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Does Caring Matter?: A Qualitative Study of Urban African American Alternative School Students Perceptions of Their School Experiences, Past and Present

Victoria Berger

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DOES CARING MATTER? : A

QUALITATIVE STUDY OF URBAN AFRICAN AMERICAN ALTERNATIVE

SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF

THEIR SCHOOL EXPERIENCES,

PAST AND PRESENT

by

Victoria Magi Berger, M.Ed.

Submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program for Educational Leaders

School of Education

Duquesne University

May, 2006

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
INTERDISCIPLINARY DOCTORAL PROGRAM FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
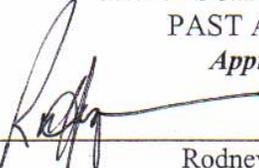For the Degree of Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)

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February 6, 2006
DOES CARING MATTER? : A
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STUDENTS PERCEPTIONS OF
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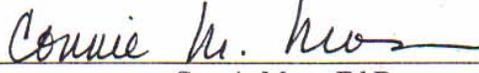
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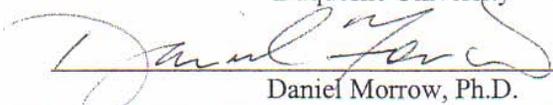
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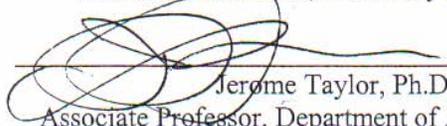
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Abstract

A cultural mismatch among African American school students and their teachers, due to diverse values, norms, and expectations, often provokes inappropriate teacher response to student conduct, thereby inciting disruptive student behavior. The management of this diversity when the environment is devoid of a teacher's sensitivity to the student's life can impact students' behavior, and ultimately, initiate an alternative school referral. This study examines such student-teacher interactions through the lens provided by the analogous dynamics of iatrogenic harm, wherein an intervention by a medical or other specialist results in additional impairment or disease. This study intends to reveal, through the voice of the urban African American alternative school student, how a teacher's response to student behavior can inadvertently create a condition in the student that spurs problematic behavior. What is crucial to positive environment maintenance is the teacher's understanding of how culturally motivated actions can be construed as negative. Their choice to respond in a way that creates positive interaction can help strengthen the student/teacher relationship. Through stories of the researcher, participants, and other students, this study will qualify the unspoken, and glorify the lives of those who might otherwise not be heard.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful for this forum to thank those who've helped me along the road to "doctorateville". The support of many has contributed to my drive to develop and complete this process. First, I will take this time to thank my chair, Dr. Rodney Hopson, for challenging me, being patient with me, and providing endless support. Through him, I have developed a new level of understanding of research, of myself, of my passions, and of my dreams.

Next, I must remark on the role of my father in my drive to make a difference in the lives of others. Dear Dad, your death and not knowing you must be how I got here. This document is a testament to finding you in me.

Now, I will thank my dearest mother, my quirky step-father, and my eccentric sister. They deserve a little piece of this pie for believing in me 100% of every minute of every day. You always knew I could do it, even when I didn't. Your confidence carried me, and I love you all.

Dr. Connie Moss, Dr. Jerome Taylor, and Dr. Daniel Morrow, my fearless committee members, thank you for supporting me! Each of you brought a refreshing and valuable perspective to my work. I am grateful to have had each of you on my ride.

To my IDPEL advisory group, Jake, Linda, Sue, Tom, and Patrick, I thank each of you for understanding me and allowing me to grow through the strength of our group. I am honored to have had the opportunity to be a part of, what will always be, the strongest team I have ever experienced.

I thank Marc D. Trivane and Kimberly Hardin for many of the same reasons, yet in totally different realms. You both have stock in my success. Your unending energy aimed at making me believe in me and love me has been the "super" in the glue that has held me together through the past four years of this painful (yet rewarding process). Marc, what do I say? You are in my soul, so deeply rooted that I know our friendship will outlast our lives together. Kim, I know you would tell me I did it myself, but I need to take this time to let you know: I couldn't have done this without you. Your teachings have given me wings.

Finally, I honor my students and my staff for their role in the passions, frustrations, and energy that drive me. For my students, you are important, your stories matter, and I am proud to be your principal. To my staff, each of you represents a change-agent. Together, we make a difference in the lives of our students.

Dedication

To All of Those Who Need to Be Heard,

Your Voice Matters, and Your Stories Count

It has been interesting, different, helpful and I am thankful that I have been here and appreciate my principal and teachers because if it were not for my teachers I would be at another school losing my mind. I have learned a lot since I have been here. I love coming to school most of the time, and when I say I hate it here, that's just a train of thought, but these teachers make good decisions. They make people not want to do the wrong thing. We walk in here with a little, and leave knowing a lot. What school do you know that will do the things that this alternative school done not only for me but for other students? We should thank the principal and the teachers, even Mr. X and Mrs. Y who are the most annoying teachers here. They take care of us.

Journal entry by 9th grade student, 9/05

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Circumstances Leading to the Problem

Problem students are, according to many teachers, a disruption to the learning process. One solution to the problem may include placing the student outside of the regular school. Since the late 1960s and early 1970s, problematic students have been sent to alternative schools for a variety of reasons, such as: academic failure, poor attendance, a persistent negative attitude, and physical aggression. In the United States, both public and private alternative schools accommodate students from a variety of backgrounds, and attempt to provide an array of special services. This study will focus exclusively on an alternative school in a small urban and distressed neighborhood that serves African American students who were referred to the alternative school because of behavioral problems.

Like most traditional schools in urban districts, a large number of these alternative schools cater to African American students, and employ a predominately Caucasian teaching staff (Bigler, 2002; Chisholm, 1994; Delpit, 1988; Kunjufu, 2002). This is inescapable considering that in 2001, 90% of all teachers in the National Education Association (NEA) were white, indicating an increase from 1971 when 88% of all NEA teachers were white. Likewise, Toppo (2003) indicates that teachers, including those outside of the NEA, are made up of 84% Caucasians and 14 % minorities. The disparate values, norms, and expectations of these cultural groups (urban and minority students, and middle

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class teachers) in both the regular and alternative education schools create a cultural mismatch that can influence a teacher's decision as to what problem behaviors are, and how they should be managed (Chisholm, 1994). The cultural mismatch that this jointure creates may be a contributing factor in the disproportionately high incidents of African American students facing suspension, expulsion, discipline, and placement in alternative schools (Utley, Kozleski, Smith, & Draper, 2002).

In the discourses of diagnosing and prescribing interventions or planning remediation for 'problematic' student behaviors, the focus has been predominantly on the student. How a teacher responds to problematic behaviors or what the teacher was doing prior to the occurrence of the problem behavior rarely comes into question. I would like to shift that focus onto the teacher, and examine how teachers' misapprehension of and reaction to the behaviors of urban, at-risk, African American students in the regular school setting can be harmful to that student. The following case study, utilizing the grounded theory methodology and components of ethnography, examines student perception of their present alternative school and previous regular school experiences.

There is likelihood that alternative school students who cannot succeed in alternative schools will face much more serious consequences. Students who are unable to succeed in alternative schools are often sent to approved private schools, residential programs, juvenile detention facilities, and even jail. Approved private programs, which from my experience are the most-likely post-alternative school placement, utilize physical restraint, involuntary administration

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of psychotropic or sedation medications, locked time-out rooms, and programming with other students who qualify as seriously mentally disturbed.

Statement of the Problem

Many teachers who come from a cultural background different from their students may misunderstand caring in the context of the student's particular culture (Bailey & Monroe, 2004; Delpit, 1988; Eamon & Altshuler, 2004). Lack of care for African American students perpetuates a cultural mismatch between African American students and teachers. A teacher's understanding and acceptance of his or her students' culture is an integral part of caring for urban African American students that should not be ignored.

Caring about African American students living in an urban, poverty-stricken area involves consideration for the student's life outside of school as it relates to their race, socio-economic status, and home life. Caring means opening up oneself to prioritizing, investigating, and understanding the student for who they are, including their culture.

To misunderstand the notion of caring in a classroom of low-income, urban African American students implies that caring is not valued, or that caring is de-valued by student behavior. Many such behaviors are culturally related through facial expressions, language usages, and gestures. Given the evidence that a lack of caring impacts other student in venues such as neighborhoods and homes (Eamon & Altshuler, 2004; Gomez, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1994), it is assumed that the same lack of caring can be harmful in schools. This study seeks to characterize student perspective, and highlight how a lack of caring can

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be detrimental to urban African American students. It is an experience that, ultimately, could widen the gap between the student and the teacher. This study also addresses how alternative school teachers are able to reach, and thus teach these students.

Teacher recognition of each student's identity, home life, and race creates a cultural connection that epitomizes caring. If caring is missing from the teachers' interaction with students, harm could potentially come to that student. The connection between caring and harm exists in such a way that a lack of caring could negatively impact students' beliefs about their teachers, and negatively impact their perceptions of their school experiences. Thus, cultural clash is not only prevalent in urban schools, but also, potentially harmful.

Caring relationships are key to the development of resiliency in youth. Resiliency literature has demonstrated how adverse conditions do not necessarily lead to poor adjustment in youths (Laursen & Birmingham, 2003). Substantial evidence points to children who succeed despite adversity. Caring adult/child relationships are noted as having a significant impact on a youth's achievement. A caring adult relationship is considered to be a protective factor that fosters resiliency. In this way, teachers' level of caring for his or her students has implications for student resiliency.

Resiliency is something that is built up over time through caring relationships. In order for wary youth to believe the adult cares, the adult must actively demonstrate caring behaviors, which include trust, attention, respect, and affirmation (Laursen & Birmingham, 2003). Teachers who consistently

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optimize the positive aspects of student behaviors and outcomes are likely to

foster resiliency. A persistent focus on the positive will require a shift in teaching

strategies. Processes that support protective factors and resiliency focus on the

positive establishment and maintenance of self-esteem. They provide

intervention before, during, and after a high-risk incident, thereby minimizing

exposure to high-risk incidents (Winfield, 1994).

Sarason (1982) notes that the "disconnect" between students and

teachers can be rooted deeply. Sarason (1982) states,

Because our values and assumptions are implicit in nature, we proceed as if the

way things are is the way things should or could be…it is inordinately difficult to

adopt approaches that require us to recognize and suspend our values in the

quest of achieving distance from our habitual ways of thinking and working.

(p.108-109)

Recognizing there is a problem may require formalizing that specific

problem by giving it a name, exploring the phenomenon, and offering remedies

for it. This study attempts to do just that through the linking of iatrogenic harm

with education.

Failing to meet students' cultural needs can be detrimental to student

success, and can lead to iatrogenic harm. Iatrogenic harm can be generated

through what Sarason (1982) calls "Defects of Virtue", whereby,

We look at and describe…culture in terms of our values and personal

experiences, which, however productive of insights, put blinders on what we look

at, choose to change, and evaluate. It is inordinately difficult to adopt approaches

that require us to recognize and suspend our values in the quest of achieving

distance from our habitual ways of thinking and working. (p.108)

In other words, by making the commitment to care for students from a different

culture, a teacher will have to recognize and work through finding harmony

between fulfilling one's own needs, and the needs of his/her students. Iatrogenic

harm can develop from a teacher's unwillingness or inability to recognize,

analyze, and synthesize their students' culture in order to develop caring

student/teacher relationships.

<div align="center">Theoretical Framework</div>

The two theories that contribute to and help explain this study's purpose

are iatrogenic harm and social capital. Iatrogenic harm can be defined as an

adverse condition in a client that results from the action of a caregiver (Caplan &

Caplan, 2001). Iatrogenic harm links this study to the potential damage common

bonds, such as the student/teacher relationship, can cause. Social capital is the,

"trust, mutual understanding, and shared values and behaviors that bind the

members of human networks and communities and make cooperation possible"

(Cohen & Prusak, 2001, p.4). Social capital relates to this study through its

association with qualities of human relationships that are optimized by

interactions amongst members of different groups- students and teachers.

Providing social capital to students through their teachers and overall school

experiences impacts student success.

Iatrogenic Harm

The term iatrogenic comes from the Greek iatros, meaning physician, and genic, meaning induced. Ancient Greeks believed that the physician's primary duty was to the patient, while ancient Romans believed that the physician's primary duty was to do no harm (Szasz, 1977). Those ideals, which are now embedded in modern medicine, highlight the connection between a physician's ethics and values and his or her role as a caretaker. Historically, the term iatrogenic has been exclusive to the medical field, bringing attention to the potential harm a patient incurs as a result of the physician's treatment choices, thus inciting an iatrogenic condition. Harm is inherent to iatrogenic conditions. In the past 15 years, the term iatrogenic has been extended to other practitioner related fields, and typically involves caring about youth.

Yowell and Gordon (1996) state that a lack of caring can result in iatrogenic harm whereby the youth is harmed by social services when the services are rendered by a non-caring adult. Yowell and Gordon's (1996) description correlates to the following definitions of iatrogenic harm:

1. Dorland's Medical Dictionary (2005) defines iatrogenic condition as, "resulting from the act of a physician…adverse condition in a patient occurring as the result of treatment by a physician especially acquired by the patient during the course of treatment."

2. The American Psychiatric Association (2002) defines iatrogenic condition as: occurring through treatment and/or comments that aggravate or precipitate the disorder.

 3. Caplan and Caplan (2001) expand on these definitions to include any

professional whose job requires therapeutic intervention, including teachers.

However, Caplan and Caplan only list teachers as potential caregivers; their study did not examine iatrogenic harm, and the student/teacher relationship. Boisvert and Faust (2002) state that iatrogenic symptoms, "may originate through the over reliance on a belief system…" (p.244), which may initiate negative thoughts from the client. They discuss "misattributing" (p.246) client behavior as a disorder that gives explicit or implicit messages that the client is wrong, bad, or different. Similarly, teachers could falsely attribute culturally specific student behaviors, like body movements and use of slang terms, as deficient, and consequently, determine that the students are unteachable. This, in turn, may cause the student to have feelings of inferiority and an inability to achieve. The student's negative behavior, like name calling or abruptly leaving the classroom, creates tension within the classroom.

Harm can be inherent in an iatrogenic condition. When considering student achievement, this harm may be the absence of attention to the student's culture, not just the student's lack of academic success. Waxerman, Walker deFelix, Anderson, and Baptiste (1992) discuss iatrogenesis in terms of responsibility. They say, " …if we begin to see ways in which school environments tolerate and even promote the difficulties students experience, the responsibilities of educators become more urgent...The prime issue is the ability of educators to respond to variations among students…" (p.35).

Caplan and Caplan (2001) comment on the well-intentioned professionals in many caretaker professions where harming clients is a result of a lack of

"…knowledge, skill, empathy, or objectivity" (p27). The "…nontechnical, nonphysical nature of their intentions makes it legitimately difficult for certain categories of caregivers to realize that their own interventions have caused damage" (p.32). Caplan and Caplan (2001) suggest that this form of change within a professional requires self-reflection on hidden assumptions, biases, privileges, and prejudices.

Resnick, Harris, & Blum (1993) discuss teacher inquiry that is, "…directed toward understanding success and well-being, identifying those factors that buffer against the stresses of everyday life that might otherwise result in adverse physical, social, or psychological outcomes for youth" (p.2). Here, inquiry into the student's life reduces potential adverse outcomes or harm. Inquiry then becomes a buffer against iatrogenic harm. Inquiry can equip teachers with what Caplan and Caplan (2001) discuss as, "…sharing the task of overcoming the difficulties involved in a situation, or else by encouraging the individual and …finding alternative sources of satisfaction" (p.5).

The mental health field has used iatrogenic harm to conceptualize the negative effect of therapy on clients' mental health stemming from professionals' interactions with clients in therapy (Boisvert & Faust, 2002; Caplan & Caplan, 2001). Individual therapy negatively affects 10% of the population (Caplan & Caplan, 2001). In many cases, the therapist has no awareness of how their treatment contributes to iatrogenic conditions in their clients (Boisvert & Faust, 2002). Treatment components, like language exchange, tend to be the overarching psychotherapist/client interaction that begins, and sometimes

perpetuates, iatrogenic harm (Boisvert & Faust, 2002; Caplan & Caplan, 2001).

For example, when a psychotherapist labels a client with a psychiatric illness, he

or she may make inferences based on that illness without considering other

reasons for certain behaviors. Thus, pre-existing labels negatively influence the

professionals' perceptions of a client, which undermines the treatment

relationship and causes "the over pathologizing" (Boisvert & Faust, 2002, p.249)

of clients.

Although iatrogenic harm has not yet been extended into the education

field, the elasticity of language, combined with the importance of the

student/teacher relationship, validates its usefulness. This merging relates the

practitioner to the teacher, and the student with the client/patient that exemplifies

the noticeable gap in the literature.

The rap song by Ludacris (2004), titled "Get Back", helps frame the

iatrogenic condition of many urban African American students (Taylor, 2004).

The lyrics, "get back, get back, you don't know me like that…why you all in my

ear?! Talking a whole bunch of shit that I ain't trying to hear…But now I'm here,

you wanna stand around running your mouth?! I can't hear nothing you saying or

spitting, so wassup…" (Ludacris, 2004). The lyrics may embody what some

urban African American students may feel when their teacher approaches them.

That is, if a teacher comes within reach of a student (physically, emotionally, or

verbally), the action may be in violation of the student's cultural norms, causing

the student to react negatively.

Linking iatrogenic harm to teachers may be perceived as an attack on the teaching profession. Caplan and Caplan (2001) discuss the reasoning for accentuating the negative as it pertains to social workers and children. The case dwells on distressing case material…unhelpful, unprofessional behavior…cases whose prevalence in the general population we do not know, but which occur at sufficiently significant rate that every single professional to whom we have spoken on this subject has immediately agreed I have seen cases like that. (p.23-24)

This research will examine the negative and typically, under-examined phenomenon of teachers' actions that Caplan and Caplan (2001) say have the capacity to "…dwarf the client's original problem and may lead to…more social maladjustment that could have been expected to emerge from the predicament that first brought the client to the notice of caregivers" (p.47). Negative treatment of students exists, and from the perspective of urban African American students, this research will provide examples of such harm.

Social Capital

Cohen and Prusak (2001) state, "social capital consists of the stock of active connections among people: the trust, mutual understanding, and shared values and behaviors that bind the members of human networks and communities and make cooperation possible" (p.4). According to Smith (2000), loyalty, reciprocity, and trust are hallmarks of a prosperous social capital. The same attributes can be extended to caring. Noguera (1996) asserts that schools can be seen as social resources that can generate social capital. Putman (1993)

asserts that social capital refers to "strong conditions of civic engagement…features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (p.2).

Noguera (1996) frames positive social capital in terms of Bourdieu's (1985) concept of social capital as, "the sum total of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual (or a group) by virtue of being enmeshed in a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (p.248). Social capital emphasizes relationships that are intrinsic to caring. For instance, Furstenberg and Hughes (1995) claim that social capital inside the immediate family requires investment, effort, and time, all of which are intrinsic to caring. If the immediate family cannot provide the time and effort necessary, it becomes even more urgent for teachers to assume the responsibility. Thus, when we replace the notion of the family as lead provider with teacher as the lead provider (*in-loco-parentis*), schools should provide the same investment, effort, and time that social capital requires of families. In this regard, positive social capital can be a useful concept for teachers to understand how culturally sensitive student/teacher caring relationships can reduce iatrogenic harm.

Noguera (1996) states that in the case of urban schools, social capital can develop into either negative or positive social capital. One may infer that negative social capital can induce iatrogenic harm because it has the potential for reproducing the marginality of urban students (Yowell & Gordon, 1996; Noguera, 1996). As stressed by McGraff and Buskirk (1999), "what we do with students

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has much more profound consequences than the resources we offer. If what we do is positive, positive social capital will prevail, and if what we do is negative, negative social capital will prevail" (p.1). McGrath and Buskirk (1999) offer several avenues for breaking down negative social capital into positive social capital. For example, they discuss transforming students' images of the future from negative to positive.

Caring for students is a teacher's responsibility that, when lacking, can decrease social capital and, in turn, present negative results. Putman (1993) reminds us that social capital increases with use and decreases when ignored. Ignoring undermines connections and trust that are hallmarks of social capital. The lack of connectivity and trust between teachers and students in a school setting can result in negative social capital. Like positive social capital, negative social capital builds up, and could affect future endeavors between students and teachers (Putman, 1993). Thus, the disconnected, untrusting relationship in one situation could carry into and affect those situations that follow. This could, potentially, causing iatrogenic harm.

<center>Significance</center>

Caucasian teachers are the predominant workforce in most African American school environments (Kunjufu, 2002). Thus, it is not surprising that cultural mismatch occurs in the schooling of African American children. The clash of teacher and student cultures in the classroom creates barriers in understanding for both the African American students and their teachers. The teacher has an obligation to the profession to break through cultural barriers and

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reach his or her students. Evidence shows that this undertaking is often misunderstood (Delpit, 1988; Flores-Gonzales, 2002; MacLeod, 1995).

Culture in this study includes, but is not limited to: who the student is, where they came from, their home-life, their strengths, their weaknesses, their thoughts, their history, and their understandings. Mismatch means that the culture of teachers and the culture of students are incongruent. This incongruence spills over into a teacher pedagogy that doesn't meet the needs of students.

Lifestyle can also contribute to cultural mismatch. Urban, low-income and impoverished students represent another aspect of culture whose importance extends itself into the classroom (Waxerman, Walter-Felix, Anderson, & Baptiste, 1992). Notably, children living in inner city and poverty stricken areas are over represented by children of color (Haberman, 2003; Eamon & Altshuler, 2004). In urban, low-income schools, teaching often occurs as if the student's culture has no bearing on learning (Denbo, 2002; Bigler, 2002). This creates a cultural mismatch in the classroom that manifests itself in disproportionately high incidents of African American students facing suspension and expulsion, low test-scores, and discipline (Utley, Kozleski, Smith, & Draper, 2002; Denbo, 2002).

 Many cultures, including the African American culture, bring different language usages, different facial and body expressions, and different priorities that may be expressed as cultural values (Denbo, 2002; Bigler, 2002; Flores-Gonzalez, 2002). Teachers may hold these values in contempt when they do not

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fit into the cookie-cutter mold of traditional education, or they may be ignorant of the differences in values across cultures (Bigler, 2002). People define and hold values differently, so no two cultures should expect to share identical values. Learning about another person's culture, and accepting the cultural conundrums that go with it, enables outsiders to feel less outside, and insiders to be more likely to hear and act on what the outsider is saying.

Because the majority of American teachers are white (Cooper-Shaw, 1997; Kunjufu, 2002; Kuykendall, 1992), it is impossible to have a racially balanced staff of teachers in most urban schools. With this impossibility, the question becomes, what can teachers do to minimize the evident cultural disparity between teachers and children from minority groups, especially those in urban areas? Part of the difficulty in answering this question stems from a history of many teacher's inability to access (admit to, see clearly) the discrimination inherent in their teaching style, classroom expectations (Delpit, 1988; Sizemore, 1981; Mihashi, 1987), and the "cultural deficit mindset" (Parker, Kelly, & Sanford, 1998, p.129) that continues to persist in present day classrooms.

Historically, white identity and culture has had conflicting moments with black identity and culture (Parker, Kelly, & Sanford, 1998). These differences are apparent in many arenas, including education. Awareness that all students are capable of high achievement has been evident as early as the mid-seventies. The achievement gap existed in part because teacher expectations (based on socio-economic status) had evolved (Kuykendall, 1992). Alarmingly, today many educators lack this awareness.

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Most teachers in urban schools, as well as rurally, are white. The school district in this study represents those same statistics. The researcher does not believe that cultural mismatch is an exclusively black/white issue. Cultural mismatch occurs due to mindset, beliefs, expectations, and experiences that influence discrimination. In this case, those mindsets, beliefs, and expectations come from predominantly white teachers.

The discrimination that drives the cultural mismatch between teachers and African American students can be understood through the classic Jane Elliot exercise, "Blue Eyes/Brown Eyes". This exercise has, over the years, sensitized both teachers and students to the negative effects of racism and discrimination, and the power of power. This power could be used by the teacher, and can produce devastating results for minority students (Coronel, 1996).

Elliot traveled the world training people in and out of the educational field on what it feels like to lose one's power, and be subject to random acts of discrimination and racism. In part, she did this by enacting the exercise with the participants, but many left the exercise as a result of not wanting to be a part of the blue-eyed, oppressed group (Coronel, 1996). Elliot's 1968 exercise demonstrates features of power that translates into discrimination and, ultimately, harmful to students.

Delpit (1988) relates both the obvious and hidden nature of the term 'power' as a major influence on meeting the educational needs of black and poor students. She remarks that the more power a teacher has, the less likely they are to recognize that power. Simultaneously, those in contact with that power easily

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identify the power's existence and, in turn, feel inferior. Power in the classroom is often reflected through teacher norms and values, which can be in direct opposition to student norms and values. Delpit (1988) remarks that students who come from families and communities that mimic the teacher's norms and values will perform according to those norms and values. What about the rest of the students? The students who don't function within the "culture of power", lose (Delpit, 1988).

Providing culturally sensitive interventions entices students. The students connect and become more willing to respect the teacher and the curriculum. Providing culturally sensitive interventions and instruction would require the teacher's willingness to suspend some of his or her own values in order to know, care about, and teach urban African American students. Because cultural mismatch may be related to class, race, or gender, a teacher must pay attention to multiple characteristics in order to break down cultural mismatch. Typically, culture operates within the extensions and limitations of class, race, and gender. As demonstrated by MacLeod (1995), class can determine a cultural mismatch whose power extends beyond skin color. MacLeod (1995) verified this through his study of two distinct cultural groups within a single school. Class alone can be powerful enough to perpetuate mismatch after the school years are completed, even when one group conforms to traditional school and social values, and another does not.

Parker, Kelly, and Sanford (1998) assert that the cultural mismatch exists in such a way that teachers try to link urban schools to suburban schools through

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reform efforts that ignore what is most important, "…a need to center the education policy discussion on students, community, commitment, and change in the urban context" (p.124). Education of urban African American students does not require assimilation into the dominant culture. Specifically, dominant reform efforts ignore the needs of urban and minority students, and require modifications and adaptations that both strengthen and recognize the best practice for teachers to serve this population (Denbo, 2002; Kunjufu, 2002; Parker, Kelly, & Sanford, 1998). When statistics reveal that ethnic minority youth can succeed in school and test successfully with outcomes comparable to non-poor white students, it becomes important for educators to critically examine educational reform. In the past, many reform efforts have made a difference for urban and minority youth. Those reform efforts must be remembered, and, ultimately, incorporated into schools serving these populations of students.

The Education Commission of the States (1995) developed an urban school reform titled the Framework for Hope, which is a series of proposed changes. Each change has been tested through its use in individual schools and districts. ECS asserts that the combination of several efforts creates an urban school reform suitable for citywide use. The ECS claims that, although school and district level reforms have shown success, citywide reform efforts would increase the "number and quality of learning opportunities for urban young people" (p.10). The Framework for Hope's ideal is for the development of a collaborative approach, through city and state leadership, to improving education as a whole, not merely through individual parts.

