals than an authoritative teacher, then implementation of professional development in classroom techniques that utilize an authoritative management style may become necessary. If the findings concur, then training in both these areas empathy and classroom management style could significantly reduce the number of referrals written and, consequently, the number of hours students spend outside of the classroom, learning environment.

In addition, this research could have an influence on teacher preparation programs. Basic psychological principles and learning style theories are often included in the course content of general education programs. However, there is often minimal discussion of empathy. Entry year teachers who understand the empathic process may relate to their students more readily and, consequently, write fewer referrals. The potential impact on new teachers entering the field of education is a second significant point to this research.

This research also may influence other psychological studies. Although there have been a considerable number of studies of empathy few have focused on the

teacher/student relationship at the secondary level. This research could generate further studies into the empathic process in the classroom.

Organization of the Study

This study includes five chapters. Chapter One presented the background and rationale for this study along with the research problem and purpose statement. Also in this first chapter, the five research questions were stated. In addition, it included definitions of terms, the delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study. Chapter Two provides a review of the literature that is related to the topics of empathy, countertransference, classroom management styles, and the theoretical framework of the study. Chapter Three focuses on both the quantitative and qualitative methodology to be employed in this study. Chapter Four provides the results of the study. Finally, Chapter Five discusses the findings, conclusions, and implications of this study and offers recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Empathy

Multifaceted and complex, teaching at its core is an interpersonal exercise. The presence or lack of empathy is one key component in whether or not a successful relationship between teacher and student will develop. The following section will provide background for this study through an examination of previous literature and research concerning empathy. The transformation in meaning of the word empathy in the twentieth century will be considered; in addition, the influential work of Carl Rogers and Heinz Kohut regarding empathy will be discussed. Moreover, tangential topics that have shaped the development and understanding of the term will be explored.

In my years of teaching, I have noticed that much research focuses on the implementation of subject matter and effective teaching is often assumed to be predicated on mastery of a particular subject. At the secondary school level, the subject matter I teach is integral to my identity as a teacher. I recognize that to the public I am foremost a teacher of English, not a teacher of children. Because of this assumption, investigations often overlook the psychological phenomena that occur within the secondary classroom. In my experiences, I have found the dynamics between teachers and their students are a significant component of classroom learning. The relationship is constituted on the emotions each emotions each feels toward the other. During my eleven years teaching in various

educational programs, I often encountered students who concealed their genuine emotions. With the opportunity to interact with these students for an extended period, some I taught for three years, together we were able to begin to understand the inner feelings each of us brought to the classroom and to the relationship. These moments brought forth in me a deeper understanding of my own empathic understanding toward my students.

The inner world that exists in a classroom cannot be easily measured nor quantified: it exists outside the realm of our senses. Writing on empathy, Heinz Kohut (1959) remarked,

The inner world cannot be observed with the aid of our sensory organs. Our thoughts, wishes, feelings, and fantasies cannot be seen, smelled, heard, or touched. They have no existence in physical space, and yet they are real, and we can observe them as they occur in time: through introspection in ourselves, and through empathy (i.e., vicarious introspection) in others. (p. 459)

This is the primary reason why theorists have referred to the study of empathy as both a complex and fascinating endeavor (Eisenberg, 1989). Through my study of this subject, I concur with this assessment. For many years, in my attempt to define my classroom management style, I was unable to label this intangible phenomenon. It is now apparent in my teaching that my empathic understanding of my students is fundamental to the climate of my classroom environment.

For the past twenty years, empathy has remained central in the analysis of intersubjective relationships or relationships between self and other because of the tremendous influence on social interaction associated with this phenomenon, which

focuses on experiencing the emotional state of another human being (1989). Nancy Eisenberg maintained,

It has been hypothesized that empathy plays a role in the survival of a group and in bonding and serves to inhibit aggressive behavior and promote prosocial behavior toward others. Indeed, empathy may be an important means of transmitting socially relevant information in diverse contexts. (p. 1)

Although Eisenberg emphasized the importance of empathy research, she also described the study of empathy as confusing and at times frustrating. This is because empathy is an elusive phenomenon that, for its short existence, has generated multiple meanings throughout multiple disciplines. Significant theorizing has emerged in psychology, animal ethology, anthropology as well as philosophy, literary criticism, and feminist studies (Harrison, 2004). Therefore, controversy continues today when researchers attempt to agree on a fundamental definition. The complexity of the concept is reflected in the number of uses and subdivisions across research areas (Määttä, 2006).

Emphasizing this point, Eisenberg (1989) noted that empathy is “difficult to conceptualize and assess” (p. 1). Although at times, I have found this research to be confounding in its ambiguity, empathy is a phenomenon that remains intriguing. In all the helping professions, including teaching, empathy exists, and identifying and examining the attributes of empathy is crucial.

The etymology of the word empathy can be traced to the Greek word “*empathia*” which is derived from the root words ‘en’ meaning ‘in’ and ‘pathos’ meaning ‘suffering or passion’. It was in Ancient Greece that the philosophers Aristotle and Plutarch used the word “*empathia*” to mean being influenced by. Today’s concept of empathy,

however, began with the German word *Einfühlung*. First used in 1873 by Robert Vischer, *Einfühlung* is included in his account of the psychology of aesthetics and form perception (Wispé, 1987). Vischer defined *Einfühlung* as the following:

A psychological theory of art which asserts that because the dynamics of the formal relations in a work of art suggest muscular and emotional attitudes in a viewing subject, that subject experiences those feelings as qualities of the object. Aesthetic pleasure may thus be explained as objectified self-enjoyment in which subject and object are fused. (*Dictionary of the History*, 2003, ¶2)

As used in the aesthetic experience, empathy enables humans spontaneously to project psychic feelings upon either people or things that are observed (MacIsaac, 1997).

In 1905, Theodor Lipps, a German psychologist, systematically organized and developed the theory of *Einfühlung* (Håkansson, 2003). His study of empathy applied the term to aesthetic relationships and the psychological phenomenon of optical illusion. His general meaning implied that “the observers project themselves into the objects of perception” (Wispé, 1987, p. 19).

If I see a tree swaying in the breeze I carry out its movement in imaginative imitative activities. In these responsive actions not only do I feel alive, for activity is associated with life, but I also enliven the object by my vital actions. These actions, being incipient, are actually tendencies of my will. Empathy is the projection of my feeling and willing ego in an object. (*Dictionary of the History*, 2003, ¶10)

It was further noted at this time that the elicited responses may result in positive or negative empathy, an essential component in the definition.

During this period, Edward Titchener, an American psychologist, developed his understanding of empathy from his awareness of infants crying when other infants cried. This motor mimicry response became the predecessor to empathy as it is commonly understood today (Wispé, 1987). Titchener, in attempting to understand aesthetics, posited that within an unconscious process, a viewer of forms endows them with their vital content by an involuntary act of transference. He defined this process as *Einfühlung*, and, soon after, translated the word as empathy (*Dictionary of the History*, 2003). Titchener (1909), in *Experimental Psychology of the Thought Process*, reasoned, “Not only do I see gravity and modesty and pride and courtesy and stateliness, but I feel or act them in the mind’s muscle. That is, I suppose, a simple case of empathy, if we may coin that term as a rendering of *Einfühlung*” (as cited in Wispé, 1987, p. 21). Titchener wrote again about empathy in his book, *A Beginner’s Psychology* (1915).

We have a natural tendency to feel ourselves into what we perceive or imagine. As we read about the forest, we may, as it were, *become* the explorer; we feel for ourselves the gloom, the silence, the humidity, the oppression, the sense of lurking danger; everything is strange, but it is to us that the strange experience has come. We are told of a shocking accident, and we gasp and shrink and feel nauseated as we imagine it; we are told of some new delightful fruit, and our mouth waters as if we were about to taste it. This tendency to feel oneself *into* a situation is called **empathy**, -- on the analogy of sympathy, which is feeling *together with* another; and empathic ideas are psychologically interesting, because they are the converse of perceptions: their core is imaginal, and their context is

made up of sensations, the kinæsthetic and organic sensations that carry the empathic meaning. (p. 198)

Melvin Bornstein (1984) elaborated on this definition of empathy in reference to analyst and analysand. He contended, “For an analyst, to put himself (or herself) into an analysand’s shoes is not simply to share a feeling or a fantasy, but to know the full experience of the analysand, including the emotional, affective, cognitive, integrative, motivational, interactional . . .” (p. 107). At this juncture in the development of the term, Sigmund Freud also wrote briefly on the subject.

Freud may have also been influenced by the work of Lipps, having had Lipps’s book in his library. In 1905 writing about humor, Freud himself described *Einfühlung*. In *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* (1960), he wrote, “Thus we take the producing person’s psychical state into consideration, put ourselves into it and try to understand it by comparing it with our own. It is these processes of empathy and comparison that result in the economy in expenditure which we discharge by laughing” (p.186). Later in 1921, Freud again discussed empathy in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1959). He suggested, “that we are faced by the process which psychology calls ‘empathy [*Einfühlung*],’ and which plays the largest part in our understanding of what is inherently foreign to our ego in other people” (p. 40). More interested in identification, Freud did little further writing on empathy (Wispé, 1987).

By the end of the nineteen twenties, personality theorists were beginning to explore the concept of empathy. The work of June Downey bridged the gap as empathy transformed from the aesthetics to personality (Wispé, 1987). Downey (1929), in *Creative Imagination*, declared,

Their technical term for this process of psychic participation is empathy or a process of “feeling-in” in which motor and emotional attitudes, however originating, are projected outside of the self . . . From one point of view we subjectify an object; for another point of view, we objectify the self. . . Our understanding of persons is moulded by something akin to empathic processes. Through subtle imitation we assume an alien personality, we become aware of how it feels to behave thus and so, then we read back into the other person our consciousness of what his patterns of behavior feels like. (pp. 176-177)

Two decades later, personality theorists were still attempting adequately to define empathy. Gardner Murphy (1966), in *Personality: A Biosocial Approach to Origins and Structure*, wrote,

The term is usually applied to *putting oneself in the place* of either a living or a non-living thing. Exactly as an individual puts himself in another’s place, assumes his spatial position and its appurtenances, glows with pride, suffers in his embarrassment, so he puts himself in the place of the pillar that is too slender to support the shaft, and he judges it inappropriate; he is pulled awry by the Picasso painting which tilts the house upon its foundation. His muscles tighten as he watches the tug of war; his larynx tires and his heels rise as the soprano strains upward; even the battle of the elements can be fatiguing. It is satisfying to the little man to put himself in the shoes of the great as he listens to the dictator’s speech and moves with his movements, and in the same way it is satisfying to the climber to melt into the vast ruggedness of the peak, which he ascends. Empathy here is of a broadly sensory sort; the individual needs nothing more. (p. 494)

Murphy's illustrative definition clearly elucidates the evolution of the term empathy. By the middle of the Twentieth Century, as the concept of empathy was spreading, theorists were finally arriving at a general agreement as to how to define the term.

As the field of psychology began to expand, American psychologist and therapist Carl Rogers emerged as a leading theorist in the area of individual counseling and a pioneer in the study of empathy. Returning from participating in World War II, many psychologists expected to apply their new understanding of psychological phenomena to civilian society. Rogers' work developed within this climate (Wispé, 1987). Differing from the detached role of the therapist, fundamental to Freudian psychoanalysis, Rogers expounded a client-centered approach to therapy. Rogerian therapy created a supportive environment in which the client and therapist developed a close personal relationship. Rogers viewed the patient and therapist as equals and used the term client, refusing to accept the traditional hierarchical relationship of doctor and patient. "In person-centered therapy, the client determines the general direction of therapy, while the therapist seeks to increase the client's insight and self-understanding through informal clarifying questions" (Friedrich, 2006, ¶3). As the therapist enters the phenomenological world of the client, they work together to free the client from the obstacles impeding normal growth and self-actualization by creating an environment of congruence, positive regard, and empathy (*Rogerian Therapy*, 2004). The basic tenet of Rogerian therapy presumes that all people have the capacity for self-actualization and given conducive circumstances will grow and develop, unless hindered by significant others (Håkansson, 2003). Because Rogerian therapists accept their clients as a worthy human being, regardless of psychological state,

and convey empathic understanding, the clients will trust and understand themselves, engendering positive behavioral changes (Rogers, 1975).

Rogers (1975) defined empathy as a process that involved a way of being with another person.

It means entering the private perceptual world of the other and becoming thoroughly at home in it. It involves being sensitive, moment to moment, to the changing felt meanings which flow in this other person, to the fear or rage or tenderness or confusion or whatever, that he/she is experiencing. It means temporarily living in his/her life, moving about in it delicately without making judgments, sensing meanings of which he/she is scarcely aware It includes communicating your sensings of his/her world as you look with fresh and unfrightened eyes at elements of which the individual is fearful. It means frequently checking with him/her as to the accuracy of your sensings, and being guided by the responses you receive To be with another in this way means that for the time being you lay aside the views and values you hold for yourself in order to enter another world without prejudice. (pp. 3-4)

Although lengthy in description, this may be the most complete definition of empathy available. Rogers (1975) emphasized that the adoption of this concept into a therapeutic or experimental situation was complex and demanding. The present emphasis and popularity of empathy as a phenomenological construct traces back to Rogers' application of the term. Moreover, the definition he employed placed empathy "squarely into an objective, researchable, personality framework" (Wispé, 1987, p. 29).

Heinz Kohut was another leading theorist instrumental in defining empathy. For Kohut, empathy could be defined on two different levels: the abstract and the operational. On the abstract level, Kohut identified empathy as a “vicarious introspection” in his 1959 essay, *Introspection, Empathy, and Psychoanalysis: An Examination of the Relationship Between Mode of Observation and Theory*. Summarized by David MacIsaac (1997), the intent of Kohut’s definition is clear.

He meant that only through introspection in our own experience could we learn what it might be like for another person in a similar psychological circumstance. By this, however, Kohut is not suggesting that our experience could ever be the same as another’s only that our similar experience allows us to approximate what it might be like for the other. For example, one does not have to experience physical and emotional abuse in childhood to know what it might be like for someone who has experienced pervasive maltreatment as a child. (p. 247)

To clarify his position, Kohut applied his definition of empathy outside of scientific psychology and explained how empathy is applied more readily to someone from one’s own culture than from that of a different culture. Kohut (1959) remarked,

Our psychological understanding is most easily achieved when we observe people of our own cultural background. Their movements, verbal behavior, desires, and sensitivities are similar to our own and we are enabled to empathize with them on the basis of clues that may seem insignificant to people from a different background. (p. 463)

He continued by expressing how empathy, however, is still apparent when a person experiences another individual from a different culture. Kohut explained, “Yet even when

we observe people from a different culture whose experience is unlike our own, we usually trust that we will be able to understand them psychologically through the discovery of some common experiences with which we can empathize” (p. 463). Therefore, the empathic relationship is formed with less difficulty when background cultures, behaviors, desires, and values, are similar, yet empathy, although more problematic, can develop if divergent cultural backgrounds exist.

Later in his career, Kohut offered a more pragmatic and clinically relevant definition of empathy. MacIsaac (1997) summarized, “For Kohut, empathy is that which allows an individual to experience another’s experience with out losing one’s ability to evaluate objectively another’s mental states. In other words, empathy is simply experience-near observation and nothing more” (p. 248). Kohut (1984) himself succinctly encapsulates the definition. “It is the capacity to think and feel oneself into the inner life of another person” (p. 82). Moreover, although, Kohut provided a concise account here of what empathy was, he supplemented his work with writings on what empathy was not.

Empathic immersion, for Kohut was a process of neither guesses, intuition, nor extra-sensory perception nor is it similar to as we would feel if in a comparable circumstance. Furthermore, “It is also not the same as ‘identifying with’ or ‘becoming the other’, so that one is ‘flooded by’ or overwhelmed by the intensity of another’s feelings” (MacIsaac, 1997, pp. 248-249). It is not infallible; it is not essentially compassionate: it does not cure; it is not alone therapeutic (Kohut, 1984). What is more, empathy is not sympathy:

Empathy is surely a necessary precondition for our ability to experience compassion; and compassionate acts, in order to be effective, must be guided by

the accurate empathic assessment of the recipient's needs. However, the same can also be said with regard to many of our hostile – destructive feelings; in order to be effective, certain destructive actions . . . must be guided by the accurate empathic assessment of the victim's sensitivities. (Kohut, 1980, p.483)

Empathy implies a neutral non-estimating meaning (Määttä, 2006). In citing U. Holmes, Sylvia Määttä reflected that empathy has little or nothing to do with liking someone. Love for another person can come without an empathic understanding while empathic understanding for someone you dislike is possible.

Although Kohut was definitive in his early writings that empathy was not curative, in his last published work, *Introspection, Empathy, and the Semicircle of Mental Health* (1984b), he amended his position. He specified, "Empathy per se, the mere presence of empathy has also a beneficial, in a broad sense, a therapeutic effect – both in the clinical setting and in human life in general" (p. 85). This change in his view did not alter the overall definition of empathy but broadened its clinical application.

Finally, in explaining what empathy was not, Kohut concluded that empathy was not an action. Deeds, acts, or qualities in a person's interactions that are commonly identified with love, compassion, or any other intense emotion should not be confused with or considered empathy (1980, p. 484). Kohut's definition and detailed explanation of what factors do not constitute empathy have provided an informative example for therapists and social scientists; moreover, empathy itself has become "the cornerstone on which psychoanalytic theory is built and treatment proceeds" (MacIsaac, 1997, p. 262).

As empathy entered the realm of research, definitional controversy again ensued. Two positions developed regarding empathy, highlighting the debate whether cognitive

processes or affective experiences form the foundation of empathic phenomena. The first position evolved from Rosalind Dymond's cognitive role-taking approach. Empathy in this case was defined "as the ability to imaginatively take the role of another and understand and accurately predict that person's thoughts" (Mehrabian, Young, & Sato, 1988, p.221). This approach emphasized intellectual processes and required social skills and social perceptiveness. In addition, the neutrality of the empathizing person is considered an aid to accuracy (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972). The second position developed from the work of Ezra Stotland. In this explanation, empathy was defined as "an individual's vicarious emotional response to perceived emotional experiences of others. Emotional empathy consists of a more basic or 'primitive' level of interpersonal process whereby, almost through a process of contagion, one responds with emotions similar to those of others who are present" (Mehrabian, Young, & Sato, 1988, p. 221). The difference that exists between these two positions is critical. "Whereas the former is the recognition of another's feelings, the latter also includes the sharing of those feelings, at least at the gross affect (pleasant-unpleasant) level" (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972).

The second definition of empathy or emotional empathy is described by Albert Mehrabian simply as "feeling what the other person feels" (2005, ¶1). This definition is the basis for the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale (BEES) that Mehrabian developed to measure emotional empathy. The BEES is one of the quantitative instruments used in this study. Mehrabian (2005) relates his definition to the measurement scale:

In the context of personality measurement, it describes individual differences in the tendency to have emotional empathy with others. Some individuals tend to be generally more empathic in their dealings with others; they typically experience

more of the feelings others feel, whereas others tend to be generally less empathic. (¶1)

The focus of this study is based on this theorizing of empathy.

In its relatively short existence, empathy has transformed from a means of experiencing art to a key factor in psychoanalytic practice and research. Though it is established as a central concept in multiple disciplines, few studies have explored empathy and its relationship to the secondary high school classroom. The next section will briefly explain the emotional boundaries associated with empathy.

Emotional Boundaries

In defining empathy, it is also useful to understand the parameters of the term. The emotional boundaries associated with empathy identify behaviors that fall outside the realm of empathy. The definition of empathy that is applied in most psychoanalytic literatures and that this study employs involves individuals that have a clearly defined sense of their own identity. The healthy emotional boundaries individuals establish allow them to define their relationships and choose the kind of relationships they have with others. However, when behaviors range outside of healthy norms, poor emotional boundaries cause individuals to blur the emotional lines between others and themselves, resulting in relationships being thrust upon them (Angotta, 2001). “Without our own understanding of self, of who we are and what makes us unique, it is difficult to engage in the process of an ongoing relationship in a way that is functional” (Stibbs, 2001, ¶1). When individuals lose sight of the emotional boundaries associated with empathy, they may be considered codependent or narcissistic.

Healthy emotional boundaries develop from individuals having a sense of their own self-worth. These boundaries normalize individuals' involvement in relationships. They protect people from being enmeshed with the emotional needs of others (2001). However, when individuals have not formed a sense of their own identity, they often become codependent. As a clear form of poor emotional boundaries, "in a codependent relationship, one expends tremendous energy accommodating someone else's needs and expectations to the point of denying the true nature of the situation" (Angotta, 2001). Moreover, in crossing the boundaries of empathy, they seek to meet their needs by intruding on the emotional boundaries of others. Consequently, when the relationship fails, there is usually a tremendous feeling of abandonment (Stibbs, 2001). The emotional and physical distress these unhealthy relationships bring upon the individuals involved is enormous. To regain healthy emotional boundaries, individuals must then learn to accept that they are worthy individuals in their own right and do not require the acceptance of others to function.

In a healthy individual, empathy is "the bedrock of our sense of morality" (Vaknin, 2006, ¶50). One's aggressive behaviors are inhibited because of the ability to experience empathic understanding of other humans. When individuals are unable or unwilling to engage in empathy, it predisposes them to exploit and abuse others (2006). Narcissistic behavior includes the most serious forms of self-obsession: malignant narcissism and psychopathy. These severe narcissistic behaviors, predicated on a lack of empathy, are characterized by emotional and cognitive immaturity and an inability to relate genuinely to others (2006). Furthermore, psychologists explain that these types of psychological personality disorders engender grandiosity and a need for admiration. "The

pathologically narcissistic tend primarily to be men (75%) who are extremely self-absorbed, intolerant of others' perspectives, insensitive to others' needs and indifferent to the effect of their own egocentric behavior" (Port, 2007, ¶3). For the narcissist to open emotional boundaries therapy must begin with developing empathy for others, and learning to appreciate others' feelings, and considering others' points of view (Narcissistic Personality, 2007).

The unhealthy boundaries that develop in individuals are often "a result of being raised in dysfunctional families where maturation and the individuation process were not properly understood nor the child respected as an individual" (Stibbs, 2001, ¶3). Although, empathy development may be innate, Rogers stressed that empathy can also be learned and inculcated (Vaknin 2006). Through empathy, individuals can experience the inner life of others, yet it is one's healthy emotional boundaries that allow an individual to separate their thoughts and feelings from others.

Empathy in the Postmodern Era

For over one hundred and twenty-five years, empathy has slowly developed its position as the cornerstone of psychotherapy. However, as the world has transitioned into a postmodern era, teaching practice must also come to underscore empathy. Teachers can no longer assume that their life experiences mirror those of their students. The previous paradigm of the Western, white, heterosexual, male can no longer be considered the sole view of the world.

Within postmodern thought, there are multiple perspectives on the construction of reality (Mahoney, 1991). Lemke (1994), contrasting modernism, described this postmodern perspective:

Postmodernism, on the other hand, argues that what we call knowledge is a special kind of story, a text or discourse that puts together words and images in ways that seem pleasing or useful to a particular culture, or even just to some relatively powerful members of that culture. It denies that we can have objective knowledge, because what we call knowledge has to be made with the linguistic and other meaning-making resources of a particular culture, and different cultures can see the world in very different ways, all of which "work" in their own terms. It argues that the belief that one particular culture's view of the world is also universally "true" was a politically convenient assumption for Europe's imperial ambitions of the past, but has no firm intellectual basis. (¶ 4)

Hence, the experiences of marginalized groups such as homosexuals, and multiculturalists must be understood on an individual basis (Bohart & Greenberg, 1997). In the classroom, it is essential that teachers develop an adequate empathic understanding of their students, if a learning environment conducive to all students regardless of background is to be established. Bohart and Greenberg stated,

If reality is multiple and we construct our own realities, then empathy becomes the fundamental way of knowing across diverse personal realities. Empathy is not merely an intervention but also a fundamental way of meeting another person from a different experiential reality. (p. 12)

In today's classrooms it is paramount that teachers are able to cross the multicultural divide, consider their students' differences, and employ empathy to meet their students' needs. Because of the interpersonal process of teaching, it is crucial that researchers investigate the empathic relationship that transpires between teacher and student.

Empathy in the Classroom

Many teachers believe they must be respected by their students and that this respect will foster a positive teacher/student relationship. However, Earnest Mendes (2003) wrote that merely respecting a teacher does not guarantee optimal behavior, effort, and performance from students. Students must perceive that teachers genuinely care and understand them. Mendes demonstrated the importance of empathy in the classroom,

In the classroom, we might be excited about a great activity for our students. Nevertheless, if a student is having a bad day, how do we respond? Do we perceive the student as apathetic and as having a negative attitude? Do we stick to our behavioral management plan and give the student a warning, soon to be followed by a set of consequences?

How do we discern in the moment, what state the student is in and what course of action would be best? It's not always an easy task. The observation skills required to make these quick daily decisions are part of empathy. (p. 58)

The relationship between teacher and student mirrors in some ways the therapeutic relationship of psychotherapy. Teachers that develop a rapport with their students, who show genuine interest in them and learn their students' strengths and limitations, are demonstrating the same empathic understanding that a qualified therapist exhibits.

Rogers reflected on the interpersonal relationship between student and teacher in the facilitation of learning. He noted that to establish a climate of learning empathic understanding is essential (Smith, 2006). Empathy is considered necessary for an effective interpersonal connection between a teacher and student, which affords a deeper understanding of the student on the part of the teacher. Rogers also suggested that if

teachers were aware of how the educational process appears to their students it is likely that learning would increase. Students usually experience a sense of appreciation when a teacher understands their point of view. For this to occur, the relationship between the student and teacher, similar to that between the therapist and client, must not be evaluative or judgmental (Smith, 2006).

The dynamic that exists between teachers and their students is paramount to the classroom environment and, consequently, the learning that takes place. Empathy is a key factor in this relationship; however, researchers have conducted few studies to explore this fascinating aspect of education. This study examines the relationship that exists between teacher referrals, empathy, and classroom management style. The following section will examine countertransference. As an integral element in the teacher/student relationship and directly related to the phenomena of empathy countertransference is a vital component to the overall understanding of the dynamics present in the classroom.

Countertransference

This section will provide background for this study through a survey of the literature regarding countertransference. The historical implications of the use of the term countertransference will be examined, in addition to the use of the term in today's research. Finally, the section contains a review of countertransference in the classroom.

Since Freud noted that a patient's influence on the analyst's unconscious feelings can interfere with treatment, the significance, employment, and conceptualization of countertransference has yielded rapidly expanding clinical literature (Betan, Heim, Conklin, & Western, 2005). In *On Becoming a Counselor* (Kennedy & Charles, 1990), the authors described the countertransference phenomenon as the positive and negative

feelings manifested by those in the helping professions toward those who are being counseled. Emotions arise in the counselor from past history and needs and when revealed must be examined. It is not possible to overcome countertransference; therefore, learning not to allow countertransference to impede upon the helping relationship is paramount. Eugene Kennedy and Sara Charles (1990) maintained, "There is nothing wrong with reacting to other people in this way; a problem arises only when we do not pay attention to the reaction because it disturbs, surprises, or shames us in some way" (p. 28). Within a helping relationship, strong feelings are elicited; listening to and identifying these emotions is of greater value than evading them. If freedom from these emotional conflicts cannot be achieved, one will be dominated and controlled by them (Kennedy & Charles, 1990).

In 1910, the phenomenon of countertransference was first introduced by Freud in his writings from *The Future Prospects of Psycho-Analytic Therapy*:

We have become aware of the 'counter-transference,' which arises in him [the physician] as a result of the patient's influence on his unconscious feelings, and we are almost inclined to insist that he shall recognize this countertransference in himself and overcome it. . . . we have noticed that no psycho-analyst goes further than his own complexes and internal resistances permit. (1957, p. 144-145)

Since the time of this statement, analysts have developed multiple positions regarding countertransference in an attempt to define and place countertransference in the scope of psychotherapy. Almost a century passed and the question of what is countertransference was still being asked. Norcross (2001) suggested that the question remains relevant because of the changing views of countertransference that have arisen over the years.

Freud wrote minimally on the subject of countertransference, thus causing a schism in the psychoanalytic community that still exists today. The classic view of countertransference comes from Freud's early definition. Here countertransference was defined as the analyst's unconscious, conflict-based reactions to the transference of a patient (Freud, 1912). Supporters of the classic view draw on Freud's writing in his paper *Recommendations to Physicians Practicing Psychoanalysis* to defend their position.

I cannot advise my colleagues too urgently to model themselves during psychoanalytic treatment on the surgeon, who puts aside all his feelings, even his human sympathy, and concentrates his mental forces on the single aim of performing the operation as skillfully as possible. . . . The justification for requiring this emotional coldness is that it creates the most advantageous conditions for both parties: for the doctor a desirable protection for his own emotional life and for the patient the largest amount of help we can give him today. (p.115)

Thus, Freud believed that the analyst must maintain a sterile field, uncontaminated by mental debris if the analyst is to be objective (Tansey & Burke, 1989). "From the classic perspective the patient's transference stimulates the analyst's childhood-based unresolved conflicts, interfering with the analyst's understanding and provoking behavior that meets the therapist's needs rather than the patient's" (Hayes, 2004, p. 22). To achieve a clear mind void of feelings, Freud suggested that the therapist enter into analysis as a means to purification (Tansey & Burke, 1989). Through this "psychoanalytic purification" the phenomenon of countertransference could be evaded or overcome, which became the decisive objective of the analyst. This classic view that countertransference must be

precluded was subsequently challenged by authors who discussed the merits of the therapist's intense emotional reactions.

Following Freud's examination of countertransference, few papers were written about countertransference for the next forty years. Two authors however anticipated the debate that was to ensue. In 1926, Deutsch briefly spoke of countertransference in a paper that prefigured the totalist view. "Deutsch argued that countertransference includes not only pathological responses but also the process of unconscious identification with a patient through revival of memory traces from the analyst's own developmental experiences that are similar to those of the patient" (Tansey & Burke, 1989, p. 15). Moreover, Theodor Reik, in 1937, also elaborated on the topic of countertransference. In his book, *Surprise and the Psychoanalyst*, Reik (1937) stated, "The unconscious reception of the signals will *not at first result in their interpretation, but in the induction [in the analyst] of the hidden impulses and emotions that underlie them*" (p. 193). Thus both these authors began gradually to move the concept of analysis from an intrapsychic phenomenon to one that is interpersonal. In addition to these writings, three other influences arose that revived the interest in countertransference.

The development of object relations theory in England, the emergence of the interpersonal psychoanalytic movement in America, and the treatment of children and severely disturbed adults all lead to the heightened interest in countertransference by the middle of the twentieth century. During the 1930s to the 1940s, the object relations theorists were led by W. Ronald D. Fairbairn, Michael Balint, and Melanie Klein. Their contribution to countertransference is primarily attributable to Klein and her followers who developed the concept of projective identification (Tansey & Burke, 1989). "Prior to

the development of object relations theory, strong emotional responses were generally regarded not as empathetic reflections of the patient's emotions but as impure impediments indicating pathological countertransference" (Tansey & Burke, 1989, p. 21). Although divided by an ocean, the interpersonal psychoanalysis movement in America headed by Harry Stack Sullivan was also exploring the realm of countertransference.

As a "participant observer," the therapist influenced and formed part of what was observed. Treatment was no longer considered to be the therapist's detached, uninvolved observation of the pathological intrapsychic operations of the patient. The therapist's experience of the patient was valued as an important source of information about the patient and the therapeutic relationship. (Tansey & Burke, 1989, p. 22)

Finally, the work done by Anna Freud and Melanie Klein with children and Sullivan with psychotic and schizophrenic patients resulted in a reemergence of interest in countertransference.

It was discovered that the psychotherapy of both groups usually exerts a greater emotional impact on the therapist than work with neurotic adult patients. Channels of communication are more often nonverbal and action oriented, with a greater emotional pressure being placed on the therapist for responsivity and affective participation. (Tansey & Burke, 1989, p. 22)

The work of these leading analysts set the stage for the development of the totalist view of countertransference that would emerge in the second half of the century.

During the ten year period following World War II, countertransference theory came to the forefront, and the idea that analysts could utilize their strong emotional

reactions to a patient flourished (Tansey & Burke, 1989). Published in 1950, Paula Heimann's article, *On Countertransference*, espoused the totalist view. Her thesis posited that "countertransference is an instrument of research into the patient's unconscious" (p. 81). She further advocated that although investigation into the analytic situation has brought forth consensus of the unique aspect of countertransference, the interpersonal nature has not been fully developed.

But my impression is that it has not been sufficiently stressed that it is a *relationship* between two persons. What distinguishes this relationship from others is not the presence of feelings in one partner, the patient, and their absence in the other, the analyst, but above all the degree of the feelings experienced and the use made of them, these factors being interdependent. (Heimann, 1950, pp. 81-82)

The totalist definition of countertransference, therefore, suggests that "all therapist reactions to a client, whether conscious or unconscious, conflict based or reality based, in response to transference or some other material, was considered countertransference" (Hays, 2004, p. 22). Furthermore, it is in these countertransference developments that clues are revealed as to key client dynamics (2004).

The contributions to the totalist view of countertransference continued with the writing of Heinrich Racker. He described concordant identification, in which a therapist is induced by his patient to identify with the patient's self and complementary identification, in which the therapist identifies with the patient's internalized objects (Tansey & Burke, 1989). "Racker argued that the induced countertransference response, in addition to being a potentially serious barrier, could also be extremely valuable to the

analyst, opening up avenues to understanding the patient that otherwise would simply not exist” (Tansey & Burke, 1989, p. 26). The totalist perspective recognizes that the feelings induced in the therapist are meaningful, and by examining the source of the emotions, the feelings become less powerful, and the analyst is more likely to respond thoughtfully and intentionally (Hayes, 2004).

Through the 1960s and into the mid-1970s, there were few milestones in the countertransference literature. The debate conducted between the classical and totalist views during the fifties “clearly subsided in favor of accepting and examining all of the experiences of the therapist as potentially—though not necessarily—useful” (Tansey & Burke, 1989, p. 34). Because the term countertransference appeared, therefore, to fall along a continuum of identificatory experiences, researchers of countertransference became specifists. “Their aim is to categorize and classify the varieties of identificatory experiences for the therapist under the overarching rubric of countertransference” (Tansey & Burke, 1989, p. 34).

Most recently a third classification of countertransference has emerged from the dissatisfaction with the classical and totalist definitions. The integrative conception developed because the totalist writings did not account for the unresolved issues of the therapist and how these feelings might be effectively handled (Hayes, 2004). Hayes draws on the work of Blanck and Blanck (1979) and Geslo and Carter (1985, 1994) to define countertransference as “therapist reactions to clients that are based on the therapist’s unresolved conflicts” (p. 23). The integrative conception uses the contributions of both the classical and totalist perspectives to form a coherent understanding of countertransference.

This definition is less narrow than Freud's classic perspective in that countertransference may be conscious or unconscious and in response to transference or other phenomena. Nonetheless, unlike the totalistic definition, it clearly locates the source of the therapist's reactions to the client as residing within the therapist. This encourages therapists to take responsibility for their reactions, identify the intrapsychic origins of their reactions, and attempt to understand and manage them. (Hayes, 2004, p. 23)

The phenomenon of countertransference is as relevant for the classroom teacher as it is for the therapist. The emotional responses elicited through countertransference correlate with the dynamics of the teacher and student relationship. The next section will discuss how countertransference manifests itself in the classroom.

Countertransference in the Classroom

Although teacher countertransference has been only minimally researched, Arthur Jersild (1955) included an account of the countertransference phenomenon among teachers in his book *When Teachers Face Themselves*.

A teacher cannot make much headway in understanding others or in helping others to understand themselves unless he is endeavoring to understand himself. If he is not engaged in this endeavor, he will continue to see those whom he teaches through the bias and distortions of his own unrecognized needs, fears, desires, anxieties, hostile impulses, and so on. (p. 13-14)

Jersild, with his book, began the investigation into psychoanalytic education. The book conveys the theme that children and adults should have an understanding and acceptance of themselves and that this can be achieved through education. However,

when teachers lack awareness, a misunderstanding of feelings can manifest in a variety of destructive ways, limiting the teachers' relationships with their students and their effectiveness in the classroom (Chuah & Jakubowicz, 1999).

Commenting on Jersild's findings, Chuah and Jakubowicz stated, "Among the feelings he found teachers most needed to face, understand, and accept were: anxiety, anger, contempt, abuse, despondency, despair, annihilation, distrust, competition, envy, fear, hate, jealousy, isolation, helplessness, meaninglessness, rage, spite, and being alternately turned on and off sexually" (Chuah & Jakubowicz, 1999, p.214). Furthermore, Jersild posited that these unexamined feelings could manifest in the classroom in destructive ways. His examples included: "giving exams and setting requirements that students will fail. . . avoiding writing about or discussing subjects that stir up feelings we do not want to face, being verbally abusive, needing to be right, needing to impress others, etc." (Chuah & Jakubowicz, 1999, p. 214). Unfortunately, the learning process and healthy relationships between teachers and students will not develop if teachers do not first attempt to understand themselves. Jersild's work, however, did not examine how a teacher's countertransference can positively affect the learning experience in the classroom and resolve conflict between students and themselves (Chuah & Jakubowicz, 1999). Countertransference is a powerful phenomenon. When left unexamined by teaching professionals, it can devastate the classroom, learning environment.

Outside the field of education, many psychoanalysts have written about the dynamics that develop in groups. Most of the authors focused on resolving resistance to learning and cooperation. Many authors (Friedman, 1977; Kirman, 1977; Welber, 1977; Sackler, 1979; Chusid, 1982; Kirman, 1982) suggested that the interpersonal dynamics of

a classroom elicit powerful feelings that must be analyzed and managed to create a positive group experience. Kirman (1982) stated that teachers and students form a group in which the creative teaching and learning occurs in the classroom; consequently, it is imperative that the teacher recognize the functioning of a group. Furthermore, Kirman maintained, “Various group destructive forces are at work in all classes: anger, rebellion, competition, indifference, rejection, anxiety, etc.” (p. 91).

Chuah and Jakubowicz (1999) investigated the literature on education from the 1950s through the 1980s and cited numerous references recognizing “that learning is an emotionally charged process and that overwhelming emotions in teachers and students, when not recognized, understood, and contained, interfere with both teaching and learning” (p. 218). Moreover, they found that the work of Ormont (1980) and Spontitz (1976) directed at analysts also applied to teachers. “They both suggest that we accept what is engendered in us without trying to temper or change it. Without respect for induced feelings, the road to understanding a group’s and individual’s unconscious messages is barred” (Chuah & Jakubowicz, 1999, p. 219). It is not so much that the emotions involved in countertransference must be eliminated, but the emotions must be explored and understood to lessen the harm induced on the learning community. It is these emotions and reactions that teachers possess that Chuah and Jakubowicz (1999), in *Teaching and Use of Countertransference*, referred to as ghosts. They discussed how these ghosts inhabit a classroom.

Each student brings in a contingent, and we bring in our own. A ghost is a shadow of a person who has become emotionally meaningful for each of us prior to our

stepping into the classroom and meeting as students and teacher. Each ghost plays a part in the meaning we give to our encounters in the classroom. (p. 215)

As illustrated in the literature, for learning to take place the teacher must examine the emotional dynamics of the classroom.

Recognition by educators that they are recipients of a multiplicity of powerful emotions, both positive and negative, generated from their students fosters in them a deeper understanding of their students and a richer classroom experience (Chuah & Jakubowicz, 1999). Teachers who explore the origins, acknowledge the existence, and examine the consequences of their emotions will be more attuned to the classroom environment than those teachers who do not accept and use their feelings constructively and instinctively act on various emotions or try to control them (Chuah & Jakubowicz, 1999). “What can enrich the experience of teaching is similar to what enriches the experience of leading groups: having the knowledge and experience of observing behavior, deciphering feelings, and thinking about how the emotional impact others have on us can be clues to understanding the nature of classroom and group relationships” (Chuah & Jakubowicz, 1999, p. 212). Regrettably, many teachers will not acknowledge the influence countertransference has in their teaching, and they maintain, particularly at the secondary level, that teaching is directed by the content of knowledge transferred to the students.