One of the proposed changes is to "free up urban systems to pursue strategies tailored to their students" (p.12). Studies have shown that a partnership with communities offers alternative strategies that meet the needs of urban students. ECS (1996) suggest that these partnerships be supported. Within those partnerships hope is maintained.

Reform efforts based on social and emotional learning (SEL) have also shown hope in urban education. Social and emotional learning is the educational "process through which we learn to recognize and manage emotions, care about others, make good decisions, behave ethically and responsibly, develop positive relationships, and avoid negative behaviors" (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004, p.4). SEL addresses social and emotional growth in schools. Research has shown that academic growth increases with effective SEL practices. However, SEL does not isolate academic achievement from social and emotional growth, but does recognize social and emotional growth as fostering academic success through the following competencies:

1. Self awareness: identifying and recognizing emotions, accurate self-perception, recognizing strengths, needs, and values, self-efficacy, and spirituality.

2. Social awareness: perspective taking, empathy, appreciating diversity, and respect for others.

3. Responsible decision making: problem identification, problem solving, evaluation and reflection, and personal, moral, and ethical responsibility.

4. Self-management: impulse control and stress management, self

   motivation and discipline, and goal setting and organization.

5. Relationship management: communication, social engagement and

   building relationships, working cooperatively, negotiation, refusal, and

   conflict management, and help seeking and providing. (Zins, et al., 2004,

   p. 7)

The Framework for Hope and SEL are two examples of education reform that

have made a difference in the education of urban low-income youth. They are

both linked to caring for and about urban students in ways that position student

success at the forefront of education. Likewise, the alternative school movement

also represents a shift in the way we think about education. Research indicates

that alternative schools have produced positive results for urban African

American students (Wang & Reynolds, 1995; Rayle, 1998).

Alternative Schools

This section will focus on alternative schools and alternative school

students in an effort to paint a picture of the school's underlying purpose, and the

student population served. The alternative school is characterized by differences

and unconventional services as a means of educating the at-risk population.

Alternative schools are developed for many different reasons, like focusing in on

a specific style of instruction or a specific discipline, for instance, the sciences.

Historically, however, alternative programs within the public school sector have

been developed out of the need to serve students at-risk (Rayle, 1998).

The alternative school movement began in the late 1960s and early 1970s in response to civil rights, and individualism in education (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Young, 1990). As with other issues of social concern, public schools in the 1960s had been assaulted by cries of racism and inequality. Educational equity (Young, 1990) became of paramount concern in the 1960s as president Johnson sought to address inequity by providing funds to school districts to enhance the education of minority and disadvantaged students in alternative programs (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Young, 1990). During that time, innovative programs that had departed from the traditional mode of schooling began to make their way into public school systems. Examples of the innovative programs include: open schools, multicultural schools, schools within schools, and learning centers (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Raywid, 1994; Young, 1990; Rayle, 1998).

During the mid-1970s, the National Institute of Educations Safe School Report was focusing on "disruptive youth". The report had determined that when disruptive youth were served outside of the regular classroom, schools would be safer (Rayle, 1998). During and after the 1970s, the majority of teachers in the United States were believing that troublemakers reduced the overall success and achievements of other students, and that all students would be better served if troublemakers were removed from mainstream classrooms. As a result, many schools were adding security, employing stricter discipline, locking doors, and restricting outsider access (Rayle, 1998). Consequently, students exhibiting behaviors were deemed inappropriate in the regular school setting and often sent to alternative schools.

One of the largest alternative school movements was labeled the "Street Academy" (Wang & Reynolds, 1995, p.100). Street academies were opened and run by the National Urban League in 1966. They were designed to decrease the dropout and unemployment of youth residing in Harlem, New York. In a three-year period, twenty-six street academies were opened across the country. Eighty percent of the students enrolled in the alternative schools were minority students (Wang & Reynolds, 1995). Moore (1977) described the philosophical foundation of these programs, as well as the mission, in the following statement:

Underlying the general street academy program was the concept that all students are educable. This emphatically included low-income, racial, and ethnic minority students whether under-achievers, drop-outs, or students who have been pushed out of the public schools. These students could be retrieved. They could be helped by education programs to acquire the coping abilities, knowledge, and competency required to live as productive citizens. For this to happen, it was demanded that programs be structured around such students and possess understanding, sympathetic and humanistic environments and individually accountable personnel. (p.ii)

Street academies proved from the start that attributes of caring (understanding and sympathy) were intrinsic to the at-risk student's education, especially in urban students living in poverty stricken areas like Harlem (Wang & Reynolds, 1995).

As early as 1977, Northern Allegheny County school districts were working together to open an alternative school to address the needs of students

underserved in regular schools. In 1979, the school opened and served 100 at-risk youth (grades 9-12) who came from nine separate school districts.

Sue Goodwin (Personal communication, April 4, 2004) remarks that although the original purpose of the alternative school was to remove behavioral problems from the existing schools, it essentially became a very nurturing community where the kids wanted to be. By the 1980s, alternative schools had shifted from innovative programs to more structured programs, focusing on remediation, and raising students above the basic academic level.

The 1980s and 1990s have demonstrated a surge of alternative school growth throughout the United States. In addition to alternative schools targeting behavioral problem students, other alternative schools offer a variety of subjects like art or music (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Raywid, 2001; Young, 1990).

Prior to the opening of the alternative school in this study (and presently), the school district sent students in need of alternative schools outside of the school district. These alternative schools focused primarily on behavior management. One such school was focused on students who were not problematic, but students who felt socially inept and had a history of truancy.

In 2003, the Pennsylvania Department of Education had offered funding under the Alternative Education for Disruptive Youth (2001) grant. The alternative school in this study participates in the program. The grant specifies the following guidelines for school districts to follow when operating an alternative school in the state of Pennsylvania:

Unless the seriousness of a student's behavior warrants immediate

placement, local programs shall admit students only when other

established methods of discipline have failed…Eligible students

must exhibit to a marked degree any or all of the following:

1. disregard for school authority, including persistent violation of school

    policy.

2. display of or use of controlled substances on school property or during

    school-affiliated activities.

3. violent or threatening behavior on school property during school-related

    activities.

4. possession of a weapon on school property as defined under 18Pa.

    C.S. Section 912.

5. commission of a criminal act on school property.

6. misconduct that would merit suspension or expulsion under school

    policy.

7. habitual truancy (Department of Education, 2003).

The alternative school in this study follows these guidelines for enrollment into

the program.

In western Pennsylvania alone, hundreds of alternative schools have been

created to provide a substitute school that would manage problem behaviors

(Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2003). These schools are both public

and private alternative schools, and are located within and outside of the

student's district of residence. Typically, public alternative schools serve students

living in pre-determined geographic areas, and remain under the guidelines of the district while private alternative schools can open their enrollment to whomever can pay the tuition.

Raywid (1994) contends that,

Two enduring consistencies have characterized alternative schools from the start: they have been designed to respond to a group that appears not to be optimally serviced by the regular program, and consequently they have represented varying degrees of departure from standard school organization, programs, and environments. (p.26)

Alternative schools deviate from the traditional school in terms of student/teacher ratio changes in the structure of the school, and number and length of classes (Raywid, 1994). According to Raywid (1994), there are three types of alternative programs: type one alternative schools are "choice" schools that usually focus on a specific instructional push such as the sciences or arts, type two serves students who are being given their last chance, and type three serves students in need of remediation in any one or more emotional, social, academic, or psychological areas. The majority of this study centers on a mixture of type two and type three alternative schools. Many states have their own alternative school guidelines that distinguish which type(s) of alternative schools exist. The variability in types of alternative programs has contributed to the lack of national data (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

Existing statistics indicate that enrollment in alternative schools has grown tremendously in the past 30 years. In 2001, over 10,000 public alternative

schools were in operation. Thirty-nine percent of all school districts have at least one alternative school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). Urban districts with large populations of minority students are more likely to have alternative schools. Teachers in the regular education program initiate referral for 66% of the students in alternative schools. Although many students return to their regular school, other students, often by choice, remain in the alternative school for the rest of their secondary education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). This indicates that the alternative school programming is more attractive to the students than regular school programming. Alternative schools make a difference in the educational successes of urban at-risk students, while the regular school programs are not as successful. Their achievements can be attributed to the teachers (Castleberry & Engler, 1998; Morley, 1991; Munoz, 2002).

As the founding principal of an urban alternative school, this researcher strongly believes that teachers are at the heart of any program. The teachers from the alternative school in this study are no exception. They, by design, have embraced the tenets of caring about their students. Each was hired under the assumption that their caring attitude for and about urban African American youth was real and would carry over into their classrooms. Each teacher participates in and embraces the development of an alternative school with alternatives. These processes include extended student/teacher relationships (i.e. teacher as mentor, teacher as coach, and teacher as counselor), individualized instruction, service-learning opportunities, volunteer experiences, community outreach and

partnerships, social, job readiness and life skills training, and equal opportunity

for special needs students, none of which would be possible without the support

and guidance from this particular team of teachers.

<p align="center">Purpose of the study</p>

The purpose of this study is to understand alternative students'

perceptions of their school experience from the past to the present. By doing so,

this study means to connect iatrogenic harm to education. Iatrogenic harm is a

term borrowed from the medical and social work field to describe the harm

incurred by a client through the treatment of a professional. This study explores

the existence of a phenomenon, the link between iatrogenic harm and education,

more specifically, the link between iatrogenic harm and teachers' actions and

responses. This study will also view the characteristics of alternative school

teachers who alternative school students perceive to be promoting student

success in and out of the classroom. An additional purpose of this study is to

portray urban African American alternative school students' own words, voices,

and stories.

A major goal of this research is to lend voice to alternative school

students' stories as they pertain to their school experiences. By doing so, this

study aims to "invite the participant's voices to resonate beyond", what Dillard

(1998) refers to as, "methodological caution". Like Burns-McCoy (2003), this

study intends to usher in what many view as disruptive voices—voices that, for

better or worse, affect another's reality in such a way that the reader must

complete the page. This study will include many verbatim responses from the

participants. Those comments will appear italicized so the reader understands when the story content belongs to the participant.

Research Question

In this study, the researcher focuses on alternative school students' perceptions of their school experiences from the past and the present by posing the following question:

How do urban African American students in an alternative school setting perceive their past (regular) and present (alternative) educational experiences?

Study Overview

This researcher has authority on the subject matter in this study as a result of extensive experiences and relationships with (and through observations of) urban, at-risk African American students. The researcher's position matters to this study. Her narrative will provide an insider's view of urban African American students and their perceptions. The researcher will recognize her own bias; yet, accept her philosophies as valid practice. The researcher will also tell her story.

By telling her personal and professional stories, the researcher links herself with her students. To reveal the risk, danger, and misfortune in her own life, means the researcher exhibits vulnerability, and can identify with the students she writes about.

In addition to telling personal and professional stories, the stories of students in the alternative school (who were not a part of the formal study) will be told at the outset of each chapter. The stories familiarize the reader with the students in the alternative school under study, and help develop a concrete

image of an alternative school environment. These stories provide insight into the complicated issues faced by the students who attend this alternative school. The students' stories indicate their level of need, and provide insight into why they are in such desperate need of a caring and hopeful place called school. The stories will appear as vignettes, and open each chapter of this document.

Finally, stories of each participant will be told. The researcher will tell these stories. Each story will give background information on each student, gathered from their school files, principal observations and memories, and informal and formal conversations with the students and their teachers.

The remainder of this study is in the following four chapters: chapter two, the literature review, will cover several topics including: student/teacher relationships, caring, hope and school/community partnerships, social capital, cultural mismatch and iatrogenic harm. Chapter three, methodology, includes sections on qualitative methods of research, such as: ethnography, case study, and grounded theory, and sections on instrumentation, the sample, analysis and the researcher's pilot study. Chapter four, the stories, includes: stories of the researcher, stories of the participants of the study, and data analysis and findings. Chapter five includes: discussions of the limitations of the study, implications for future research, and the next steps for the researcher.

Beauty Queen

Beauty queen was one of the first students referred to the alternative school. She was enrolled in the regular high school, but only showed up one day; the day her mother enrolled her. When she came to enroll in the alternative school, her mother and younger brother trailed behind her. Her mother, I later found out, was covered in scars from being burned with gasoline by her previous boyfriend. She made me nervous. She stuttered a bit and had a loud, room stopping voice. She referred to her daughter by her daughter's middle name, telling me about her trouble keeping her daughter in school.

Beauty Queen sat quietly for a moment, but quickly, she opened up when her mother left my office to use the bathroom. She began telling me how she was going to change, and come to school. She told me she had problems with her mother because her mother gave her up for drugs when she was little. She told me she lived with a white family for five years in foster care, and then in a group placement.

She was a beautiful girl with model-like features, and I could tell that at some point in her younger life, she'd received a quality education, either in the home, school or both. She spoke with clarity and experience.

"I like you" she told me, and "I promise to come to school, be a positive role-model, and graduate with honors. Maybe I'll even go to college and land a career in fashion design."

Beauty queen was a 16-year-old in her second year of high school, but with only enough credits to be a mid-year freshman. Before she left with her mother that day, she made a verbal pact with me to return the next day, and every other day that week.

Beauty Queen came every day, not only that week, but for weeks after. Then, she would disappear for a week or so at a time, returning with outlandish stories of horrific incidents at home with her mother, her brothers, and her boyfriend. Little did I know, she wasn't telling me everything. One day, at the tail end of her second year, she came clean. She wandered in my office, 40 minutes late to school, and out of control. She was crying hysterically—which didn't surprise me as her mother had called earlier to let me know that Beauty Queen was 'cutting' herself the night before, and threatening to kill herself. Through her tears, she told me I'd better sit down. She took out a crumpled up piece of paper from her pocket and told me to read. The letter read:

> *The uncle I told you picks me up from school is 70 years old and*
> *my mom knowed him before he knowed me. He's not a real uncle*
> *He takes pictures of young girls and other things like make me touch him*
> *in his van. I don't know how to stop because my mom knows I go and*
> *we share the money he gives me. Sometimes I sneak out to see him and*
> *he will meet me at the mall and we do it in his van and then I get to buy*
> *new outfits. I also take girls to him so his friend can take more pictures of*
> *them because he says that I'm too old for the pictures now but we still*
> *do it in the van.*

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I read her letter with disgust for the man, and pity for Beauty Queen. I acted immediately and called the police. Three hours later, they showed up at the school. The 'uncle' lived in the school district, so the officer needed to send a detective to complete Beauty Queen's questioning. As Beauty Queen spoke, details of these absurd escapades unraveled through a tough-girl, matter-of -act voice of a 17-year-old young woman who was wizened beyond her years. The detective knew who Beauty Queen was talking about because the 'uncle' had been under investigation a few years back for taking pictures of under-aged girls. In fact, Beauty Queen told the detective where the man kept his pictures, and exactly which apartment he lived in. She offered to drive with him to show him. The detective told her there was no need, and that he would be in touch. No one ever called back, and nothing was done. I reported the situation to Beauty Queen's mother, and she commented to me, "Beauty Queen is a liar."

In the weeks that followed, Beauty Queen's attendance went from worse to OK to worse again, and she appeared to be high as a kite many mornings. About three weeks after the 70-year-old man incident, her mother called me to tell me that Beauty Queen was cutting and running around the house hollering that she was going to kill herself. I could hear Beauty screaming in the background, and her mother yelling at her to get it together and go on to school. I heard the door slam, and then her mother telling me she was on her way.

When Beauty Queen arrived, I immediately pulled her into my office. She admitted to threatening suicide, and showed me several superficial cuts on her forearms. After consulting with a school district counselor, I took Beauty to the area psychiatric emergency room. Her mother met us there, but soon after, she left because she had to get home to her other children who, like Beauty, she couldn't trust in the house alone. After about four hours of waiting, Beauty and I met with several clinicians before the decision was made. To my chagrin, Beauty would not be admitted. I put her in a taxi, paid the bill in advance, and drove away. I walked through the door of my own home at 11pm pissed off at everyone in the world who wouldn't listen to kids like Beauty.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter will review the literature on student/teacher relationships, caring, social capital, cultural mismatch, African American students, and iatrogenic harm. Caring will be defined by discussing the institutionalization process as it pertains to urban African American students, its relationship to caring, and the urban African American student. A review of the literature on social capital will follow to help identify the relationships and connections that are made during the learning process. Next, this chapter will review the literature on cultural mismatch, followed by a review of educating urban African American students. A review of the literature regarding iatrogenic harm will close this chapter. Most references will be drawn from the body of educational literature. However, sociological, medical, social work, and psychological sources will also be used when needed.

Student/Teacher Relationships

The quality of the student /teacher relationship, as expressed in the literature, has an important influence on student achievement, both positively and negatively (Klem & Connell, 2004; Baker, 1999; Jacobson, 2000; Beyda, Zentall, & Ferko, 2002). Klem and Connell (2004) state that a positive student/teacher relationship in poor, urban schools is more vital because the relationship can serve as a pre-cursor for academic achievement. Similarly, Jacobson (2000) argues that teachers play an important role in students' failure or success. A

teacher who is not committed cannot, "address equitably the needs of all those served" (p.49).

Jacobson (2000) discusses the student/teacher relationship, and the disproportion between minority and white dropout rates. She asserts that both outward and hidden devaluation of minority students interferes with the basic skill-building necessary to achieve success in society, school, and the work place. Jacobson (2000) labels the interference as "Complicity versus Sensitivity". Complicity is an innocent, yet damaging insensitivity to elements of race, culture, and educational experiences that contributes to student vulnerability. Jacobson (2000) offers methods to counteract complicity, and ensures sensitivity by establishing an educational environment that challenges and motivates students. Teachers get to know students in such a way that demystifies their culture. They use constructive criticism and evaluation tools early in the student's development. Students respond positively to making changes in their work, and appreciate one-on-one mentoring in instructional arenas. Like Jacobson's (2000) discussion, Klem and Connell (2004) relate interpersonal relationships, specifically support, to quality student/teacher relationships.

Klem and Connell (2004) identify caring and supportive interpersonal relationships amongst urban and minority youth and middle class youth with their teachers as impacting more positive academic attitudes, values, and school satisfaction. They stress the urgency for such interactions between all youth and their teachers, regardless of cultures, race, or socioeconomic status due to the growing number of students (60%) who become disengaged by high school. The

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support and caring referred to in this study is linked to engagement in urban schools (Klem & Connell, 2004). Results indicate that teacher support from the perspectives of students and teachers is important to student engagement in school. Additionally, high levels of engagement in school are linked to better attendance and test scores. This study confirms other findings by Smith (2000) where support alone does not impact test scores; but rather, a combination of improvement efforts such as support, instructional improvements, and district-wide implementation are needed to influence test scores. Studies confirm that interpersonal relationships in schools affect achievement. Dobransky and Frymier (2004) focus on components of interpersonal relationships outside of the typical school experience.

Dobransky and Frymier (2004) hypothesize that students who engage with teachers in dimensions of interpersonal relationships outside of the classroom (OCC) would report greater learning. Through their investigation, their hypothesis is supported. Students who perceive their teachers as sharing control, trusting, and displaying levels of intimacy during communication report higher levels of learning. The sample population in this study represents diversified cultures of students.

Dobransky and Frymier (2004) assert that, "for interpersonal communication to occur, two people must communicate with each other as individuals rather than with regard to the roles they are in sociological level, or the cultural groups they belong." Their allegation is guided by an approach used by Miller and Steinberg (1975) that shows how interpersonal relationships

outside of normal roles promotes a psychological level of communication that focuses on the individual, not the role they play. Findings from this study suggest that students who engage in OCC report higher levels of affective learning, an increase in perceptions of teacher intimacy, and an increase in levels of shared control, trust, and intimacy. Similar findings are noted in the student/teacher relationship pertaining to students at risk for school failure due to behavioral problems.

Beyda, Zentall, and Ferko (2002) suggest that the student/teacher relationship, as it pertains to students with behavioral problems, can flourish or deteriorate based on teachers' actions within those relationships. That is, for Beyda, Zentall, and Ferko (2002), examples of negative teaching styles are verbal reprimands with degrading rhetoric, and promotion of competitive learning tasks. If little attention is given to lower performing students, it distances the student from the teacher and hinders a positive relationship growth. Findings from this correlational study reveal that a teacher's negative classroom practices are significantly correlated to students' negative behavior. This study lends insight into the nature of behavioral problems that teachers often face in urban and distressed schools.

<div align="center">Caring</div>

Many terms come to mind when the meaning of caring is considered. Much literature exists regarding concepts that constitute a caring teacher. Ianni (1992) emphasizes the importance of interpersonal relationships, specifically intimacy and trust, in caring relationships. In fact, Ianni (1992) defines

interpersonal relationships as the "crucible within which caring attitudes and behaviors manifest" (p.73).

Characteristics defining caring teachers include: compassion, placing the needs of another as first priority, competence, doing what is best for students (Durbin, 1998), thoughtfulness and involvement (Edgar, 1998), commitment and a sense of efficacy (Rosenholtz, & Simpson, 1990), consistency and mentoring ability (Teasley, 2004), support, understanding, character, and the willingness to give time regularly and predictably (Ianni, 1992). Ianni (1992) defines caring as, "…involving feelings that there are no rules or recipes for; what is required is willingness, concern, and empathy" (p.159). They remind us, "…a caring attitude doesn't come cheap" (p.160).

Jonathon Kozol (1982) remarks on the staff at an alternative school in inner city Boston. Although he does not use the word caring, Kozol (1982) comments on the entire staff and how they approach the students who exist based on survival, "they do not, however, forget the lives of children in the storm of words nor do they place their ideologies or their high-level goals in counterpoise to the immediate needs of intellectual and physical survival" (p.73). Placing another before oneself is intrinsic to caring. Kozol (1982) states that a sense of stability and of commitment must be inherent in the teacher in order for both the present and future lives of his or her students to be impacted.

Noddings (1992) defines caring as the "…consenting commitment of citizens to one another" (p.47). He further explains that the hierarchical and authoritarian structure of institutions creates great difficulty for establishing and

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maintaining caring relationships. It is important to note the linking of the term

caring to relationships. In fact, Noddings (1992) comments that caring cannot be

detached from relations. Further, Noddings reminds us that it is not the person

caring that matters, but instead, the caring relation. Caring occurs within

relationships, and Laursen and Birmingham (2003) assert that caring

relationships serve as a protective factor for youth and initiates growth. Yowell

and Gordon (1996) state that a lack of caring can result in an "iatrogenic

condition", whereby the youth could be harmed by the professional services

when they are in the care of a non-caring adult.

      Caring, according to Noddings (1984), is at the crux of positive social

development and can be referred to as "engrossment" (p.16). According to

Noddings (1984), engrossment requires one to care from the inside. She states:

Apprehending the other's reality, feeling what he feels as nearly as possible is

the essential part of caring. For if I take on the other's reality as possibility and

begin to feel its reality, I feel, also, that I must act accordingly; that is, I am

impelled to act as though in my own behalf, but on behalf of the other. (p.16)

Without engrossment, caring is reduced, and the full affect of caring on the

student is lessened. This can produce a harmful effect or adverse reaction similar

to one a doctor can elicit in his/her patient for inaccurately treating a medical

condition.

      Nel Noddings (1995) states that, "we should want more from our

educational efforts than adequate academic achievement, but we will not even

achieve that unless our children believe they themselves are cared for and learn

to care for others" (p.25). Noddings (1997) describes this caring in terms of authentic caring relationships, whereby nonfamilial adults immerse themselves in the young person's welfare, and in the process gain insight into their life outside of that relationship. Noddings (1992) also discusses the differences between caring in education and caring in a singular encounter. She stresses the need for relationships and continuity in order for care to be complete. Noddings (1992) believes continuity can be thought of in four parts: continuity of purpose, place, people, and curriculum.

Continuity of purpose refers to the consistent and persistent encounters with caring in the school. For Noddings (1992), this means creating caring activities like community members joining students for lunch in the school building. The school is readily available to students for engagement in the same space at the same place that has adopted caring as the means of reaching students.

Continuity of place has to do with the physical school. Noddings (1992) stresses that students should spend a minimum of three years in the same building. She also suggests that schools with declining enrollment could fill their unoccupied space with community offices, so the building would remain open for the students.

Continuity of people expresses the need for caring teachers to have long term relationships with his/her students. Continuity of people reminds us that a teacher who is incapable of providing care to the student/teacher relationship would not be suited to undertake continuity of person.

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Continuity of curriculum considers caring as a curricular hallmark where teachers infuse caring into the traditional courses, and spend time in specially designed courses aimed specifically at building caring within and amongst the students and teachers.

In a study by Castleberry and Engler (1998), alternative school students identify caring teachers as one of the predominant reasons for their success. The students identify respect as family, listening, and paying attention—all aspects of caring. The student participants in this study are one-third African American, two-thirds Caucasian; all labeled "at-risk". Student participants are admitted to the alternative school as a result of behavior (42%), behind in credits (29%), family problems (27%) and truancy (25%). Similarly, Ianni (1992) discusses specific characteristics that young "care-seekers" look for in adults, they include: understanding, interest, and most importantly, the willingness to give time consistently, and whenever promised.

Baker (1999) furthers the discussion of the manifestation of urban at-risk student's perceptions of caring in her mixed quantitative/qualitative study of teacher/student relationships in urban at-risk classrooms. The student participants are 100% African American, urban, at-risk, and have low socioeconomic status. Results indicate that as early as third grade, the students experience school satisfaction as a result of perceiving a caring relationship with a teacher and a positive classroom environment. Using Chi-squared analysis with a significance of .01 to measure interview responses, data indicates that overall, students who are dissatisfied and satisfied with school report that they

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know their teacher cares about them by citing examples of expressions of emotional and social supports. Analysis of interviews also reveals that fewer than 80% of both the dissatisfied and satisfied groups relate caring to non-academic interactions.

A study by Munoz (2002) presents outcomes of an urban alternative school for students at-risk. This quantitative study utilizes computer-based sources to collect data, such as: attendance, race, gender, and behavior-related reports. Basic descriptive statistics are analyzed, and results indicate that the program improves both attendance and behavioral problems. The school runs on the concept that preventative measures must focus on, "positive environmental contexts in the schools…that, in turn, reinforce positive behavior" (p.5). Key phrases, such as: "restructuring schools on the basis of at-risk student needs...creating positive environmental contexts…facilitate the achievement of the attributes of social competence, problem solving skills, autonomy, and sense of purpose in all children" (p.6), indicate that this school provides urban at-risk students an education in the context of caring for and about students that positively impacts both attendance and behavior. If students are cared for and can feel that care, they are more likely to reduce inappropriate behavior and attend school more consistently.

Ianni (1992) states, "it is possible for a youngster from an emotionally impoverished family to feel cared about and learn to care for others" (p.5). Ladson-Billings (1994) raises this same point in the context of parent involvement and lack there of in school. She discusses eight exemplary teachers who teach

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urban African American students. Ladson-Billings (1994) recognizes the negative

impact parents can have on the school experience for teachers, and states the

following:

> I raise these points not in an attempt to absolve parents responsibility
>
> toward their children's education but to encourage teachers to look more
>
> broadly and carefully at the causes of the behaviors they see, to develop
>
> multiple perspectives, and to make a commitment to working with their
>
> students, regardless of parental lack of or participation in their child's life.
>
> (p.133)

Ladson-Billing's (1994) discussion of commitment describes a level of caring that

recognizes, "the most salient feature of the child's identity"…an awareness of

"student's race and backgrounds" (p.33), otherwise known as culture. Culture

defines many social situations. The acknowledgment of a student's cultural

foundation is a simultaneous act of caring that enhances the social experience.