Teachers’ own understanding of the countertransference phenomenon is resolutely connected to their empathic understanding of their students. Additionally, an awareness of the empathy educators experience toward their students is indispensable to the teaching dyad. It allows teachers to develop the conception of human nature and how

they effectively think about how they know. These are the presuppositions and foundations of knowledge or epistemology.

Classroom Management

An issue of critical concern for teachers, parents, and administrators is classroom management in public schools. Violence, aggression, defiance, and fighting are all classroom disruptions teachers regularly face (Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1996). In 1987, a national study found that the majority of teachers believed that student misbehavior interfered with their teaching, and more than half of the teachers thought it interfered with student learning (National Center for Education Statistics, 1987). Through my own experiences as a secondary classroom teacher, I concur with these findings. Although student misbehavior is infrequent in my classroom, I am accustomed to suspending my teaching to redirect disruptive students. Repeated over time this action impedes on the learning of all the students in the classroom. Undoubtedly, the frequency to which I must discipline students, whether it is for minor talking or a major disruption such as threatening another student, severely limits the actual time students are involved in the learning process.

In 1999, The Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Thirty-First Annual Poll reported that the two most critical issues facing schools were “lack of discipline/more control and fighting/violence/gangs” (Rose & Gallup, p.47). These issues became startlingly real for Emily Sachar, education reporter for *New York Newsday*, when, in the academic year 1989-90, she decided to teach eighth grade mathematics in Brooklyn, New York. Abigail Thernstrom (1999) related Sachar’s experience.

Many kids, she discovered, had never been taught how to sit still, how to control what they said, how to behave. Her students called her ‘cuntface,’ told her ‘to fuck off,’ spat in her face, played radios during class, and threw chairs at one another. Even if a majority wanted to learn, a small group of troublemakers could turn the room upside down in minutes. (p. 19)

The situation Sachar found herself in is not unusual. Although I have not experienced as extreme behavior in the classroom, I have taught many students that approached learning with outright defiance. Students have sworn at me; a student stood up and declared that he “hated this fucking class” before he stormed out of the room. Students have also threatened me; a student, disgruntled with me, threatened that his mother was going to come to school and then I would be in trouble. Related to these outbursts, Thernstrom (1999) cites a 1991 survey: “58 percent of secondary-school teachers said they had been verbally abused at some point in their teaching career—23 percent in the four weeks prior to the poll” (p. 19). Additionally, I have expended much class time on disciplining minor offenses such as asking students to stay on task or put away the ubiquitous MP3 players and cell phones. Confirmed by the survey data, these stories of disruptive behavior in the classrooms abound.

To compound the problem, because of the litigious nature of American society, administrators and teachers must be more cautious when disciplining students today. “‘Everyone has lawyers today, and that is why we have an elaborate structure established as far as disciplinary hearings,’ the president of the Cambridge (MA) Teachers Association told a Boston globe reporter” (Thernstrom, 1999, p. 20). It is not uncommon for teachers to deal with criminal or civil suits. Eugene Liss, a lawyer representing

teachers in the Newark, New Jersey, estimated that 20-40 teachers in his area face charges every year (1999).

In the face of all this, countless educators, including myself, have spent numerous hours attempting to determine the most effective classroom management techniques. We have listened to copious in-service presentations touting the latest developments in creating an orderly classroom. In addition, we have read books and articles that promote various discipline models: *Discipline without Coercion*, *Discipline with Dignity*, *Discipline Through Self-Control*, *Assertive Discipline*, and *Discipline with Love and Logic* (Gootman, 1998; Cangelosi, 1997; Charles, 1996; Harmin, 1995; Fay & Funk, 1995). Personally, I have never been comfortable using check marks on the board for punitive tallying or colored cards to settle students into silence. These techniques ring false to me and feel like an abuse of my students.

I am not alone in thinking that much of the discipline practiced in high schools today focuses on the exploitation of students. Alfie Kohn (1995) wrote about the state of classroom management in *Discipline is the Problem--Not the Solution*. He asserted that most of these discipline techniques offer no more than an assortment of tricks to force students to comply with teachers' directives. "In fact, the whole field of classroom management amounts to techniques for manipulating students' behavior" (¶ 3). In *Raising Black Children*, psychologists James Comer and Alvin Poussaint wrote of the importance of using discipline not as a means to control and punish students. Instead they recommended that discipline should be a means to "help a child solve a problem, develop inner controls and learn better ways of expressing feelings" (p. 198). Rarely have I encountered administrators that share this philosophy. In addition, William Glasser, also,

promoted an educational theory that refuted punishment techniques. He maintained, “Teachers who attempt to motivate resistant students to follow rules and/or to work harder by doing something to or for those students will almost always fail to get the desired results over any period of time.” It is imperative that teachers challenge the dominant paradigm of classroom management and perceive discipline through the dynamic of the teacher/student relationship. It is only with an understanding of this tenuous, power relationship that teachers will be able to provide the most advantageous learning environment for their students.

From the work of Diana Baumrind (1966), three prototypes of adult control have emerged that have influenced the practices of parents and child-development experts. Baumrind reported her findings in *Developmental Psychology Monograph* in 1971. The types of adult control described are also reflected in the daily experiences of classroom teachers. In developing the Classroom Management Profile, the instrument that is used in this study, researchers at Indiana University based their scale on the types of adult control Baumrind classified. They are authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive-indifferent and permissive-indulgent, which are identified as indifferent and laissez-faire on the Classroom Management Profile.

“Authoritarian parenting is a restrictive, punitive style that exhorts the adolescent to follow the parent’s directions and to respect work and effort” (Santrock, 1996, p. 184). When necessary, disciplinary measures are used to restrain an adolescent’s self-will when their desires conflict with the adult’s perception of appropriate conduct. Controls, firmly placed on adolescents by authoritarian adults in accordance with a set of standards that are often theologically motivated, severely restrict autonomy (Baumrind, 1966). The

authoritarian adult “believes in inculcating such instrumental values as respect for authority, respect for work and respect for the preservation of order and traditional structure” (Baumrind, 1968, p. 261). In addition, verbal exchanges are limited. Children of authoritarian parents often exhibit socially incompetent behavior (Santrock, 1996). “Adolescents of authoritarian parents often are anxious about social comparison, fail to initiate activity, and have poor communication skill” (1996, p. 185). An authoritarian adult might typically be heard saying, ““You do it my way or else. There will be no discussion!”” (1996, p. 185).

According to Gary Ingersoll (1996) of the Center for Adolescent Studies, the authoritarian teacher’s classroom is arranged with seats in rows with students working quietly in their assigned seat. This teacher maintains strict control placing firm limits on student behavior. The primary means of teaching is a lecture format and procedures are enforced to keep students on task and disruptions to a minimum. “Failure to obey the teacher usually results in detention or a trip to the principal’s office. In this classroom, students need to follow directions and not ask why” (Ingersoll, 1996, ¶2). Dialogue is rare, thus students lack the opportunity to practice communication skills. Moreover, students sense they are powerless under the authoritarian adult and will not initiate any activity. The teacher makes all decisions, telling students what to do and when to do it (1996). The following is the reaction of a middle school student to this teaching style: “I don’t really care for this teacher. He is really strict and doesn’t seem to want to give his students a fair chance. He seems unfair, although that’s just his way of getting his point across” (1996, ¶6). The authoritarian teacher is commonplace in schools across America. They demand control and strictly enforce their specified rules

“Authoritative parenting encourages adolescents to be independent but still places limits and controls on their actions” (Santrock, 1996, p185). Activities are directed by the adult; however, obedience is never demanded for its own sake (Carter & Welch, 1981). Because both autonomy and disciplined conformity are respected, the authoritative parent/teacher “exerts firm control at points of parent-child divergence, but does not hem the child in with restrictions. She enforces her own perspective as an adult, but recognizes the child’s individual interests and special ways” (Baumrind, 1966, p. 891). These warm, nurturing adults express genuine interest and affection for all students, allow for extensive give and take in discussions, and encourage frequent verbal interaction, including critical debate (Ingersoll, 1996). Furthermore, the authoritative teacher supports a learning environment in which students may interject relevant questions; therefore, the opportunity is created to learn and practice communication skills (Ingersoll, 1996). Authoritative teachers and parents will also communicate the reasoning behind decisions. The authoritative adult “does not base her decisions on group consensus or the individual child’s desires; but also, does not regard herself as infallible or divinely inspired” (Baumrind, 1968, p. 261). Disruptive behavior in the classroom is usually met with polite, yet firm, reprimand only after the teacher has taken into consideration the circumstances. (Ingersoll, 1996). For example, an authoritative adult might handle a discipline situation by saying, ““You know you should not have done that. Let’s talk about how you can handle the situation better next time”” (Santrock, 1996, p. 185). This authoritative parenting/teaching style produces adolescents who usually exhibit socially competent behavior (Santrock, 1996). “The adolescents of authoritative parents are self-reliant and socially responsible” (1996, p. 185). In a longitudinal study conducted by

Baumrind (2005), it was found that “youth with authoritative parents were the most competent and least maladjusted” (p. 62). Ingersoll (1996) quoted one student who characterized an authoritative teacher, “I like this teacher. She is fair and understands that students can’t be perfect. She is the kind of teacher you can talk to without being put down or feeling embarrassed” (¶ 4). These teachers have embraced a philosophy of teaching that often alienates them from the authoritarian majority. They are usually well liked by their students and often misunderstood by their peers.

The last type of adult control is permissive which is broken down into two categories: permissive-indifferent and permissive-indulgent. There are several general characteristics of the prototypic permissive parent/teacher. The adult is usually non-punitive and accepting of a child’s impulses, desires, and actions. Permissive adults regard themselves as resources for the child and do not attempt to mold children’s behavior (Carter & Welch, 1981). Baumrind (1968) stated, “She attempts to use reason but not overt power to accomplish her ends” (p. 256). Furthermore, a permissive adult will discuss decisions with a child and explain rules. “She allows the child to regulate his own activities as much as possible, avoids the exercise of control, and does not encourage him to obey externally defined standards” (Baumrind, 1966, p. 889). These general characteristics of a permissive adult can be divided into two categories that further delineate the style.

“Permissive-indifferent is a style in which the adult is extremely uninvolved in the adolescent’s life” (Santrock, 1996, p. 185). In accordance, the permissive-indifferent teacher is not involved in students’ lives. Uninterested in the activity of the classroom, the teacher demands minimal work from students and when possible recycles curriculum

from year to year, avoiding time consuming class preparation (Ingersoll, 1996). Discipline within the permissive-indifferent teacher's classroom is lenient because the teacher may lack the necessary skills or confidence to discipline students effectively. Furthermore, the students mirror the teacher's management style and have low achievement motivation and are simply killing time until the bell rings (1996). One student stated for Ingersoll (1996), "This teacher can't control the class and we never learn anything in there. There is hardly ever homework and people rarely bring their books" (¶4). Adolescents of permissive-indifferent parents usually exhibit socially incompetent behavior, characterized by lack of self-control and an inability to handle independence well (1996). Adolescents with permissive-indifferent parents perceive other areas of their parent's lives as more important than they are. "The permissive-indifferent parent cannot answer the question, 'It is 10:00 P.M. Do you know where your adolescent is?'" (1996, p. 185). This type of teacher is rarer in public schools but does exist. Their classes are usually the blow-off classes less motivated students look forward to attending.

The other type of parenting within the permissive category is permissive-indulgent or laissez-faire. "Permissive-indulgent parenting is a style in which parents are highly involved with their adolescents but place few demands or controls on them" (1996, p. 185). Students in a permissive-indulgent teacher's classroom may follow their impulses without fear of disciplinary repercussions. The word "no" is rarely heard in a permissive-indulgent house or classroom. These adults' permissive style is usually popular with adolescents. Ingersoll (1996) quotes a student reflecting on a permissive-indulgent teacher. "This is a pretty popular teacher. You don't have to be serious

throughout the class. But sometimes things get out of control and we learn nothing at all” (¶ 6). Rules are not enforced, discipline is inconsistent, and, consequently, disruptions occur (Ingersoll, 1996). Both the teacher and parent may interpret these behavioral infractions as cries for attention for they are highly concerned about the adolescents’ emotional well-being. Students in these classrooms tend to have low achievement motivation (1996). Furthermore, as with permissive-indifferent parenting, these youth tend to be socially incompetent and lack self-control. The primary characteristic of permissive-indulgent parenting is allowing children to do what they want which leads to adolescents who do not learn self-control and expect to get their way (Santrock, 1996). This practice of child rearing is often deliberate with parents believing “the combination of warm involvement with few restraints will produce a creative, confident adolescent” (1996, p. 185). Unfortunately, these types of teachers can be found in classrooms. Though they regard their style of teaching positively, they are generally a detriment to the overall academic environment.

Of course, research can be found that supports each of these prototypes of adult control. In addition, each style, authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive, possess positive and negative attributes. Arguments could be made for the implementation of any one of these styles in the secondary classroom, and over the years, each has seen a resurgence in popularity. However, from Baumrind’s findings the authoritative control style would appear to be most effective in the secondary classroom.

Disciplinary Action

This study involved the teachers of three urban high schools. The students at these three high schools receive disciplinary action by means of a student disciplinary referral

to the dean of students (see Appendix I). The consequences for disciplinary infractions may include after school detention, Saturday school, in school suspension, or out of school suspension. The first step in disciplinary action after an incident has occurred is for the teacher to record the event on the referral form. At this time, if the incident is severe the student can be escorted by security to the dean's office. If the action does not warrant the immediate removal of the student from the classroom, the disciplinary referral can be delivered to the dean after class. In this event, the following morning, the student name will be recorded on the Do Not Admit list, which is distributed to teachers each morning.

On a daily basis, approximately fifteen students are included on this list. The student's first hour teacher will inform the student that he/she must report immediately to the dean's office. During their meeting, the students will be assigned the appropriate disciplinary action. On any given day at the high schools in this study, ten to twenty students are usually serving suspension, while up to twenty-five student will be serving time in in school suspension. These disciplinary procedures and the punitive action that is assigned require students to be absent from the classroom and miss the valuable educational experiences that occur every day.

Without question, some offenses such as possession of weapons or violence require maximum disciplinary penalties. However, for misbehavior in one teacher's classroom, students are removed from all there classes if suspension is assigned. The educational outcomes should not be adversely affected because students are removed from class for behavior that an empathic teacher could redirect.

Theoretical Framework

There is no one form of inquiry that is superior to others in every case; however, differences in the research questions posed lend themselves to different forms of inquiry (Schofield, 2007). In this study, the method of investigation that the researcher employed to answer the research questions was critical inquiry, which is positioned within the theoretical perspective of critical theory. Critical inquiry is well suited for exploring these research questions because of the power associated in the dynamic between a teacher and student.

Critical theory developed as a response to the scientific rationality of the Enlightenment. The belief in scientific certainty which positivism evoked did not adequately answer questions of oppression and hegemony (Benjamin, 2003). By the middle of the twentieth century, a number of theorists understood that the principles and ideas inherited from the Enlightenment had not come to fruition. “The faith in rationality and science with its promise of inevitable progress in the task of human betterment was perhaps the feature of modernity which had come under most significant attack” (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 9).

Critical theory can be traced to Marxian analysis and the development of the Frankfurt School. The Institute for Social Research (Das Institut für Sozialforschung) of the University of Frankfurt am Main in Germany was home of The Frankfurt School, and the leading theorists in the school included Theodor W. Adorno, philosopher and sociologist; Walter Benjamin, essayist and literary critic; Herbert Marcuse, philosopher; and Max Horkheimer, philosopher and sociologist. “The hope of those associated with the Frankfurt School was to help establish a critical social consciousness able to penetrate

existing ideology, support independent judgment and be capable as Adorno put it, of maintaining the freedom to envision alternatives” (Held as cited in Pinar, 1996, p. 248).

Adorno and Horkheimer, *In Dialectic of Enlightenment*, composed a scathing critique of the modernist project. They posited, “In the most general sense of progressive thought the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Yet the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant” (Giroux, 1989, p. 30).

It was the events that occurred in Nazi Germany that brought the Enlightenment rationality into question for these scholars. For it seemed human logic led as readily to Auschwitz’s crematoriums as it did to liberty and equality (Wood, 1999).

The unspoken terror permeating our collective memory of the Holocaust (and more than contingently related to the overwhelming desire not to look the memory in its face) is the gnawing suspicion that the Holocaust could be more than an aberration, more than a deviation from an otherwise straight path of progress, more than a cancerous growth on the otherwise healthy body of the civilized society; that, in short, the Holocaust was not an antithesis of modern civilization and everything (or so we like to think) it stands for. (Bauman, 1989, p. 7)

When accounts from soldiers liberating the concentration camps verified the atrocities of the Holocaust, no connection to philosophical goals of betterment could be tied to these horrendous reports.

Pointing to this historical context in his background of The Frankfurt School, Giroux (1989) stated, “Reacting to the rise of Fascism and Nazism, on the one hand, and

the failure of orthodox Marxism, on the other, the Frankfurt School had to refashion and rethink the meaning of domination and emancipation” (p. 29). Science, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, which had been central to the modernist project, was becoming “a dominant component of contemporary ideology. Thus, scientific philosophy, in its modernist guise, becomes a force which suppresses rather than emancipates” (Simons & Billig, 1994, p. 4). Critical social theory emerged from the shattered illusions of the Enlightenment to reexamine these predominant metaphysical presuppositions.

Critical theory entered into education most particularly with the work of Paulo Freire. As a teacher of the oppressed minorities of Brazil and later as director of Brazil’s national literacy program, Freire brought a dialectical approach to education that worked against the hierarchical framework that traditionally characterizes the teacher/student relationship. Freire believed that this exploitative paradigm of teaching resulted in domination and oppression of students and a silencing of the students’ own knowledge and experiences.

Among the recent scholars who are working within critical theory, Jurgen Habermas and Anthony Giddens are particularly influential (Schofield, 2007). In addition, the works of Brian Fay (1987) and John Heron and Peter Reason (1997) also expound this perspective. In addition, Stephen Kemmis (1993) working out of Australia in the area of action research has significantly contributed to the field. Meanwhile, “Henry Giroux and Michael Apple have provided excellent theoretical accounts of the nature and working of critical theory in their work on the political, institutional, and bureaucratic control of knowledge, learners, and teachers” (Tripp, 1992, ¶3). Apple (2004) wrote in *Ideology and Curriculum* that it is essential that the social principles and

values that stratify students culturally and economically be examined. He continued, “In order to do this, we need to remember that certain types of cultural capital—types of performance, knowledge, dispositions, achievements, and propensities—are not necessarily good in and of themselves. They are often historically and ideologically ‘conditioned’” (p. 123). Meanwhile, Giroux (2006) has examined the state of critical theory today and its place in education. He maintained,

The critical question here is whose future, story, and interests does the school represent. . . Critical pedagogy argues that school practices need to be informed by a public philosophy that addresses how to construct ideological and institutional conditions in which the lived experience of empowerment for the vast majority of student becomes the defining feature of schooling. (p. 52)

These leading voices in the field of critical inquiry are continuing to examine the issues brought forth by The Frankfurt School and, in addition, are broadening their scope to include multiple disciplines and various forms of oppression (Schofield, 2007).

Critical inquiry brings to research an agency grounded in definite, normative considerations (Sirotnik, 1991). The purpose of the inquiry is to challenge the injustices inherent in society. “Following a tradition associated with Antonio Gramsci, critical researchers aim to understand the relationship between societal structures and ideological patterns of thought that constrain human imagination and thus limit opportunities for confronting and changing unjust social systems” (Schofield, 2007, ¶3). It is the knowledge garnered from critical inquiry research, which may offer a first step toward addressing injustices that is paramount for the critical researcher (2007). Therefore, critical inquiry goes beyond other forms of inquiry because it expresses a direct interest

in emancipation (Ashley & Orenstein, 2001). The process of emancipation involves oppressed and exploited people becoming “sufficiently *empowered* to transform their circumstances for themselves by themselves” (Tripp, 1992, p. 13). Emancipatory analysis, as the foundation of critical inquiry, thus moves research into a non-relativist domain (Schofield, 2007).