Socialization does not exist without caring. As Ianni (1997) points out,

"…we as a nation cannot empower our youth or their relationships until we

strengthen and enrich the social contexts in which they must live and grow"

(p.78). When we care for students, we act in sociable ways. For instance,

McDermott and Rothenberg (2000) comment on specific teacher's caring actions,

all of which create successful social contexts in their study of exemplary teachers

from high poverty inner-city schools. "They connected with children by

constructing personal and caring places for learning, making learning exciting

with varied activities, integrating cultural knowledge…using humor, conducting

field trips, and sometimes inviting children to their homes and communities"
(p.61).Ianni (1992) states the following:

> It follows then, that rather than hope for a ripple effect by which youth
> learn to care for each other…we should consciously construct contexts
> that are not only conducive to the expression of caring attitudes and
> behaviors, but that also symbolize, model, and encourage persons
> operating within those contexts to care. (p72, 77)

In other words, alternative schools for urban at-risk students should organize
communities into humanizing social systems that thrive on pervasive and
consistent caring attitudes, and promote behaviors that represent hope and
success for all students (Scherer, 1972). Hope has been conceptualized as a
manifestation of caring.

Caring and Hope

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) (1995) reminds us that
regardless of the failed reforms, the overall achievement gap, startling statistics
on drop-out rates, and school violence and poverty, urban schools can be a
place of hope. The EDC (1995) states that, while the condition of our cities and
their schools may at times seem overwhelming, it is not hopeless. Everything has
not been tried, and everything that has been tried has not failed. A number of
schools in urban areas are succeeding in turning around children's lives in spite
of the odds. (p.4)

In broader terms, Freire (1994) comments on hope; it is intrinsic to human existence. When we lose sight of hope, we run the risk of becoming hopeless, negative, and stale.

Freire (1994) brings a unique understanding of hope to the reader. Freire's (1994) hope is an ontological need that helps people understand the struggles of the self, and the struggle of others. Hope provides the pathway to enduring a struggle. Freire (1994) states, the hoped-for is not attained by dint of raw hoping. Just to hope is to hope in vain…without a minimum of hope; we cannot so much as start the struggle. But without the struggle, hope as an ontological need, dissipates, loses its bearing and turns into hopelessness. (p.2-3)

This hope of Freire (1994) is critical hope, hope that asks probing questions into the why's and how's of education. It is a hope that considers the curiosity of both teachers and students, existing simultaneously, as integral for both to "meet on the basis of teaching-learning" (p.68). Hope provides social capital through what Bourdieu (1985) describes as, "the sum total of the resources, actual or virtual" (p.4). In other words, hope is a catalyst for providing social capital.

In the education literature, hope in schools has connections to the involvement of the community. Community connections strengthen hope by expanding the scope of interests in students beyond the schools walls. That is, involved communities provide additional reinforcement to students in schools and optimize the chances that social capital is provided to students. The strength of

community connections can be understood by dissecting the meaning of "community". Ferdinand Tonnies does just that.

Ferdinand Tonnies had developed the theories of gemeinschaft and gesellschaft in 1887. The term gemeinschaft translates to community, and gesellschaft translates to society. The terms are used to describe change in two basic types of social groups as society moves from rural communities to agricultural communities, and then, to industrialized communities (Sergiovanni, 1994; Truzzi, 1971). Chirstenson (1984) remarks that the two terms refer to two different types of social interaction that exist at the same time, but are quite different. Gemeinschaft and gesellschaft can be observed, states Chirstenson (1984), through the lens of values and beliefs that change due to constant changes in society. We are reminded that both theories exist at the same time, and both are beneficial to society. However, gemeinschaft (community) is preferred, and should supersede the values and beliefs inherent in gesellschaft (society). The theory of gemeinschaft relates to this study in that it prioritizes group values and beliefs that mimic a community. In fact, the components of gemeinschaft highlight values and beliefs that may have the ability to promote student success and reduce problematic behaviors. Gesellschaft highlights values and beliefs that may perpetuate cultural mismatch, and ultimately, contribute to problematic behavior.

According to Sergiovanni (1994), gemeinschaft exists in three forms: gemeinschaft of the mind, kinship, and place. Sergiovanni (1994) is mostly interested in gemeinshaft of the mind and how it relates to schools. His interest is

extended to this study. Gemeinschaft of the mind refers to, " the bonding together of people that results from their mutual binding to a common goal, shared set of values, and shared conception of being…it strengthens the "we" identity…and is essential to building community in schools" (Sergiovanni, 1994, p.6). Chirstenson (1984) refers to gemeinschaft as a "unity of wills" (p. 161) that, unlike gesellschaft, promotes common understanding and values that lead to a family-like unity (Sergiovanni, 1994; Truzzi, 1971) and mirrors the essence of community.

Sergiovanni (1994) asserts that when we pursue gemeinschaft in schools, we pursue a "community of the mind" (p. 7) that is based upon understanding, not contracts. In other words, teachers and students will share understanding of each other, strive for success, and have relationships that symbolize mutual respect and caring. The notion of gemeinschaft as strengthening the "we" and diminishing the "I" indicates that schools that embrace the elements of gemeinshaft embrace the other, not only the self. In contrast, the theory of gesellschaft is more "I" focused, and thus, maintains a self-centered focus that is not well suited for the community ideal (Chirstenson, 1984; Sergiovanni, 1994; Truzzi, 1971).

Gesellschaft refers to the replacement of community values with contractual values—values that replace personalization with impersonalization, separation instead of unity, and isolation instead of bonding (Sergiovanni, 1994). One of the most damaging aspects of gesellschaft is the motivation to gain personal benefit. Values and beliefs are monolithic, rejecting the other to serve

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the self (Christenson, 1984; Sergiovanni, 1994; Truzzi, 1971). Sergiovanni (1994) compares gesellschaft with the modern corporation where acceptance is conditional. Acceptance is based on rules and policies where self-interest prevails. Gesellschaft undermines community, and its structured protocol is not well suited for schools. That is, the concept of a community in school is hard won in a gesellschaft environment. Ultimately, in a gesellschaft environment, a teacher's role would be limited to their own conception of teaching (Sergiovanni, 1994), and devoid of interest in the needs of his/her students. For example, a teacher's goal could be to raise standardized test scores. That undertaking is certainly suited in schools; however, gesellschaft appears when the teacher's goal is self-satisfying: to be recognized as a capable teacher, satisfy his/her superiors, or even keep his/her job. In such a case, the improved test score has little to do with the student who took the test.

The co-existing nature of gemeinschaft and gesellschaft indicates the need for teachers to assume both while prioritizing appropriate levels of each. In some sense, gesellschaft will support relationships with students. Life requires each of us to manage ourselves in such a way that we care for ourselves, and sometimes, only ourselves. Gesellschaft in moderation is not necessarily a negative trait. On the other hand, the individualistic ideals embedded in gemeinschaft are more closely connected to developing positive relationships with students in urban schools, and influencing student achievement. The traits of gemeinschaft exemplify community and school bonds that influence positive

educational gains and hope in urban schools. Sergiovanni (1994) calls

communities places of the "we" (p. xvi), and states the following:

> This we usually share a common place, and over time, come to share
>
> common sentiments and traditions that are sustaining. Changing our
>
> theory of schooling from organization to community does not require a
>
> massive restructuring of schools, but it does require reflection on
>
> consideration of those in and outside of the school. (p.3)

He reiterates the importance of this when he states, "though initially

organizations are creatures of people, they tend to over time be separated from

people and to function independently in pursuit of their own goals and purposes.

This separation has to bridged somehow" (p.3).

Taylor (2004) remarks on the strength of the community in assisting urban

school districts to improve the success rates for minority and low-income

students. For Taylor (2004), the notion of community is a vital necessity to urban

educational. That is, he believes that urban schools can improve achievement

through combined community support, and what he terms "Values for Life"

curriculum (p.15).

"Values for Life" had emerged from Taylor's (2004) partnership with a

large urban school district in an effort to address the district's accomplishments.

Values and virtues are identified through interviews with black and white, low and

middle-class parents. When assisting in social, emotional, and academic

wellness, it is expressed as "Values for Life". "Values for Life" promotes a socially

and culturally integrated populace by replacing an emotional instability with emotional resilience, and provides a connection to community.

Taylor (2004) promotes the "Values for Life" as a combined community, family, and school reform effort. He asserts that, "without these values and virtues, urban students living in high-risk environments are likely to be victimized by negative circumstances and influences that undermine academic, social and emotional excellence" (p.15). Taylor's (2004) "Values for Life" concept requires there be a change in attitude of educators, administrators, parents, and community members. He comments that all stakeholders must acknowledge the values and virtues embedded in "Values for Life". By doing so, schools become venues for hope instead of despair.

Each of the "Values for Life" is tied to hope in urban education (Taylor, 2004). Hope in urban education is not something new. Many reform efforts have shown the hope and promise Taylor (2004) discusses. Many studies and reports have linked hope to school/community partnerships (Sergiovanni, 1994; Taylor, 2004; Jones, 1995). The remainder of this section will focus on programs and educational processes that symbolize hope in urban schools.

Jones (1995) asserts that meeting the challenge in urban education requires what he calls civic capacity. He refers to civic capacity as, "the establishment of cross sector alliances among representatives in schools, city hall, nonprofit organizations, parent groups, and businesses. These alliances bring together stakeholders in the community on behalf of a shared problem-

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solving agenda" (p.2). A problem arises when the community's interests are not aligned with the interests of the schools that create varied levels of civic capacity.

Jones (1995) reviews civic capacity in three city school districts. In each school, community links are noted as building civic capacity. In some cases, businesses are encouraged to become involved in schools through adopting the values and interests of the school. They promote those values and interests through further community involvement, and working directly with students. Taking the interests of the schools into the business sector follows closely with Taylor's (2004) sense of urgency for community connections as an influence on urban school reform. In both cases, outside entities, specifically community members, are encouraged to support the efforts of the school in exchange for hope.

Similarly, the National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth (NCFY) (1996) speaks of youth development in terms of connecting youth to their community. They state, "even communities with concentrated poverty and serious crime comprise individuals and organizations with tremendous strengths and talents…combining the community and youth development models…offers tremendous opportunities to effect positive, long-lasting change" (p.20) that can be equated with hope. The NCFY (1996) reminds us that community leaders who invest in the connection gain personally and contribute to community growth.

Like Taylor (2004), the NCFY (1996) sees religious and political leaders as intrinsic links to successful urban school reform. Both Taylor (2004) and the NCFY (1996) advocate for ways in which community partners can "campaign" for

reform by holding awards ceremonies, collaborating on goals and visions, and displaying student work in community offices and churches. But, are these measures enough? Efforts to increase student success may be worthy of consideration; however, when those efforts represent the efforts of one or only a few, those efforts are not as likely to produce results. That is, efforts to increase urban student success must be formalized, and in the best-case scenario, be inclusive of entire staffs, districts, and schools.

When hope and caring are aligned with alternative school programming, hope and caring become rules of a program. Rules are written to be followed, and to prescribe the norms of best practice. When a rule is institutionalized, it has the capacity to become a common and accepted practice (Eisenstadt, 1964). Hope and caring in alternative schools should be institutionalized.

Institutionalization of Caring

The process of institutionalization can be defined as "the organization of societal prescribed system of differentiated behavior oriented to the solution of certain problems inherent in a major area of social life" (Eisenstadt, 1964, p235). This shows that the organization of social behavior requires strategies in order to normalize behavior according to the standards of the organization. When those strategies work to improve the functionality of the group, then permanence should be considered. The permanent nature of the strategies indicates that the process of institutionalization should be pending.

Horsley, Loucks-Horsley, Phlegar, and Perez-Selles (1990), more recently, refer to institutionalization as "continuation" by stressing the routine

nature of the process as well as the process extending itself into multiple aspects of the organization. Continuation, according to Horsley et al. (1990), is the third phase in any change effort. It follows the initiation and the implementation phase. We are, however, reminded that the phases are not always ordered and may occur simultaneously. In schools, this means that in order for a strategy to be institutionalized, the strategy must be used across grade-level, levels of staffing, curriculum, and policies (Horsley et. al, 1990).

Kramer (2000) specifies the requirements of institutionalization in a three-phase process: capacity building, widespread use and support, and systemic integration. Regardless of what the phases are, it is evident that, "there is a general agreement that complete infusion (of a strategy) requires a phased process" (Kramer, 2000, p.16).

Service learning is a documented example of a successfully institutionalized strategy. Service-learning requirements, as defined by Kramer (2000), provide a starting point for institutionalizing caring in urban schools. Kramer (2000) comments on service learning and the institutionalization of the strategy:

1. Service learning must be used routinely and by most players.

2. Service learning is a significant component of academic and non-academic classes.

3. Service-learning should be used as a means for attaining educational and community goals.

4. Service learning processes take time.

5. Service learning can become a regular piece of the teaching profession if teachers and principals want it to be.

When the words "service-learning" are replaced with "caring", we are left with the following statements that reinforce the power of caring, and will serve as a guide to the institutionalization of caring in an urban alternative school:

1. Caring must be used routinely and by most players.

2. Caring is a significant component of academic and non-academic classes.

3. Caring should be used as a means for attaining educational and community goals.

4. Caring processes take time.

5. Caring can become a regular piece of the teaching profession if teachers and principals want it to be.

Caring just may be the key to employing successful alternative education programs. Raywid (2001) claims that a caring environment "is clearly essential for the unsuccessful and those who are at-risk of being unsuccessful" (p.583). Is this "care" simply the care of a single teacher or the caring attitude of the principal or the care of a peer? The answer is no. In order to be effective, care must be institutionalized: the entire organization becomes committed to, believes in, and acts on caring at every level of the school's structure. The institutionalization of caring requires the entire school program to embrace the vision of the alternative school as one that emerges with the disposition that

caring for another transforms the social and cultural world around one and reorders the experienced society (Mayerhoff, 1971).

In other words, the school becomes the vehicle or community in which caring transforms educational experiences for urban, African American at-risk youth in alternative schools. Ianni (1997) states that, "Ample evidence exists that community is what gives continuity to caring; that community preserves caring and institutionalizes it" (p.74). Although the community outside of the alternative program is an important part of educating at-risk students, the community referred to in this research is synonymous with the school itself—the beliefs, values, actions and people within the confines of school space.

Caring must be inclusive in order to institutionalize itself. In order to be inclusive, the entire school community must believe that a connection to the social and emotional well being of students represents the ultimate goal in caring.

The importance of exceptional care giving for optimum social, emotional, and mental development, Ianni (1997) suggests, is irreplaceable. Because of the amount of time youth spends in school, it makes sense that all teachers should assume the role of the caring adult. We know that the presence of a caring adult can compensate for the missing supportive infrastructure in their homes (Ianni, 1997). When a school community institutionalizes caring, teachers can play a lead role in the on-going process. If teachers "fail to recognize the impact they have on the …development of children" (Scott, 2003, p.35), they run the risk of harming their students. Ianni (1997) states, "it is possible for a youngster from an

emotionally impoverished family to feel cared about and learn to care for others"

(p.5). Teachers possess the capacity to make such a difference.

The Missouri Caring Communities Project (1995), a neighborhood based,

school-linked service project, have voiced the need for institutionalization of their

caring communities program in order to increase commitment to achieving better

results for children and their families. Following the implementation of their

service delivery approach, many members on-board its development process

had gotten together to discuss "lessons-learned" from the process. They now

offer a how-to version of their own institutionalization process that is worthy of

consideration. They suggest the following components as intrinsic to the

institutionalization process: creativity, receptivity to change, commitment,

collaboration, vision, evolution, changing attitudes, building strengths, flexibility,

leadership, evaluation, and active involvement.

<div align="center">Social Capital</div>

Shaefer-McDaniel (2004) asserts that a youth's perception of social capital

is an important issue to study, and recommends that researchers combine the

thoughts of James Coleman, Pierre Bordieu and Robert Putman. In doing so,

Shaefer McDaniel (2004) claims that social capital is "synthesized" (p. 141). The

synthesis of the definitions provides what Shaefer-McDaniel refers to as a more

complete framework for understanding young peoples' perceptions of their,

"…social relationships and interactions" (p.146).

On a national level, the government has investigated social capital, as it

relates to young people, to address different policy issues, like education and

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health. Over the past few years, research has revealed that qualitative and quantitative measures of social capital show grave disparities. Quantitative measures have shown how young people can be disinterested in engaging in thought and activity related to social capital, such as voting or volunteering. At the same time, qualitative measures have revealed more promising outcomes. This prompts the government to initiate an investigation of their previously used measurements of social capital (Whiting & Harper, 2003).

On behalf of the Office for National Statistics and the Department for Education, Whiting and Harper (2003) serve as lead researchers in an effort to distinguish the causes of the disparity between qualitative and quantitative results of the impact of social capital and young people in order to improve the validity of social capital measurement. Their scrutiny reveals that the quantitative measures are geared towards adults, which skews the outcomes.

Consequently, Whiting and Harper (2003) have developed a new set of questions, and, in the future, will compare rates of social capital by using the original adult-related indicators and the new youth questions. This on-going study reminds researchers that social capital can have different meanings for different groups. The remainder of this section will focus on a definition of social capital that brings forth an understanding of social capital as it pertains to urban African American at-risk students. As stated by Cohen and Prusak (2001), "social capital consists of the stock of active connections among people: the trust, mutual understanding, and shared values and behaviors that bind the members of human networks and communities and make cooperation possible" (p.4).

According to Smith (2000), loyalty, reciprocity, and trust are hallmarks of prosperous social capital. Smith (2000) also contends that social capital allows people to make a commitment to one another to build the community, and discover a trust that develops into, "…shared set of values, virtues, and expectations…" (p. 2). He states that the development of trusting relationships acts as a magnet for tolerance, empathy, and caring which, consequently, enhance social capital (Smith, 2000).

Noguera (1998) asserts that schools are social resources that can generate social capital. Urban schools' goals should be to gain social stability and support in order to sustain the notion that, "…public schools are in effect, the most significant remnant of the social safety net available to poor people in the US" (p.3). Recognizing that poor families suffer from a magnitude of circumstances that do not promote social capital in the home, Noguera (1999) suggests that investing in urban schools can serve as a strategy for addressing poverty, economic inequality, and social isolation.

Furstenberg and Hughes (1995) examine poor African American mothers (under age 18) and their children in the city of Baltimore. Each participant is at-risk of life-long disadvantages depicted by a variety of life stressors including, but not limited to: single parent households, receiving public assistance, unemployment, and teenage motherhood. Their study of social capital, and the successful development of at-risk youth, focuses on how much the presence of social capital influences development. The study utilizes structured interviews and open-ended conversations in its measurement of social capital. Furstenberg

and Hughes (1995) assume the perspective that…"we measure social capital by the quantity and quality of social relationships…but because of the centrality of the family to youth development, our measures of social capital center on the family" (p.584). The family-centered social capital they speak of centers on parents' social investment in their children. Results indicate that social capital has significant links to socioeconomic outcomes in early adulthood, but also has a different affect on the range of outcomes investigated.

Results of Furstenberg and Hughes's (1995) study indicate preliminary support of social capital as "implicated in differentiating patterns of socioeconomic success and failure among at-risk youth." (p.587). Similar findings are noted in another study by Runyan, Hunter, Socolar, Amaya-Jackson, English, Landsverk, Dubowitz, Browne, Bandiwala, and Mathew (1998), whose study focuses on "children who prosper in unfavorable environments"(p.12), and how social capital impacts that outcome.

The study sample consists of 667, two-to-five year old children who are all categorized by their unfortunate social and economic circumstances. The study is intended to help inform pediatricians and child advocates. This cross-sectional case analysis uses a social capital index value and plots it against the number of children in the "doing well" group. A "dose-response relationship" (Runyan et al., 1998, p.20) indicates that on an ordinal scale the distribution of social capital to children doing well is very different from distribution of social capital to children doing poorly (Runyan et al, 1998). Findings reveal that the presence of any social capital measures increases the odds of the child's success rate by 29%, while

adding two measures of social capital can increase those odds by 35% (Runyan et al. 1998). This shows how social capital can affect a child as early as the pre-school age. The findings in both Runyan et al. (1998), and Furstenberg and Hughes (1995) support the development of relationships.

Jarrett, Sullivan, and Watkins (2005) remark on the intergenerational relationships shaped by participation in youth programs. Their qualitative study of three youth program participants suggests that intergenerational relationships form as the result of a merger between adult role models and youth participating in structured programs. Two of the three programs are located in urban areas, and comprise predominately minority youth; while the third program is located in a rural town made up of predominately white students. Data from the open-ended interviews and focus groups reveals that the adults in the youth's lives provide them with social capital, such as: information, assistance in several aspects of their lives, and exposure to positive adult role-models (Jarrett, Sullivan and Watkins, 2005). In fact, Jarrett, Sullivan and Watkins (2005) claim that the adults contributing positively to youths are a source of social capital. This study portrays the nature of the relationships that develops between teachers and students.

Croninger and Lee (1993) in their study of over 11,000 students from over 1,000 cities examine teacher-based forms of social capital that reduce the probability of dropping out for all students, as well as an exploration of whether or not social capital has special benefits for students at risk of dropping out of school. The researchers claim that from the perspective of social capital, "…differences in the probability of dropping out can be explained by differences

in the quality of social networks that comprise a student's interactions with teachers" (p.555). This quantitative study utilizes two measures of social capital (student teacher relations and student teacher talks outside the classroom) among four groups of students: students without risk, socially at-risk students with no discipline history, academically at-risk students from socially advantaged homes, and academically at-risk students from socially disadvantaged homes. Results of this study reveal that students who drop out of school characterize their relationship with teachers less positively than graduates. Possibly, dropouts are more likely than graduates to have one or more risk factors. Dropouts also benefit more from social capital than other students. Usually, teacher based forms of social capital are found to be beneficial for all; but especially for students who are at-risk of dropping out, and socially, academically, and/or economically disadvantaged.

Cultural Mismatch

Cultural mismatch is not just a phenomenon between African American students and their teachers. The notion of cultural mismatch extends beyond the African American culture, affecting many other minority groups. Examining cultural mismatch through a variety of groups depicts how mismatch develops and evolves into a barrier between teachers and students. This section will review the literature on cultural mismatch pertaining to a variety of cultural groups, including African American students. Further, this section will focus in on cultural mismatch between African American students and their teachers.

Cultural mismatch is not only a problem faced by African Americans; cultural mismatch has roots in many other cultures. Delpit (1988) discusses the cultural mismatch between native Alaskans and the University of Alaska's predominately white faculty. In short, the natives are limited to college courses that would enable students to teach in their native villages, but not outside of those villages. The mismatch is evident as Delpit (1988) uncovers the students' thoughts regarding their coursework; they are dissatisfied with their course selections, and want their learning to prepare them to teach beyond the traditions of the native Alaskan villages. Teacher resistance to the students' requests indicates a disconnect between the non-native faculty and the native students that demonstrates the broad range of predictors of cultural mismatch.

Other representations of cultural mismatch in education are evident between American Indian, Latino, Asian, Mexican-American, and Pacific Islander students, and teachers from another cultural group (Bailey & Monroe, 2003; Flores-Gonzales, 2002). Flores-Gonzales's (2002) representation of cultural mismatch between middle class teachers and Latino students demonstrates how cultural differences between teachers and students from another culture influences school success. In Flores-Gonzalez's observation, turning "Street Kids" into "School Kids" requires attention to the cultural underpinnings of the students. Cultural mismatch points to the need for varying teaching practices across cultural contexts.

In their observations of cultural practices in the Pacific, Bailey and Monroe (2004) assert that affective teaching practices in one culture may not suit another

culture. They demonstrate this through their study of mathematical education. In

the Pacific, educating today's youth by maintaining the old world ways remains

the primary goal of the school systems. The communal and cooperative nature of

the old ways of Pacific countries has become a barrier to meeting the needs of

the youth, many of whom move beyond the confines of their less developed

country into more westernized areas. Through their investigation, Bailey and

Monroe (2004) conclude that what was lacking was, "…an appropriate and

matching pedagogy which compliments their cultural practices and mission to

educate their children effectively" (p.2). In their observation of six exemplary

teachers (identified by their building principals as successful), they note that the

individualistic and sterile atmospheres in the six classrooms offer exactly the

opposite of the old ways of the Pacific.

Bailey and Monroe (2004) conclude that neither the old ways of the

Pacific, nor the new ways of the Western world dominate the mathematic

curriculum and instruction; but rather, pre-service and in-service opportunities

work to blend the two cultures. The blending of the students' culture with the

schools' culture lends itself to a new pedagogy that prepares students for life

within the Pacific communities, and life beyond their native countries.

The blending of the home culture with the school culture as a successful

tool in educating students from different groups is paramount to Nilda Flores-

Gonzalez's (2002) ethnographic study of identity development in Latino students.

Nilda Flores-Gonzalez (2002) discusses how taking on a new culture, like the

culture of school, does not mean that the old culture must be ignored. In light of

this, she rejects cultural mismatch on the basis that, "…racial/ethnic minorities do not have to choose between performing well in school or maintaining their ethnic identity; they can be "ethnic" and "model" students simultaneously" (p.9). She also questions the deficit model of minority students due to the model's inability to account for exceptions within groups. That is, the deficit model cannot account for differentiated academic achievement of siblings or dropouts who return to and graduate from high school.

Pransky and Bailey (2003) utilize meta-inquiry, based on teacher research, to relay their understanding of cultural mismatch through case study vignettes of Cambodian students in an ethnically diverse classroom. They demonstrate how cultural mismatch plays itself out in the classroom. The teacher/researchers' desire to better understand the dynamics of what they see as, "…the nature of mismatches between home and school that place students at risk" (p.371) One of the teacher/researchers stages situations in his classroom to initiate the visibility of the mismatch. Consequently, he engages in odd behaviors, and makes many mistakes in his lesson delivery. Most of the children freely point out the purposeful behaviors through comments, laughs, and gestures. The Cambodian students are the exception; they whisper to one another, but would not correct the teacher or ask any questions. After investigating the possible reasons, the teacher/researcher discovers that in the Cambodian culture, children never question their elders. What could have been misunderstood as a deficit is defined as a cultural difference (Pransky & Bailey, 2003). This case study not only shows the obvious cultural mismatch, but also reveals ways in

which educators can reduce the negative effects of cultural mismatch through inquiry. In chapter five, the notion of inquiry, as a tool to reduce harm to the student, will be explored.

In his study of female aboriginal graduates, Bazylak (2002) identifies characteristics of cultural mismatch between the students and their school. This qualitative study uses results from sharing circles to portray the cultural components of schooling that impactes the students' drive to graduate. In doing so, Bazylak (2002) highlights "…students' perceptions of their own success as a feature of problem-solving that focuses on positive factors with a solution based philosophy driving educational transformation" (p.135). The students' perceptions include: a need for their spirituality to be recognized in school through ceremonies and rituals, a need for their families to be invited into the school, a need for access to support/social services, a need for a mutual and trusting relationship with teachers, and the need for an engaging curriculum.

One sharing circle reveals that female students' desire to have children influences their drive to graduate. This is a prime example of how mismatch affects cultural groups differently. In the western world, having babies at a young age is not glorified. In many cases, getting pregnant during high school can be perceived as a tragedy. For this particular group of Aboriginal students, pregnancy served as a motivating factor in their decision to graduate. This follows the norms of Aboriginal women, to be the nurturer and caretaker of the family. Consequently, having an outlet in school to discuss child rearing as a life-

style contributes to the students' decision to graduate. Having this information lends itself to Bazylak's (2002) solution-based philosophy.

The following studies and remarks help identify the unique nature of African American students, and the students' distinct set of cultural values that should not be ignored in the classroom. Mismatch will be discussed by describing several researcher/authors' positions and study findings. These descriptions are intended to provide insight into beliefs, and teaching tactics that prioritize a reduction in cultural mismatch.

Haberman (2003) uses the term misseducation to describe the tragedy of seven million children in urban poverty that are disproportionately represented by African Americans. He argues, "misseducating diverse children in poverty for over half a century is a predictable, explainable phenomenon not a series of accidental, unfortunate chance events " (p.1). Denbo (2002) describes how to combat miseducation, "…that results in the elimination of harmful institutional practices" by, "…a belief that African American students, like other students, can achieve high standards and that the African American culture, like other cultures, is a rich one" (p.55).

Denbo (2002) defines six institutional practices in which support increases achievement. The sixth intends to, "initiate innovative policies and practices that support African American student achievement" (p.57). He discusses practices specifically aimed at African American students. They are: experiment with research-based pedagogy, introduce action-based research, reduce class size, expand access to preschool, identify and assign culturally competent and highly

qualified teachers, provide before and after school programs, and utilize multicultural curricula.

Denbo(2002) identifies teacher attributes that could aid in the deconstruction of misseducation, such as: intercultural competence, participation in student community and culture, an understanding of social construction of worldviews, knowledge and willingness to recognize racism, and a willingness to involve parents.

Noguera (1996) examines data from a study of a Northern California Alternative school, East-Side High. East-Side High consists of 90% African American, 8 % Latino, and 2% Asian students, all from poor families and live in an urban area of California. By the mid-1980s, the school serves as a "dumping ground" (p.226) for bad kids (Noguera, 1996). In 1998, a new principal is assigned to the school. Noguera's (1996) perception of the principal exemplifies not only caring, but also, caring for the urban, at-risk, African American student. Noguera (1996) states the following:

> Rather than becoming demoralized by the malaise that pervaded the school, his encounters [the principal's] with students led him to immediately recognize not only their many unmet needs, but also their potential for higher performance if provided the opportunity to re-create an alternative learning environment…for this predominantly African American population of students. (p.227)

Noguera (1998) had watched, over a four-year period, "…a more conscious and deliberate effort to affirm the culture and social experience of the largely black

student body…" (p.228). The principal had recognized his student's race, which became an important tool in making that school a better place.

Noguera's (1998) discussions reiterate the importance of the leader in shaping alternative schools for urban, at-risk, African American youth. The value of a school leader, who is also a culturally responsive leader, lends itself to the discussion on institutionalization discussed earlier in this chapter, and will lend itself to the position of the researcher's narrative in this study.

Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) discusses successful teachers of African American students. She firmly believes that African Americans, as a racial group, are not recognized as having a distinct culture, even when studies have suggested that students are more likely to succeed when they feel positive about their culture (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Ladson-Billings (1994) states, "it is the way we teach that profoundly affects the way that students perceive the content of the curriculum" (p.13). She suggests that teachers of African American students recognize that learning is not only a teacher driven exercise, but also, a student driven exercise.

Ladson-Billing's (1994) pedagogical cases detail culturally relevant teaching, which she regards as assisting "…in the development of a relative black personality that allows Africa American students to choose academic excellence, yet still identify with African and African American culture" (p.17). She shows us this through interview excerpts and recorded observations of teachers who exemplify what she refers to as the "Basics of Culturally Relevant Teaching" (p.31). The basics of culturally relevant teaching speak not only to African

American students, but also to other minority groups. Ladson-Billings (1994) describes some of them below:

1. "Teachers with culturally relevant practices see teaching as an art and themselves as artists." (p.42)

2. "Teachers with culturally relevant practices believe that all students can succeed." (p.44)

3. "Teachers with culturally relevant practices see teaching as digging knowledge out of students." (p.52)

4. "The teacher/student relationship in the culturally relevant classroom is fluid and humanely equitable." (p.61)

5. "Culturally relevant teaching involves cultivation of the relationship beyond the boundaries of the classroom." (p.62)

6. "Teachers with culturally relevant practices are careful to demonstrate a connectedness with each of their students." (p.66)

7. "Culturally relevant teaching sees excellence as a . complex standard that takes student diversity and individual differences into account." (p.98)

Hale-Benson (1986) asserts that African American children are immersed in a culture that schools often fail to recognize. She uses the term "African survivals" (p.120) to represent a part of the African American student culture that has retained the students' roots in West Africa. These are not cultural norms that are under debate in the African American culture; the norms have persisted over

centuries and represent, "…implications for the way Black children learn and think" (Hale-Benson, 1986, p. 111).

The distinguishing characteristics of African American culture are often in opposition to traditional mainstream education as a result. "Black children may be experiencing severe learning disabilities because of the differences between the culture in which they develop and learn and the culture they encounter most in public schools" (Hale-Benson, 1986, p.102). The cultural mismatch inherent in Hale-Benson's (1986) perspective can be overcome through new ways of teaching that incorporate the African American culture into the entire school process. Hale-Benson (1986) sponsors the notion that a new pedagogy be enacted in the school system—a pedagogy that validates the African American culture. Like Hale-Benson (1986), Sulentic (1999) discusses the need for a new pedagogy.

Sulentic (1999) asserts that black language is an aspect of the African American culture that influences the verbal variance between home and school. Sulentic (1999) has developed a language equity pedagogy model as a result of her findings from a study of the socio-cultural context of language, and diglossia amongst two predominately African American classrooms in Iowa. Ethnographic methods, like participant observation and interviews, are used to understand African American children's' negotiation of language. Findings reveal that specific teacher strategies impact the issues of black language in the classroom. Teachers who validate Black English by using and modeling "code-switching" (p.122) also encourage the use of Standard English. Teachers' attitudes in

acceptance of Black language (a direct behavior management style), use of "code-switching", acceptance of Standard English approximations, and recognition of the verbal nature of African American students help facilitate student learning.

Iatrogenic Harm

Historically, iatrogenic harm, and iatrogenic conditions have been utilized solely by the medical field. Dorland's Medical Dictionary (2004) defines iatrogenic condition as, "resulting from the act of a physician…adverse condition in a patient occurring as the result of treatment by a physician especially acquired by the patient during the course of treatment" (p.2). 180,000 Americans per year die of preventable adverse events in hospitals (U.K. Manifesto, 2001). One of the most recognized and frightening instances of iatrogenic harm occurred during the 1960s with the drug Thalidomide.

Thalidomide was given to pregnant women to battle morning sickness. Frighteningly, the medicine was pulled from the shelves once staggering numbers of newborns, whose mothers took thalidomide, were born with birth defects. Simply put, the patient presents a problem, the doctor prescribes a remedy, the remedy is harmful, the patient suffers.

Rarely, education has been linked to iatrogenic harm. More specifically, teacher practice has not been linked to iatrogenic harm. However, it can be assumed that an iatrogenic condition could occur when the young person perceives relationships with their teachers as incongruous to who they are

(Yowell & Gordon, 1996). In the case of student behavior, this harm may be the absence of acceptance of the student's culture.

Waxerman, Walker deFelix, Anderson, and Baptiste (1992) suggest that a teacher's inability to respond to students' variations is harmful. They say, " …if we begin to see ways in which school environments tolerate and even promote the difficulties students experience, the responsibilities of educators become more urgent...the prime issue is the ability of educators to respond to variations among students…" (p.35). The researchers do not use the term iatrogenic, but their discussion of teachers' inability to respond to students' variations indicates the iatrogenic nature of the practice. The inability of teachers to respond to students' variations is one aspect of education that might link itself to iatrogenic harm. This study indicates how further research would be beneficial to the educational field.

Similarly, Resnick, Harris, & Blum (1993) discuss a teacher inquiry into students that is, "…directed toward understanding success and well-being, identifying those factors that buffer against the stresses of everyday life that might otherwise result in adverse physical, social, or psychological outcomes for youth" (p.2). Here, inquiry into the student's life has not been linked to iatrogenic harm; but rather, inquiry has reduced potential adverse outcomes for youth, which is an indicator that failure to reduce potential adverse reaction may cause iatrogenic conditions. Tyson (2003) specifically remarks on the "…the ideological influences of everyday schooling practices and their unintended consequences" (p. 326) in her investigation of common teacher practices and African American

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students' response to these practices. In an ethnographic study of two all-black schools (one public and one parochial) in a 90% African American, urban school district, Tyson (2003) had found that, although the school pledged to meet the specific needs of African American students, the expectations of the teachers to conform to dominant cultural norms of behavior undermines the other pledges of the school to build self-esteem and an affirming racial identity. The consequences of teacher's expectations, although unintended, could be harmful to the students.

The unintended natures of the consequences are at the heart of understanding iatrogenic harm and iatrogenic conditions. Tyson (2003) states that having conversations surrounding the dominant culture and its power in our larger society could ease the negative consequences associated with teachers' operating within, "…a particular institutionalized frame, one that defines mainstream cultural norms as not just standard but the best" (Tyson, 2003, p.339).

Waxerman, Walker deFelix, Anderson, and Baptiste (1992), Resnick, Harris, and Blum (1993), and Tyson (2003) discuss harmful teacher practices. These authors indicate the need for remediation of teachers in the specific areas under study. Remediation is needed for teachers who do not have the knowledge or understanding necessary to reach their students. This lack of knowledge and/or understanding possibly illustrates the unintended nature of the harm inherent in their everyday practice, which could justify the link to iatrogenic harm.

The iatrogenic nature of student/teacher relationships could be seen as a parallel to the studies of iatrogenic harm within other disciplines.

One such study, by Dishion, McCord, and Poulin (1999), evaluates iatrogenic harm in relation to peer group counseling sessions. This study hypothesizes and then tests the idea that high-risk adolescents' behavior escalates as a result of interventions delivered in peer groups. Dishion, McCord, and Poulin (1999) refer to this phenomenon as deviancy training. That is, placement with peers who are also at high-risk impacts future engagement in deviant behaviors. Using data from two prior studies, Dishion, T.J., McCord, J. & Poulin, F. (1999) found that the older, more deviant peers are more prone to iatrogenic harm than less deviant younger peers, and both short and long-term iatrogenic harm affects problematic behavior. Reasons for this may be due to older students dominating discussions with and bullying the younger, more influential peers.

This study not only informs the counseling field, but also the educational field where teachers make decisions for their students. Like counselors, if teachers act in ways that they believe are beneficial, but in fact are harmful, they could run the risk of initiating iatrogenic harm. In the alternative education field, known for educating high-risk youth, teachers who discuss high-risk issues in a group setting possibly run the risk of students learning negative behaviors through stories from other students. Results from this study imply that, especially with older, high-risk youth, individual counseling for problems such as violence, substance abuse, and other delinquent behaviors, may be warranted.

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A theoretical exploration of iatrogenic harm could emphasize the impact of labels, language, and belief systems on psychotherapy patients. Boisvert & Faust (2002) remark that several components of therapy contribute to negative treatment. Included in those components are: mismanaging care time limits, labeling patients incorrectly or relying too heavily on the label, suggesting the client is flawed, discussing members of the client's support system negatively, and relying on one particular belief system. Boisvert & Faust (2002) contend that assumptions guide iatrogenic harm in psychotherapy. People commit to their own belief system without regard for alternative views. This theoretical exploration could have implications for education. Like a psychotherapist, a teacher of at-risk students runs the risk of harming those students through lack of understanding.

Caplan and Caplan (2001) discuss iatrogenic harm and the mental health field. They note that, "within long established care-giving fields, it has been recognized that well-intentioned professionals may harm clients because of lack of knowledge, skill, empathy, or objectivity" (p. 27). Unfortunately, what Caplan and Caplan (2001) realize is that even though recognition exists, the problem of iatrogenic harm by mental health providers still persists.

They began a 15-year study in an effort to identify the iatrogenic harm inherent in intervention components of children and divorced or divorcing parents. Over the course of the first few years, Caplan and Caplan (2001) had noticed that limiting their efforts to divorce issues was not realistic. That is, in their clinic in Jerusalem, Caplan and Caplan (2001) saw many children and adults who had suffered from iatrogenic harm initiated by caregivers. Divorce

cases, child abuse cases, children who lost their parent(s), and adoption cases had to be reviewed. Eventually, their concern was turned to the lives of any weak or dependent person coming to their clinic as a result of a failed intervention by a caregiver. Caplan and Caplan (2001) also had analyzed the actions of the caregiver incurring the harm as well as the faults of the organization employing them.

Caplan and Caplan (2001) use two case studies as examples of caregiver harm on students. These two studies focus on teacher and school administrator actions that incur iatrogenic harm on a particular student. Both students are sent to Caplan and Caplan's (2001) clinic as a result of a referral from the school. Following each case study, Caplan and Caplan (2001) discuss the specific actions that contributed to the harm.

The first case study is of a 13-year-old eighth-grader who after years of honor roll receives poor grades in some of her classes. The student admits that her drop in grades coincides with her dislike of the teacher, who had a habit of announcing the student's bad grades to the class on several occasions.

The following year, the teacher leaves the school, and the student's optimism rises until she realizes that she's been placed in remedial classes. Under the guidance of the principal, the girl shifts from her regular classes into remedial classes. The principal reviews the report card, and makes a decision with the regular class teacher's input. Consequently, the student was unable to continue in her favorite classes—she'd maintained A's in those. Formidably, the student's mother insists that her daughter be moved back to her original

schedule. However, by that time the student was so frustrated, she had required

mental health treatment and an alternative school placement (Caplan &Caplan,

2001). It seems apparent that the teacher's actions leads to an iatrogenic harm;

one that impacts the student's need for mental health treatment, and the need for

an alternative school placement. The actions of the teacher and administrator

demonstrate what Caplan and Caplan (2001) refer to as "typical features of

iatrogenic behavior" (p.53). They give a series of reasons why iatrogenic

behavior can occur, such as: idealistic planning, failure to gather data, ignoring

potential logistical problems and other "…cognitive and administrative

shortcomings" (p.58).

The second case study examines the connection between iatrogenic harm

in the context of teachers/administrators by using a four-year-old pre-

kindergartner who is witnessed playing with a doll in a way that suggests sexual

abuse. The teacher notifies the family, and the family doctor is called. The doctor

assures the teacher that the family is not menacing. In fact, they are highly

functional, even though the father had recently lost his job. Additionally, the

babysitter in the family recalls that this boy had awoken from his bed, and

secretly watched an adult content TV show, which could account for his

inappropriate play. The teacher suggests there be an in-depth investigation. They

persist, and notify social workers. Consequently, the family receives a barrage of

social workers investigating their family. What's uncovered is exactly what the

babysitter reported—the boy had witnessed adult material on a TV show. As well,

the social workers are able to discern the thwarted image the teacher had of the family.

After that incident, the teacher was hypersensitive to anything the boy did in her class, and would often call the parents threatening to notify the authorities. Finally, the parents had to request a transfer to a new school to rid themselves of the over-zealous teacher.

Caplan and Caplan (2001) identify compulsive beliefs, thwarted family stories, poorly supported suspicions, and lack of adequate data as the acts instigating iatrogenic harm. Pertaining to both of these case studies, Caplan and Caplan (2001) discuss systemic organizational causes for the faulty behavior of the teacher. The establishment of clear professional roles within an organization could create iatrogenic harm when caregivers assume responsibility that they are not qualified for. In other situations, a professional who should be knowledgeable and capable in a certain area is either poorly trained or lacks the temperament needed in making judgment calls during heightened incidents. Loss of objectivity as a result of maintaining a hidden agenda may also impact iatrogenic harm at an organizational level. Caplan and Caplan (2001) identify these organizational deficiencies as a part of the system of, "…professional shortcomings", that, "illustrate system-generated iatrogenic damage that is built into long held traditions of professional practice" (p.95) and malpractice.

Caplan and Caplan (2001) provide many other case studies in their book, which explores iatrogenic harm of many care-provider professions. The broad scope of professions these cases cover illustrates how iatrogenic harm needs to

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be considered beyond the medical field from which it originated. Marking a shift

in the literature, Caplan and Caplan's (2001) work clearly connects the notion of

iatrogenic harm as transmittable by teachers and other educational

professionals.

Little Man

Little Man has, also, been in the alternative school for about three years. He is much smaller than most boys his own age, but has a sneakiness about him that reminds me of a wise and experienced robber. On this day, Little Man was highly agitated because I gave him detention for calling a peer a "nasty ho". In front of the secretary's office, Little Man picked up three bananas left over from lunch, mushed them up in his hands, and dropped them like fecal matter as he held the mush behind his rear end. I stood watching Little Man. I reminded him that he wasn't mad at the secretary. He looked at me and told me I was right. He then picked up the mashed bananas and, once again, dropped them like fecal matter in front of my office door.

More stubborn than I, Little Man refused to pick up the mess. He sat outside of my office for three hours as students passed by, teachers packed up and headed home. Finally when we were the only two left, he told me he was sorry, and picked up the banana. He then asked me for a hug before leaving.

The next morning Little Man's aunt called me to tell me that for the third day in a row his mother had not returned home. She had met a new man and was off, I was told. When the mother finally returned that morning, she heard the message from my secretary asking her to call the school due to problems with her son. Without knowing what happened, she beat him until his face bled.

The aunt called to tell me he wouldn't be in school until the following day. From that day forward, Little Man lived with the aunt who was really a neighbor. Little Man's mother has no problem with him living with the neighbor; but as the story goes, will not give over custody. About a week after the banana incident, Little Man came to me and stated, "I have a new mother, so don't call the old one anymore ok?"

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Introduction

This chapter contains several sections. Qualitative methodology, introduces the methods chosen for this particular study. Following, grounded theory, case study, and ethnography will be examined. Finally, the study sample and the pilot study connected to this research will be discussed.

Qualitative Methods

Qualitative research and methodologies refer to what Strauss and Corbin (1990) call a, "…nonmathematical process of interpretation, carried out for the purpose of discovering concepts and relationships in raw data and then organizing these into a theoretical explanatory theme" (p.11). In qualitative research, this is achieved through intensive description. The act of description is basic to this type of research as it, "reflects who we are as researchers and influence the way the "world" is written and how a story is told and retold" (Jones, 2002, p.461). How urban, African American, alternative school students make sense of their lives is paramount in this study. My inquiry aims to portray and understand the student/participants' perceptions of their experience. The goal of this study is more about understanding the outcomes of their experiences, and less about the student/participants. In this study, urban, at-risk, alternative school students quality their experiences with previous teachers, and guide the entire research process.

The study will be aligned with qualitative methodologies, as discussed by

Jones (2002) that are "fundamentally anchored in a concern for developing depth

of understanding of a particular phenomenon and the construction of meaning

that individuals attribute to their experiences" (p.462). This will be achieved

through several qualitative avenues including the concept of the "story".

Story

In this research, the stories told include that of the researcher, several

students in the alternative school in this study, and the participants of the study.

Like Burns-McCoy's work (2003), these stories deal with:

The breadth of human experience in time and space…with things the limited

disciplines of thought either ignore completely or destroy by methodological

caution, our most pressing concerns: personality, family, death, love, time, spirit,

goodness, evil, destiny, beauty, and will. (p.1)

The stories in this study are framed to help the reader understand the breadth of

experience that gives rise to the needs of each individual.

Research in the field of special education uses story to understand the

needs of special education students (Pugach, 2001). Following a qualitative

paradigm, special education researchers use stories to tell how things work or,

often times, are broken (Pugach, 2001; Noddings, 1992). The use of story in

special education (and qualitative research) marks a shift in qualitative research

from dispassionate to purposefully orchestrating and highlighting the voices of

those who have not been heard before (Pugach, 2001). Denzin and Lincoln

(1994) refer to this shift as the "crisis of representation" (p.9).

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Within this study, the crisis of representation is absolved. The professional and personal stories of the researcher, the chapter opening vignettes, and the stories of each participant resonate with a voice that clearly portrays underrepresented voices. The vignettes in particular expose a voice that is the essence of the climate of the alternative school under study. The researcher chooses to tell those particular stories (chapter opening vignettes) to accentuate the personal, academic, emotional, and social representations of the students. The stories of the researcher serve to acknowledge the, "centrality of the researcher's own experience—the researcher's own livings, tellings, retellings, and relivings…the researcher's own narrative of experience, the researcher's autobiography" (Clandinin & Connelley, 2000, p.70).

Finally, the stories of the participants speak for themselves. They are enriched with the voice of the researcher and they, like the vignettes and researcher story, "create a character that transcends the original setting or event of the research" (Burns- McCoy, 2004, p.1). Each of the stories in this study take the reader beyond the research question into a space that forces the reader to see, in all its ugliness and sadness, a reality from the perspective of the researcher. Thus, grounded theory will be employed to traffic newly found representations, ideas, and understandings.

Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory is a qualitative research method developed for the purpose of studying social phenomena (Glasser & Strauss, 1967). Charmaz (1991) remarks that, "throughout this research process, grounded theorists

develop analytical interpretations of their data to focus further data collection which, in turn, is used to inform and refine their developing theoretical analysis" (p.509). The researcher is not bound by formulas (Charmaz, 1995) and rigid procedures. In fact, grounded theory allows the researcher to let the data gathering experience lead the way. In other words, as stated by Glasser and Strauss (1967), the emergence of data and theory through the analysis of "basic social processes" unfolds as the research expands. Glasser and Strauss (1992), and Yee (2001) assert that grounded theory provides a fresh and innovative twist on an already existing problem by generating new theory from the data. Grounded theory methods, "…focus on the discovery of substantive categories, hypotheses, and relationships between and among categories relevant to a certain phenomenon" (Blasé, 1986, p.102). In this study, theory is generated from the perspective of linking education to iatrogenic harm.

There are strategies (Charmaz, 1983) intrinsic to grounded theory. These strategies eventually lead to what Charmaz (1995) refers to as, "analytic explanations of actual problems and basic processes in the research setting" (p.511), and what Glasser and Strauss (1967) refer to as the purpose of grounded theory research—to generate theory, not verify it. Yee (2001) suggests the following in six outlines:

1. Simultaneous collection and analysis of data: Data and
theory are closely connected. They drive each other and as
the theory refines itself so does the data. The data forces the

researcher to continually raise questions through paying

attention to how participants see the world.

2. Coding process: "Coding organizes data …and captures

the meaning of the chunks." (p.5)

3. Comparative methods: Constant comparative methods,

"encourage a multifaceted investigation in which there are no

limits to the techniques of data collection, the way they are

used, or the types of data acquired except for the

requirements of theoretical sampling. The constant

comparative method represents a method of continually

redesigning the research in light of emerging concepts and

interrelationships amongst variables." (p.9)

4. Memo writing aimed at the construction of conceptual

analysis: "Memos serve to distance the researcher from the

participants. Memos serve as a guide for future data

collection and additional questions to be pursued. Memo

writing is constant throughout the entire grounded theory

process." (p.3)

5. Emerging theoretical ideas.

6. Integration of theoretical framework.

Researchers choose to use grounded theory for data collection because

researcher bias must be controlled. Dobson (1999) remarks:

The practical difficulty in applying the grounded theory approach is that even if attempts are made to keep the initial approach as unbiased and open as possible, the data collected cannot emerge independently of the researcher's personal ideological and theoretical stance." (p.262)

Member checking is a strategy for managing researcher bias. In this study, the researcher will execute member checking after the focus groups are completed. At that time, the researcher will review the transcriptions with the student participants by reading the transcriptions out loud for each participant. Throughout the reading, the researcher will allow each student the opportunity to expand upon or clarify any statements.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to member checking process in grounded theory as the "most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p.314), and they recommend that study participants be made aware that the story being told reflects not only their own view, but also, the views of the researcher—a method employed in this study to tell a story about each participant.

Researcher bias typically contains subjectivity. In general, subjectivity in research has been used in a negative context. In the case of qualitative inquiry, "how you pursue your own subjectivity", states Glesne, (1999, p.110), "matters less than that you pursue it." Bogdan and Bilken (1982) suggest, "we are talking about *limiting* observer's biases, not eliminating them." Glesne (1999) furthers this understanding by claiming that subjectivity is an expected component of qualitative research that is, "the basis for the story that you are able to tell" (p.109). Field notes (Bogdan & Bilken, 1982) guard against bias and subjectivity;

yet, the bottom line is that, "the researcher's primary goal is to add to knowledge, not to pass judgment" (Bogdan & Bilken, 1982, p.42).

Blasé utilizes grounded theory to examine the patterns of teachers' thoughts and actions, which are expressed in two case studies (Blasé, 1986). Grounded theory methods can be used to discover categories of teacher thought, and the relationships of those categories with troublesome student behaviors. He finds that over a period of [many/several] years, a teacher's perception of the role in the classroom dramatically shifts from an initial emphasis on instruction to the pursuit of optimal student/teacher relationships (as an aid in instruction), and personal satisfaction (Blasé, 1986). Blasé's (1986) study has implications for (at-risk) student-teacher relationships, and teacher retention in school districts with high teacher burnout and turnover rates.

Jones and Hill (2003) use grounded theory in their study of student motivation and community service through the use of the constant comparative method. Jones and Hill's (2003) study combines the constructivist epistemology with grounded theory to move from, the meaning participants attach to their experiences, rather than the generation of objective truth. This required data analysis to proceed not as a linear process…but in a more cyclical manner, [as the researcher constantly returned] to the data with new questions and ideas until narrative emerged that described the essence of experience for study participants." (p. 520)

Their findings reveal that diverse high school students are not sure why they engage in service, want external motivators, and enjoy spending time with

friends and family during service activities. Post high school students fall into three categories: no involvement in service, involvement in service for someone else, involvement in service as a direct result of their own ability to make the decision for themselves and their interests. This lends insight into students' choice in school activities and effective teacher practice (Jones & Hill, 2003).

Faver (2004) also utilizes constructivist grounded theory. The study of client/ social worker relationships has implications for the student/teacher relationship. Faver's study of relational spirituality and social care giving is, "particularly useful to explore the meanings that humans assign to their experiences as reflected in their oral or written accounts of those experiences" (p.244). The study portrays how we can strengthen our relationships with others to gain joy and vitality to sustain our capacity to care. One element of the findings shows how client successes influence workers' desire to persevere.

Case Study

Like grounded theory, case study calls attention to researcher bias. Merriam (1988) states that bias and subjectivity are common in case studies, and that case study is one of the few methods that acknowledge bias at the outset of inquiry. This study uses components of case study, like using colorful description to tell stories. Merriam (1988) notes that case study is an examination of a certain phenomenon that is chosen for study because of the concern that the phenomenon precipitates. Her review of the special features of case study reflects the following four characteristics: "particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, and inductive" (p.11). The particularity of the case is problem centered, and

focuses of a specific phenomenon. The descriptive nature of case study rests in rich, substantial description. The heuristic nature of the case study means that an understanding of the phenomenon is available to the reader through discovery of new meaning, an extension of previous understandings, or confirmation of past understandings. Finally, the inductive nature of case study indicates that the data is grounded in the context of this case study.