It is through the examination of interpersonal dynamics that power relationships are revealed. For the critical theorist, there are rules of interaction of which people are not always fully cognizant. It is thus the emancipatory goal to reveal these constraints by which we live through dialogic interaction. In this regard, critical inquiry is always grounded in critique. Human’s interpersonal interactions necessitate continual critique, for it is within these power dynamics that oppressive relationships are perpetuated that strangle liberation.

Critical inquiry is essential to this study because of the normative quality inherent in the theoretical framework. Teaching is a moral action, and in any research focusing on the dynamic between teacher and students, there must be the implicit goal of emancipation for both teacher and student. It is through both reflection and action that the transformation is possible. Therefore only in praxis, can the struggle for liberation persist (Freire, 2000). As critical inquiry enters into the research, a partnership between the researchers and researched develops to initiate change. It is the critical theorist’s perspective that this change will allow both participants to become more fully human (Sipe & Constable, 1996). The critical researcher aims to place the study findings analytically in the context of ideological factors.

Within the stated research question, critical inquiry provides for prolific research possibilities and the ability to move the research beyond recitation to action. It is the responsibility of the researcher to position his or her own work in praxis. It is the agent to reposition ourselves, as teachers, and our students in a world of social justice.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a review of the literature that relates to the key concepts in this study. The topics of empathy, countertransference, classroom management styles, and the theoretical framework of the study were each examined. It was noted that empathy can be interpreted in various ways and is used across numerous different disciplines. For this study, the definition of empathy was drawn from the work of Rodgers and Kohut. Following, countertransference was examined, and its influence was considered Diana Baumrind (1966), provided the three prototypes of adult control that directed the discussion on classroom management and are central to one of the research instruments. Lastly, critical inquiry informs this research, and its normative considerations are central to the study. Chapter Three focuses on both the quantitative and qualitative methodology to be employed in this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this mixed-method study was to understand the relationship between the number of student disciplinary referrals written by secondary teachers and their level of empathy and their classroom management style preference. The research methodology included two distinct phases to completely analyze data and answer the research questions. Data was collected through three survey instruments, three written response answers, and interviews with five participants. The employment of the three quantitative survey instruments in conjunction with qualitative written responses and interviews provided greater understanding of the research questions (Creswell, 2003). “In many instances, both forms of data are necessary...as supplements, as mutual verification and most important for us as different forms of data on the same subject, which, when compared, will each generate theory” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 18). The researcher through the use of quantitative and qualitative data addressed the following research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between the number of disciplinary referrals a teacher writes and a teacher’s level of empathy as measured by the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale

2. Is there a relationship between the number of disciplinary referrals a teacher writes and a teacher's classroom management style preference as measured by the Classroom Management Profile?
2. Is there a relationship between a teacher's level of empathy as measured by the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale and a teacher's classroom management style preference as measured by the Classroom Management Profile?
3. Is there a significant difference between a teacher's level of empathy as measured by the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale and a teacher's authoritarian and authoritative classroom management style preference as measured by the Classroom Management Profile?
4. What are the perceptions of teachers in a secondary school environment regarding various disciplinary scenarios?

Chapter Three is a presentation of the methodology used in this study. The chapter is divided into eight sections. The first section describes the research design. The second section provides information on the setting and the third section the participants. The fourth section details the ethical considerations of the study followed by the data collection instruments used in this study. The sixth section includes a discussion of the data collection process while the following section describes how the researcher analyzed the data. The last section provides a summary and conclusion to Chapter Three.

Research Design

The research design was predicated on the assumption that the gathering of various types of data can best provide an understanding of the stated research questions (Creswell, 2003). Consequently, the research design that was used in this study was a

mixed-method design which integrated both quantitative (numerical) and qualitative (text) data to derive inferences (Crossman & Wilson, 1985). Historically, according to Abbas Tashakkori and Charles Teddlie (1998) mixed-method research design was the third methodology to develop in research design. The first movement centered on quantitative approaches, the second focused on qualitative approaches, and the most recent movement has been the mixed-method approach. In this study, a mixed-method design afforded the collection of different but complementary data on the same topic. John Creswell and Vicki Plano Clark (2007) detail the significance of mixed-method research by suggesting,

The complexity of our research problems calls for answers beyond simple numbers in a quantitative sense or words in a qualitative sense. A combination of both forms of data can provide the most complete analysis of problems.

Researchers can situate numbers in the contexts and words of participants, and they can frame the words of participants with numbers, trends, and statistical results. Both forms of data are necessary today. (p. 13)

The mixed-method approach enabled the researcher to elaborate on the results by employing each method to inform the other.

By utilizing both quantitative and qualitative approaches, the researcher was able to build on the strengths of each type of data collected and minimize the weakness that might be inherent in any single approach. It is not the intention, as Burke Johnson and Anthony Onwuegbuzie (2004) explained, to replace either of the traditional approaches, but draw from each of their strengths and minimize the weaknesses of both. In so doing, the use of two differing methods of data analysis increased the validity and reliability of

the study (Kidder & Fine, 1987). In addition, contradictions emerged that extend the scope of the study (Greene, Caracelli & Graham., 1989).

In considering the research design, the researcher held forth to the three factors Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) deemed essential. First, the timing of the use of the collected data was determined to be sequential. The researcher analyzed the quantitative data prior to examining the qualitative data. Secondly, the weight of the quantitative and qualitative data were equal with each providing significant information to answer the research questions. Finally, although the data was initially analyzed separately, the two datasets were integrated (mixed) in the interpretation phase of the study. The quantitative and qualitative findings will be presented in Chapter Four.

Setting

An urban Midwestern city school district was purposely chosen as the research site. According to Michael Quinn Patton (2002), “The logic and power of purposeful sampling derive from the emphasis on in-depth understanding” (p. 46). Of the nine high schools in this school district, three schools were selected as sites at which teachers would be surveyed. The selection of information-rich cases in this purposeful sampling resulted in the researcher understanding more fully the research questions that were central to the purpose of the study.

According to the demographics provided on the school district website, these three schools provided a representative sample of all the districts secondary classroom teachers including age, years of experience, and type of certification, in addition to giving a representative sample of the secondary student demographics that included ethnicity and achievement test scores. These sites were also selected for their convenience because

the researcher was currently a teacher within the district and taught at one of the participating schools.

Participants

Purposeful and convenient sampling was employed to select the 220 teachers that received survey packets. All teachers in each of the three school building were given a survey packet delivered to their school mailboxes. Respectively, sixty-one teachers, seventy-eight teachers, and eighty-one teachers were currently employed at the time of the study. The survey packets were completed by 44 teachers (20%) and yielded the following data. The demographic data showed that 75% of the participants returning a survey packet were female ($n=33$) and 25% were males ($n=11$). The age of the participants ranged from twenty-two to over sixty with 30% ($n=13$) of the participants reporting in the 40 to 49 years old category. Table 1 provides a summary of this information.

Table 1

Demographics of Survey Respondents for Sex and Age

	Sex		Age (years)				
	Male	Female	22-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Population	11	33	6	10	13	11	4
Percent	25.0	75.0	13.6	22.7	29.6	25.0	9.1

The demographic profile survey asked participants to list their years of teaching experience. Of the participants, 50% ($n=22$) had 10 years of teaching experience or less,

23% ($n=10$) had 11 to 15 years experience, and 27% ($n=12$) had over 16 years of experience. This information is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Demographics of Survey Respondents for Years of Teaching Experience

	<u>Years of Teaching Experience</u>						
	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	31-35
Population	13	9	10	3	2	5	2
Percent	29.6	20.5	22.7	6.8	4.5	11.4	4.5

Participants were to indicate the type of certification they currently held and their level of education. All but 11% ($n=5$) of the participants held standard teaching certification credentials. Of the participants, 52% ($n=23$) held bachelors degrees, 43% ($n=19$) held masters, and 5% ($n=2$) held doctorates. Table 3 provides a summary of this information.

Table 3

Demographics of Survey Respondents for Highest Level of Education and Type of Certification

	<u>Highest Level of Education</u>			<u>Type of Educational Certification</u>	
	Bachelors	Masters	Doctorate	Standard	Alternative
Population	23	19	2	39	5
Percent	52.3	43.2	4.5	88.6	11.4

Lastly, each participant indicated from a choice of nine subject areas the academic discipline in which he or she taught. Depending on their current teaching assignment,

participants could select more than one subject area. Disciplines included English, social studies, science, mathematics, foreign language, art/music, business, physical education, and other. The majority of participants taught English, social studies, or science with 20.6% ($n=13$) of the participants indicating that they taught English, 19.0% ($n=12$) teaching social studies, and 15.9% ($n=10$) science. A total of 14.3% ($n=9$) of the participants selected the other category. Some indicated in writing beside the other category that they taught special education, family and consumer science, or driver's education. Table 4 provides a summary of this information.

Table 4

Demographics of Survey Respondents for Subject Area Taught

	<u>Subject Area Taught</u>								
	English	Social Studies	Science	Math	Foreign Language	Art/Music	Business	P.E.	Other
Population	13	12	10	6	5	3	3	2	9
Percent	20.6	19.0	15.9	9.5	7.9	4.8	4.8	3.2	14.3

The results of the demographic profile survey yielded valuable information for this study and provided additional information if further study occurs.

Ethical Considerations

It was the researcher's intent during this study to exact no harm on the participants. Conversely, it is hoped that the participants benefited from the research experience. Rubin and Rubin (1995) maintained, "Research ethics are about how to acquire and disseminate trustworthy information in ways that cause no harm to those being studied" (p. 93). Through the course of data collection, the researcher aspired to

learn more about the participants as teachers: about their discipline policies, about their interactions with their students, and about their individual preferences toward classroom management. An Application for Review of Human Subjects Research was submitted to the Institutional Review Board for Oklahoma State University. This information included a description of the project type, subjects, project significance, and methods. Permission to conduct the study was granted on June 4, 2007 (see Appendix J). Permission from the school district was obtained by the researcher through a personal meeting that was followed by a letter of approval. In addition, each building principal was asked to sign a permission to participate letter (see Appendix A), to protect the participants from harm.

Each participant signed an informed consent document (see Appendix D) that explained the purpose and methods to be used in the study. The form also indicated that the participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time. In addition, on the consent form the participants could also indicate whether they would be willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview. The signed consent forms required the researcher to maintain the participants' anonymity and change the participant's names and the settings to protect their identities. Throughout the research study, ethical standards were practiced and respect was given to each participant's contribution in the final report.

Instruments

Quantitative Measures

During the first phase of this study, the participants were asked to complete three survey instruments. The surveys that were used enabled the researcher to gather information that described both frequency and physical counts and participants' attitudes and opinions (Issac & Michael, 1995). Jack Fraenkel and Norman Wallen (1996)

maintained that the central purpose of survey research is to describe the characteristics of a population and determine how members of an identified population respond to selected variables.

The first of the three survey instruments used in this study was the demographic profile survey (see Appendix E). The participants responded to seven questions on this instrument. Each participant chose one of five categories of age ranges, indicated male or female, and specified their level of education. In addition, participants were asked the number of years of teaching experience and noted whether they held a standard or alternative teaching certificate. Also, the participants circled their respective subject area(s) selecting from a list of nine choices. Lastly, each participant self reported the total number of student disciplinary referrals written during the previous school year.

The second of the three survey instruments used in was The Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale (BEES) (see Appendix F). Albert Mehrabian, Ph.D. developed this instrument. The scale, which consists of 30 items, yields a single total scale score, ranging from -120 to +120, based on a 9-point agreement-disagreement Likert-type scale. A lower score indicates the participant has less empathy while a higher score shows a greater degree of empathy. On the survey scale, +4 indicates the participant agreed very strongly with the statement, while +3 on the survey scale indicates the participant agreed strongly, +2 indicates moderate agreement, and +1 indicates slight agreement. A response of 0 on the scale corresponds with neither agreement nor disagreement, while -1 indicates slight disagreement. Continuing down the scale, -2 indicates moderate disagreement, -3 was strong disagreement, and -4 shows very strong disagreement. A sample of the statements on this survey instrument includes, “Unhappy movie endings haunt me for

hours afterward,” and “I cannot feel much sorrow for those who are responsible for their own misery” (Mehrabian, 2005, ¶6-7). In order to reduce acquiescence bias, the tendency for people to agree with most or to disagree with most statements, the scale was designed with one half of the survey containing items where agreement indicates higher emotional empathy while the other half of the statements contain items where agreement indicates lower emotional empathy (Merwin, 2003).

The internal consistency of BEES using Cronbachs coefficient alpha is .82 (Mehrabian, 2005). The validity evidence of BEES is indirectly attributed through the high positive correlation of .77 with the Emotional Empathy Tendency Scale (Mehrabian, 2005). Johanna Shapiro, Elizabeth Morrison, and John Boker (2004), in an article published in the peer-reviewed journal, *Education for Health*, corroborated the validity findings Mehrabian reported for the BEES. The researchers used the BEES to survey first year medical students to assess the effectiveness of an empathy training course. The BEES rating scale yielded highly reliable scores. The mean coefficient alpha reliability for the BEES was found to be 0.81 (Shapiro, et al., 2004).

The researcher of this study chose the instrument over the Empathy Construct Rating Scale (EPCR) because of the standardized format and high reliability of the BEES. In addition, the BEES measures the extent one can feel others’ pain or happiness while the EPCR is a self-assessment instrument that probes ones ability to listen and paraphrase (Shapiro, et al., 2004).

The third survey instrument was The Classroom Management Profile (CMP) (see Appendix G). The Center for Adolescent and Family Studies at Indiana University Center for Adolescent Studies developed this instrument. The scale, which consists of 12 items,

yields the degree of the subjects' agreement-disagreement on a 5-point agreement-disagreement Likert-type scale. Level 1 on the survey scale indicates strong disagreement, level 2 indicates disagreement, level 3 shows neutrality, level 4 agreement, and level 5 suggests strong agreement to the statement. Scale scores are divided into four categories. The categories are based on the work of Baumrind, as described in Chapter Two, and include authoritative, authoritarian, laissez-faire, and indifferent. Scores in each of the four categories can range from 3 to 15. The category with the highest score indicates the participant's classroom management style preference. A sample of the statements includes, "The classroom must be quiet in order for students to learn," and "My students understand that they can interrupt my lecture if they have a relevant question" (Ingersoll, 2003, ¶1). Validity evidence for this instrument was not available. The researcher chose the CMP because it was developed at an educational institution. In addition, it was selected because of the simple format and the short time it would take participants to complete the survey. The researcher attempted to design and select survey instruments that could all be completed within a 10 to 20 minute timeframe.

Qualitative Measures

The qualitative phase of the survey included a written free response section and participant interviews. The written free response section included in the survey packet involved each participant responding to three classroom management scenarios (see Appendix H). These free responses were completed at the same time as the three quantitative instruments. The classroom scenarios were written as follows:

- 1) Today's lesson involves viewing a short documentary film. You have turned down the lights and started the movie. Before long, you hear something land on the floor at the front of the room. You soon realize someone has thrown a coin across the room. You wait and this time you see that it is Anthony who has

thrown the next coin. Anthony is generally a good student, yet sometimes antagonizes some of the other boys in the class. You have previously warned Anthony about his disruptive behavior.

- 2) Brandon enters your room late with a pass from the office. He is clearly agitated as he takes his seat. You give him the instructions for the lesson and ask him to get started. Brandon is frequently in trouble for various offenses including dress code violations, excessive tardies, and talking in class. You see that Brandon has not started working, and you approach his desk and ask if he needs any help. He angrily replies, "Just leave me alone. I hate this school."
- 3) Early in the morning, there had been a fight in your building involving several girls. In class, you are presenting information, which each student is required to take notes on. During this time, Stephanie and Marla are quietly talking. You ask them to stop and to focus on taking notes. Although these girls are friends, they consistently complete their assignments and maintain good grades. After a brief time, the conversation begins again.

The researcher developed these scenarios using information gathered from an initial pilot study and vignettes told to the researcher by other high school classroom teachers. On the survey, the participants described their response to each disciplinary situation using a free response method that was guided by the following prompts.

- From this scenario, what disciplinary action if any would you most likely take?
- Please elaborate on your feelings and attitude toward this student.

This section of the survey should have been completed by the subjects in ten to twenty minutes.

After the surveys were returned, the researcher purposely selected five participants for the responsive interviewing portion of the study. Advocating an in-depth approach to the interview process, Herbert Rubin and Irene Rubin use the term responsive interviewing. This model of interviewing is rooted in both constructionist and critical theories. There are three distinct characteristics to responsive interviewing. First,

this form of interviewing stresses that the interviewee and interviewer are human beings who are able to form a relationship during the interview. The interviewer is not simply an automaton acting as a recording machine. Rubin and Rubin do underscore, however, that the bond that develops between interviewee and interviewer brings about ethical obligations for the interviewer. The second characteristic of responsive interviewing is the emphasis on the depth of understanding engendered during the interview process not merely the breadth. Lastly, responsive interviewing allows for flexibility throughout the research project.

The participants selected to be interviewed indicated, on their informed consent document (see Appendix D), that they were willing to be contacted by the researcher for a follow-up interview. From the pool of forty-four candidates, the researcher selected four participants whose responses on the scoring scales of the BEES and the self-reported number of referrals represented the high and low scores and the on the CMP represented those with a high preference for authoritarian and authoritative. No participants scored highest in laissez-faire or indifferent; therefore, there is no representation from these two groups. Additionally, one participant whose scores did not correspond with the general findings was also selected to be interviewed. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), a variety of perspectives reflected by the participants enhances the credibility of research findings. Furthermore, they stated, “The philosophy of responsive interviewing suggests that reality is complex; to accurately portray that complexity, you need to gather contradictory or overlapping perceptions and nuanced understandings that different individuals hold” (p. 67). The researcher’s interviews with the selected participants yielded rich data that was used to support the research findings.

For the interviews, the researcher, to enhance transferability used an interview protocol. During the interviews the teachers elaborated on the researcher's questions regarding their teaching experience, attitude toward student behavior, classroom management decisions, and perceptions on the use of student discipline referrals.

Qualitative verification is the term Creswell (1994) uses instead of the quantitative descriptors validity and reliability. This alteration in terms transforms the focus from statistical to authentic (1994). In the verification process, it is the responsibility of the researcher to examine the findings and interpretations to minimize the occurrence of inaccuracies (Creswell, 2003). In this study, the researcher used four strategies to check for verification of the findings that Creswell (2003) determined to be primary to research proposals.

Triangulation was applied as various data sources were used to gather information and support the emergent themes of the study. Member checking was also employed after the interviews with the five participants took place. A transcript was e-mailed to each of the participants, and they confirmed that it represented their thoughts accurately. Additionally, the researcher explored her own biases that might have influenced the study. Bias cannot be eliminated from research, but by identifying areas of potential bias, the researcher was aware of possible conflicts during the entire research process. Lastly, negative or discrepant information was included in the results. "Because real life is composed of different perspectives that do not always coalesce, discussing contrary information adds to the credibility of an account for the reader" (Creswell, 2003, p.64). Using these verification strategies at various stages, the researcher was able to represent the findings and interpretations with assurance.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study occurred sequentially in two phases and involved both quantitative and qualitative methods. The purpose of this design was to use the subjective qualitative data to describe in greater depth the objective quantitative data that was collected in phase one (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The purpose of the first phase was to collect data, to examine the research questions, that included general demographic information about the participants, the self-reported number of referrals written by each participant during the previous school year, and the data from the completed BEES and CMP. Concurrent with this data collection, qualitative data collection began in the form of written responses to three classroom management scenarios. The data from the first phase provided necessary information for the selection of the interviewees that occurred in the second phase of the research. The remainder of the qualitative data, five participant interviews, occurred during the second phase, after the collection of the initial survey data. Five participants that returned the survey packets and indicated their approval to be contacted for an interview were purposely selected to be interviewed. Four interviewees represented participants that scored high or low on the quantitative survey instruments. The fifth participant's scores did not correspond with the general findings. The interviews further explored the relationships set forth in the research questions and brought together the strengths of both forms of data to corroborate and compare results from the two different research perspectives.