Tellis (1997) describes "multi-perspectival analysis" as a characteristic that is non-negotiable in case study methods. To Tellis (1997), a multi-perspectival analysis means that the researcher pays attention to the voice and perspective of those in this study, and, "the relevant groups of actors and the interaction between them…give a voice to the powerless and voiceless" (p.5). This one aspect is a salient point in the characteristic that case studies possess. By telling stories, the voice of the researcher (from the perspective of principal, "I", and researcher) will empower the participant voices.

Case study helps researchers (and their readers) to understand the meaning of an experience through the presentation of beliefs, observations, and perceptions, rather than facts. The case itself is referred to as a "unit of analysis" (Yin, 1993; Tellis, 1997; Merriam, 1988), and the particular case under investigation in my study is composed of a group of students. After identifying the possible problem, iatrogenic harm, I direct my inquiry towards "instances" of this condition (Merriam, 1988, p.44). Selecting the case was, indeed, an important part of the research process in my study; however, the focus on instances instead of the person classifies my investigation as an instrumental case study.

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Like intrinsic case study where the case itself is of main importance, instrumental case study scrutinizes the context and pays attention to detail. The difference between the two rests in whether or not the investigation pursues an advanced understanding of the case (intrinsic), or the understanding of an external interest (instrumental) (Stake, 1995). Stake (1995) describes instrumental case studies as those that are "examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or redraw a generalization. The case is of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else" (p.437). I will utilize the cases in my study to relay my understanding of iatrogenic harm in the context of student/teacher relationships.

Because instrumental case study has less of an interest in the case itself and more interest in a larger issue, examining multiple cases will advance the understanding of that issue. In this study, multiple cases (four) are examined. The multiplicity of the cases examined is termed "collective case study", which is an "instrumental study extended to several cases" (Stake, 1995, p.437). Instrumental case studies draw from the uncommon through:

1. The nature of the case.

2. The case's historical background.

3. The physical setting.

4. Various other contexts such as economic, ethical, aesthetic.

5. Other cases through which the case is recognized.

6. The informants through whom the case can be known. (Stake, 1995, p.439; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.90)

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Pransky and Bailey (2003) utilize case study method in the form of case study vignettes. Teaching and learning is enhanced through the ability to critically inquire about beliefs and assumptions guiding their research. The crux of this research rests on Pransky and Bailey's (2003) premise that, "learning is fundamentally a social and cultural process. In this sense, instructional tasks are social and cultural tasks in which students make meaning based on their previous life (and school) experiences" (p.384). The two researchers want to identify why at-risk, linguistically challenged minority students are "struggling" in the classroom. Their findings reveal that the reasons for the students' struggles support several mutually reinforcing theories in the discourses of minority studies—especially those theories in relation to cultural mismatch. This study informs best practice for at-risk students.

Rayle (1998) utilizes case study method to explore the match between at-risk students and their alternative school. In doing so, he outlines the particular alternative school in this study by providing a vivid description of the school. Data is collected from several sources, such as: interviews with students, teachers, administrators, journals, other documents and supporting materials. This study provides the best practices for at-risk students, and culturally relevant teaching strategies. Findings reveal that this alternative program is able to meet the needs of some at-risk students, while other at-risk students with differing issues could not be served by the programming.

Lastly, Honaker (2003) discusses the personal experiences, beliefs, and instructional practices of two "effective" white teachers of African American

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students. Case study method is used to illustrate the teaching techniques, and past experiences that contribute to the two white teacher's ability to break down cultural mismatch and find success with African American students. Six open-ended interviews with guided questions are the main source of data collection. Like Rayles' (1998) study, this study relays the best practice for at-risk students, and culturally relevant teaching strategies. Findings reveal that the teachers' connection to students allows for common goal sharing in the areas of motivation and success.

Ethnography

LeCompte and Schensel (1999) have detailed appropriate times to use ethnographic methods. They suggest the use of ethnography "when the problem is clear, but its causes are not well understood" (p30-31). Following this advice, I will use components of ethnography to investigate the possible factors that lead to iatrogenic harm that develops as a result of student/teacher interactions. It is important to see student/teacher relationships ethnographically to properly understand how iatrogenic harm negatively complicates the delivery and enjoyment of a fair and equitable education for urban, at-risk African American students from the students' own perspectives.

I will use several of the ethnographic methods as suggested by LeCompte and Schensel (1999): face to face interaction with participants, presentation of accurate reflections of the participants' perspective and behavior, and explanations of how people think, believe, and behave. The particular cultural components in my study are elements of the students' backgrounds, which

manifest in their behaviors and impact their relationships with teachers. It is not the student/participants' culture, per se, that constitutes a problem; but rather, the cultural disconnect between urban at-risk and African American students and their (more often than not) white, middle class teachers. Over many years, it has been implicated in problematic student/teacher relationships, and is apparent in the context of the relationships of the participants in this study.

Face-to-face interaction with participants, which has been noted as the second major hallmark of ethnography, involves intimate and reciprocal involvement with the participants (LeCompte & Schensel, 1999). In my study, the dynamics of the researcher/participant relationship are unique. Trust was established (and is on-going) between the principal/researcher and the students/participants prior to the study. My position as principal could be viewed as extremely bias (Dobson, 1999); yet, in this study, my relationship with the students allows for some personal liberty to tell their stories, and is supported by the discourses of oral history (Bogdan & Bilken, 1982).

Ratcliff (1994) asserts that ethnography emphasizes the reconstruction or re-creation of peoples' behavior from their own perspective. The participants' point of view is extended through generalized questions that, through the course of the research, narrow and become more specific. My study, although not as lengthy, is typical of ethnographic studies, and ethnographic in the sense that it, too, will begin the telling of general stories that eventually narrow in on specific student/teacher interactions that suggest iatrogenic harm. Likewise, this study is ethnographic in nature due to the use of ethnographic assumptions in the

interview style and in the data analysis. Spradley (1979) remarks that ethnography means "learning from other people" (p.3) The interviews and data analysis resulting from this study do just that; the researcher is the student, and her goal is to illustrate, in a meaningful way, the perceptions of African American students in an urban alternative school.

Bogdan and Bilken (1982) define ethnography as, "thick description" (p.36), and state the following:Ethnography, then, is "thick description". What the ethnographer is faced with when culture is examined from [the emic] perspective is a series ofinterpretations of life, common-sense understandings, which are complexand difficult to separate from each other. The ethnographer's goals are to share in the meaning that the cultural participants take for granted and then to depict new understandings for the reader and for outsiders (p.36).

LeCompte and Schensel (1999) note several similarities in case study and ethnography. The similarities include: performing research on phenomena in the setting in which it occurs, investigating what is "really" going on under the surface of appearances, and intense time commitments. Additionally, both ethnographies and case studies gather data through face-to-face interactions, participant observation, and in-depth interviews (LeCompte & Schensel, 1999; Ratcliff, 1994; Bogdan & Bilken, 1982).

By using ethnographic semi-structured interviews, Whiting and Lee (2003) examine 23 stories of pre-adolescent foster children whose lives, prior to being placed, had included poverty, violence, and drugs. Their study allows the children/participants to tell their stories through a venue not often explored in

literature—from the perspective of the underprivileged and/or underrepresented. They find that even when the foster children understand why they are placed, they feel fear, anger, and confusion. This portrayal of foster children's stories reflects a better understanding of the nuances involved in the psychology of children who are placed and living in foster care.

In this study, the goal of using ethnographic interviews is to provide a rich description to provoke clear understanding through a story format. The authors remind us of what Fetterman (1989) remarks is the primary goal of ethnography, "the ethnographer is both the story teller and the scientist; the closer the reader of an ethnography comes to understanding the native's point of view; the better the story, the better the science" (p.12).

In a mixed method study, Stanton-Salazar and Spina (2003) employ a series of ethnographic interviews of Latino students of Mexican origin (reflecting two-thirds of the student body) in an urban California high school to explore students' critical understanding of the empowering role of mentoring relationships in their lives. A portion of the larger study focuses on the youths' perception of their mentor/mentee relationship. Findings suggest that mentoring relationships should be provided on an individual, not group, basis, and that these types of relationships are not available to minority youth with enough frequency (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2003). Another section of the study utilizing ethnographic interviews examines caring relationships as protective factors for at-risk youth. Both studies suggest that child/adult relationships can positively influence at-risk and minority students living in urban areas as well as social capital.

Laursen and Birmingham (2003) use ethnographic interviews in their study of at-risk youths' perception of caring adults in regard to overcoming adversity. Their study uses open-ended questions throughout the interview protocol to allow the participants' voices to be heard. Results from this study indicate that high expectations, opportunities for participation, and caring relationships serve as protective factors for at-risk youth. This study lends insight into student/teacher relationships and other mentor-type relationships.

Magolda (1999) discusses ethnographic techniques of a university Drug and Alcohol Education Committee. The committee performs ethnographic research to become intimately familiar with the drug and alcohol practices within students' cultures. The study is ethnographic, Magdola (1999) believes, because it focuses on the particular, interprets student actions and words through a cultural lens (creating multiple realities), and takes a personal rather than distanced approach to interviewing students. Findings from this study could implicate the significance of students' culture in their decisions to partake in alcohol and drugs. This study relates to how culture impacts student decisions and choices.

Study Sample

With prior approval from the superintendent of schools, the students who comprise the sample will be selected from an urban alternative school in a distressed Allegheny county school district. The school has been in operation since October of 2003 under a five-year contract with the department of education. The maximum capacity under this contract is 60 students, grades

seven through twelve. At the end of the 2004-2005 school year, 58 students attended. Three students were pregnant during the time of the sample selection. They could, potentially, be chosen for this study if they meet the eligibility requirements listed in the following section.

Following the tenets of theoretical sampling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the sample in this study will be chosen from the current alternative school enrollment. Students eligible to participate will be those students who are referred from the district's regular elementary, middle, or high school students:

(a) who have been enrolled in the alternative program for 3 or more

months.

(b) whose referral is initiated by a teacher from the past regular school.

(c) whose primary reason for referral is their negative interaction with

teachers.

The students who comprise the sample are selected from an urban alternative school in a distressed Allegheny county school district where I am the founding principal.

The school is located in a Baptist church next to the regular middle and high school. The church operates a small day care, a soup kitchen that feeds over one hundred meals a day, four days a week, and holds Sunday worship. The Pastor of the church is a strong-willed African American woman who, by mere presence, holds the respect of my students. The school occupies the third floor of the church, and one classroom on the second floor down the hall from the

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church day care program. The church program staff and the alternative school students come into contact on a daily basis. Many students and their families have eaten at the soup kitchen. On occasion, students have served their suspension by working with the Pastor in the soup kitchen, or performing general janitorial duties in the church. The pastor and many of her staffers have known several students and their families for years. It is not uncommon for the Pastor and principal to combine resources, and develop opportunities for the students.

The district's regular education schools from which the alternative school students come collectively employ a 92% white teaching staff. The alternative school employs a 100% white teaching staff. According to Dr. Dan Morrow, this district is an "urban-bound" community that is contiguous with several of Pittsburgh's neighborhoods, and vulnerable to the same economic and social dynamics that contribute to difficulties in many urban centers such as suffering from crime, violence, and a loss of business in the downtown areas. Poverty is blatantly evident. In 2000, the borough's yearly per capita income was $16,890. In 2005, Eligibility for free and reduced-price lunches is 82% of all students in the regular school. In the secondary grades, 73% of students participate. At the alternative school, 100% of students participate.

The school has a 100% African American student body, 46 boys and 12 girls. Of the 58 students, over 30% are special education students, primarily labeled as emotional support. Two have been identified as mildly mentally retarded. Within those labeled as emotional support, nine have been treated in a psychiatric hospital one or more times within the past five years.

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During the past two years, the students have revealed many life stressors. Forty-seven have repeated one or more grade. Four have reported statutory sexual abuse. Eleven have lost someone close to them from murder. Five have been placed elsewhere as a result of school weapons policy violations. Two have lost a parent to suicide. Two have been incarcerated, one for murder charges, and the other for felony distribution of narcotics. Seven have reported being kicked out of their home by their mother or guardian, and 14 have been fined by the district's magistrate for truancy exceeding ten consecutive days. Three boys are fathers, four females gave birth before the age of 15, and over 50% have admitted to frequent or chronic use of marijuana and unprotected sex—the list could go on.

Teachers from the regular middle and high school initiate most referrals to the alternative school. However, the director of social services, the superintendent, and the director of special education may also make referrals. Parent requests are also considered. Every referral made is sent to the principal for review and final approval before the request is sent to the alternative school. Once the referral reaches the alternative school, the principal of the alternative school reviews all disciplinary reports and other pertinent information. The file review is used more for placement purposes than for acceptance or rejection. That is, the alternative school houses both regular education classes and a self-contained emotional support classroom. Placement in the regular classes or the self-contained classroom is dependent upon the student's history of their need level. More acute students are placed in the self-contained classroom that

operates within one large classroom managed by two certified teachers. That classroom accommodates up to 10 students.

In the past two years, only one of the 77 enrollees (total to date) was denied admission. The student had engaged in persistent episodes of physical aggression that required a higher level of care than the alternative school offered. Although most students are admitted, the alternative school may prove to be an inappropriate school placement. Several students have been referred out of the alternative school into an approved private program that offers a therapeutic or partial hospital program more suited to address their needs. Typically, needs, such as, mental health and medication related issues that impede the students' learning in the alternative school environment, could not be handled without more restrictive measures. In turn, the student is referred out of the district.

The school district's existing programs include: a full time social service department, one mental health program for students and their families, a drug and alcohol program, and a general guidance department specific to each school. The alternative school students may use these services or be referred to these services; yet, alternative school student involvement is minimal due to the "out of sight, out of mind" syndrome.

As the founding principal and only administrator of the alternative school, I serve as counselor, mentor, parent, and partner. My staff often assumes those same roles. Our efforts to connect the alternative school students to the existing and established programs in the middle/high school have proven fruitless (except for the mental health/youth advocacy program).

The mental health/youth advocacy program assists many of our students, regardless of their eligibility in their program. That is, the program targets students with mental health related diagnosis. In the case of my students, this program offers them mentoring, informal counseling, outings, and unique community opportunities. The level of staff commitment to the mental health/youth advocacy program is unique. This program staff visits the alternative school several times a week. Aside from this connection to the middle/high school building, our students are not welcome in the building for any reason. In fact, about 10 of my students were chaperoned once by several alternative school teachers to an afternoon basketball game, and security guards stopped the group and would not allow them to enter until the principal arrived and said it was ok. One must keep in mind that these ten students used to attend the middle/high school, some for several years.

Unless a student is expelled from the district, which accounts for only five of my students, they are permitted to attend school functions, such as: athletic events, prom, graduation, or other school related functions. Regardless, the alternative school students, frequently, are excluded from invitation to many events. The principal often acts as liaison by leading her students into the building and serving as a highly visible chaperone (and cheerleader).

<div align="center">Pilot Study</div>

The researcher's pilot study serves to uncover what "caring" (Durbin, 1998) means to the African American students in an urban alternative school—in an economically distressed Western Pennsylvania neighborhood school district.

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This pilot study could be considered an exploration of alternative school students' conceptions of caring, and could provide the best insight for their teachers.

Following grounded theory (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 1991), the notion of teachers' practice as potentially harmful to students evolves from interview questioning in which content is formulated by understanding caring from this particular population's point of view.

The researcher hypothesizes that caring in an urban alternative school means understanding the students as individuals, and making the effort and time to accommodate their particular needs through multiple means. Caring has been conceptualized alternately as: "competence" or "using what is best for students" (Durbin, 1998), "thoughtful and involved" (Edgar, 1998), "commitment and a sense of efficacy" (Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1990), "consistency and mentoring ability" (Teasley, 2004), and "support, understanding, character, and the willingness to give time regularly and predictably" (Ianni, 1992). Through the pilot study, the researcher discovers that her students hold similar views of caring.

In each of the five interviews, the students identify time, involvement, and mentor-type relationships as signs of caring. When asked, "if you were your teacher's teacher, what would you want them to learn in caring about the kids in this school? How would you teach them what you needed them to know about caring?" Each of the four respondents reveals their thoughts on the same teacher, a teacher in the alternative school. Their responses imply that the teacher needs to learn how to talk to students, how to teach students, and how to interact socially with students. Likewise, each respondent identifies at least one

experience with this teacher that they perceive as influencing their negative response, and negatively impacting their success in the subject. Four-out-of-five of the participants mention that this teacher is similar to teachers from the referring school. However, informal discussions over the past year and one-half with this teacher indicate that he believes his interactions with students are not only suitable and widely accepted, but also grounded in best practice.

As the interviews continue, and codes surround one particular teacher's practice, the notion of iatrogenic harm becomes more apparent. The behaviors that students describe, such as yelling at this teacher, purposely getting kicked out of class or refusing to complete class assignments and tests, can be described in terms of an iatrogenic condition. The unintended harm inherent in the teacher's actions can be described as iatrogenic harm. Thus, the pilot study uncovers the formation of a newly framed phenomenon, the linking of teacher practice to iatrogenic harm. For the researcher, this information proves to be the real issue for this set of student/participants; and thus, worthy of further investigation.

As demonstrated through the participants interview answers, the real issue for this set of student/participants is not dependent upon how their teachers care for or about them, but how they perceive certain teachers as uncaring, and consequently, contributing to their misbehavior. The following three quotes demonstrate the shift from care to harm during the pilot study interviews:

1. *Mr. X__, man, he needs to chill--his class is butt--all he does is run his mouth with big fancy words, and he just don't make sense. How can*

we learn if we don't understand the words…and he won't stop to tell us what he means. He just reads and reads outta different books he likes. My boy H asked him what he meant when he said one big word, and he thought we was mocking him, so he kicked H outta class and yelled at all of us. I got detention from him that day 'cause he was already in a bad mood, so when I wanted some aspirin he made me wait forever just cause he could so I got up and just left… he just doesn't like us much.

2. *You know we be jokin' around, and he says we get all loud, which is disrespectful, but we aren't even talkin to him. We wasn't even in his class that period, and he got all over us with his power n' shit sayin', "go to class, I don't care what you are doing just go to class." He always talks salty to us, but expects us to be angels--I'm not about that, people disrespecting me and all.*

3. *I'd have to teach him a lot of things, lik,e I would ask him if he really wanted to be a teacher for us kids. He doesn't have to treat me with respect, but he should. The kids are good, and he has to look at that part. Like, I would tell him that he should talk to us like we his own children, like he was my parent at school, so we could all talk. And he needs is to mind his business. When I'm talkin' to J, and he hears me and tells me what I can say, it's like I get real mad cause I ain't even talkin' to him.*

The pilot study data, possibly, reflects wide disparities in understanding behaviors, including: body language, word choice, voice, and proximity. The teacher's understanding, when in conflict with student understanding, can be perceived by students as uncaring and harmful, which leads me to connect the teacher's notion of caring to iatrogenic harm. As discovered in student interviews, the uncaring, harmful teacher actions or iatrogenic harm can lead to a condition in the student that instigates problematic behavior, or possibly an iatrogenic condition. After conflict, the student's perception of caring can be further influenced by a negative perception of the teacher's actions.

Building on this frame, my dissertation study will investigate a potential connection between iatrogenic harm and teachers who may have contributed to the students' referral to the alternative school. The choice to move discussions away from the particular teacher (referenced in the pilot study) is two-fold. First, I feel as though investigating one of my teachers (who is no longer working for the district) has ethical ramifications that are irresolvable. Second, the students report that exchanges with this particular teacher remind them of their school experiences prior to their alternative school placement. This indicates that, overall, they are satisfied with the majority of their alternative school teachers, and that alternative school teachers, generally, possess something that their regular teachers did not.

Gracie Not So

In a conversation with the special education teacher of my school, I stated, "our daily operations here would make for a reality show extraordinaire!" As she agreed, we rehashed the absurdity of that particular day. Worn down by the clock takes us through these students' expressions of life, we sat in the comforts of two, worn and outdated, green upholstered chairs, and read the letter of a 14-year-old girl I will call "Gracie Not So". Her letter reads:

> *My mom made me angry 'cause I got hit for getting caught at school wit a boy from upstairs. We was in the bathroom, and I sucked his dick for a minute, and the principal found out, and she made me tell her, so I did, and she told my mom, and now I have to ride the bus with the other kids who have problems. So, now I look stupid on the van.*

When I spoke to this mother and revealed that, yes, in fact, her daughter had performed oral sex in the bathroom on an 18-yr-old student, she stated, "oh my god, but I told your security guard she is boy crazy!" While sitting in those green upholstered chairs, the special education teacher told me that earlier that day, she had found out that Gracie Not So had a two-year-old daughter that was taken from her by Children's services. With that information, I barely could move. I wasn't still because I was in shock, and I wasn't still because I had questions. I barely moved because her story prompted me to think about another student—not because of their likeness, but because my mind has become accustomed to hearing what I cannot control and moving on…quickly. That is, the tribulations of my students are manifest in their lives outside of my school.

I have learned to give over my power by only thinking about a single student until that thinking takes me to knowing that there is nothing in my power that will change the situation. Thus, when I was told that Gracie Not So was a mother, I was done. Gracie would be placed in a more restrictive class, and the 18-yr-old boy would be put up for expulsion for statutory sexual misconduct.

CHAPTER IV

STORIES, INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS, AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

This chapter contains three sections. The first section reflects a personal

history that has impacted the professional path of the researcher, and why

students like those at Wayward Academy fulfill a professional calling. The second

section contains a story about each student/participant, and is followed by stories

told by those participants during the focus group interviews. The stories in this

section will first provide background information on each participant from review

of their discipline, demographic, and academic file, as well as discussions of

these students during faculty meetings. The third section will interpret the results

of the data analysis through charting and discussion.

The Researcher and the Stories

I begin this chapter with a personal and professional background of myself

because I believe that who I am and what I have experienced has driven me

towards students like those at Wayward Academy. If it were not for my past, I do

not think I would possess such genuine concern for my students, nor would I feel

compelled to create, outside of them, a forum for their voices to be heard, and

their feelings validated.

I have many stories. There are stories of students who over the years

have been mishandled by the schools entrusted to teach them. In each school

position I have held, I have made it my mission to ensure the students under my

care develop healthily. When I was working with them, I was working for them. My goal had been to provide my students with a fulfilling school experience. This meant providing my students with support in academic, social, emotional, and life skills.

In each of those jobs, I was placed with students, who needed not only a teacher or principal, but often, a mentor, counselor, friend, or parent. Those were the kids who had little, and had come from poverty stricken neighborhoods and families. They may or may not have fallen victim to mental illness. The school districts or private providers, barely staying afloat financially, had lacked the provisions for services typically provided outside of the school and by the parents. Within each of those positions, I was able to create a new environment; a place where caring teachers, those I supervised, or myself, headed the classrooms. I wouldn't stand for anything less. It is not to say that a world where caring teachers head classrooms solves the problems of the students who attend them; but rather, caring teachers have a better chance of reaching their students and consequently, teaching their students and positively impacting student learning (Edgar, 1998; Ianni, 1997; Kozol, 1982; Yowell & Gordon, 1996).

Currently, I am the principal of an alternative school for "throw-away" (Dunbar, 1998) students from one of the lowest performing and poorest school districts. The school district in this study will be referred to as "WayWard " school district. The alternative school in Wayward school district will be referred to as "Wayward Academy". Dunbar (1998) discusses the type of students attending

schools, like Wayward Academy, as being "clumped together" and "hopeless" (p.186).

When I interviewed for this particular principal position, I was asked if I would be capable of not only working in, but also starting a new alternative school for the district. I accepted the challenge, and soon after, got started. Getting started consisted of doing everything. I was opening a new school, an alternative school for disruptive, truant, and otherwise difficult students who were all coming from the district's middle and high school. I was allotted enough of a budget to hire five teachers and an aide.

The purpose of Wayward district's interest in opening the alternative school was to have a district school for students who had been unsuccessful in the regular school setting. Like the alternative school students Dunbar (1998) examined, the students at Wayward Academy, "knew that this school was a place where bad students were sent…no amount of rhetoric about changing…would change this perception" (p.187).

Not a single teacher that already worked in the Wayward school district applied for one of the six openings. I held interviews for about two weeks. My final choices were limited to a team of teachers who'd had some experience with troubled youth. I hired a teaching assistant I'd known from my previous job, and who I will refer to as "Mascot". I purposely took him with me. As an African American male who'd had no experience with at-risk youth, he had a huge desire to make a difference. Also a devout Christian, he told me it was time for him to give back. I hired Mascot as a teacher's aide, but knew he would eventually be

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one of the most important players on the Wayward Academy team. I knew that his rapport with students would help set the tone for the entire staff. The teachers that were hired had varying professional backgrounds; yet, most had some experience with youth in a therapeutic and restrictive environment. Of the six staff members, five had worked in an approved private school that enrolled students in need of psychiatric treatment options, physical restraints, and time-out rooms to manage behaviors. In hiring this type of applicant, I was assured that whatever student behaviors they'd dealt with in the past, the behaviors of students in the alternative school would far exceed them. Their successful experiences in those previous work environments were indicative of their level of willingness to work with students who at times had the potential to verbally and/or physically aggress them.

After the staff was hired, I soon realized that no one particularly knew where I could go to meet with my new staff to begin the planning of the district's new alternative school. After much inquiry, the superintendent of schools had located an empty room in the basement of the high school. From that day forward, we were assembled each day in a room in the basement of the high school that had served as a mock courtroom years before.

I was promised classroom space by October. I was told that we would be given a wing of the High school, but would be sharing the classrooms with the regular teachers. We would hold school for four hours per day, from 3:30-7:30 pm. Unbeknownst to me, the regular high school teachers were not told this detail about the plan. They were quite unhappy, as was I. I knew that the space-

sharing situation would never work, nor would a four-hour school day. There would be no feeling of permanency in the classroom by my students or teachers. The rooms would never truly be our own. We couldn't post things on the walls, nor could the teachers decorate and adjust without having to, each day, put everything back the way the daytime teacher had it arranged.

Noddings (1992) has discussed the need for continuity of place. She's asserted that part of providing a caring environment for students involves permanence and stability of the physical place of a classroom or school. Ownership of the physical space and place, according to Noddings, can have an impact on the caring for students.

My job was to create the necessary space to develop a caring school environment. Curious, I set out on foot, directing members of my new staff to look around the neighborhood. The neighborhood, full of historic abandoned and boarded up houses, attracted me for some unknown reason. One of our first stops was down a walkway between the back of the high school and the rear side of a Baptist church. Peering into the long windows on that side of the church, I noticed that it looked like a school hallway, an empty school hallway.

The next day, I sent Mascot to meet the employees at the church. He gladly obliged. He was gone for about an hour. When he returned, he had the pastor of the church's phone number, a woman with whom he'd just shared lunch. The church served lunch everyday to over 100 people, soup kitchen style. Mascot came back with a full belly and valuable information. The pastor was interested in speaking with me about this "new alternative school".

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I arranged to meet with the pastor. When I arrived, we toured the church; and lo and behold, the empty hallway I saw through the window was exactly that—a hall of empty classroom-style rooms. Within two days, the superintendent of schools went with me to meet the pastor. We left with a verbal agreement to rent the third floor of the church. Three weeks later, we moved in.

Moving was simple. We didn't have anything except a few old chairs and desks that I asked for after passing them each day on my way to the basement courtroom. We had little money to do much of anything beyond hiring the staff. One of my teachers found a place that provided furniture to non-profits in exchange for 12 hours a month of community service. I signed up, and we all went to the warehouse to serve our 12 hours. We were given unassembled, cherry-wood workstations from a local bank, and several odd chairs, desks, and tables. When the workstations arrived, my entire new team pitched in, and we built each teacher a workstation, and prepared their classrooms.

Then, for three days, I brought in some influential people to help the incoming teachers prepare for their new jobs. It seemed necessary in order to provide the new team with as many tools possible. The training sessions centered on crisis prevention (how to talk to students in crisis and how to manage disruptive behaviors), self-awareness (understanding ourselves and how we might interact with different style learners, knowing our limits, and how to support each other), and alternative instruction (how to adapt and modify for different level learners, educating students with attention deficit issues, and developing lessons that motivate students). Three days later, our first students

came to school.

By the end of the first year, it became evident that the alternative school was perceived as a separate entity—out of sight and out of mind—by the rest of the school district. The staff's perception of this school and its students was much different from the outsiders' perception. In fact, when asked, all of the teachers at this alternative school stated that they would never teach in the regular middle or high school in the district. One of the alternative school teachers stated, "our kids can't be the worst kids because they aren't bad. In fact, we have a lot of talent. I can't believe some of the kids they send us; they are so smart and have so much potential. All we do differently is listen to them and take their lives into consideration. It isn't rocket science and I just can't understand what is going on for these kids in the regular school."

In this place, my students' stories have become my stories. These stories speak about a multitude of indiscretion that most people only encounter when they turn on the TV, or open up a book from Oprah's picks. I will represent my students as accurately as possible by painting a true depiction of life at Wayward Academy. At times, these stories will reveal tough kids: kids who don't use proper English, curse excessively, and often make threatening comments about others. These stories will show the perceptions of students who many believe could care less about consequences, have zero respect for themselves or others, or are too far gone to bring back. Many believe that for those reasons these students' voices should not be heard and are, in fact, offensive.

The researcher and the Wayward Academy students share a propensity to be in the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong people creating wrong circumstances. Many of the researcher's experiences are the same as her student's experiences. Many of the Wayward student experiences are living stories of the researcher's past. Wayward Academy student stories serve to impose upon the reader a truth that discloses life-changing events educators need to be aware of when walking into a classroom. These truths speak volumes about the human spirit, and children's inclination to build up defense mechanisms that, ultimately, save them. The representation of these stories validates the notion of the researcher accepting her participants as "active agents" in the research process rather than passive victims of research (Milne, 2005).

Frank (2002) remarks that the linking of personal troubles (researcher's own struggles in school) and public issues starts with the development of personal stories. Shostak (1998) refers to personal stories as knowledge. Like Frank (2002), this researcher views the telling of her personal and professional background as a way to "confront a dilemma" through narrative (p.1). According to Frank (2002) the narratability of a life, such as this researcher's, affirms life as being worthy of telling and living. Frank comments that, "being narratable implies values and attributes reality" (p. 2). The researcher's reality is her truth; her truth and her reality inform the validity of this qualitative project.

In ethnography, the role of the ethnographer is to be a "chronicler and teller of tales" (Shank, 2002, p.60). Shank (2002) remarks that the ethnographer

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must have prior knowledge of the culture to be studied. The researcher in this study has extensive prior knowledge of the alternative school, the alternative school students, and the African American culture as it relates to a white woman's professional journey within predominantly African American schools and social service organizations. Shank (2002) states "validity is always about truth" (p.67). This section will reveal the researcher's truth as support for her credibility as the narrator of her student/participant's stories.

Winter (2000) discusses the nature of validity in qualitative research. She (and many other researchers such as Denzin & Lincoln and Wolcott) refers to validity in qualitative researcher as trustworthiness. Trustworthiness denotes the researcher's role within the research as it relates to her credibility and believeability. In this study, a part of her, the researcher's trustworthiness, stems from her past experiences as a student and as a professional, as well as her recognition of her position in this research as an insider (Milne, 2005).

The next section will discuss two of the researcher's personal school experiences. After, the researcher will discuss her professional experiences. In both cases, this information is provided to exhibit the researcher's authority to narrate the students' stories.

<div align="center">Researcher as Student</div>

My school experiences, although culturally different from my students, have note-worthy similarities. Like my students, my school experiences were riddled with disciplinary reports. The difficulties I'd faced, in retrospect, stem from my anger, a viable need for attention, and a tumultuous home life. Teachers in

general were not my favorite people. They'd imposed rules upon me that were strange to my ways at home. At home, my mother was very caught up in her own life and rarely home. If she were at home, she frequented her bedroom, door shut, not to be bothered…or else.

My relationship with my mother had existed on the premise that we had to fight about everything, and yell, yell a lot. I was an avid door slammer and an impossible liar. I'd hated going to school, and hated studying. I, frequently, had gone to school immediately following fights with my mother. Mornings before school were often the only times during a given day that we would communicate, if you can call the yelling and name calling communication.

At any rate, I would go to school heated, and take my anger out on my teachers when they tried to make me conform to their silly rules that had little to do with what was going on in my head. School was a place, that in retrospect, where I'd treated others as I was treated at home. I was a bully. I thought I was invincible, and I was extremely defensive. If a teacher had looked at me "sideways", I'd be quick to respond inappropriately. I can recall being put on the spot by a particular teacher's comments, my eighth-grade French teacher. She'd announced that, again, I had been late to the class, and how I'd better be on time for the field trip the following day (as if I didn't know I had been late). After my dad had died when I was five, my mom never got my sister and me to school on time, and I'd hated being late.

I'd decided I hated the French teacher. I couldn't stand the sight of her. She was a homely soul, not the best kept. Almost everyday I would laugh with

my friend in secret over the French teacher's eye-crust and armpit stains. After the day she'd brought my tardiness to everyone's attention, I didn't keep my laughter (or thoughts) to myself. So, I'd enlisted my trusted crew of preppie girl friends, and we all told her she smelled. Also, we'd kept our eyes shut when she talked to us, and told her we wouldn't open them until she'd washed her face. Eventually, after a day of those types of pranks, we (I) had finally made the stupid teacher cry. I'd felt no sympathy; I'd gotten revenge.

I was certain that this teacher meant to make a fool of me, so I did what I knew best; I began to fight back. I'd felt no remorse, nor did I stop being that way to teachers; especially those who would say something that was directed towards or made me think of my mother or life at home.

Looking back, I'd abused teachers I didn't like, and usually, I didn't like them because I didn't know them. They didn't take the time to get to know me. Teachers that took an interest in me would be set for life; I'd come to their classes to learn. Unfortunately, those teachers were to be few and far between.

In spite of myself, I remember wanting to go to school because I wanted to go to certain classes to see particular teachers. The one I best remember, I will call Ms. Writing. Ms. Writing was a fresh-out-of-college writing teacher. I had her for creative writing my sophomore year in high school. The student/teacher relationship that we'd created took time, mostly for me to build trust. Her attention to me had stemmed from some very disturbing things I'd been writing in my journal. Her first quest had been to weasel out of me anything that would indicate abuse, or need for intervention greater than her. I'd known that game, and didn't

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dare indicate anything she would have to tell my mother about. But, she did encourage me to keep writing, write more, and write as truthfully as possible. She'd explained how writing could be freeing, and explained how writing down feelings would be a much better tactic than doing feelings. I'd wanted to get an "A" in Ms. Writing's class, and I did.

I took a writing course with Ms. Writing for each year until I graduated. During those three years, I wrote constantly. My usual prose or free verse, still, adorns the pages of dozens of old spiral notebooks. Writing has worked to give me an outlet for my anger. I have used it voraciously. In fact, my willingness to write as a coping mechanism has saved me many times.

Researcher as Professional

For whatever reason, I am dedicated and comfortable with my choice to serve African Americans. I have a total of 16 years of work experience, from my first position in a residential treatment center to my present position as alternative school principal. In all of those positions, I have worked with predominantly African American children and many African American co-workers. Over the years, I have become confident in my ability to reach and teach African American students. Could I teach all African American students? Maybe not, I have taught only those students that I have taught, and I'm not generalizing my experience to all African American students. It's important to make note of the years of personal and professional experiences that add to the researcher's level of insider knowledge.

As a white woman in a predominantly African American forum for over 15 years, I have gained extensive insider knowledge. I bring up race to mention my understanding that I will never be able to put myself in the shoes of a black student because while I share like experiences, I can never share life experiences from the perspective of another black person. Aside from that, I make mention of my ethnicity to show the nature of my involvement in a low-income alternative school serving urban African American students. My involvement speaks to a type of person, maybe even the type of white person, who would be a successful leader in this type of school environment. How my cultural elements fit into this study could be noted as a willingness to be a white person who is capable of crossing racial boundaries.

The journey from college to my first position as a direct-care worker in a Baltimore City residential treatment center has marked the beginning of a long investigation into African American youth. When I use the term investigation, I use it in terms of a willingness to understand and relate. In each position I have held, I've taken the opportunity to engage African American students in helping me to understand their lives through listening to them, spending time in their communities, and sharing time, space, and experience. I've immersed myself in their world through my own curiosity, the cultivation of caring relationships and trust, and the fact that regardless of how out of place I was or felt, and no matter how much the youth has tried to push me away, I've kept coming back.

The stories of those experiences serve as what Ochs (2001) refers to as the "essential function of personal narrative: to air, probe, and otherwise attempt

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to reconstruct and make sense of actual and possible life experiences" (p.7). I will illustrate this through a story of a girl I will call Big.

Big was a twelve-year-old African American female placed in the residential treatment facility in Baltimore City due to her failure to adjust to multiple foster care placements, including one with her aunt and uncle. Her background history has included incidents of sexual and physical abuse, and rape. She weighed about 210 pounds, and was at least six-feet tall. She released an odor of hair grease and body odor. Her hair was wild, and she refused to let anyone fix it for her. Bathing did not suit her, which eventually became a serious issue in the unit where she lived.

I was the four-to-midnight counselor, Wednesday through Sunday. My salary was barely paying the rent, but I didn't care. I was working with children who needed me. My street sense was paying off in this job. My clients were more than thrilled when I'd decided we needed to get out and walk around downtown. Sometimes, we would stop into the variety store for one of the kids to buy hair extensions; but typically, we just walked around the "strip" and ate candy. I usually would give each kid a dollar.

The first time we'd gone, I'd bought everyone an ice cream. By the second walk, the kids had their own idea, and we would frequent the corner store where they would buy a plethora of penny candies. That became our routine: go to the strip, walk around, buy hair-weave, purchase candy necklaces and Swedish fish, eat, walk some more, and eventually return to the apartment. By the end of her second week at the treatment center, Big was permitted to join us on our walks.

She didn't talk much, and most of her short stay at the center was spent in isolation, and silent. When she asked if she could walk with the group of us, I was eager to oblige. She'd hold up the rear the entire walk, and didn't say more than "yes" and "sure" when it was time to go to the candy store. After we'd returned, everything was normal, girls taking showers, listening to rap, and laying out their clothes for the following morning. Big had refused her shower, once again. She didn't smell good. In fact, she stunk. She was starting middle school the following morning, and it was my job (said the log book) to "MAKE SURE BIG SHOWERS!"

Big had been resting on her bed, twirling her hair and sucking on the end of a longer piece, when I knocked on her open door and approached her. I sat on the end of her bed and asked her why she wouldn't shower. She didn't respond. I'd gotten up and was standing in her doorway and stated, "I bet you would feel better if you were clean," and that tripped a wire. The look on her face spoke volumes. Shear anger erupted. She leapt up, jumped over to me and grabbed me by my shirt just below my neck. I believe she lifted me up, but I'm not sure. Either way, I was taken off of my feet, and ended up close to the other side of the living room area in a heap on the floor.

I wasn't too sure how to respond, so I called the supervisor. By that time, Big was sitting on her bed again, twirling and sucking on her hair. A team of crisis counselors came. They gave Big about ten seconds before grabbing her and taking her to the time-out room. I could hear her yelling and crying at the men.

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When I peered through the window in the time-out room door, Big was on the floor, face down in a four-man restraint.

I had not witnessed a restraint, except in a simulation during a training session during my first few days working at the center. I grew to hate the time-out room, and loathe how violent some restraint situations became. For about two weeks following the restraint, whenever I worked with Big, she stayed in her room. I basically just left her alone. I wasn't scared per se, but I wasn't comfortable with her either.

Eventually, she began coming into the dayroom when I arrived. In a feeble voice, she would look down and say hello to me. One day, she sat down on the floor as I painted with her peers. She watched for some time before lifting a brush to the paper in front of her. When the girls started taking turns with their showers, Big began painting. At first she just mixed colors around, but as the weeks passed, she began painting pictures. She was truly talented. One of her first pictures was a card that she handed me before going to bed. On the front, it had a picture of a cloud smiling. On the inside, she'd apologized for pushing me. Painting was just one of the activities we would share over the next two years.

I have many other stories of my involvement with African American youth. I will tell another that shows how time, caring, and understanding have impacted my rapport with African American students.

Just before the Christmas holiday of 2006, I sat in my office bewildered by a phone call I had received from the regular high school. It was about 2:45 pm, which was an hour and a half before the school day ended. When I picked up the

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phone, the teacher on the other end asked me if I was sitting down. He proceeded to tell me that one of my female students had hit the regular school's biology teacher. In total disbelief, I peered into the 12-grade classroom, but didn't see this particular student. Apparently, she had left without permission to go next door to the regular high school to use the studio to record a music disk with another peer. I immediately ran next door to the regular high school building. The female student had already left, but a teacher was there to fill me in on all of the dreadful details. I was told that this student had hit the teacher because she didn't want to get off of the office phone when caught using it. I could imagine the student mouthing off; but hitting the teacher? I knew something just wasn't right.

In spite of my gut feeling, I had to put the student up for expulsion. Hitting a teacher was the worst offense possible, and although this student had made a complete turn around over six months at the alternative school, I wouldn't be able to help her—but I would try.

This student was well liked by all of the alternative school staff. Her mother and grandmother were, also, well known to us because I had spoken to them several times to update them on their daughter's amazing turnaround. She'd had zero disciplinary referrals, and had earned the highest grade point average in the school for the first marking period. This was the first student of the eight I'd had to expel that my entire staff came to me and asked, "Is there anyway we can keep her?"

When I arrived at the expulsion hearing, I felt doomed. I knew I would do my best to use this student's recent turnaround as reasoning for why she should

be allowed back at the alternative school, but I thought my support would be in vain. She'd hit a teacher, and I doubted my help would matter. Determined, I knew one thing; this incident was not this student, and this incident did not define this student. She was a lot more.

As the hearing proceeded, and the victimized teacher testified, I could put myself in the student's shoes during the incident. If the teacher had come at me as she came at the questions asked of her during the hearing, as an angry child, I would have wanted to hit her too. Her words were harsh, and her tone was accusatory. In her testimony, she'd stated that she'd had this student a year prior, but at the time of the incident, she couldn't remember the student's name. She told us all, "I said, 'hey girl, get off the phone' because I couldn't come up with her name. Then, when I went to push down the button to terminate her call, I guess she thought I bumped her on purpose, so she swung her arm around and hit me in the shoulder."

The student's lawyer asked me several questions about my feeling towards this student. Did she scare me? No. Has she every hit anyone else? No. Would I have any trepidation about her returning? No. Weren't her grades outstanding? Yes. Hadn't she maintained excellent rapport with teachers since coming to the alternative school? Well, the answer, yes.

I appreciated the lawyer's efforts, but I, still, felt weary of the board's decision. When they finally made their judgment, they'd found the student guilty of assaulting the teacher. She was to be permanently expelled from the school district, but the expulsion would be suspended until August—just enough time for

her to return to the alternative school and complete all her credits to graduate. She would not be permitted in any other school district buildings except the alternative school. I couldn't believe my ears. I just knew at that moment, with the board retuning a suspended guilty judgment, deep down, they'd felt, as did I, that something about that teacher just wasn't right. The victim's own testimony, her tone of voice, her posture, her use of pointing when she spoke, and her attempts to lean closer to people when her story line heightened, expressed the teacher's lack of insider knowledge. The following stories of the participants, also, give insight into the researcher's level of insider knowledge.

Student/Participants

These four stories demonstrate a frightening dynamic of African American students whose lives are incongruous with their age. I tell these stories to show just how absurdly unfair these young lives become, and how little support they are offered by those capable of enacting change. These stories are what Dunbar (1998) refers to as, "retelling of the lived experiences of the students at the alternative school" (p.3). I tell these stories to show the magnitude of dysfunction in students within this school district. I tell these stories to illustrate why these students just might not be able to trust adults, and interact with teachers appropriately. Finally, I tell these students' stories from my perspective simply to tell these students' stories. These stories matter to me, and they make all the difference in understanding the needs of many urban African American alternative school students. These stories will, at times, use the literal student voices but, for the most part, will be stories from my own perspective of their

lives. These stories will include data from transcriptions derived from this study, academic, discipline and other related files, observations, and informal conversations. These stories are the crux of this dissertation's purpose—to present the experiences of a group of students, students who might otherwise not be heard.

Loutzenheiser (2002) remarks that, "Voices-literally the words-of children of all ages can never be heard enough in educational research…insights and analysis of marginalized youth who leave large high schools for alternative programs demonstrate the power and importance of listening to young people" (p. 441). In this way, like Loutzenheiser's (2002) stories, the stories he will attempt to, "analyze…through the lens of what they (students) know rather than what they lack" (p.442). By examining what students do know, we are taken back to my original research question:

How do urban African American students in an alternative school setting perceive their past (regular education) and present (alternative education) educational experiences?

Three boys and one girl comprise the focus group interviews. Seven students had been chosen, and had completed the IRB consent and assent forms, but on the day of the interviews, only four of the seven showed up. The following section will tell the stories of each of the four participants. The stories reflect researcher observation, teacher reports, discipline and academic reports, and other pertinent file information, and discussions regarding each individual student. As with the previous story, all names and identifiers have been changed.

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Atty

I will begin with the only female participant. I will call her Atty, short for attitude. Atty had come to the Wayward Academy when she was in seventh-grade. Her record indicates that her transition into middle school had not been an easy one. Atty had been suspended several times for fighting and cursing at her teachers. In several disciplinary reports, Atty was noted as telling teachers to "Fuck off" and "Shut the Fuck up." Records also indicate that she'd been failing all of her core subjects, and missing a fair amount of school. Prior to her seventh-grade year at the district's regular middle school, no records had existed for Atty. Atty, herself, had stated that she'd gone to school in several other states, and had hated her teachers. Her disciplinary file reads as follows:

1. 9-27-03: hallway wandering, stating, "Shut the fuck up you ugly ape and mind ya' own damn business".
2. 10/1/03: not sitting at her seat and repeatedly calling her peers names, calling teacher "white bitch", and throwing a pencil.
3. 10/11/03: talking in class, telling teacher to go away from her desk, pushing a teacher, and throwing contents of desk.
4. 10/29/03: "Atty was loud and would not sit down. She kept talking when I was talking and no one could get anything done."
5. 11/3/03: throwing toilet paper at the walls during lunch.
6. 11/7/03: leaving the building before lunch without permission, not returning.
7. 11/19/03: fighting with a female peer, ripping the other girl's hair out, and having to be pulled off of her and held back.
8. 11/27/03: calling teacher "slimy mother fucker".
9. 12/3/03: yelling at the security.
10. 12/16/03: trying to scratch dean's arm when sent to office.

Figure 1. *Atty's Disciplinary File*

After coming to the alternative school, Atty'd arrived with a larger-than-life attitude. She would continue cursing at teachers, threatening other students, and

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displaying less than acceptable social skills with peers of the opposite sex. Atty was very outspoken and loud. Her "inside voice" could carry throughout a room, especially when she was agitated. During those times, Atty became louder; so loud that she could prompt rooms of students into silence just to see what would happen next. After a few weeks at the alternative school, it became painfully evident that Atty had been a complete disruption because she was impeding the learning of herself and others with her loud mouth and ferocious words.

After discussing her situation with the teachers, we'd agreed that Atty needed to go to our self-contained classroom. There, she would be provided with a more structured day, a strict point system, and a single classroom. She would no longer have to move from class to class, and teacher to teacher.

The teacher of her new class had to be as stubborn as Atty. Atty'd met her match the day she entered that classroom. Luckily, the teacher, one of the most stubborn people I had ever met, took Atty under her wing. This is not to say that her wings haven't been tested, torn, and tugged apart over the past three years. Atty had taken a while to settle; but once she'd realized that her teacher would handle her behaviors rather than punish them, I guess she'd acquiesced. It took the better part of Atty's first year with us, but she's developed a new sense of self that contains a very well mannered and conscientious young lady. Her days had been fluctuating between a mixture of the old Atty, and the new. Some days, she'd exemplify model behavior that would last throughout the day, while other days, she'd either come to school or leave school in an ornery mood.

Regardless of her mood, Atty has been well liked by all of the alternative

school staff. She wouldd be helpful and funny, and often times, our main informant. She'd have rough times when she'd act out, curse at her peers and/or staff, and wander through the halls yelling so everyone in the school could hear that she was upset. Those times were becoming few and far between. Atty wrote in her journal:

> *These people is like family here to me. I spend more time with them then anyone in my life, even my mom, and I do that because I know that you all believe in me like a grand-child. I learned that I can do things in school that I never done. Like, I can get good grades and not cuss at my teachers, even though sometimes I do it and can even get suspended. I have a bad day, and I cuss, and then I get real mad because I didn't mean to do it. Sometimes I mean it, but I don't say it. That is better to do.*

Over two years, she's made great strides, and continues to prosper in the alternative school. Technically, Atty should be attending school in a neighboring school district because she'd moved across the district's border. After she'd moved, she came to me and asked if she could stay. After speaking with her teachers, we decided that Atty had come way too far for us to just let her go like that. We were wanting her to stay with us, so she did. If she could manage to keep her nose clean and stay out of too much trouble, the secret would be safely kept. However, if Atty were to act in any way requiring expulsion, the district would remand her to her home district. This is not to say that Atty acted like an angel—far from it. In fact, Atty'd had a huge blow-up just recently.   Atty had

come to school early the day before the Thanksgiving break. She'd come in slamming doors and crying. She'd refused to talk with any adult; but talked to her peers (as if we couldn't hear her). She was complaining about her mother, getting kicked out of the house, and getting punched in her back. After I'd overheard her talking, I called her into my office. She immediately began telling me she didn't want to talk. So, after persistently asking questions, within a minute or so, she was releasing the morning's anger. Evidentially, she'd had a very violent argument with her mother. I let her know I would have to call the child welfare agency to report what she was telling me. With that, she began flipping out.

She'd pushed her chair aside, and had run out of my office. She was pushing over chairs, threw a milk crate down the stairs, and was cursing at anyone who looked at her. She ran downstairs to her classroom, threw herself on the floor, and was crying hysterically. When a male peer approached her she screamed, "LEAVE ME THE FUCK ALONE YOU UGLY MOTHER FUCKER." Typically, name calling of that sort would have prompted suspension; but, because I knew what was going on with Atty, the last thing I or her teacher wanted was to reprimand her by staying home with her mother, who'd punched her earlier that morning, repeatedly.

I was able to get Atty to come back to my office without much of a problem. She and I had gotten to know each other well, as she'd become my daily lunch serving helper a few months prior. I made the call to report the abuse

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because I had to; being a mandatory reporter was a job duty I took with seriousness. I knew, however, that the call probably would not result in any sort of investigation, or even a call home to the mother. I was right; unless Atty stated (and she didn't) that she was afraid to go back home for fear of being hurt, the report would be filed, but not pursued. I didn't feel surprised. I had by that point discovered that what might seem extreme to me was not congruent with what the authorities considered extreme.

Complaint

The next participant is a 16-year-old tenth-grade male who I will call Complaint. Complaint had come to the alternative school in the last month of its first year in operation. He'd been highly influenced by peer negativity around him, and quickly had fallen into trouble with his teachers for being rude and downright mean. Complaint had complained about everything, and nothing the other students were seeing as rewarding or exciting phased Complaint. Instead, he would comment on every minute detail. In addition, he would fart constantly. He would sit at lunch and consume at least four containers of milk in 20 minutes. He'd always been lactose intolerant, and would proceed to light up in whichever class he had after lunch, and throughout the rest of the school day. His disciplinary file reads as follows:

1. 9/25/02: leaving classroom without permission.
2. 9/26/02: smart mouthing teacher, disrupting peers.
3. 9/30/02: chronic bathroom use, and using inappropriate language when told.
4. 10/7/02: disrupting peers and instruction with farting and foul language.
5. 10/8/02: putting graffiti on teacher's door and desk.
6. 10/17/02: not taking 'no' for an answer when refused hall pass for bathroom. Cursing excessively in class and at teacher.
7. 10/31/02: throwing contents of his desk onto the floor because he was asked to stop calling girls "ho's".
8. 11/6/02: agitating female peer, and not responding to redirection.
9. 11/14/02: running around the cafeteria, and refusing redirection to sit down.
10. 11/18/02: running around class, refusing to clean work-station, and leaving room without permission.
11. 11/25/02: consistently disruptive and loud, leaving class without permission.
12. 12/9/02: refusing assigned seat in cafeteria, calling teacher a "bitch".
13. 12/10/02: late to class and then disruptive, and refusing to take quiz.
14. 12/16/05: running around cafeteria, and leaving cafeteria three times without permission.
15. 12/16/02: refusing to keep quite during video, telling teacher he ran the class.
16. 12/19/02: late for class, and failure to serve assigned detention. Rude remarks to female peers and teacher.
17. 11/27/03: insubordination to the extreme, cursing, and making sexually inappropriate gestures at teacher.
18. 1/28/03: leaving school during lunch and not returning.
19. 1/29/03: mocking the teacher, and refusing to come into detention room.
20. 2/10/03: cursing at teacher and peers.
21. 2/13/03: rude and disrespectful, sexually inappropriate statements and gestures.
22. 2/14/03: unruly.
23. 22/21/03: cheating on test and refused to be quiet. Told teacher to shut-up.
24. 2/25/03: unauthorized leave of school at 10am.
25. 2/27/03: threatened to beat up teacher. Called teacher "pussy".
26. 3/14/03: threatened to beat up peer and get her sister to beat up peer.
27. 3/17/03: refused to take test, cursing.
28. 3/25/03: running in halls, cursing, rude to teachers and peers at lunch.
29. 4/29/03: ripped discipline report from teacher hands, stealing computer mice from lab.
30. 5/ 5/03: stealing from cafeteria.
31. 5/9/03: refused to take test, left class without permission.
32. 5/16/03: class cut 2 times.
33. 5/21/03: failure to serve detention, loud in halls.