The initial data collection began when participants received the survey instrument in their school mailboxes in August 2007, during the first week of the school year. Included in the packet were a cover sheet (see Appendix B), instruction sheet (see

Appendix C), an informed consent document (see Appendix D), a demographic profile survey (see Appendix E), Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale (see Appendix F), Classroom Management Profile (see Appendix G), and the classroom management scenarios (see Appendix H). The total estimated time to complete the packet was between thirty and forty minutes. On their own, the participants completed the packets and then returned them to the researcher in the self-addressed stamped envelope included in the packet. The researcher received 44 (20%) survey packets within two weeks. After this time, no other packets were received.

The week after the collection of the surveys, the researcher conducted the five interviews. The five potential interviewees were first contacted by e-mail, and their participation in the study was requested; all five indicated that they would be willing to participate. The interview process took place over the course of one week with the selected participants. The duration of the interviews did not exceed one hour and included no more than two individual interactions. Interviews took place in the participants' classrooms before and after school hours. During the interview process, the researcher audio-taped the conversation and took written notes to assist in the interpretation of words, phrases, and body gestures. These notes were included in the interview transcripts.

The interview protocol included eight pre-determined, open-ended questions. These questions focused on the participant's teaching experience, attitude toward student behavior, classroom management decisions, and perceptions on the use of student discipline referrals. In addition, follow-up sub-questions were used to garner additional explanatory information.

Member checks were conducted after the transcription of the data was completed. The member checks occurred on September 5, 2007. All five of the interviewees reviewed the transcripts of the interview data via e-mail correspondence. All participants of the member check approved their interview transcription and found that it accurately represented their thoughts during the interview. The member check of the qualitative data provided the researcher with verification that the transcription accurately reported and represented the responses of the interviewees in the study.

The data for this study is kept private. Any written results do not include information that can identify any teacher or student. Only the researcher and individuals responsible for research oversight have access to the records. It was possible that the consent process and data collection would have been observed by research oversight staff responsible for safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of people who participate in the research.

At the time, the primary investigator received the packets each page of the data was coded with corresponding numbers. The signed consent documents, survey data, and interview transcripts are stored securely in locked file containers at the residence of the primary investigator. The consent documents are stored separately from the survey data and interview transcripts. Data will be kept for five years after the completion of the study. After this time, all data will be destroyed. The findings were reported in the form of this dissertation to Oklahoma State University and the participating school district to be used at their discretion.

Data Analysis

The analysis of quantitative data and statistical results gathered from survey strategies generally utilizes a postpositive perspective for testing theories and constructing knowledge, while qualitative research strategies, which focus on open-ended responses from the participants, draw on the patterns and themes that emerge from the data for analysis (Creswell, 2003). In a mixed-method approach, the researcher will utilize both these perspectives during the data analysis phase.

Initially in this study, the data analysis examined the information gathered through the administration of the demographic profile survey, the BEES and the CMP instruments. Then, the researcher utilized data coding techniques to examine convergence between qualitative data, the self-generated written responses and the interview transcripts, and quantitative data, the standardized assessments. The research questions that examined, within and between subject associations, the variables of referral patterns, emotional empathy, and classroom management preference were addressed throughout the analyses.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The survey data were compiled and compared using data analysis software (Statdisk, 2004). The interpretive analyses for this study were a Pearson product-moment correlation and an independent samples *t*-test. A Pearson product-moment correlation (*r*) examines the relationship between two variables. The correlation measures the tendency of the two variables to increase or decrease together. An independent samples *t*-test identifies significant differences between the means of two independent samples.

To determine if the number of student disciplinary referrals written by a teacher was related to empathy as measured by the BEES, a Pearson product-moment correlation was performed. In addition, this correlation was used to determine if there was a relationship between the number of student disciplinary referrals written by a teacher and their classroom management style preference as measured by the CMP. The last Pearson product-moment correlation was performed to determine if there was a relationship between a teacher's levels of empathy as measured by the BEES and a teacher's classroom management style preference as measured by the CMP. Finally, an independent samples *t*-test was performed to determine if there was a difference between a teacher's level of empathy as measured by the BEES and authoritarian and authoritative classroom management style preference as measured by the CMP. Because no participants scored highest in the laissez-faire or indifferent preferences these categories were not included in the sample.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Following the analysis of quantitative data, the written responses to the classroom management scenarios and the interview transcripts were analyzed through qualitative means. The researcher used data coding techniques to generate support for the research questions. A three step, constant comparative coding paradigm developed by Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin (1998) was used to look for emergent patterns within the written responses and interview transcripts. The data collected was first coded to organize and describe the information that had been gathered. Next, these codings were analyzed and interpreted. Finally, the data results were represented in the research study findings.

Strauss and Corbin's coding process begins with open coding or unrestricted analysis to examine the collected data for relationships to the research questions. This involved line by line analysis of the data to identify key words and phrases. This first step allowed the researcher to begin initial analysis of the data without concern for whether the analysis was correct. The open coding system included identifying categories and describing patterns in the data then exploring the differences and similarities that became apparent (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For each subsequent written response then interview, the previous data were compared with the new data to verify the concepts already categorized and determine new categories. In this study, the researcher recorded the results of these procedures on note cards and preliminary diagrams.

The next step in Strauss and Corbin's coding paradigm is axial coding. "When analysts code axially, they look for answers to questions such as why or how come, where, when, how, and with what results, and in so doing they uncover relationships among categories" (1998, p. 127). During this further analysis, the tentative codes were systematically categorized according to their properties and dimensions, subcategories became apparent, and relationships among the categories began to develop. The proposed relationships that came forward from the categories were then checked with the data. During this analysis phase of the study, the researcher continued to refine the diagramming process as a means of conceptualizing developing patterns and reflecting on the analytic thought process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The last step in the coding process was to analyze the categories and subcategories that were generated and to develop larger theoretical schemes. To achieve this, the researcher employed selective coding to integrate and refine the emergent

categories. Ultimately, the goal of the selective coding process was to determine a central category

representing the predominant themes of the research, and relate the other categories and subcategories to that new category. In this study, the researcher, to facilitate the integration of key concepts, made use of illustrative narratives. This process allowed the researcher to articulate the central themes more descriptively.

Integration of Data

In mixed- method studies, the integration of the two methodologies, the quantitative and the qualitative, can occur at various stages in the research process. Mixing can occur during the initial, intermediate, or concluding segments of the research (Creswell & Plano, 2007). For this study, that was sequentially designed, the integration of the methods first occurred after the quantitative phase was completed with the purposeful selection of the interview participants. After the transcription of the interviews, integration again occurred as the findings of the quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed. The qualitative data were used to explain in greater depth the quantitative results in relation to the research questions.

Summary and Conclusion

The study aimed to fill gaps within current research and provide findings that may inform teachers and administrators of the need for more empathic understanding with secondary students and the need for examination of the classroom management techniques currently in use. This chapter detailed how the researcher conducted the study and the procedures undertaken to answer the research questions of the study effectively. Through this mixed-method study, the researcher was able to gather comprehensive

information to answer the research questions. Using the multiple data sources allowed the researcher to gather a broader range of perspectives (Creswell, 2003). The collection of rich data through written responses to open-ended questions and the conducting of interviews with participants complemented and elaborated upon the quantitative data collected. Chapter 4 includes analyses of the quantitative and qualitative data and the findings collected through this study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

Quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used in this study that examined the relationship between the number of student disciplinary referrals secondary teachers write and their level of empathy and classroom management style. Because of the system of in school suspension and out of school suspension the district studied employs, numerous students are being excluded from valuable educational opportunities that are taking place in the classroom. As found in this study, the classroom management style and empathy level of a teacher contributes to this cycling of students into the various discipline stages.

This chapter presents a detailed description of the data collected in the study and the findings based on the data collection. The quantitative data were collected through three survey instruments: a demographic profile survey, the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale, and the Classroom Management Profile. The results were analyzed using a standard, statistical software package (Statdisk, 2004). The qualitative data were collected through three written response scenarios and interviews with five of the survey participants. The researcher then analyzed this qualitative data using Corbin and Strauss's (1998) constant comparative coding method incorporating a three-step approach. The findings presented are in two sections: a quantitative description of the findings related to

the research questions and a qualitative description of the findings related to the research questions.

The research questions that prompted the researcher to conduct this study were:

- 1) Is there a relationship between the number of disciplinary referrals a teacher writes and a teacher's level of empathy as measured by the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale?
- 2) Is there a relationship between the number of disciplinary referrals a teacher writes and classroom management style preference as measured by the Classroom Management Profile?
- 3) Is there a relationship between empathy as measured by the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale and classroom management style preference as measured by the Classroom Management Profile?
- 4) Is there a significant difference between a teacher's level of empathy as measured by the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale and authoritarian and authoritative classroom management style preference as measured by the Classroom Management Profile?
- 5) What are the perceptions of teachers in a secondary school environment regarding various disciplinary scenarios?

The researcher conducted the following steps in the collection of the data. Upon obtaining Institutional Review Board and district superintendent approval, the researcher distributed a total of 220 survey packets to teachers in three urban high schools who were both purposefully and conveniently selected. Forty-four participants returned the survey for a 20% response rate. Of those responding, seventy-five percent were female. The

majority (54.6%) of the teachers fell into the 40 to 59 years of age category and had been teaching for 0 to 15 years (72.8%). In addition, participants taught in various academic areas with English, social studies, and science being the subjects most often indicated by the 44 participants.

The participants completed the informed consent document, three survey instruments, and three free-response writings and returned them to the researcher. After collection of this data, the researcher purposefully selected five teachers to participate in follow-up interviews. The following section describes the quantitative findings of this study.

Quantitative Survey Findings

This section will first report the scores and means of the three survey instruments employed in this study: the demographic survey profile, Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale, and Classroom Management Profile. It will then address research questions one through four individually.

The demographic survey profile was the first instrument in the packets distributed to the teachers. On the demographic survey profile instrument, teachers self-reported the number of discipline referrals that they had written during the previous school year. An accurate number of the discipline referrals written by each teacher was not available from the discipline deans in each of the three buildings; moreover, teachers within this district are not required to keep records of the referrals they write. Consequently, the teachers' self-reported results were from their memory of the previous year. The distribution of the number of student disciplinary referrals written by the participating teachers ranged from 0 to 50. Table 5 distributes the referrals into eleven equal categories. The most referrals

fell into the first category indicating 0 to 4 referrals written. The tenth category, 45-49, recorded no referrals written. It appears that those teachers writing numerous referrals, over 40, rounded their answers up or down to 50. Table 6 provides information regarding the mean and standard deviation of the number of referrals written.

Table 5

Distribution of Number of Student Disciplinary Referrals Written by Participants

	<u>Number of Referrals</u>					
	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29
Quantity	8	6	5	7	5	3
Percent	18.1	13.6	11.4	15.9	11.4	6.8

	<u>Number of Referrals Continued</u>				
	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50
Quantity	3	1	1	0	5
Percent	6.8	2.3	2.3	0	11.4

Table 6

Mean and Standard Deviation of Number of Student Disciplinary Referrals Written by Participants

Variable	Student Disciplinary Referrals	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Number of Referrals	19.1	15.9

On the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale (BEES), which produced a numerical empathy rating for each teacher, participants answered thirty questions on a 9-point agreement-disagreement Likert-type scale. The mean and standard deviation were calculated for these BEES scores. Scores ranged from -9 to 107. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Mean and Standard Deviation of Level of Teacher Empathy as Measured by the BEES

Variable	<i>Low Score</i>	<i>High Score</i>	BEES	
			<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Level of Empathy	-9	107	38.6	32.0

For the Classroom Management Profile (CMP), which determined each teacher's classroom management style preference, participants answered twelve questions on a 5-point agreement-disagreement Likert-type scale. The means and standard deviations were also calculated for these CMP scores. The results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Mean and Standard Deviation of Classroom Management Style Preferences as Measured by the CMP

Variable	<i>Low Score</i>	CMP		
		<i>High Score</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Authoritative Classroom Style Preference	3	14	12.0	3.5
Authoritarian Classroom Style Preference	4	15	10.6	3.8

Laissez -faire Classroom Style Preference	3	13	6.4	1.9
Indifferent Classroom Style Preference	2	11	5.6	2.0

The following section will utilize the findings of the BEES and CMP with the data regarding number of student disciplinary referrals written. Statistical analysis for this data included both Pearson product-moment correlations and a *t*- test. All tests were considered significant if $\alpha < .05$.

Research Question One

Pearson product-moment correlation procedures are conducted to identify the relationship between two variables. For this analysis, a Pearson product-moment correlation was first performed to answer research question one: is there a relationship between the number of disciplinary referrals a teacher writes and a teacher’s level of empathy as measured by the BEES?

For the study’s 44 participants, it was found that an inverse relationship existed between the number of referrals written and a teacher’s level of empathy ($r = -0.54$). A higher level of empathy was associated with a lower number of referrals. Critical r equaled ± 0.30 . Empathy accounted for 29% of the variation in referrals. It appears that referrals, which are a means of disciplining students usually following the use of alternative intervention strategies including counseling with students, verbal and written warnings, and contact with parents or guardians, are submitted in greater number by teachers who are less empathetic in general. The findings from research question one provide information that has not previously been thoroughly researched. It appears that a teacher who responds less empathically to the testing statements on the BEES may also

be less empathic to students' needs and behaviors. Teaching involves interactions between student and teacher. If teachers lack empathic awareness of their students, then it is likely confrontations will ensue that may result in a disciplinary referral. These findings suggest that teacher empathy may reduce the number of disciplinary referrals and subsequently the need for students to be out of the classroom for in school or out of school suspension.

Research Question Two

The next analysis answered the second research question: is there a relationship between the number of student disciplinary referrals written and classroom management style preference as measured by the CMP?

It was found that a positive correlation existed between the number of referrals written and authoritarian classroom management preference ($r = .80$). The greater the number of referrals results in the higher the preference for an authoritarian classroom management style. Critical r equaled ± 0.30 . Authoritarian classroom preference accounted for 63% of the variation in referrals. It appears from these findings that teachers who write a greater number of referrals will prefer an authoritarian classroom management preference. In an environment that promotes order and discipline, it is understandable that these teachers use student disciplinary referrals as a means of classroom control. This punitive measure aligns with an authoritarian's general view that children who do not abide by strict standards and values should be punished (Santrock, 1996).

Continuing to look at research question two, it was found that an inverse relationship existed between the number of referrals written and authoritative classroom

management preference ($r = -0.81$). The lower the number of referrals written the stronger the preference for an authoritative classroom management style. Critical r equaled ± 0.30 . Authoritative classroom preference accounted for 65% of the variation in referrals. These findings thus show that it appears that teachers who write fewer referrals will maintain discipline in the classroom through authoritative means without the need for coercive control of the students. According to Ingersoll (1996), authoritative teachers are characterized as warm, nurturing adults who express authentic interest and demonstrate genuine friendliness to each student. Furthermore, teachers with an authoritative classroom management preference would also tend to promote discussion, debate, and critical thinking in their classrooms. A management style that supports student inquiry and encourages each individual student's voice is reasonably more inclined to use alternative methods to discipline students than a written referral. Further research was not conducted for the laissez-faire and indifferent classroom management style preference because no participants in the study scored highest in either of these categories.

Research Question Three

Next, a Pearson product-moment correlation was performed to answer research question number three: is there a relationship between empathy as measured by the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale and classroom management style preference as measured by the Classroom Management Profile?

Analysis found that a negative relationship existed between a teacher's level of empathy and authoritarian classroom management preference ($r = -.71$). The higher the level of empathy results in a lower preference for an authoritarian classroom style.

Critical r equaled ± 0.30 . Authoritarian classroom preference accounted for 50% of the variation in empathy. From these results, it appears that an authoritarian classroom management style, which encompasses a restrictive, disciplinarian means of control and can constrain students' autonomous voice and opportunity to express feelings and attitudes, may result in the teacher/student relationship becoming distant and impassive. A teacher maintaining an authoritarian management style would, therefore, be less inclined to exhibit empathetic responses to students. In an authoritarian classroom, students may feel they are unable to participate fully in the learning process by asking questions and voicing their own opinions; consequently, it is possible that these students will withdraw from future learning experiences.

However, the findings for question three also indicated that a positive relationship existed between teacher's level of empathy and authoritative classroom management style preference ($r = .70$). The higher the level of empathy results in a stronger preference for an authoritative classroom management style. Critical r equaled ± 0.30 . Authoritative classroom preference accounted for 47% of the variation in empathy. A teacher maintaining an authoritative management style that encourages students' independence and self-expression would, therefore, be more inclined to exhibit empathic responses to students. Converse to the authoritarian classroom, an authoritative classroom that values the uniqueness of each student's voice and does not rely on forceful control of the students may draw students into the learning process by allowing them to express and explore their own ideas. Results for each participant's age, number of referrals written, BEES score and CMP scores is presented in Table 9.

Research Question Four

The last analysis conducted was an independent samples *t*-test using data gained from the BEES and the CMP. Question four sought to identify if significant differences existed between the means of two independent samples of data, which included the teachers' level of empathy and authoritarian and authoritative classroom management preferences.

The researcher performed an independent samples *t*-test to determine whether there was a difference in empathy between teachers with authoritarian classroom management preference and an authoritative classroom management preference. All participants scored their highest preference in either the authoritarian or the authoritative preference with no participant scoring equally in both categories. An independent samples *t*-test confirmed a significant difference between authoritarian and authoritative classroom management preferences with regard to the teachers' level of empathy (t stat = -6.4244, $p < .05$). These results supported the findings of the Pearson product-moment correlations. Authoritative had a higher level of empathy than authoritarian. These findings indicate that, as a group, authoritative teachers tend to demonstrate a higher level of empathy and, consequently, a greater understanding of their students needs. It is, therefore, conceivable that the students of these teachers will be more comfortable and at ease in the classroom environment and the students may be less disruptive. Conversely, the findings indicated that as a group authoritarian teacher exhibited lower levels of empathy. These teachers have seem to have less understanding of their students' emotional needs and tend to use domineering forms of discipline such as a referral to control students.

The quantitative data supports the findings for research questions one through four. The results suggest that teachers' empathy levels and classroom management style have a significant relationship to the number of referrals written. Consequently, the number of student disciplinary referrals written by teachers may be able to be lowered through changes in teachers' personal empathy and discipline techniques. This will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

The results of the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale (BEES) and the Classroom Management Profile (CMP) for each of the 44 participants is reported in Table 9.

Table 9

Participant scores for number of referrals, BEES and CMP

Partici- pant	Age	# of Referrals	BEES Score	CMP Authori- tarian	CMP Authori- tative	CMP Laissez- faire	CMP Indifferent
1	40-49	35	1	11	12	4	8
2	60+	17	24	7	11	3	6
3	22-29	24	19	6	14	6	8
4	50-59	25	16	11	8	4	4
5	30-39	20	20	8	10	5	11
6	40-49	15	62	5	13	7	5
7	50-59	1	58	7	14	6	5
8	40-49	38	-9	13	5	7	4
9	60+	15	31	7	12	7	4
10	30-39	6	96	5	15	5	4
11	40-49	0	24	6	13	9	8
12	30-39	0	91	4	14	6	3
13	40-49	15	21	6	14	4	9
14	50-59	6	79	5	15	10	7
15	40-49	50	87	6	11	8	5
16	30-39	13	22	5	13	5	4
17	50-59	24	17	12	7	7	5
18	22-29	25	12	12	8	5	8
19	30-39	0	46	4	13	6	7
20	30-39	1	46	5	13	7	7
21	30-39	50	-1	13	5	8	6

22	22-29	5	76	5	15	8	5
23	30-39	50	-8	11	5	7	5
24	22-29	10	52	8	4	6	7
25	40-49	10	78	4	15	5	5
26	60+	50	63	5	13	6	5
27	40-49	15	49	6	14	9	6
28	50-59	30	35	13	6	6	6
29	30-39	10	66	6	11	4	2
30	50-59	30	-9	6	11	4	2
31	30-39	3	51	6	11	4	2
32	40-49	2	22	10	6	6	4
33	22-29	8	51	4	12	5	7
34	50-59	15	69	3	14	7	4
35	40-49	1	42	4	13	6	6
36	22-29	24	22	10	6	5	6
37	50-59	4	52	4	13	6	5
38	40-49	50	8	14	5	10	7
39	50-59	40	16	12	4	6	3
40	40-49	50	32	13	6	7	7
41	60+	30	28	13	4	7	5
42	50-59	50	4	12	5	5	4
43	50-59	12	107	5	14	6	4
44	40-49	5	34	4	14	9	9

The next section presents the qualitative survey findings.