Figure 2. Complaint's discipline file

For whatever reason, I'd become very fond of Complaint. He was a disheveled looking boy, almost dirty. He was overly tall and lanky, and had no confidence in the way he carried his long body. He was extremely charming with me on purpose, and I knew it. I saw something in him, and just knew he needed me, us, the alternative school; not to mention, the basic things he needed, like shoes without holes, and clothes that fit his length. Over the years, I have provided him (and many others) with some of those essentials. The problem was that Complaint was charming with and for me, but a jerk to his teachers. He'd get kicked out of several classes each day in his first year with us. He, also, was maintaining a 3.0 average, and becoming a star basketball player in the meantime.

Luckily, Complaint was growing up a bit. He began realizing that he was in a place where people truly cared about him. Now, he only gets kicked out of class once per day, and only infuriates a teacher bad enough to run to my office about once a month. He's recently gotten hired at Wendy's with a little help from me. I'd heard they were hiring and called the manager. I spoke of Complaint as if he were a star. The manager met him a few days later, and hired him on the spot. But first, Complaint had to look the part.

He'd dressed for the interview in a pair of dress slacks that that had a broken zipper. In addition, he'd worn two oversized t-shirts. I'd gone to the closet in my office to retrieve one of the dress shirts I keep for occasions just like this one, but because Complaint is so tall, the dress shirts I had wouldn't do. All of the shirts would rest at his waistline, revealing the safety pins that were holding

together his fly. Knowing he only had an hour to spare before his interview, I handed his ride (a teacher's aide volunteer) a twenty, and told him to stop at the discount store to purchase a shirt and pair of slacks that fit.

When he returned to the school, I was ecstatic! Complaint had been looking for a job for over a year. He'd finally gotten one, and I could not have been more proud. The following week, I asked him about his first weekend at work. He looked at me, and quickly looked away before pulling a letter from his mother out of his pocket. He handed me the letter:

Ms. _____

Complaint can't go to the job because you didn't give him bus fare and it is to far for me to get him if the weather is bad. He needs one closer to home.

I wanted to explode! Complaint's mother didn't do a thing for him. She didn't drive anyway, so she couldn't pick him up even if he did work closer to home. In fact, she didn't do much of anything for the boy, and always seemed to question anything good that happened for him. She'd known we were helping him find a job, and she knew, as well as I did, that it was almost impossible for a 16-year-old-boy to get a job in the neighborhood he lived in because most of the 20-year-olds were working the fast food restaurants and retail stores. Not to mention, Complaint's new job paid $6.50 an hour to start, whereas most of the shops in his neighborhood only paid minimum wage.

As I began to inquire more, Complaint began filling in the gaps. He'd gone to work Friday, but on Saturday he didn't have the money get there. His mother had refused to give him the $3.00 he needed, so he missed work. In my frustration, I told Complaint he'd better get himself together, and stop depending on his mother so much. I told him he was bright enough to figure this out on his own, and to get it together. He then pulled a 20-dollar-bill from his pocket, and asked me to make change. When I asked what for he said, "candy". Before changing the 20, I asked him if he still had his job. He told me that he thought so, and was planning on going in that day. I asked him how he was going to get there, and he shrugged his shoulders. He then asked me for a bus ticket. I took his twenty, changed it, and gave him back 10 dollars in ones, and 10 dollars in bus tickets. He just looked at me. My last word to him that day was responsibility.

Sticky

The third participant, also a male, will be referred to as Sticky. I'd heard about Sticky through the grapevine, before he was enrolled. Apparently, he was wreaking havoc in all of his eighth-grade classes, most of which were special education classes. His file reflected an extremely hyperactive young man, who could not stay in his seat, would not follow teacher directions, and was a persistent disruption to the learning of himself and others. He'd been failing all subject areas, and had been in several fights throughout the first three months of the 2004-2005 school year. As a special education student in addition to

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discipline reports, Sticky had an individualized educational plan, a psychological

evaluation, and summary evaluations from two psychiatric hospital stays in his

file.

Sticky's school-based psychological evaluation states that Sticky is an 11-

year-old male who is in constant movement in his seat, around his seat, on top of

the desk, on others' seats. He crawls around the floor or sits on the back of his

seat during class. Sticky is constantly yelling out, to the annoyance of the

classroom peers and the teacher. He does become abusive in temperament to

others students the longer it continues. Because of Sticky's behavior, he is often

isolated to protect the rights of other students in the classroom. Sticky's file is

riddled with disciplinary reports. From 9/18/03 through 4/29/04, he had

accumulated 70 separate infractions. Here are the first 40. They read as follows:

1. 9/18/03: constantly wrestling and running in halls.
2. 9/22/03: purposely tripping a student.
3. 9/23/03: fighting with another student.
4. 9/29/03: talking about a student's mother in class, sexually inappropriate language.
5. 9/30/03: failure to show up for assigned detention.
6. 10/2/03: telling 'your momma' jokes in class, refusing to stop.
7. 10/6/03: shooting rubber bands at student's face.
8. 10/7/03: throwing a book at another student, calling teacher a "bitch".
9. 10/9/03: talking back to teacher.
10. 10/9/03: requiring security escort to leave room for disrupting test.
11. 10/10/03: refusing to clean up, leaving cafeteria without permission, loud and cursing at guard.
12. 10/17/03: making animal noises in class.
13. 10/17/03: refusing to come into classroom, name calling with peers.
14. 10/27/03: talking badly about teacher's mother, cursing, rude.
15. 11/6/03: leaving school without permission.
16. 11/6/03: sleeping in class, cursing when woken up.
17. 11/12/03: cursing at teacher, leaving class without permission, playing in halls and yelling.
18. 11/26/03: in wrong classroom and refusing to leave.
19. 12/2/03: telling student to shut the "F" up.
20. 12/4/03: failure to serve detention.
21. 12/5/03: throwing checkers at peer, banging fists on desk, throwing checkers box toward teacher.
22. 12/10/03: throwing paper in class at teacher and in hallways after class.
23. 12/11/03: refusing to work, sleeping or arguing about lights being kept
24. 12/12/03: refusing to leave class for cussing, security escort needed.
25. 12/12/03: refusing all directions, cursing, name-calling.
26. 12/12/03: refusing to sit in assigned seat, cursing.
27. 12/15/03: did not show for detention, loud in class.
28. 12/16/03: calling student, "FAGGOT" and making noises during class.
29. 12/18/03: failure to show for teacher detention.
30. 12/19/03: harassing female peer with sexually explicit words.
31. 1/5/04: throwing pencils at ceiling and name-calling to peers.
32. 1/5/04: called teacher ugly when redirected to stop cussing.
33. 1/7/04: calling female peer a "Hooker and Ho".
34. 1/16/04: fighting with other student over pencil and seat.
35. 1/16/04: serious horseplay in classroom, knocking peer to floor.
36. 1/21/04: blowing bubbles with gum, refusing seated work, out of seat numerous times for no reason but to talk to peers.
37. 2/2/04: coerced students to yell when teacher was talking, cursing in class, laughing and falling onto floor during test.
38. 2/2/04: hit another student in face with binder.
39. 2/4/04: grabbing self inappropriately to get class attention.
40. 2/6/04: banging on desk, refusing to stop.

Figure 3. Sticky's disciplinary file

When I'd first met Sticky, he appeared much younger than his age. He was a small, friendly boy who seemed intent on pleasing his mother by telling me he was ready to follow directions and not get suspended all of the time. He would barely look at me when he spoke, and I had to ask him to repeat himself a few times. His mother had clarified the psychiatric reports by telling me Sticky had two prior hospitalizations for his out of control behaviors. The hospital reports had indicated that Sticky was diagnosed with Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD). From my previous work in a child psychiatric hospital, I'd known that ODD was a diagnosis reserved for children with extreme emotional disorders.

As with most of the student referrals to the alternative school, I never judged the child's potential to succeed in the alternative school because of their past. I assigned Sticky to our self-contained classroom right before Christmas Vacation. I invited Sticky and his mother to the alternative school Holiday Party the following day. They both came.

Shortly after Sticky became familiar with the daily routine, he began to break the rules. He must have thought he was sneaky, but he was a horrible liar and a dreaded thief. In his first month with us, he had stolen many calculators, teacher's lunches, student's video games, and other items I can't recall, hence the code-name, "Sticky". He was easy to catch, and most often, he would admit that he was guilty. He also had a very foul mouth. He'd speak ill of the girls in his class by forming chains of sexually inappropriate comments in front of anyone and everyone, including me. One day, when his teacher had left the classroom to use the bathroom, I stepped in for her. As I was entering, I'd heard Sticky and

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Atty going at it in the rear of the classroom. Sticky looked up at me, but didn't seem phased by my presence. He would continue to argue with Atty, and would not listen to my requests to leave her alone. In fact, he became louder. At one point, and I will never forget his words; he called Atty, "a big-lipped, dick sucking whore, whose mother smells like welfare cheese". I had to suspend him for three days. Upon return from that particular suspension, Sticky didn't last very long without making an absolute menace of himself. On a Monday, he'd stolen a teacher's cell phone. Instead of suspension, Sticky was assigned to clean up the classrooms after school that entire week. He did well with the cleaning, but only lasted until Wednesday when he was suspended again.

Sticky's teacher did not accompany her students during the daily recreation period. That time gave her a much needed and well-deserved moment away from her students. Each day, the students would travel from the alternative school to the local Boys N' Girls club. As usual, Sticky would walk to the club with a few other peers and two other teachers. About twenty minutes into the hour, I'd received a startling call from the head of the Boys N' Girls club. One of the students had set a tree on fire outside of the recreation hall. I knew Sticky would be involved. He'd been the ringleader of his pack of one. Alone, he'd decided to pull out the lighter he hid in the shorts he wore underneath his extremely baggy jeans. Apparently, as his peers told the story, he'd begun with lighting dry leaves on fire. When one of the leaves would burn down to his hand, he'd throw it and take off. Within minutes, the base of the tree had become inflamed, and many of my teachers and the Boys N' Girls staff attempted to put it out. Luckily, they were

able to do so without the fire department. Sticky was suspended for the maximum possible, 10 days. After returning to school at the close of the suspension, I told his mother he that he had one more chance, and that any other major infraction would land him in a more restrictive school. (Sticky was a special education student and thus, he could not be put up for expulsion. The district had to find him an appropriate school out of the district if he could not make it at the alternative school. The cost of such programs runs from 1,400 to 2,200 dollars per year).

Sticky's mother unloaded her frustration by yelling at Sticky while in my office. She swore at him and told him he would be kicked out of the house if he got into trouble again. She also told him if she were called up to the school ever again, she would beat him in front of his class. I let Sticky and his mother know that many of his privileges would be revoked, and that he would be escorted to and from anywhere he traveled, even within the school building.

Over time, I heard less and less about Sticky. Like Atty, he'd developed a love/hate relationship with his teacher. When she said no, he would try to persist; but she would remain firm. Her firmness was riddled with stubbornness, which was a great trait to have when dealing with students like Sticky. As with most of her students, eventually, for the better part of the day, they would comply, and end up engaging in learning. Sticky was no exception. The 13-year-old eighth grade student, who came to the alternative school reading at a second grade level, entered ninth grade this year. Recently, his testing has revealed that he's reading at a sixth grade level. Although he still gets into trouble, the incidences

have decreased more than 85%. In fact, in the first four months of the school year he has only engaged in two suspendable offenses, smoking in the bathroom and carving his name into desks. The other day, after spending a lot of time reading through Sticky's file, I'd commented to him how far he had come. He asked me what I'd meant, and I told him how much he had grown up, and how proud we were that his behavior was so much better. He looked up at me and stated, "I know, I just grew hair under my arms, I'm maturing."

Hair

Hair had arrived at the alternative school about two months after the school opened. His enrollment had been unique due to his minimal discipline record. He'd been referred because his mother requested a "new school" for her son. Three boys who were in the 11th grade were targeting him because Hair was friends with and hung around kids from another neighborhood. Two weeks prior to his entry in the alternative school, these boys had waited for him after school and beat him up. From that day on, Hair was refusing to go to school, and his mother and father, afraid for his life, didn't force the issue. Hair had come to the alternative school with only three disciplinary referrals, one for telling a security guard to "shut-up", and two for talking excessively during class.

When I met Hair, he had his hair braided; but, over time, he would undo his braids, many times a week during school, revealing a mane similar to that of Troy Polemolu of the Pittsburgh Steelers. Hair is a handsome young man, braided or down. He was very polite during his intake meeting, a trait which would stick with him, at least when he'd speak to authority figures. Hair had been

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a district veteran. He'd attended school in the district since he was in kindergarten. His records from kindergarten and middle school had indicated that Hair was an anomaly. Unlike the majority of his peers, Hair was residing with both parents, and had been living in the same home for most of his life. Both of his parents were licensed and had vehicles; also, a rarity among parents of students in the alternative school, and from my perception, the district in general.

Hair's attendance never had been an issue, and he'd completed every grade with a 2.5 average or better. He and his mother let me know during his intake that he was planning on going to college. Hair had said that his father worked at a nearby university, and he would get a full ride to whatever school he could get into.

As Hair settled in, he began to have issues with other students, mainly about 'turf', and who and where he hung out. He also had been caught, many times, speaking extremely inappropriately about women. I'd often overheard him calling all women, "Bitches and Ho's", and he let everyone know that a woman's place was taking care of her man. Regardless of his machismo, Hair maintained his attendance, grades, and attitude. He volunteered as a teacher's aide in a work-study program, and was recommended to work as a tutor/mentor in the district's daily after-school program.

Over the two and one-half years he attended, Hair was involved in two critical incidents, both of which required physical restraint to keep him from pummeling a peer. One incident had been with a male peer, and the other, more recent incident, with a female. During both incidents, Hair had become

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completely out of control and combative.

In the first incident, Hair was involved in a verbal confrontation with a male. They were arguing over whose "Boyz" were better known. The argument had escalated into a fight. Hair's opponent threw a chair at him. Apparently, as the story goes, Hair had ripped off his shirt, revealing his skinny, but muscular chest, and charged the other boy. When he came up for air, he had a bloodied nose. With his out of control hair, Hair was looking like a wild man. He blew his bloody nose onto the floor, and went back after the other boy. By the time security entered the fighting ring (science classroom), Hair was on top of the boy, punching him in the face repeatedly. He had to be pried off of the other boy, pushed out of the classroom, and held back for over 30 minutes by three grown men.

The second incident was more recent. Hair and a female peer were arguing because she sat in his typical seat in math class. The young woman was in her fourth day of attendance at the alternative school. She'd been loud and defiant from the moment she started. Again, as told by student and teacher witnesses, the girl would not respond to Hair's respectful requests for her to move, and she became verbally abusive calling Hair, "a Disrespectful Nigga who ain't shit!" His teacher could redirect Hair at first, but when the female peer took out a pair of brass knuckles, he flipped a switch. A male peer got between the two. The girl snuck a punch to his jaw, then quickly took her seat and began mocking Hair. Hair was trying to release himself from the grip of (by that time) the teacher's aide and myself. Hair was refusing to calm down. He was ushered into

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the secretary's office. The aide shut the door, and had to hold him back from trying to exit. Next, the female peer came out of the classroom and began calling Hair "all sorts of salty-ass motherfuckers."

Hair's arm went through the glass of the door as he tried, with all of his might, to get past the aide and back out to fight the girl. The security guard and I were able to get her out of the area. In fact, she was escorted to the door and told to go home. (When a student becomes enraged like that and the student is 18 yrs of age or older, which this girl was, I put them out of the building as quickly as possible to diffuse the situation. Where as, if a student is under 18, I request permission from the parent before sending them out on suspension). Shortly after, Hair was able to calm down. I notified his mother and she came, quickly, to pick him up.

In many cases, behavior such as Hair's would end up in expulsion proceedings, but I was consistent in my pursuit of confining the incident and dealing with it directly. During my years as principal of the alternative school, I'd assumed my own book of rules. One of those rules was this: if you throw the first punch, you are guilty. If you retaliate, you are defending yourself. In both cases, Hair was victim of another's first punch, and I understood what it meant in this particular 'Hood' to defend oneself. Defending oneself could be seen as a measure of being. If you didn't do it, you quickly became "A lame", short for "Lame Ass Nigga". Not standing up to someone also could be referred to as being "Punked". In spite of his positive upbringing, Hair would never let himself be a lame or get "Punked".

Atty, Sticky, Complaint, and Hair do Focus Groups

Only Atty, Complaint, Hair, and Sticky made it to the focus groups on each of the days. The focus groups were held on vacation days for students, so no other children were in the building. Each day, in addition to earning a 20-dollar stipend, the interviewers were given money to take the participants out to lunch. The interviewers were to report back after lunch on the first day. They had taken the kids to an all-you-can-eat pizza place up the street. This is what they said upon return, "Atty ate enough for all of us, Complaint didn't stop complaining about how nasty the food was, Sticky smiled the whole time, and Hair flirted non-stop with the waitress. We had a blast!"

The following section will discuss focus groups as the primary instrument utilized in this qualitative study. In the coming sections Atty's, Complaint's, Hair's, and Sticky's responses to the interviews (focus groups) conducted during this study will be examined.

Instrumentation

The primary instrument used in this study is the focus group. Focus groups are a form of group interviews that focus on the communication between the participants. The researcher's previous experience with individual interviews, during her pilot study, led the researcher to construct a different kind of interview that would allow her students' interactions to preempt the flow of meaningful information.

As with many previous studies utilizing focus groups (Folch-Lyon & Trost, 1981; Kitzinger, 1995), the interaction among the participants in this study

encourages a high level of participation. Unlike the short answer to (most) questions, hesitations in word choice, and repeated, "I don't know how to say it", answers that dominate the researcher's individual pilot study interviews, the focus group interviews in this study reveal a tremendous amount of information.

The focus group seems appropriate, not only because of the previously stated results from the pilot study, but also because of the level of insider knowledge of the researcher. That is, having spent extensive and often emotionally charged time with these participants, the researcher is privy to instances of students engaging each other in topics that one might consider private. From those experiences, the researcher notes how other students engaging each other in the discussion perpetuates the intensity of the conversation/discussion.

In the particular environment under study, as observed consistently and on a daily basis over a three year span, student/participants are more likely to discuss sensitive, emotionally charged past experiences in a group setting. Folch-Lyon and Trost (1981) support the use of focus groups for those very reasons by stating the following:

Disclosing behavior and attitudes that they might not consciously reveal in an individual interview situation…participants often feel more comfortable and secure in the company of people who share similar opinions, attitudes, and behavior or simply because they become carried away by the discussions (p.445).

Other indicators that focus groups would enhance this particular study include specific characteristics of the method as supplied by Kitzinger (1995). Focus groups:

1. "encourage research participants to explore the issues of importance to them, in their own vocabulary, generating their own questions and pursuing their own priorities." (p.300).

2. "examine not only what people think but how they think and why think that way." (p.299).

3. " allow the researcher to "identify shared and common knowledge…cultural values and group norms. This makes focus groups...particularly sensitive to cultural variables—which is why it is often used in cultural research and work with ethnic minorities." (p.300).

The focus groups are hosted and carried out by an interview facilitator. Because of the conflict of interest between the researcher as principal and her participants as students, a third party is hired and trained to perform the focus groups. The students have some level of familiarity with the interviewer, who the previous year had volunteered in the alternative school as Americorps worker.

Additional focus groups are held for the purpose of member checking, a process that allows the entire focus group to hear the transcribed version of the conversation and approve its use for research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this

study, the interview facilitator allows students to read through the transcriptions if they wish, but all transcriptions had been read aloud to the focus group to ensure accurate member checking. The following chart represents the process that occurs prior to the interviews and focus groups.

SECURE IRB APPROVAL

Hire Interviewer (Researcher)   *Secure Contact Person (Researcher)*

Train Interviewer (Researcher)   Train contact person   (Researcher)

Secure On-Call Therapist (Researcher)

Review Focus Group?'s   Get Parent Consent #1 (File Review)
(Researcher & Interviewer)   (Contact Person)

Discuss potential issues and protocol
(possible student distress/emotional response)
(Researcher & Interviewer)

Review Protocol for answering questions, number of mailing attempts, phone contacts, verbal permission
etc.(Researcher & Contact Person)
Get student Assent **again** (#2) at onset
of first Focus Group Interview (Interviewer)

Perform File Review to Determine Eligibility (Researcher)

Secure Consent #2   (Contact Person)   Secure Assent

Complete Interviews   Complete Transcriptions   Review Transcriptions

Member checks (Interviewer & Researcher)
                                              Data Analysis/Coding (Researcher)
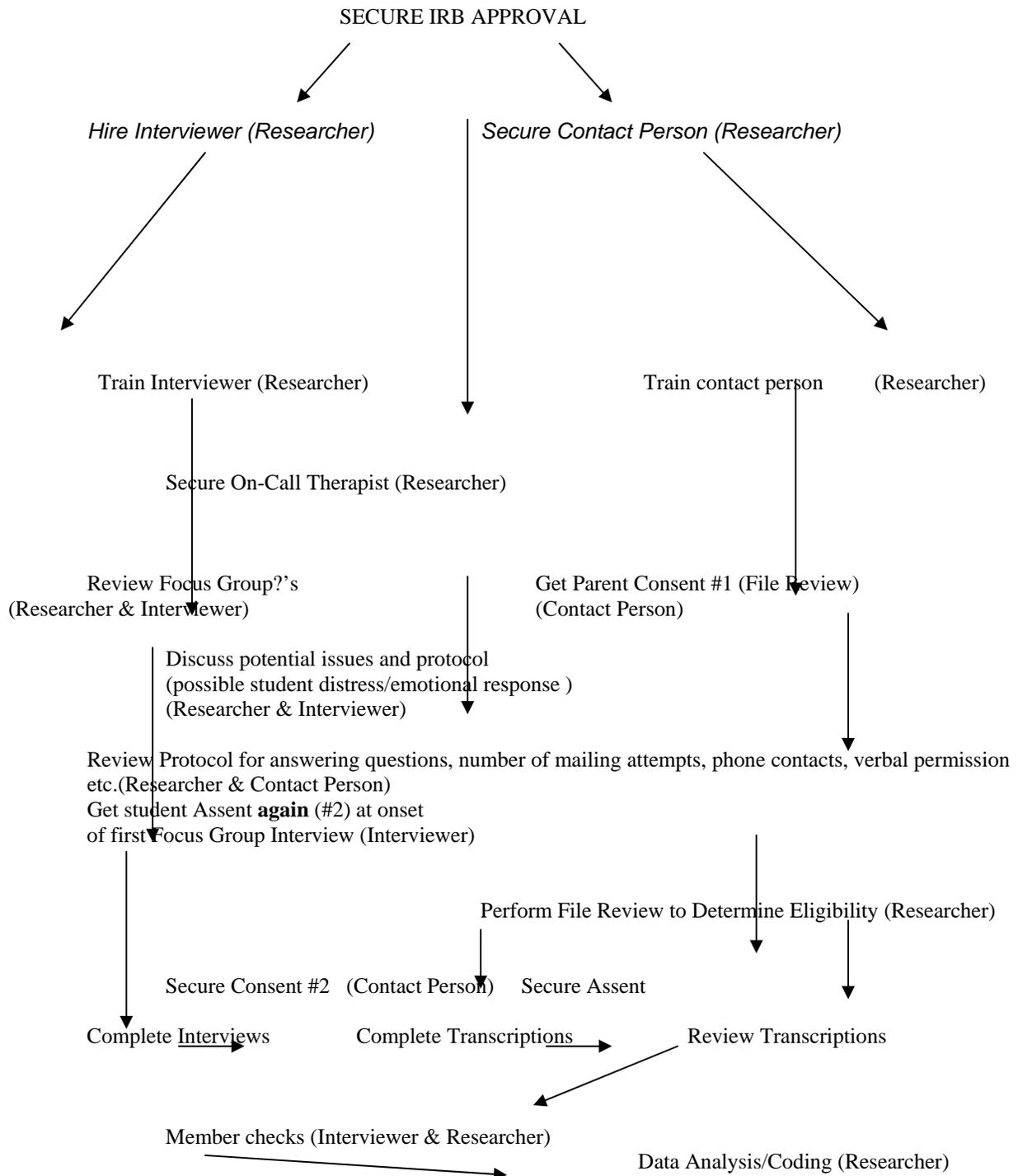
Figure 4. IRB Process

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Data Collection

All verbal exchanges and story telling from individual interviews and focus group interviews are recorded on audio tape and transcribed verbatim, except for any identifying information about the students, their lives, and the school system. All identifiers are removed from the transcriptions before they are presented to the researcher in an attempt to avoid any possible conflict of interest between the researcher as researcher and the researcher as principal.

Following the grounded theory and case study method, multiple sources of evidence/data are gathered to strengthen internal validity (Spaulding, 2000; Yin, 1993). Data is collected from individual and focus group interviews, file reviews, researcher perceptions, interpretations, analysis, and feelings, related to social, historical, and economic conditions, situations influencing the central phenomenon, and observations (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Data Analysis

Categories that emerge from the data are sorted, prioritized, and coded (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Coding involves conceptualizing, reducing, elaborating, and relating data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). By categorizing and coding the data, the researcher maintains attention to each slice of data as it emerges. Rather than waiting until all of the data is gathered from the focus groups, data is utilized immediately. The entire process is driven by the original research question: How do urban African American students in an alternative school setting perceive their past (regular) and present (alternative) educational experiences? As well, the

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participant responses are analyzed through the theoretical framework of this study, iatrogenic harm, and social capital.

When a category is adopted, a comparison is implied. In this study, two categories are derived from the researcher's knowledge of the theoretical issues related to this study, iatrogenic harm and social capital. Iatrogenic harm is translated into the harm category, and social capital is translated into the gain category.

Next, the student responses are retrieved from the data in a "who said what" format, involving four individual sets of responses. Each student represents a speaker. The individual sets are compared and contrasted using data triangulation to look for likenesses across response sets (Dye, Schatz, Rosenberg, & Coleman, 2000). The most prominent characteristic of each set is the impact their stories deliver. Stories and perceptions then became categories.

The constant comparative method is used to further analyze the data. The constant comparative method represents a method of "continually redesigning the research in light of emerging concepts and interrelationships amongst variables" (Yee, 2001, p.10). In this case, the variables are each student's set of responses. The response sets are then compared constantly to look for what Janesick (1994) refers to as, "statements and signs of behavior that occur over time through the study" (p.9). By analyzing each response set, it becomes evident that student responses could be broken into three distinct sectors. The researcher assigns each section with a title that breaks the data into three distinct additional categories. Each of these categories states a question that the

researcher imagines her students might ask: "Are you talking to me?", "Do you know who I am?", and, "Where am I?"