Qualitative Survey Findings

A more in-depth examination of the research questions was provided through the qualitative phase of this study. This section presents the qualitative findings and emergent themes, in connection with the quantitative data. The first qualitative data that was collected consisted of the participants' written responses to three classroom management scenarios that were included in the survey packet. After the collection and analysis of the survey packet data, the researcher selected five interviewees from the participants. The five participants were purposely selected based on the highest and lowest totals calculated for each of the survey instruments. In addition, one participant was selected because the

findings from her data were not supported by the quantitative results. Ultimately, the intent was to select five participants who would add significant data to the study and bring enhanced understanding to the research questions. The researcher contacted the five potential interviewees by e-mail, and their participation was requested; all five indicated that they would be willing to participate. Audio taped interviews took place in each of the teacher's classrooms before and after school hours. After the researcher transcribed the interview data, a transcript was sent to each of the interviewees to determine if the participants found that the transcript accurately represented their thoughts during the interview.

Through the three-step Strauss and Corbin constant comparative coding process the researcher utilized for this study, categories were generated to develop distinct themes. The predominate themes that emerged from this analysis included: teacher control, student voice, and teacher/student reciprocity. These themes were prevalent throughout the qualitative data gathered and supported by the quantitative results. The presentation in this section includes five narrative summaries of individual interviews. The analysis conducted in this section and the emergent themes fall within each case and across all cases.

Jennifer Flores and Brianna Jones represent those teachers who according to the survey instruments wrote few referrals and scored high in empathy on the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale while their Classroom Management Profile scores indicated they preferred an authoritative classroom atmosphere.

Jennifer Flores

“I don’t act like I’m some big authoritarian person because I’m not. That’s not who I am, and it would be really unnatural for me,” Jennifer Flores states, beginning our conversation. She is in her thirties but only in her fourth year teaching. Currently, she is teaching biology and anatomy. She continues talking, “Occasionally, I’ve been known to scream, but I don’t like that. I don’t like to do that at all. So, yeah, that’s one of my goals this year is to be nice just to be nice.... I’m pretty laid back so the chit chat doesn’t really bother me as long as they’re being productive.” At the onset of our interview, Jennifer began by representing her style of teaching as one that does not center on her control over her students and the first central theme of this study surfaced through her own words. It appeared throughout our conversation the control that an authoritarian teacher might comfortably experience would feel uneasy for her.

Responding to the scenario in which Stephanie and Marla are talking in class about a fight that had occurred earlier in the day, Jennifer wrote that she would “separate the girls. If the talking continued I would stop and address the class as a whole as to what had taken place—yes there was a fight that involved several girls but now is not the time to discuss the fight. I would refocus their attention.” Apparently, such disturbances do not seem to agitate Jennifer, and it is not necessary for her to control her classroom through strict disciplinary measures. Such a reaction as this to the scenario was frequent amongst most of the participants that scored high in empathy on the BEES. One participant wrote, “If they are normally good students than an occasional off day in not too big of a deal.”

According to the Classroom Management Profile, Jennifer’s authoritative score was 13 out of 15 while she only scored 5 out of 15 for an authoritarian preference. It

appears that her preference lies in a cooperative classroom where students may speak and ask questions. On the CMP, she strongly agreed with the statement, “My students understand that they can interrupt my lectures if they have a relevant question.” Furthermore, she seems to understand the importance of explaining her actions and providing a democratic classroom experience. She strongly agreed with the statement on the CMP, “I always try to explain the reasons behind my rules and decisions.”

The practice of allowing students to voice opinions and concerns came forward as a key component in most of the participants who scored themselves as authoritative and emerged as one of the three central themes of this study. Beginning to discuss the techniques she uses in the classroom to maintain discipline, this theme of student voice surfaced. She explains, “I use redirection a lot. Asking them what their choices could have been. You did this but what would have been better.” Allowing students to discuss their behavioral mistakes, voice why they chose to misbehave, and learn to correct their actions may diminish the need to write numerous referrals and allows the students to take ownership of their behavior.

“I don’t have rules, the main thing I tell ‘em is that if you’ll be cool, I’ll be cool.” Jennifer’s words directly reflect the concept of reciprocity, which became another thread the researcher followed through both the interviews with participants and reading the written responses. Jennifer’s idiomatic word “cool” represents the attitude many authoritative teachers expressed in their writing. As long as the student was generally well behaved or at least attempting to cooperate, the teacher would often be less strict in writing a referral. One participant even wrote of Anthony, who had been throwing pennies, “He’s a kid. He’s going to do dumb things. No biggie.”

In this same written scenario with Anthony, Jennifer indicated that she would relocate the student to a different part of the room and keep a close eye on him and the other students involved in the incident. She also stressed that her attitude toward Anthony would not change regardless of the behavior problem. Generally, the participants with an authoritative classroom preference simply moved Anthony's seat or moved their seat nearer to Anthony rather than reprimand him or write a referral. A participant wrote, "I would move next to Anthony. Sit there till the film is over. Talk to Anthony after class."

During the past year, Jennifer wrote only one disciplinary referral. Before she writes a student referral, she has given the student a warning, called the student's parents, and submitted an intervention form to the counselor. She explains, "For referrals, well, I follow the four step process until you get to a referral, which is what the district wants you to go through. I can monitor a kid, and I can see if I've talked to so an' so three times now. But, I don't have a lot of behavior issues. I really don't." The process of working through a discipline plan before writing a referral to the dean was observed also in other participants who self-reported writing few referrals. An English teacher described in detail the steps she would take to discipline Anthony. First, she would talk to Anthony privately in the hall. If it continued, she would issue another warning. Then depending upon his reaction, only then might she write a referral or perhaps an intervention with the counselor for bullying. For many of the teachers, who wrote a low number of referrals, a written referral was not their first line of action when behavioral problems arose, and for most of these teachers, their classroom management preference was authoritative with average or high empathy.

Speaking about her relationship with her students as the interview continues, Jennifer remarks, “I make sure I make eye contact with my kids, and I talk to them on their level without being vulgar you know using their language.” Jennifer’s empathic understanding was relatively high with a score on the BEES of a 46 while the mean registered 38.6. She maintains,

A lot of times it’s a first impression kind of deal, and I don’t want to be someone that judges a book by its cover, but you can with kids a lot of times because they represent what they like in the way they dress and the way they carry themselves. So I find the skater kid and I’m all like, ‘Totally, what’s up dude.’ And using some of that language. It’s knowing about all the different cultures within a high school and being able to find something about each and every kid that you can identify with. You know, even if you have to watch MTV and listen to rap music you’ve got to be able to find something with each kid that you can connect with because otherwise you’ll lose them.

This approach appears to serve Jennifer well in developing and maintaining strong relationships with her students.

As we conclude the interview, Jennifer talks about dealing directly with students’ emotional issues in the classroom and the importance of allowing students to voice these emotions in a safe environment. She answered the second scenario about Brandon, as did many of the other teachers with a higher empathic rating. “I would not take any disciplinary actions against Brandon seeing that he is obviously upset and not focusing on school work.” To follow up, she would allow him to take a few moments to calm down and collect himself and would return later to check to make sure he was doing all right. “I

would want to give him a listening ear for him to vent and calm down and to help see/understand why decisions have to be made.” It appears from her written responses and her discussion during our interview, Jennifer is genuinely concerned for her students. Jennifer's above average BEES score seems to corroborate these findings.

Jennifer’s interview and written response to classroom scenarios yielded data that supported the quantitative findings for research questions one through four. She is a teacher who wrote few disciplinary referrals, scored higher than the average participant in empathy, and preferred an authoritative style of classroom management. The next section details the findings of Brianna Jones, another teacher, who scored similarly to Jennifer on the quantitative surveys.

Brianna Jones

A recent college graduate in her mid-twenties, Brianna Jones is starting her second year teaching math. New to the teaching profession, Brianna has been attending staff development workshops and reading on her own to sharpen her skills. “I’ve been reading lots of books. I try to take tidbits of all these things and what I think is going to work in my classroom.” Brianna mentions that the Ruby Payne book *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, which the school principal assigned as professional development reading, has helped her to become aware of some of the issues that face inner city youth.

As far as her teaching strategies, Brianna says she follows a modeling approach. “I’m really trying to do the whole modeling thing. Treat the kids like I want them to treat each other and also how I want them to treat me.” Here the theme of reciprocity emerged in her words. As with Jennifer, she desires a classroom where students and teachers respect each other and that respect is mutual. She next explains how she also is conscious

of the language she uses in the classroom. “I’m really careful about not making derogatory remarks.” She speaks to her students in a manner she would expect them to use to talk to her. These teaching strategies are representative of her classroom management preference. On the CMP, her preference was authoritative, for which she scored 15 out of 15. According to this scoring, she does not mind being interrupted during lectures for relevant questions, she explains the reasoning behind her rules, and she is concerned about not only what students learn but also how they learn.

In discussing the general atmosphere of her classroom, Brianna does not demand the control upon which an authoritarian teacher would insist. She states, “I’m not like super stringent when it comes to talking; the kids work in groups a lot. As long as I’m not talking then they’re more than welcome to be talking amongst themselves and talking to their friends while they’re working as long as they’re staying on task.” Her demeanor is calm and confident as she continues to speak about the environment she creates for her students. “I’m not the kind of like sit down at your seat, be quiet, everybody in their assigned seat, don’t move, you know that sort of thing,” Brianna explains. “I’m much more relaxed in here, and I try to keep the kids comfortable. Make it closer to their own environment outside of school.” In the scenario in which Stephanie and Marla are talking during a lecture, Brianna wrote that she would “walk up to the girls and remind them that they are preventing other students from learning.” Only if this approach did not lessen the talking would Brianna decide to move the girls away from each other. Her response mirrored that of many of the other authoritative teachers. One participant wrote, “My attitude toward these students would be to remind them of the importance of good behavior and respect for the learning environment.”

As we continue to talk, she elaborates on her interactions with her students. If there is an incident that needs to be addressed with a student Brianna is respectful to maintain the students' privacy. "I take the kids out in the hall if I have to talk to them about anything." Her score on the BEES was a 76 while the mean was 38.6, indicating her level of empathy was substantially higher than the average participant. In relating what she does when students come to class already upset, her words demonstrate this high level of empathy for her students. "When a kid walks in the door and looks pissed off, I usually grab him and ask him outside and ask him, 'What's going on? It looks like you're having a bad day.'" She continues, "Just doing that, just telling them it's going to be better. We're having fun today in class. That usually helps defuse it some." This response is similar to her written passage regarding Brandon, the student who enters the classroom agitated and upset. She wrote, "I would take Brandon into the hall and ask him what's wrong. I'd tell him that I understand how he feels, but he is still responsible for doing his work." She elaborates about her attitude toward students like Brandon, "Students should know that it is all right to be angry and upset, but it is not all right to take anger out on teachers and classmates. We all have bad days, but the students must still complete their work."

Our conversation continues and she discusses those situations when a student's anger is rising. She states,

If there's a student who I've talked to and they're having a bad day, if something starts to escalate, I'll try to defuse it and be like, 'Look I know it's a bad day, but let's not pick on other students and try to focus on your work.' I also think just trying to deal with it in the classroom is also helpful. Honestly, we're the ones in

here. We know the situation. I just think it's a lot easier if you can handle as much as you can in the classroom.

From this comment, it is appears obvious that Brianna does not rely on writing referrals and allowing the dean to discipline her students.

She continues by talking about her relationship with her students and finding value in their lives. "Finding out about their home life and stuff, I think that's incredibly important and one a lot of teachers ignore." She begins an anecdote from her classroom experience, "I have one kid that is great academically, but he's really loud and kind of doesn't know when to stop the funny. Just from talking to him, I found out that he doesn't live with his mom. He lives with his twenty-three year old uncle." New to the teaching profession, new to this large of a school, and new to this part of the country, Brianna is often surprised at her students' situations. "This is the first time I've been teaching in a big inner-city school. I really didn't realize how many kids don't live at home, how many kids are homeless, how many kids are pregnant, so all those were a huge thing for me." The fact that she has taken the time to realize that not all her students are from middle income families demonstrates that she is communicating with her students and allowing them to share their voices and lives with her.

In the previous year, Brianna only wrote five student referrals. We begin to talk about her disciplinary techniques and the infractions for which she writes referrals. One thing she will not tolerate is the use of profanity. "I know some teachers are real lax on it, but for me, it's really important." She remembers two other incidents in which she wrote a student referral, "I think I had two for disruptive behavior, and on those I had talked with their parents and had many discussions with them, and it just got to the point where

it was all right you're on to the next step." Her discipline policy is similar to Jennifer's policy and aligns with the four-step approach set forth by the school district. The procedure begins with a warning, followed by a phone call to the parents, an intervention with the counselor, and then a referral.

Ending our interview, she tries to think about what has helped her most when dealing with her students and again the theme of allowing others' voices to be heard emerges. She concludes, "A lot of my work experience before college helped, dealing with people, learning how to talk to people and communicate with them."

The data collected from Brianna's interview and written responses to classroom scenarios supported the quantitative findings for research questions one through four. Like Jennifer, she is a teacher who wrote few disciplinary referrals, scored higher than the average participant in empathy, and preferred an authoritative style of classroom management. In the next section, Cathy Spencer and Michael Curtis represent the opposite of Jennifer and Brianna. These teachers wrote many referrals, scored low in empathy on the BEES, and indicated an authoritarian classroom preference on the CMP.

Cathy Spencer

"Both semesters, I was the leading referral writer," Cathy Spencer announces with pride. She had self-reported on the demographic survey that she wrote at least 50 referrals in the past year.

Cathy has been teaching in public schools for sixteen years. She started her career as a coach and P.E. instructor at a middle school in a small rural town. After five years, she began a succession of positions in various sized high schools where she

coached and taught in the classroom. She has held her current position as a coach, P.E. instructor, and classroom teacher for three years.

“I use more expectations than rules,” Cathy explains as she begins to discuss her classroom management approach. Her expectations appear to be a means to exert control over her students. “This is what I expect from you all,” she will tell her students. Participation and cooperation, and “staying on top of your grades” are of highest priority for her whether in the gym or in the classroom. She continues by saying, “I don’t feel like I’m horribly strict. I just feel like I’m firm.” However, she then again stresses the idea of expectations for her students, “This is what I expect, you follow, and we’ll get along.” Her statement is emphatic as she speaks without hesitation. There appears to be little reciprocity in her teaching technique. They are her rules, and the students are expected to follow them. In answering the survey questions on the CMP, Cathy had scored 14 out of 15 for the authoritarian classroom management style preference. Her classroom expectations seem to corroborate this score.

In Cathy’s written response to Anthony throwing pennies in the classroom, she wrote, “At this point I would write a referral for the disruptive behavior of Anthony.” Although other respondents simply gave Anthony a warning for this first offense, Cathy, as with the other participants that scored high in authoritarian preference, chose immediately to write a referral rather than use other means to stop the disruptive behavior. She continued her response by explaining her decision, “Even good students need correction for inappropriate behavior. Everybody needs to be held accountable for their actions. Holding students to different standards can tear apart a classroom. Teachers

who do this will lose the respect of their students.” This attitude, however, appears to contradict the following remarks she made while being interviewed.

During our interview, Cathy explained her classroom management philosophy. “My saying is . . . you can’t be fair with everybody but you can be right by everybody.” If you and I are in the same class, with the same teacher, with the same assignment due, you know, you have a great home life and I may have a horrible home life. I may have to work from four o’clock to twelve o’clock each night, to help pay the bills. That’s not a fair situation, as far as getting homework done. Now, as your teacher, I don’t feel like I can be fair, but I can be right by you in your situation and do right by me in my situation. That’s how I’ve always perceived it.

Cathy started to talk immediately about her coaching experience, which seemed again to contradict what was just stated.

She began to recount one specific incident that took place during softball season several years ago. “My policy was, when you miss practice, you had X amount of running to do to make-up for it, it wasn’t much, it wasn’t horrible, and you didn’t get to play. I had a girl that went to and tried out for softball for college, and she didn’t get to play the next game.” She paused for a moment after she recalled this story. Then rather pensively, she said, “Looking back on it now, I wish I’d done a few of those things just a little bit differently.” By the affecting tone of her voice, she seemed genuinely remorseful for this decision; however, she admitted that she continues to abide by her rule of no practice–no play, following the rule with complete inflexibility.

Returning to the question regarding her style of classroom management, Cathy continued, “I think it depends a lot on the situation, how volatile or how it could effect the safety of other students, or staff, or however.” In the written response case of Brandon, a student who enters the classroom clearly agitated after having been to the dean, Cathy’s response indicated that she would “take him into the hallway to try to de-escalate the situation.” Although she took the time to speak with Brandon, she did not seem to give credence to Brandon’s concerns or opinions. She immediately followed that “If he continued to be defiant, I would write a referral for inappropriate actions.” This example of a quick response to write a referral for a student that is obviously emotionally upset seems to support her score on the BEES. Cathy scored 8 on the survey while the mean for the respondents was 38.6. A low score (scores can range from -120 to +120) indicates a lower degree of empathy.

In the case of Stephanie and Marla, the two girls who continued to talk in class, Cathy again demonstrated in her written response her haste in using a referral to discipline her students. Although her initial intervention was to talk with the girls, if the disruption continued, she would write a referral. Her response stated, “If it continued I would write referrals on both of them. All students need to have inappropriate behavior corrected. Disrupting the educational process of other students is not acceptable.” During the interview process, she reiterated the need to act swiftly in disciplining students before their behavior escalates. “You have to give the kids a little bit, but it’s one of those, you give ‘em an inch, and they take three miles. I think it’s sort of a case by case scenario.” Cathy epitomizes the teacher who uses student disciplinary referrals as the main means of classroom management. In comparison, many teachers with a preference toward an

authoritative classroom management style simple spoke with them or moved the two students apart for the class period. In contrast to Cathy, Joan Caffey, a special education teacher of 27 years, submitted a response to this scenario that characterizes the answers of most of the participants whose classroom management preference was authoritative and had relatively high BEES scores. Joan had a score of 13 out of 15 for authoritative classroom style and a score of 24 on the BEES. Having written no referrals in the previous year, Joan clearly believed this situation did not warrant the intervention of the dean that Cathy deemed appropriate. Joan wrote, "Sometimes just eye contact and a shake of my head lets the kids know that now is not the time." In addition, Joan was actually willing to let the students leave class to talk with the school counselor. "Perhaps, I would write a pass and allow the girls to talk specifically to our social counselor." Joan concluded her response with some words regarding her general philosophy about handling disciplinary situations in the classroom. "You can't let your feelings and attitude control your actions. . . . When kids are upset, the worst thing you can do is get upset too. Many times teachers' calmness will help the student calm down as well." Joan concluded by writing, "Sometimes just a little sympathy and understanding is all a student needs." Joan's response to this situation is the opposite of Cathy's response and provides an example of how a more empathic teacher might handle a relatively benign incident.

In concluding the interview with Cathy, I inquired about her relationship with students and how she builds connections with them. She replied, "I think I have a fairly good rapport. You know I try to talk to them in the hallways. Converse with them somewhere other than the classroom, you know, 'You going to the football game. You playing football?' You know those types of things." Although Cathy believes she is

developing a means to communicate with her students, her actions in the classroom may be a hindrance to this process. Her forceful control in the classroom would appear to distract from any meaningful relationships she might form with students.

The data collected from Cathy's interview and written responses to classroom scenarios supported the quantitative findings for research questions one through four. Unlike Jennifer and Brianna, she is a teacher who wrote many disciplinary referrals, scored lower than the average participant in empathy, and preferred an authoritarian style of classroom management. In the next section, the findings of Michael Curtis, a teacher with similar data to Cathy, are presented.

Michael Curtis

"I set the rules and procedures in place at the beginning of the school year, so the kids know what I expect," Michael Curtis states. He has been teaching in the same school system for twenty-five years and is currently teaching social studies, although he has also taught English, business, and foreign language. His preferred classroom management preference is strongly authoritarian scoring 12 out of 15 with his next highest total being only six in the laissez-faire category. He also reported that he had written forty referrals during the past school year.

During our conversation, he describes how he uses a system of rewards and punishments to maintain control in his classroom. "I use a series of different promotions to get them to behave the correct way." He continues, "There are certain procedures and benefits to behaving correctly--rewards and such." According to Michael the process is clear and understandable to his students. "They get rewards for doing what they are supposed to do, and they get something taken away or added to them if they don't, and

that's pretty simple." Because of this system that is in place from the beginning of the year, Michael feels that he has few discipline problems. "I talked about how important it is at the beginning of the year that they follow the procedures in the classroom. And normally, I don't have very many problems with that," he asserts with certainty. This method of disciplining his students exerts strict control over their actions. His authoritarian management preference is conducive to this technique of reward and punishment.

In addition to the reward system, Michael maintains a consistent procedure in his classroom. "Upon entering the classroom they have something to do immediately, so their not just playing around. They have board work. There's some kind of review work from the day before, questions over something we covered yesterday, and they need to answer those and be ready to discuss them." This routine enables Michael immediately to get the students on task, which, he maintains, prevents many behavioral problems. "If the kids are working they are going to be less likely to get themselves into trouble. Keeping them on task is the goal."

Michael's expectations of his students are evident through his responses to the written scenarios. In the case of Marla and Stephanie, the two girls talking in class, Michael would immediately send the students out of the classroom with an intervention referral to see the counselor because they refuse to cooperate with the teacher. He cited an incident that occurred last year and explained the steps he took. "I had the same situation with two girls who were excellent students in the class, but they were ignoring my request to stop talking in class. It was an isolated incident. The girls were discussing homecoming king and queen. I wrote an intervention referral to the counselor and called

their parents. The parents were cooperative and understanding. The incident never occurred again.” Michael, as with Cathy, did not use an ordered system of steps prior to writing the referral, but he used the referral process as his first line of action.

In addition, responding to the scenario of Anthony, the student throwing pennies and disrupting the class, Michael had a similar reaction. He wrote, “The student would be removed from the class and assigned detention. I would discuss his behavior with his parents and the dean of students. There should be consequences for his behavior.” Both these responses appear indicative of the way Michael disciplines students in an authoritarian classroom and are not unlike those of other authoritarian participants. One teacher responded to the scenario involving Anthony, by bluntly stating, “I would reprimand this student and tell him his next negative action would involve very negative consequences. All students should be treated with equality. This insures uniform understanding of what is expected and what will be tolerated.”

On the BEES, Michael scored a 16 with the mean at 38.6 indicating he exhibited less empathy than the average participant did. Discussing his interactions with students that are experiencing difficulty in class, he stressed, “Usually, I try to find out if there is a problem. If they don’t understand the question or they don’t want to participate or something like that.” In the scenario with Brandon, the student who enters the room visibly agitated, Michael would discuss his behavior with the student rather than seek to find out what is bothering the student. Again as with Cathy, Michael appears initially to be concerned for the student but during their conversation goes only so far as to deescalate the situation not to understand what is troubling Brandon. In addition, Michael would also request a conference with his parents to determine the relationship of the child

with his parents. He maintained, “The child may be a product of his home environment, or he may have a rebellious attitude.” There were some participants who were not willing to talk at all with Brandon. One teacher who scored -9 on the BEES seemed to express little empathy for a student who was clearly upset. “He needs to step-up and continue with his work. In the real world he will be required to deal with unsavory situations and how he handles himself will determine how far he will go in life.”

Before the interview ends, Michael again reiterates that for the most part the students do not cause disruptions in his class. “I usually don’t have too much trouble with the kids just not doing what I ask them to do. It takes awhile to figure out what works for each kid. One positive stroke might work for one kid, but it won’t work for another kid. I think the key is knowing your kids.” Michael’s responses in general extended the themes of teacher control, lack of reciprocity, and little concern for students’ voice in the classroom. Michael’s responses to the written scenarios and interview support the quantitative findings and mirror what was found in the responses of most of the participants who wrote numerous referrals, scored low on the BEES, and preferred an authoritarian classroom. The next section, will discuss Sarah McCloud, a participant whose responses did not entirely align with the quantitative findings.

Sarah McCloud

Some participants’ scores did not follow the general findings of the quantitative results. Accordingly, I decided to interview Sarah McCloud. Her scores did not correspond directly to the quantitative findings, but her interview held certain insights regarding the results. Sarah wrote 30 referrals during the past school year, indicated a

preference for an authoritarian classroom on the CMP, but registered an average score of 35 on the BEES, higher than her authoritarian counterparts.

“I believe in treating the students equally and with respect,” Sarah states as our interview begins. She has been in her current position for sixteen years as a choir instructor. Prior to moving to the high school level, she taught for twelve years at a middle school. Through her years of teaching, she has developed a classroom philosophy that treats students fairly and equitably. “I trust them until they show me that I can’t trust them. I don’t think I’m a strict disciplinarian.” In contrast to the general findings of this study, Sarah’s statement is not supported by her score on the CMP. Sarah’s authoritarian preference was 13 out of 15 while she scored 6 out of 15 for authoritative classroom management preference.

Sarah continues to speak and focuses on her relationship with students, “They generally like me, but I have to be strict enough that they learn and that they are controlled in the classroom and don’t go crazy.” In her written response to the scenario of Stephanie and Marla, Sarah reiterated her need to keep students from disrupting the learning environment. She responded,

Although these girls do their assignments and make good grades, they need to realize that other students might need to focus on the assignment. I would probably tell the girls that they need to be polite and quit talking because other students needed to listen without distraction.

Maintaining classroom control and providing an environment conducive to learning appears paramount to Sarah.

Sarah seems to be generally concerned about the academic performance of her students and reminds them that non-participation will result in a lowering of their grade. “Their going to have to do their work, and I’ll talk to them first and say, ‘Look we’re stuck with each other. Why don’t you go ahead and sing so you can pass the class and you don’t make an F because it will be a long year otherwise.’” In this statement, she seems to be expressing the theme of reciprocity that was present in Jennifer and Brianna’s responses. In her written response regarding Brandon who was not engaging in the lesson, Sarah wrote, “I would remind him that he needed to do the assignment so that he didn’t receive a zero.” On the CMP, Sarah agreed, “The classroom must be quiet in order for students to learn,” this would be understandable in a choir class that requires active listening on the part of the students. She also agreed, “If a student is disruptive during class, I assign him/her detention, without further discussion.”

As the interview continued, I asked Sarah what usually prompts her to write a referral. “Referrals are automatic if they’re fighting,” she flatly replied. But this answer could not account for the 30 referrals she had written in the previous year. I inquired again, and she spoke about giving only one warning to students who use offensive language in her classroom and then writing a referral. But this still did not appear to account for the numerous referrals written. Eventually, I asked her about her students that did not participate. She said she would attempt to talk with them first; however, if they continued not to sing in class, she would then write a referral. “I send them out on a referral and, of course, they come back and then they are the same way, so I send them on a referral again and then we have a parent conference and then, of course, they never change...,” she continues with a chuckle, “and so I send them some more and eventually

they get out of my class.” This cycle seemed to explain the majority of the referrals Sarah wrote.

Because Sarah submitted 30 referrals but scored 35 on the BEES just below the mean of 38.6, I wanted to talk about her connection with the students. “I think I have good rapport. I think just getting to know me is part of it. I sponsor class organizations, and I sponsor choir club and junior class.” Continuing, she relates the following, “Generally, just knowing that I’m fair and I’m honest with them. If I say I’m going to do something, then I do it. If I threaten them, then I go through with it.” Her tone changes as she begins to talk about her show choir, and she speaks with enthusiasm in her voice. “We do fun things, especially when it comes to performances. We go out around Tulsa and travel a lot. So it’s just getting to know me as a person more than someone up in front of the class.” From her responses on the survey instruments and our interview, Sarah appears to represent an anomaly to the quantitative findings.

Sarah’s authoritarian style may be a result of two factors that can increase disruption in the classroom. First, the courses she teaches are electives that for many are not required for graduation; therefore, there is often little incentive to pass these classes. Secondly, Sarah’s chorus classes often have upwards of 30 students thus the need to keep students focused and disciplined. Because of these large class sizes, multiple warnings before a referral is written may become detrimental to the learning environment; therefore, Sarah would be likely to write more referrals and maintain stricter control of the classroom.

Summary

Research involving student disciplinary referrals, degree of empathy, and classroom management preference is not readily available. This project has explored a region of education few have researched. In this mixed method study, both the quantitative and qualitative data reported that participants with a low degree of empathy wrote more referrals and preferred an authoritarian classroom management style while participants with a higher degree of empathy wrote fewer referrals and preferred an authoritarian classroom. Overall, the findings supported the notion that a change in classroom management practices and an increase in a teacher's empathy can lower the number of disciplinary referrals written; consequently, students would spend less time outside of the classroom learning environment. Chapter 5 offers conclusions and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECCOMENDATIONS

Introduction

Teachers have struggled with student discipline problems since the days of the one-room schoolhouse (Morris & Howard, 2003). Unfortunately, the disciplinary consequences of in school suspension and out of school suspension are not adequate solutions to the student behavioral issues that are prevalent in today's classrooms. There is a legitimate concern that students who are removed from the classroom environment suffer academically. Not only are the students deprived of the educational experiences that occur in the classroom, Shaul (2003) found that the qualifications of those services offered during in school suspension and out of school suspension programs varied widely from district to district. Furthermore, students who have jeopardized their chance at academic success when they were removed from the classroom and are now falling academically behind their peers, are more likely to manifest behavioral problems upon their return to the classroom (Dickinson & Miller, 2006). The disciplinary process in many schools begins with a student disciplinary referral written by a teacher. In the three schools participating in this study, this initial step of a written referral resulted in the student being immediately removed from the classroom or in the student being summoned out of class to the dean's office the following day. Depending on the

infraction, in school suspension or out of school suspension may be assigned. This problem of students being removed from the classroom is exacerbated when teachers write student referrals for seemingly minor offenses. As a teacher, I have watched students fall academically behind when they were assigned days of suspension for a referral written by a teacher that would have simply warranted a warning or telephone call home in my own classroom. In this research, I wanted to examine why some teachers wrote more referrals than others did. This was the impetus for this study that examined whether teachers' levels of empathy and their classroom management preference contributed to the number of student disciplinary referrals written.

Overview of the Study

The research methodology for this mixed method study equally weighted both the quantitative and qualitative analyses to explore the five research questions. The questions were as follows:

1. Is there a relationship between the number of disciplinary referrals a teacher writes and a teacher's level of empathy as measured by the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale?
2. Is there a relationship between the number of disciplinary referrals a teacher writes and a teacher's classroom management style preference as measured by the Classroom Management Profile?
3. Is there a relationship between a teacher's level of empathy as measured by the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale and a teacher's classroom management style preference as measured by the Classroom Management Profile?

4. Is there a significant difference between a teacher's level of empathy as measured by the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale and a teacher's authoritarian and authoritative classroom management style preference as measured by the Classroom Management Profile?
5. What are the perceptions of teachers in a secondary school environment regarding various disciplinary scenarios?

First, data were collected from the following three quantitative instruments: the demographic profile survey, the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale, and the Classroom Management Profile. Along with these instruments, qualitative data were collected from the three written response scenarios. Following the analysis of this data, the researcher selected five teachers to be interviewed. Both the quantitative and qualitative results were used to understand the phenomenon under investigation, the relationship of the number of student disciplinary referrals teachers wrote and their level of empathy and classroom management preference.

Purposeful and convenience sampling were employed to select the three urban high schools where the survey packets were distributed to 220 teachers in August of 2007. Of the 44 (20%) teachers voluntarily returning the survey packets, five participants were purposely selected for the responsive interviewing portion of the data collection. Each teacher was interviewed in his or her classroom for forty-five minutes to one hour. An interview protocol was followed and member checks were conducted by the interview participants, after the transcription, via e-mail. The participants found that the transcript accurately represented their thoughts during the interview. The interview transcripts provided rich description of the teachers' perceptions of their own discipline processes,

classroom management preferences, and personal connections with their students. The quantitative data was analyzed using a Pearson product-moment correlation and an independent samples *t*-test, while the qualitative data was analyzed using Strauss and Corbin's constant comparative coding method. The qualitative findings corroborated the quantitative results and together supported the research questions.

Discussion and Conclusions

The views of the participants in this study revealed common elements that were reported in the findings. Qualitative data analysis corroborated the quantitative data and, additionally, helped explain the data that fell outside the general findings. In addition, through the qualitative data three themes emerged: teacher control, student voice, and teacher/student reciprocity.

A significant relationship was found for question one, is there a relationship between the number of disciplinary referrals a teacher writes and a teacher's level of empathy as measured by the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale? Teachers who wrote more referrals did demonstrate a lower level of empathy, and reversely, teachers who wrote fewer referrals tended to have a higher level of empathy. Teachers with a higher than average empathy score exhibited in their written responses and interviews a tendency to build relationships with their students based on reciprocity and a personal connection to students on an individual basis.

For question two, is there a relationship between the number of disciplinary referrals a teacher writes and a teacher's classroom management style preference as measured by the Classroom Management Profile?, the results indicated a significant relationship. Teachers who wrote more referrals favored an authoritarian classroom

management style; whereas, teachers who wrote less referrals than their counterparts preferred an authoritative classroom management style. The assertive control of the authoritarian teachers, as evidenced in their responses to interview questions and in their written responses, was associated with numerous referrals. These same teachers also did not allow students to discuss and ask questions in the classroom. Conversely, it was shown that there was a tendency for the teachers who accepted the opinions of their students into the classroom and required less direct power over their students wrote the fewest referrals.

For question three, is there a relationship between a teacher's level of empathy as measured by the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale and a teacher's classroom management style preference as measured by the Classroom Management Profile?, again a significant relationship was determined. Teachers with low empathy preferred an authoritarian classroom management style and had a propensity to appear domineering in the classroom. An authoritative style of classroom management was preferred by teachers with empathy higher than the participants' average. These teachers who were inclined to prefer an authoritative style of management used more subtle, understated control. Two of the interviews, Jennifer and Brianna, provided clear insight into the theme of teacher/student reciprocity, as these teachers definitely made an effort to create a classroom environment in which teachers and students worked together with mutual respect for each other. Both teachers specifically stressed in their interviews and in their responses to the scenarios that they desired a classroom environment in which respect between the students and teacher was mutual. The techniques they used in the classroom to maintain discipline, such as talking with the students in private and using a four step

approach to discipline, exemplified the reciprocal relationships of respect that had been previously established.

As a final point, a significant difference was found between teachers' level of empathy and a teachers' authoritarian and authoritative classroom management style preference. For question five, what are the perceptions of teachers in a secondary school environment regarding various disciplinary scenarios?, the views expressed by the teachers regarding the three disciplinary scenarios supported the findings in questions one through four.

Not all of the participants' scores and responses were representative of the overall findings of the study. As demonstrated by Sarah's data other issues may have been a contributing factor in the number of written referrals reported by the participant. Because Sarah taught an elective in which many students were enrolled with little desire to participate and, additionally, it was necessary for her to handle larger than average class sizes, she resorted to writing referrals to maintain discipline though she showed a higher than average level of empathy toward her students.

In this study, the mixing of the quantitative and qualitative methodologies resulted in various types of data being collected that were then analyzed by the researcher. The results of the statistical analysis were able to answer the research questions, but it was the rich description of qualitative data that provided the in depth understanding of the findings. The results held forth in this study are more trustworthy because of this integration.

Recommendations

While the findings of this research are particular to the district, school settings, and teachers studied, some provisional recommendations for staff development and areas that could be further researched surfaced.

Empathy Training

Although research is scarce involving teacher empathy in the high school classroom and its relationship to student referrals, there has been research conducted regarding the effectiveness of empathy training with pre-service teachers, special education teachers and medical professionals (Davis, 1983; Ensign, 2002). Unfortunately, only a few research studies have indicated a need to implement empathy experiences as part of staff development for the professional growth of teachers (Aspy, 1975; Davis, 1983; Ensign, 2002).

John Kremer and Laura Dietzen (1991) concluded, “Empathy training should be available to all persons to help them live life and meet its crises more effectively” (p. 69). There does seem to be an untapped resource that school districts are not taking advantage of in the area of empathy training. According to Ensign (2002). “Staff development is essential for today’s teachers, and bringing empathy and a new understanding of what children are encountering each day should be an important part of staff development in the 21st century” (p.108). David Aspy (1975) concluded teachers needed to empathize with the struggles of a student to understand more thoroughly the process of instructing the students during the educational process. This ability to empathize with the students will allow the teacher to become more effective in instruction. The results of this study, which indicated that teachers with higher levels of empathy wrote fewer disciplinary

referrals, suggest that empathy training would be an advantageous use of professional development resources. The implementation of staff development focusing on increasing teachers' empathy could decrease the number of disciplinary referrals written and the period of time students are removed from the classroom environment. Additionally, the training could afford a gain in teachers' understanding that is necessary to support their students' needs educationally and emotionally. The following section reviews three studies that including empathy training as part of staff development or college course work. Each provides insight into the possible uses of empathy training at the high school level and demonstrates the effectiveness of such programs.

There have been several studies on the effects of empathy training. Generally, the studies have focused on medical professionals; most notably, staff development for nurses that included empathy training experiences has been documented to be successful in research (Ensign, 2002). Most of these studies reported that the implementation of empathy training for nurses significantly influenced the participants' level of empathy and their understanding of their patients.

Elaine La Monica, RN, Ed.D, of Teachers College at Columbia University studied 56 nurses working with cancer patients, who received a sixteen hour empathy training program. "After exploring what an empathic response is, the nurses practiced perceiving the patient's feelings, building responses that reflect those feelings, and making sure the patient knows they do indeed understand his feelings" (Nurse's Notebook, 1984, p. 63) The data indicated positive results from the training. The patients of these nurses were found to be "significantly less anxious, hostile, and depressed than the patients of a group of 53 nurses who took a course in physical assessment" (1984, p. 62). This study

demonstrated the transformative power nurses, with minimal training in empathy, can have on their patients well being.

An experimental study at the University of Haifa involved 51 social work students working with clients at their practicum sites. The study assessed the outcome of The Empathy Training Program, a course that lasted forty hours over a five month period. The process which each participant learned was carried out in the following four stages: recording interviews, developing hypotheses about the client's statements, developing hypotheses about the trainee's statements, and verifying hypotheses (Erera, 1997). The findings indicated that there was a statistically significant improvement in the group's mean empathy scores after the training program was completed. The qualitative data further suggest that the program improved students' in-depth assessment and understanding of clients, developed their response repertory, and increased their independence (1997). The results achieved from this study are also key factors in the relationships teachers build with their students. Such empathy training as in this study, if conducted with pre-service teachers, could be a valuable asset in an overall teacher preparation program.

Within the educational field, a few research studies have shown the use of empathy staff development to be effective in providing pre-service and special education staff with the understanding and resources they need to support students with disabilities (Ensign, 2002). The Klutz study, one of the most well known studies involving empathy training, involved pre-service special education teachers and the implementation of empathy staff development. The purpose of the Klutz study was two fold: first, determine the ways pre-service teachers develop empathy for the difficulties special needs students

demonstrate and secondly, determine to what extent the pre-service teachers learned how to motivate and support special needs students (2002). Ensign (2002) noted that the training involved “having students personally experience trying to learn a skill when there are major obstacles, and in the process to learn skills for effectively teaching students with special needs in the regular classroom” (p.106). The study concluded, “Using an extensive experiential assignment as a base for an entire special education course is an effective and meaningful way for students to develop empathy for students with special needs and learn course content” (p. 112). The Klutz study, confirmed that empathy training could create a better understanding of how students learn; in addition, this training provided a foundation for new teachers working with special needs students.

The implication from these findings suggests that the use of staff development opportunities that are based in empathy building experiences would be beneficial for teachers in all areas and levels of education.

Classroom Management

Besides empathy training, professional development programs, also, should focus on developing authoritative methods of classroom management. A teacher’s competency in the classroom is often predicated on maintaining an orderly, productive learning environment (Evertson, 2001). Teachers require more opportunities to explore various methodologies to aid in managing students’ behavior. Several studies, which have surveyed teachers, reported the need for more professional development opportunities in classroom management.

In one study, the majority of 176 secondary teachers surveyed viewed classroom management skills to be of major importance (Merrett & Wheldall, 1993). Moreover,

almost three-quarters of the teachers in this study were dissatisfied with the classroom management training they received from their undergraduate teacher preparation courses. The participants confirmed that professional development concerned with understanding student behavior and effectively managing a classroom would be well received (1993). Another study of 281 students preparing to teach in junior high schools, found similar reactions from the participants (Zeidner, 1988). The researcher reported, “Again and again, teachers have been reported to judge student misbehavior and classroom discipline to be among the most difficult and disturbing aspects of the teaching experience as well as a major factor contributing to teacher discontent and burnout (p. 69). Unfortunately, another study concluded that professors in teacher preparation programs inadequately prepare students for managing a classroom of students. Until recently, the study suggested, ad hoc solutions and the suggestion that “This worked for me” sufficed as training for new teachers (Merrett & Wheldall, 1993). In my own training to become a secondary teacher, emphasis was placed on curriculum content while classroom management and student behavior was rarely discussed. Because entry year teachers often arrive at their new classrooms inadequately prepared to supervise their students, research findings indicate, they often resort to the traditional authoritative methods of discipline that they experienced as a student (1993). At this juncture in education when emphasis on standards and assessments are alienating many students and causing more disruption in the classroom, it is imperative that classroom management center on an authoritative approach (Tidwell, Flannery, & Lewis-Palmer, 2003).

One approach to classroom management will be discussed to provide insight into a methodology available to teachers. The approach was developed by William Glasser and centers on the concepts of an authoritative classroom management style.

Glasser's choice theory offers a tangible alternative to the stimulus-response theory advocated in most authoritarian classroom environments. Choice theory provides an explanation of motivation based on the belief that humans are internally, not externally motivated and outside events do not control our behavior. It is what is important and satisfying to individuals that direct their behavior (Glasser, 2001). Glasser (1997) maintained, "Choice theory teaches that we are all driven by four psychological needs embedded in our genes: the need to belong, the need for power, the need for freedom, and the need for fun" (p. 19). These needs according to Glasser are as fundamental to survival as the basic requirements of water, food, and shelter.

By giving students choice in designing curriculum that will prepare them for life beyond high school and in selecting the pace by which they complete assignments, these needs students bring to the classroom can be realized. In the selection of the curriculum, Glasser stressed the necessity to de-emphasize memory tasks and incorporate critical thinking into lessons, and in regard to pacing, students should be given a choice as to when tests are given and assignments are due (Emmer, 1986). In addition, it is the teacher's task to assist students in making sensible choices and understanding the connection between their behavior and the consequences that can occur (1986). However, if this method of classroom management is to be successful, students must be afforded opportunities for discussion in the classroom (Glasser, 2001). The students' expression of

their own opinions and feelings is paramount to establish the mutual relationship between student and teacher for choice theory to be successful.

Though various other classroom management theories have been developed and numerous discipline practices applied in the classroom, Glasser's choice theory provides a clear option for teachers who are seeking to develop their authoritative classroom management style.

Further Research

It is evident that the findings of this study and the recommendations provided can be beneficial to school districts and higher educational institutions. However, the findings provided from this research have left more questions to be answered. Consequently, further research could be conducted in a number of areas.

1. Initially, additional research using the existing data collected could be completed regarding the relationship between explanatory factors, such as gender, years of experience, or type of certification, and a teacher's level of empathy. Training may be able to increase empathy, but there may also be mitigating factors that determine a teacher's level of empathy. A further understanding of the phenomenon of empathy would aid in directing how training is implemented and what type of training is best suited for the teacher population being assessed.
2. Classroom observations of several of the participants could also be conducted. As another qualitative means of accessing the level of empathy and classroom management style, classroom observations would be a valuable additional tool in this study.

3. Another area of study would involve empathy training and teachers' classroom management preference. It is not know if an increase in the level of a teacher's empathy will significantly alter their classroom management style or if further training in authoritative classroom management methods would be necessary. By implementing an empathy training program throughout a school, research could be conducted through pre and post tests to determine if there was a significant change in management style. This study could determine how best to utilize staff development resources in the future.
4. Tangentially, it is imperative that pre-service teacher programs at higher educational institutions implement empathy training and classroom management training for students entering the education field. Teachers cannot be expected to automatically possess an empathic understanding of their students if they have had no empathy training nor can they be expected to use authoritative classroom management methodologies if they have not been exposed to them. Many teachers will enter the teaching profession relying on student disciplinary referrals as the primary means of discipline if alternatives are not offered.

Concluding Remarks

The disciplinary procedures, teacher written referrals, and disciplinary consequences, in school suspension and out of school suspension, that many schools utilize today are removing students from the classroom learning environment at an alarming rate. This study used quantitative and qualitative methods to explore how empathy and classroom management relate to written referrals. The research found that a teacher's level of empathy and their classroom management preference style have a

significant relationship to the number of referrals a teacher writes. If the number of referrals a teacher writes can be decreased, students will not as often be removed from the classroom, the optimum learning environment.

The challenges involved in the relationships teachers form with their students abound. Empathy is one component of this dyad teachers must explore. A complex and fascinating phenomenon, teacher empathy can enhance the connections that develop between teacher and student. In addition, the need for teachers to explore their own classroom management preferences is paramount. Teachers who incorporate the methods of an authoritative style will establish an environment of mutual understanding. Each of these aspects of education, empathy and classroom management, when applied in the classroom will enhance the learning experience of students.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Letter to Administrators

Lauren Skvarla
1419 S. Jamestown Ave.
Tulsa, OK 74112

August 15, 2007

Dear, Mr. _____,

I am currently a doctoral student at Oklahoma State University working on my dissertation. I would like to gather data for my study in your building.

The purpose of the study is to determine the relationship between teacher empathy, classroom management styles, and number of referrals written by teachers.

The survey packet, I would like to distribute to all your teachers through their school mailbox, includes an instruction sheet, demographic information sheet, the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale, Classroom Management Profile Test, and three free response Classroom Management Scenarios, and a stamped envelope for return mailing.

Teachers will have the opportunity to volunteer to be interviewed if they wish. Selected follow-up interviews will take place by phone or in person outside of the school day. I will individually arrange times with selected teachers.

The collection of this data will not interfere with the learning environment for teachers or students. Students will be described generically if at all.

The data of this study will be kept private. Any written results will not include information that will identify any teacher. Research records will be stored securely and only the researchers and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records. It is possible that the consent process and data collection will be observed by research oversight staff responsible for safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of people who participate in research. At the time that the packets are returned to the primary investigators, the data will be coded with corresponding numbers. The signed consent forms will be separated from the survey data to be stored separately from the data. The data will be stored at the residence of the primary investigator. Survey data will be stored in locked storage containers. Only the primary investigators will have access to the data. All data will be kept for five years after the publication of the study. After this time, all data will be destroyed.

Sincerely,

Lauren Skvarla

APPENDIX B

Cover Sheet

I know you are all busy this time of year, but

**please help me gather
information for my dissertation**

The surveys you have received will not take
long to fill out and return.

**Thank you,
AND ENJOY YOUR DRINK!**

**Lauren Skvarla
Classroom Teacher
Hale High School**

If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact

Dr. Sue C. Jacobs, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-1676, irb@okstate.edu;

Dr. Pam Brown, 204 Willard, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-8004, pamela.u.brown@okstate.edu; or

Lauren Skvarla, 1419 S. Jamestown Ave. Tulsa, OK 74112, 918-747-6570, l.skvarla@okstate.edu.

APPENDIX C

Instruction Sheet

Instruction Sheet

This survey will collect data to be used in my doctoral dissertation.

The completion of the survey is voluntary and anonymous and will take approximately 15-30 minutes.

- **Read the instructions on EACH page carefully.**
- **Complete each section on the forms provided.**
- **Please answer ALL the questions (there are no wrong answers).**

The records of this study will be kept private.

Any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records. It is possible that the consent process and data collection will be observed by research oversight staff responsible for safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of people who participate in research. You may withdraw at any time from the project with out reprisal or penalty.

If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact

Dr. Sue C. Jacobs, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-1676, irb@okstate.edu;

Dr. Pam Brown, 204 Willard, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-8004, pamela.u.brown@okstate.edu; or

Lauren Skvarla, 1419 S. Jamestown Ave. Tulsa, OK 74112, 918-747-6570, l.skvarla@okstate.edu.

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent Document

Project Title: Teacher Empathy in the High School Classroom

Primary Investigators: Lauren Skvarla and Pamela Brown

Purpose:

The purpose of the research study is to identify the role of teacher empathy in the high school classroom and determine the relationship between teachers' empathy, classroom management styles, and the number of referrals written. You are being asked to participate to represent a cross-section of this school district. You will provide, through the completion of the survey information regarding your level of empathic understanding and classroom management techniques.

Procedures:

The instruments used include the Balance Emotional Empathy Scale and the Classroom Management Profile test. In addition, there is a series of three free-response, classroom management scenarios that the participants will be asked to respond to in writing. Lastly, interviews will be conducted with those participants that volunteer and are then purposely selected. Subjects selected will represent the extremes of the subjects' results expressing the most empathic to the least empathic. The expected duration of the subject's participation is approximately 30 to 40 minutes. For subjects selected to be interviewed the duration of the interview will not exceed 2 hours and will include no more than two individual interactions. Interviews will take place in the subject's classroom after school hours.

Risks of Participation:

There are no known risks associated with this project, which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Benefits:

The benefit of this study is that the researcher will present information to society regarding teacher empathy within public schools. This research when reviewed by educators and administrators will provide insight into alternative means of addressing classroom management problems.

Confidentiality:

The data of this study will be kept private. Any written results will not include information that will identify any teacher or student. Only the researchers and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records. It is possible that the consent process and data collection will be observed by research oversight staff responsible for safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of people who participate in the research.

CONTINUE ON REVERSE SIDE

APPENDIX F

Full Length Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale (BEES)

*Copyright material available from Albert Mehrabian, 1130 Alta Mesa Road, Monterey,
CA 93940.

APPENDIX G

Classroom Management Profile (CMP)

Answer the following 12 questions. Read each statement carefully. Respond to each statement based upon either actual or imagined classroom experience using the scale below

1. = Strongly Disagree
2. = Disagree
3. = Neutral
4. = Agree
5. = Strongly Agree

- _____ 1. If a student is disruptive during class, I assign him/her to detention, without further discussion.
- _____ 2. I don't want to impose any rules on my students.
- _____ 3. The classroom must be quiet in order for students to learn.
- _____ 4. I am concerned about both what my students learn and how they learn.
- _____ 5. If a student turns in a late homework assignment, it is not my problem.
- _____ 6. I don't want to reprimand a student because it might hurt his/her feelings.
- _____ 7. Class preparation isn't worth the effort.
- _____ 8. I always try to explain the reasons behind my rules and decisions.
- _____ 9. I will not accept excuses from a student who is tardy.
- _____ 10. The emotional well-being of my students is more important than classroom control.
- _____ 11. My students understand that they can interrupt my lecture if they have a relevant question.
- _____ 12. If a student requests a hall pass, I always honor the request.

The classroom management styles are adaptations of the parenting styles discussed in *Adolescence*, by John T. Santrock. They were adapted by Kris Bosworth, Kevin McCracken, Paul Haakenson, Marsha Ritter Jones, Anne Grey, Laura Versaci, Julie James, and Ronen Hammer.

APPENDIX I

Student Disciplinary Referral

REFERRAL FOR DISCIPLINARY REASONS -

Public Schools - 2005-06

Page 1 of 1

Student Number: _____ School: _____ Code: _____ Date: _____ Grade: _____
 Student's Last Name: _____ First: _____ M.I.: _____ Male Female
 Teacher Number: _____ Period: _____ Time: _____ AM PM
 Race: American Indian Asian Hispanic Black White

Offense Information (Check Only One)

<input type="checkbox"/> 65 Abusive Language/Behavior toward Staff	<input type="checkbox"/> 20 Fireworks	<input type="checkbox"/> 31 Possession of Stolen Property
<input type="checkbox"/> 57 Aggravated Assault & Battery	<input type="checkbox"/> 38 Gang Behavior	<input type="checkbox"/> 63 Provoking/Intimidating Behavior
<input type="checkbox"/> 33 Arson (must call Fire Marshall)	<input type="checkbox"/> 10 Gang Symbols	<input type="checkbox"/> 37 Racial Disability Harassment
<input type="checkbox"/> 47 Battery	<input type="checkbox"/> 28 Gambling	<input type="checkbox"/> 24 Reckless Driving
<input type="checkbox"/> 51 Battery Against School Personnel	<input type="checkbox"/> 49 Grand Larceny	<input type="checkbox"/> 69 Refusal to Submit to a Search
<input type="checkbox"/> 44 Bomb Threat	<input type="checkbox"/> 07 Harassment/Verbal Abuse-inc. bullying	<input type="checkbox"/> 03 Refusal to Work or Follow Directions
<input type="checkbox"/> 46 Burglary	<input type="checkbox"/> 64 Hazing	<input type="checkbox"/> 39 Riotous Behavior
<input type="checkbox"/> 08 Bus Misconduct	<input type="checkbox"/> 45 Intent to Distribute Drugs/Alcohol	<input type="checkbox"/> 71 Refusal to Serve Suspension Options
<input type="checkbox"/> 53 Conspiracy	Specify Type	<input type="checkbox"/> 21 Robbery
<input type="checkbox"/> 48 Disorderly Conduct	<input type="checkbox"/> 18 Leaving Campus w/out Permission	<input type="checkbox"/> 36 Sexual Harassment
<input type="checkbox"/> 09 Disrespect	<input type="checkbox"/> 06 Leaving Without Permission	<input type="checkbox"/> 43 Sexual Offenses (explain below)
<input type="checkbox"/> 04 Disruptive Behavior	<input type="checkbox"/> 19 Misuse of Computing Resources	<input type="checkbox"/> 40 Threat with a Dangerous Weapon
<input type="checkbox"/> 68 Endangerment	<input type="checkbox"/> 32 Petit Larceny	<input type="checkbox"/> 56 Threat with Intent to Kill
<input type="checkbox"/> 16 Excessive Referrals	<input type="checkbox"/> 41 Possession of a Firearm	<input type="checkbox"/> 11 Tobacco
<input type="checkbox"/> 34 Extortion	<input type="checkbox"/> 26 Possession, Ownership, or Use of Illegal Drugs/Alcohol	<input type="checkbox"/> 05 Use of Profanity
<input type="checkbox"/> 22 False Alarms	Specify Type	<input type="checkbox"/> 58 Verbal/Written Threat Against Staff
<input type="checkbox"/> 14 Failure to Identify	<input type="checkbox"/> 27 Possession of Other Substances/Materials	<input type="checkbox"/> 23 Trespassing
<input type="checkbox"/> 12 Fighting	Specify Type	<input type="checkbox"/> 30 Vandalism/Graffiti
<input type="checkbox"/> 70 Fighting at an Extracurricular Event	<input type="checkbox"/> 29 Possession of a Weapon other than firearm (including look-a-likes)	<input type="checkbox"/> 42 Verbal or Written Threat
	Specify Type	<input type="checkbox"/> 25 Wireless Telecomm. Devices
		<input type="checkbox"/> 13 Other (explain below)

EXPLANATION

Teacher Request for Parent Conference Teacher's Signature _____

DISCIPLINARY ACTION TAKEN

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 09 Alternative School | <input type="checkbox"/> 11 Bus Suspension | <input type="checkbox"/> 01 Conferred with Student | <input type="checkbox"/> 08 Contract with Student |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10 Detention | <input type="checkbox"/> 12 In-School Intervention | <input type="checkbox"/> 14 Long-Term Suspension | <input type="checkbox"/> 02 Parent Conference |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 03 Parent/Team/Student Conference | <input type="checkbox"/> 06 Probation | <input type="checkbox"/> 20 Referred to Counselor | <input type="checkbox"/> 05 Referral to Police |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 07 Referred to Special Services | <input type="checkbox"/> 04 Staffing | <input type="checkbox"/> 13 Suspension | <input type="checkbox"/> 15 Time-Out Room |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16 Other (Please Comment) | | | |

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

From _____ (date) Through _____ (date) TOTAL Days Assigned/Suspended: _____ Admin/Couns. Number: _____

Date Action Taken: _____ Duplicate Referral yes | no Offense Category (1) _____

METHOD 1 Phone | 2 Mail | 3 Conference | Date: _____

COMMENTS

Signature of Person Handling Referral: _____ Date: _____

1/11/2006

APPENDIX J

Institutional Review Board Approval

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Monday, June 04, 2007

IRB Application No ED0760

Proposal Title: Teacher Empathy in the Secondary Classroom

Reviewed and
Processed as: Expedited

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Protocol Expires: 6/3/2008

Principal

Investigator(s)

Lauren Skvarla
1419 S. Jamestown
Tulsa, OK 74112

Pamela Brown
237 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

The reviewer(s) had these comments:
As you receive approval from the principals/administrators of each school, please submit these to the IRB for our records.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 219 Cordell North(phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Sue C. Jacobs, Chair
Institutional Review Board

VITA

Lauren Skvarla

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy or Other

Thesis: THE USE OF STUDENT DISCIPLINARY REFERRALS BY HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS AS IT RELATES TO EMPATHY AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Major Field: Curriculum and Social Foundations

Biographical:

Personal Data:

Born in Red Bank, New Jersey, on March 8, 1964

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Education at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2008.

Experience:

2005-Present, Secondary English teacher, Tulsa Public Schools, Oklahoma;

2004-2005, Middle School English teacher, Tahlequah Public Schools, Oklahoma;

1997-2002, Secondary English teacher, Broken Arrow Public Schools, Oklahoma;

1995-1997, Secondary English teacher, Muskogee Public Schools, Oklahoma;

Professional Memberships:

American Educational Research Association;

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development;

Oklahoma Educational Association.

Name: Lauren Skvarla

Date of Degree: May, 2008

Institution: Oklahoma State University

Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: THE USE OF STUDENT DISCIPLINARY REFERRALS BY HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS AS IT RELATES TO EMPATHY AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Pages in Study: 150

Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major Field: Curriculum and Social Foundations

Scope and Method of Study: Student disciplinary referrals result in students missing valuable classroom experiences. The purpose of this research was to study teachers at three urban high schools in terms of number of student discipline referrals, teacher level of empathy, and classroom management preference. This study employed mixed methods. Three survey instruments, responses to three written response scenarios, and five teacher interviews, employed over a month period, were the primary source of data for this research design. Quantitatively, Pearson product-moment correlations and an independent samples *t*-test were used to analyze the data. Qualitatively, data were analyzed using a constant comparative method. The mixing of quantitative and qualitative results occurred in the interpretation of the study. By analyzing and triangulating the scores from the survey instruments, written responses, and interview data findings were validated. Qualitative findings supported survey results.

Findings and Conclusions: It was found that a higher than average level of empathy by a teacher and a classroom environment that implements authoritative management principles can significantly decrease the number of student discipline referrals that teacher writes. Conversely, it was also found that a teacher with a lower than average level of empathy and an authoritarian classroom management preference write significantly more written referrals. Because of these findings, training in empathy and classroom management should be implemented as part of teacher preparation programs and teacher professional development.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Pamela U. Brown