<div align="center">Interpretation of Results</div>

The "Are you talking to me?" category includes stories and perceptions that relate to how a teacher speaks. The story or perception is grouped by harm or gain. At this point, sentences are broken down into segments, isolating like terms as they relate to harm or gain in the overall context of a teacher's rhetoric. Simple charts are then devised to link like terms. For example, the following Teacher Talk represents words that indicate harm and gain.:

Harm	Gain
Salty, witch, angry, mad,	like, tell, concentrate, respect
Yelling, cussing, weird, crazy	interesting, best, fun, tries, help
Wrong, bad, dumb, loser	played, smiled, looked, followed

Figure 5. Example of data reduction

When one reviews the terminology in the above chart, it is evident that the students' perception of teacher responses in the harm category "influences negative thoughts" from the students (Boisvert, 2002). Boisvert indicates that what may be driving the students' negative thoughts stems from a teacher's pre-conceived bias of students and their behavior. In the gain category, the terminology used by students to describe their Wayward Academy teachers indicates that Wayward Academy teachers have, at least, minimal understanding

of how to "buffer against stresses of everyday life" by engaging in small but meaningful gestures, actions, and word choices (such as smiling, playing, or helping) that reduce the likelihood that students would experience harm from their interaction with Wayward teachers (Resnick, Harris, & Blum, 1993).

In addition, the gain category in the previous chart indicates the evidence of social capital. Putman (1993) claims that norms are an important feature of social engagement and inspire the production of social capital. In comparing the words chosen by students to describe their Wayward Academy teachers and the words they chose to describe their previous teachers, it can be inferred that, at minimum, Wayward Academy teachers utilize norms of engagement that, from Wayward student perspectives, stem from the norm of speaking to students with respect and care.

The organization of the student responses to the focus groups can be examined in the following charts that display the different categories. Within each chart, the transcription data is organized by the corresponding categories.

PERCEPTION (Related to Harm)	STORY (Related to Harm)
1. Teachers over here talk salty to kids.	1. She gave me, like, no respect for nothing, and told me to get out. I never had a chance, so I left.
2. I just know she don't have kids at home. She be yelling all the time.	2. I got everybody laughing when I fell off the chair. He couldn't handle it, so he started yelling at me, and thenthe other kids. Mr. __ told the whole class to shut-up. I cussed him out real bad.
3. He looked at me all mad n' shit, told me some shit, like, you can take the kid outta the street, but not the street from the kid.	3. I was so mad. He thought I didn't know what he said means. I'm not stupid. I knocked the papers onto the floor, kicked my chair, and left.
4. They say what they want to say.	4. Them teachers do cuss at us. I heard one teacher call my friend a damn dummy. Damn is cussing you know.
5. Ms _ called my brother mean. She sounds like a witch.	5. I used to go wait for my brother. after class, but she talks so nasty that I would have to say something back to her every time, so security told me I had to wait for my brother outside.
6. She don't talk to us, she talks down at us.	6. She's grimy. She told me she still gets paid whether I do my work or because I just sit there sometimes 'cause she doesn't teach us nothing, and I can't do the sheet. What good is it to do it if the teacher don't teach.
7. He is the worst teacher 'cause he gets mad sometimes. He kicks too many kids outta class.	7. Every time I see him, he's got so something to say and the other day, you know, that I chipped my tooth before class, he had to stop me in thehall and tell me somethin'. I got all mad, like, mind ya own damn business, son.

Figure 6. "Are You Talking to Me?"

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PERCEPTION (Related to Gain)	STORY (Related to Gain)
1. Here, I don't fail because when I get behind, my teachers tell me to do more work.	1. I used to never go to class 'cause when I got behind I could never catch up. Here, even the principal will tell you you need to get your grades up. You get used to not failing. It is much better to get used to that.
2. It's different for me here 'cause I don't get so mad about being told to learn 'cause I like my teachers.	2. Mr. __ makes it interesting for us when we get to chose some of the things we like, and we get to do extra stuff, like, when I got to go to the nursing home.
3. She always reminds me when I'm mad and I get stupid, of other times I made good decisions.	3. Ms. __ is the best at that. She took me outside the other day when I was Mad at C__ for calling me some dumb Stuff, and she told to yell as loud as I could to the trees. She's kinda crazy, but it was fun to be able to yell so loud.
4. You can't skip school here at alternative because they call your Rays-it's, like, dumb-everyone here knows you is missing.	4. I never have skipped school here. Not like before, I used to skip all the time, and nobody ever did nothing. No, they did, if you missed three days in a row they would call home with a recording. Dumb recording no one listens to anyway. Here, they will go pick your ass up if you don't come to school.
5. He wasn't mad or anything. He asked me if there was something he could do to help me concentrate better.	5. I was cutting up that day. I was all crazy, and I was messin' with T__. I wouldn't leave her go, and Mr. K__ asked me to come to the hallway to talk to him. He's kinda lame, but he tries to help us. I like him 'cause he showed me respect and gave me choices after school the other day.

Figure 7. "Are You Talking to Me?"

PERCEPTION (Related to Harm)	STORY (Related to Harm)

PERCEPTION
(Related to Harm)

1. He got up all in my grill. All close
to my personals! It made me heated!

that's

2.They think all the kids is just dumb.

one

3. The teachers never really cared if I
I
went to school, they never said
anything about it.

there?

4. He don't know nothing about how
to handle us kids when we gets crazy.

5. They don't try to get to know us like
enough
the teachers do over here.
up

6.That jerk called me "Hey girl".
He
Who does he think he is?

STORY
(Related to Harm)

1. He was like sit down or else! So I
was, like, who do you think you is
talking to like that? He told me I knew
where he be after school. I swear,

what he said.

2. When I was over there, I was failing
everything. I had all F's and maybe

D. It was, like, a waste to even go. No,
no one told my mom I was failing.

3. I missed so many days my mom and

had to go to the magistrate. She was
telling me to go to school and all but
she doesn't know what it is like there.
How come she cares but nobody else
said anything before they sent us

4. I told him not to talk to me like that
Too; but, all he said was he was the
teacher, and all that power shit about
what he says goes. I told the little bitch
to suspend me, then.

5. Mrs J__ said she didn't trust us

to take us on a field trip, like, we'd cut

or something. Ain't nobody wanna look
like a fool out there.

6. Yeah I was talking but he had feet.

coulda walked over to me like a human
being instead of calling me outta my
name like some girl on the street.

Figure 8. "Do You Know Who I am?"

PERCEPTION (Related to Gain)	STORY (Related to Gain)
1. I like the teachers here because they know who I am and don't send me home for stupid things when they know I am having a bad day.	1. When I came here, I was, like, what do I have to do to get suspended? Ms. K__ doesn't let us go home when we is bad, unless we fight. She says if we ain't in school we ain't learning, so what is the point?
2. My teacher can tell what kind of day I am having just by looking at me.	2. That day was bad. I was fighting with my mom, and she threw a shoe at me and kicked me out of the house all early. I didn't know where to go but school. Before I sat down, she asked me what was wrong.
3. We is like family here, and have parties that we look forward to and want people in our families to come to see what we done so good.	3. I was a little sad my mom didn't come 'cause I made macaroni and cheese for the party, but she helped me make it for everyone. She never comes, but she is happy I don't get suspended a lot anymore. This school is just different.
4. The teachers here know how to handle us kids when we get crazy so they let us do our work with Mr. S_ in the lounge so we can talk with kids about it while we work and take breaks if we need them.	4. Having aides here is the best 'cause Mr. S__ is like fam. He is always there for us. He helps everybody, you know.
5. Ms. C_ can tell we is coming just by our voices.	5. I swear to god that lady has EP….L O-well you know, Yeah, ESP. S__ , and I were with J__ in the hallway, and she said all three of our names before we walked in the classroom telling us to watch our language. We was cussing a lot though.

Figure 9. "Do You Know Who I am?"

PERCEPTION (Related to Harm)	STORY (Related to Harm)
1. That school is dirty and all old. It looks like the ghetto in there.	1. When I got to high school, I was like whoa, what the heck is this place? The bathroom has toilet paper all stuck to the ceiling all over the place, even in the halls. Its been there forever. That bathroom makes you feel dirty!
2. I never felt good in that building.	2. It's too big to watch real good, so kids get picked on like me. When I was in 8th grade, G__ pulled me back behind the bathroom and stole my shit.
3. Everything in there is off-limits to us kids, like we babies or something. That is the nicest place in the school 'cause everything is new but we don't get to use it.	3. They make you feel like the computers isn't even for us to use except look at them. The library lady said they were too expensive, so the keep 'em in the back.
4. Too many kids in there wanna fight. They don't break em' up, like, ya'll.	4. Once, in the cafeteria there was, like, three fights at once. The teachers just stand there. My cousin J_ got knocked out when the crowd jumped in. I couldn't help, he was across the room. I felt so mad.
5.The only good part was going to an art class, but they closed that shit down.	5. That room was fat. The teacher had the walls all painted different colors, and she let us help draw some pictures on it, too. That was my favorite place to go in the whole school. P__ said they don't have the money to pay the teacher anymore or something like that.
6. Didn't no body miss me. Maybe it's too many kids in one place to notice.	6. You just don't feel good in there all The time so I just stopped going. For what? Fight?

Figure 10. "Where Am I?"

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PERCEPTION (Related to Gain)	STORY (Related to Gain)
1. It's just better over here.	1. I get to have my baby in the daycare downstairs. That is real good for a baby. Yesterday, I had to miss class cause she was sick down there. I just got my work from the teacher to do in the nursery.
2. Their rooms are bigger but we don't need all that space to learn. It's cool. It's small, but if it were bigger, they would give us more kids, which would suck.	2. Our classroom gets messy, but that is 'cause we do all kinds of stuff in it. We live in that room, so it gets messy, which is why we take turns vacuuming, especially if we cook. No, we only cook sometimes.
3. We don't get stuck in school all the time.	3. Mr. W__ takes E__ to the weight gym and he gets to box. It is good for him 'cause he gets his anger out, and comes back to class all tired, so he leaves everyone alone to do they work.
4. Our classroom is like my own private office. I got everything I need to get all A's in here…Ohh, hollah!	4. My teacher is messy, but she has everything we need somewhere, not like before when everything you did you had to get to somewheres before starting, and then the kids is all crazy and nothing got done.
5. She says the world is our classroom.	5. She had us all walking in the cold to go see this plant that stays green all winter.
6. My mom don't want me in no big school. She thinks I'd get lost or something dumb like that. I like it better, too. It is easier to get to your classes.	6. My favorite classroom is Mr. C__. He's got that part in the back where we go listen to music when we get done with all our work.

Figure 11. "Where Am I?"

"Are you talking to me?"/Harm Related

According to the data, in the "Are you talking to me?"/harm category, the participants clearly indicate that teachers from their past school had spoken to them in a haphazard fashion that made the students feel defensive. This haphazard fashion is noted in focus group data such as, "…talks salty to me", "she be yelling…", "they say what they want to say", "she sounds like a witch…", "she talks down to us…", and "…he gets so mad sometimes".

The participants are able to articulate that, as a result of the teacher response (typically verbal and negative), they made a choice to do something in retaliation such as, "I knocked the papers onto the floor, kicked my chair, and left", "I got all mad like 'mind ya own business son'", and "I cursed him out real bad". In this category, as well as with all of the others, a perception of the teacher(s) precedes a corresponding story. With prompt from the interviewer with a question, "Can you tell me a story that will explain why you feel that way?" each student identifies and tells a story of an incident with a particular teacher. One student had talked about being a class clown and getting his peers to laugh. As a response, the teacher had told the whole class to "Shut-up" which incited the student to curse at the teacher. Another student recalls a teacher calling his friend a "damn dummy".

The views of each participant differ because of individual thoughts and experiences. The only common link is how each participant reacts negatively to an interaction with his or her teacher. The most common reactions are inappropriate verbal comments, and leaving the classroom without permission.

Overall, participants did not indicate that consequences for negative behaviors impact their decision to react to their teacher's comments. In fact, at no point during the days of interviewing did any student indicate that they were feeling sorry for or remorseful for actions resulting from the teacher comments. The few times the interviewer asked if anyone had felt badly for engaging in cursing, throwing things, etc., the overwhelming response from the group was a loud, "No!", and a reminder that the teacher "deserved it". This is an indicator that, for some urban African American students, retaliation and "saving face" is highly valued; so highly valued, that "saving face" could be considered a cultural component.

"Saving face" can be discussed in light of the literature on "face". The Chinese use face to describe both "gaining" and "losing face". In this study, students avoid "losing face" by engaging in maladaptive behaviors such as cursing at teachers or leaving the classroom. Understanding the concept of "losing face" verifies the reasoning behind a student's need to "save face". Yau-fai Ho (1976) remarks that, "face is lost when the individual, either through his action or that of people closely related to him, fails to meet essential requirements placed upon him by virtue of the social position he occupies" (p.867). Yai-fai Ho (1976) reminds us that a person's face is actually representative of a person's social position. In other words, due to the culture of the students' peer group and the students' dedication to that group, "saving face" becomes a necessity that negates remorse, and causes students to respond to teachers inappropriately. Indicators of their inappropriate behaviors include

kicking, throwing things, and being asked to wait outside of the school building.

I have seen "saving face" occur time and time again. There is no doubt that how a teacher talks to a student impacts how a student responds to that teacher. Over the years, I have witnessed many students getting in trouble because of their response to an adult.

A typical Wayward Academy student response to my (the principal's) inquiry as to why a student responds to an adult by using foul language, yelling, and/or anger is, "he/she came at me sideways" or "who does he think he is coming at me like that?", or "why does he/she always yell at me and not the other kids?" One way in which Wayward Academy staff has minimized "saving face" is by addressing student behaviors in private, and with attention to tone of voice, word choice, and reduction of blame.

Findings from this study reiterate what this researcher has experienced with urban African American students in her past; "saving face" is not only a defense mechanism, but also an expectation of the peer group. In this study, the need to "save face" supercedes the need to respond appropriately to an adult. This indicates that in order to reduce student negative responses, teachers of urban African American students must understand, internalize, and finally, change how they talk to and approach students.

Another way of interpreting student responses of, "No!", and, "the teacher deserved it!", is to refer back to Putman (1993). Putman (1993) reminds us that both positive and negative social capital build up over time, influencing future student engagement. Students' adamant interpretation of their responses to and

actions towards their previous teachers builds up and affects future endeavors (even thoughts and perceptions). This concept relates to what Putman (1993) refers to as negative social capital.

The level of interruption by the participants during interviews indicates the urgency students feel about changing the relationships with some of their teachers. Interruptions were not intended to add to another's story, but to begin their own. However, in some instances, students who had a negative interaction with the same teacher as the student telling the story would lend support by adding terms of endearment, such as, "that bitch was mean!", or, "yeah, I had her salty-ass for English too!"

"*Are you talking to me?"/Gain Related*

According to the data, in the "Are you talking to me?"/gain category, the participants identify within their perceptions something a teacher from the alternative school says to them that indicates satisfaction. Indicators of satisfaction include, "here I don't fail", "it's different for me here", and, "she reminds me when I am mad…of other times I make good decisions." Again, as with the harm section, the likeness in student responses stems from their perception of what teacher says to them. However, unlike the harm category, students recognize that the outcome of the experience is important because they gain rewards like, special classes, outings, and respect. In this category, the data points towards the students' enjoyment, such as, "I like him cause he showed me respect and gave me choices", "I got to go to the nursing home and hand out dinner and play cards with that funny old lady", and, "we played Madden on his

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play station after school the other day." This enjoyment reflects social capital, a gain the students receive from their interactions with teachers. Comments indicate that, overall, students attend alternative school with more frequency, if not always, because they choose to.

This outcome reiterates McGraff and Buskirk's (1999) assertion that what teachers do with Wayward Academy students has a much greater effect than any physical resource the teachers could provide. In other words, despite the limited physical resources at Wayward Academy, students make progress with an opportunity to build social capital through their positive interactions with teachers (Croninger & Lee, 2001). This translates into a concrete finding from this study: positive interaction with teachers has a greater influence on urban African American students than physical resources.

Students identify a teacher action that is indicative of an alternative school experience in each story in this category. The participants indicate that alternative school experiences, like the principal calling home if a student is absent, removing a student from the classroom when there is a confrontation, and giving students choices in learning activities make a positive impact on their perception of school. In several responses, students specify a typical student/teacher interaction whereby the teacher imparts a request of the student.

In this category, teacher requests are seen as just that, requests. Students indicate that their acceptance of requests as requests, instead of requests as demands, increases over time through the development of the student/teacher relationship. That is, a finding from this study points towards the notion that a

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previously established student/teacher relationship can impact a students'

acceptance of or rejection of a request, and the type of response the student

gives. Examples of this include, "Ms. __ is the best", "he's kinda lame, but he

tries to help us", "…here even the principal will tell you when you need to get

your grades up", "…you get used to not failing", and, "…its like dumb—everyone

here knows you is missing."

At Wayward, student acceptance of teachers' direction (requests) is a

consistent reality. That is, through team discussions, trainings, supervision, time,

and experience, the Wayward Academy teachers support what works for this

particular group of students, which points towards a reduction of iatrogenic harm,

most specifically, iatrogenic harm caused by language choice. Alternative views

of reaching students, as provided by their principal, impact the teacher's over

reliance on traditional modes of teaching. The framework provided to teachers

tests their assumptions and provides a forum from which discussions about their

own belief systems are challenged. Challenging teachers' assumptions at

Wayward Academy has links to the understanding of iatrogenic harm by

psychotherapists.

Boisvert & Faust (2002) assert that assumptions guide iatrogenic harm,

and without the breakdown of those assumptions (which requires commitment

from the professional) psychotherapists (professionals) run the risk of harming

students.

"*Do You Know Who I Am?"/Harm Related*

According to the data, in the "Do you know who I am?"/harm category, the

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participants identify dissatisfaction with the way in which they perceive their past teachers. Participants identify stories that in their perception indicate that the teachers did not care about them or have rapport with them. Indicators from the focus group data include, "so, I was like who do you think you are?", "they think all the kids is just dumb", "the teachers never really cared if I went to school', "they don't try to get to know us", and, "it made me heated."

Participant remarks point towards the lack of student/teacher relationship negatively influencing student perceptions of teacher intentions and actions. A teacher's lack of acknowledgement of a student has the capacity to cause damaging results to the relationship well into the future (Caplan & Caplan, 2001). This scenario does not indicate iatrogenic harm. However, this scenario lends support to the linking of iatrogenic harm to education.

According to the participant stories, a finding from this study indicates that teachers who do not directly address negative behaviors with students, such as absence or failure, have a negative influence on student perceptions of whether or not the teacher cares about them. The perceived inappropriate comments by teachers could also fall under the "What did you say"/harm category due to the association with words said, yet, these particular words are more indicative of the students' perception of the teacher not having an established relationship with them. It is less about what the teacher said to the student.

The teachers' word choices illustrate a connection to the iatrogenic harm on urban African American students. The teacher's rhetoric, as the participants report, reveals the likelihood that students' perceptions of their teachers guide

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their inappropriate response and actions. Examples of this are: "I told him not to talk to me like that, but all he said was he was the teacher and all that power shit about what he says goes", and "…he coulda walked over to me like a human being instead of calling me outta my name like some girl on the street." The notion of negative social capital comes into play in this section as well (Noguera, 1996).

In this section, the students' perceptions of their previous teachers' resemble those of a student who suffers from an iatrogenic condition wherein the teachers' chosen words of communication incite a problematic response. Examples of this are,"…all he said was he was the teacher and all that power shit about what he says goes. I told the little bitch to suspend me then", "I had all D's and F's. No one ever told my mom I was failing", and, "…he coulda walked over to me like a human being instead of calling me outta my name like some girl on the street." Such perceptions can have damaging results that indicate that negative social capital may also play a part in the interaction.

As emphasized by Croninger and Lee (2001), teacher based forms of social capital can reduce the drop out rate by as much as 50%. Teacher based forms of social capital are far more important for students who face economic and social hardships, especially when most of those students receive little support in their homes or communities (Furstenburg & Hughes, 1995; Croninger & Lee, 2001). Croninger and Lee (2001) remark that, "at-risk students have the most to gain from social capital but also the most to lose if they are without it" (p.3).

"Do You Know Who I Am?"/Gain Related

According to the data, in the "Do you know who I am?"/gain category, the participants identify alternative school teachers as having a previously established relationship with the students. The participants' comments relate how the teachers handle their behaviors. This category represents students' perceptions of teachers who address student behaviors by incorporating their previous knowledge that was unique to the student. Indicators of their previous knowledge that comes from student responses during the focus group interviews include, "my teacher can tell what kinda day I am having by lookin at me", " they know when I am having a bad day", " the teachers here know how to handle us kids…", and, "Ms.__ can tell when we is coming just by our voices."

Additionally, student stories reveal that alternative school teachers engage students beyond the curriculum, and even, outside of the classroom. The terminology embedded in the stories reflects the students' positive understanding of how the teachers intervene. The perceptions that match the stories, respectively, point towards previously established student/teacher relationships. Whiting and Harper (2003) remark that for youth trust and reciprocity (both of which are indigenous of previously established relationships) are hallmarks of social capital indicating that, in this category, social capital may be gained through the establishment and maintenance of student/teacher relationships. McGraff and Buskirk (2004) refer to the relationship as "dynamics of engagement" that produce social capital as a result of engaging students, having hope, building confidence, and developing enthusiasm for learning (p.1). Data that support the establishment of student/teacher relationships, within participant

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stories include, "Mrs. K doesn't let us go home when we is bad unless we fight. She says if we ain't in school we ain't learning…", and, "Mr.__ is like fam" (family).

The stories in this section portray a sense of student appreciation for their teachers' actions, even though those actions impose some form of redirection. This category makes clear that alternative school students have the ability to accept redirection, and acquiesce to limits and rules. The students' ability to accept redirection, rules, and limits specifies pre-existing relationships where teachers are able to assess a student's mood by simply looking at them. They also can tailor the educational environment to meet the needs of a variety of learners. This makes sense considering Noguera 's (1996) remark that urban schools are the most reliable source of support; and thus, the most reliable source of potential social capital in many urban students' lives.

"*Where am I?"/Harm Related*

According to the data, in the "Where am I?"/harm category, participants identify size and appearance as their primary perceived concerns with the physical space and place at their previous school placement in the district's regular middle or high school (both the middle and high school are located in the same building in this district). The size concerns are typically related to fighting or other inappropriate behaviors, while the appearance concerns are typically related to what the space/place looked like. Examples from the data of concerns over fighting and inappropriate behaviors, "too many kids in there want to fight", "kids in there just run wild…when there is a fight everybody rushes the halls…",

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"…it's too many kids in one place", and, "I just stopped. Go for what, fight?" Appearance concerns include, "that school is dirty and all old", "it looks like the ghetto in there", and, "it's like a crack house with kids in it. I was like, whoa, what the heck is this place. The bathroom has toilet paper all stuck t the ceiling…"

The stories and perceptions in this category reveal that the looks of the place/space may influence students' negative perceptions of their school. As well, the stories and perceptions draw out negative student feelings. This section epitomizes the cliché, "if you look good, you feel good." In the case of the stories and perceptions in this category, the looks of the space and place impact the students' emotions. Comments such as, "that bathroom makes you feel dirty", reinforces the student's perception that, "I never feel good in that building." Student's perception of the building as making them feel bad has implications for relation to symptomology, typical of iatrogenic harm. That is, the governing bodies of schools that are outdated and unattractive are making a choice to put students in a building that negatively influences how they feel about themselves. With knowledge from literature of the past, we know that the way people feel is impacted by their physical surroundings, which makes the case for prioritizing renovations.

For the participants, the large size of the space and place has a direct correlation to their perception that, "It's too many kids in one place to notice." These findings point towards the effects of the size of the physical structure, but also, the effects of size of the student population. The student population of the alternative school is one-fifth of the student population in the regular schools. The

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students relate how size could be detrimental or harmful to their health because of physical altercations that can occur within a larger student population. In summary, this study reveals several key findings:

1. "Saving face" is not only a defense mechanism, but also an expectation of the peer group, and often times, the immediate family. In this study, the need to "save face" supersedes the need to respond appropriately to an adult.

2. Positive interaction with teachers has a greater influence on urban African American students than physical resources.

3. Teachers who do not directly address negative behaviors of students, such as absence or failure, can appear as teachers who address behaviors (in ways perceived by the participants) inappropriately.

4. Social capital in the school may be gained through the establishment and maintenance of student/teacher relationships.

5. The incorporation of social, life-skills, and emotional venues into the student/teacher relationship positively influences how a student perceives their school place and space.

6. The physical place/space influences students' negative perception of their school.

7. The size of a student body influences students' negative perception of school.

"Where am I?"/Gain Related

According to the data, in the "Where am I?"/gain category, the physical

space and place (the building and classrooms) offer students a change from their previous school assignment. Each participant discusses an attribute of the physical space at the alternative school as if it were unique to his or her school experiences. Those attributes are embedded in the following quotes from the data," …we don't need all that space to learn", "our classroom is like my own private office", "…the world is our classroom!", "we get to know each other better when it's small", and, " we don't get stuck in the school building all the time."

The participant perceptions of the alternative school place and space demark a general acceptance of the differences in the physical nature of the alternative school. The corresponding stories also point out that space and place in the alternative school extends beyond the confines of the building into other spaces and places. Examples of this from the data include: "she had us walking to go see this plant…", "Ms. W__ takes E__ to the weight room, and he gets to box", "I get to visit my baby in the daycare downstairs", and, "we cook sometimes."

Shaefer-McDaniel (2004) calls the relationship one has with a place, "place attachment". She asserts that place attachment is a hallmark of social capital. Shaefer-Mcdaniel (2004) also discusses social capital as it relates to young people and their environment. She cites the incorporation of young persons' perceptions of their relationships and environment as intrinsic to developing a framework for social capital that is sensitive to the needs of youth. The student perceptions and stories in this section lend support to that claim.

The student comments suggest the teachers' willingness and ability to

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provide an alternative learning that meets the needs of students on an individual

basis and as a whole class. This also shows teachers as sources of social capital

in that they provide students with spaces and places that promote learning not

only through academics but also through social, life-skills and emotional venues.

The final chapter of this document, chapter five, follows this page. Chapter

five discusses the implications for further study, implications for practice, and the

limitations of this particular study. Closing remarks will end the entire document.

Fully Grown

The saddest child, and I say the term "child" loosely, I will call Fully Grown. Fully Grown came to the alternative school the third week of a new school year. I reviewed his file and found a typical truant. He'd missed well over 50 days of school the previous year, had very few credits towards graduation, and a few disrespectful comments to teachers trailed through his first three years in high school. Fully Grown had planned to graduate that year, and, as with many intakes, I told him what he would have to do in order to receive his diploma. It would take a full year in classes, plus two independent studies, and four classes over the summer. Fully Grown and his mother both agreed that he could and would accomplish this very strenuous goal. I nodded and told them he would have to "keep his eye on the prize!" Fully Grown tilted his head down as I was speaking. He lifted his head, and slowly stated that he understood. Something in his voice and his eyes told me he had no idea what I had just asked of him.

After Fully had been with us for two days, my team of teachers began reporting his limited academic ability. We all noticed his quiet, almost invisible presence in every class. He sat with his work, looked at his work, but completed nothing. He never raised his hand, smiled when spoken to, and answered in brief terms. As the weeks passed, the teachers began reporting, frequently, about their frustration with Fully. They weren't frustrated because he wasn't learning. They were frustrated because they had no clue what to teach him. After three weeks of observation from the entire alternative school staff, I called Fully's mother in for a meeting. At that time, I didn't report the findings of the informal assessment his special education teacher had done a week prior, indicating that Fully could read at a fifth-grade level. His comprehension was that of an elementary school student.

In the meeting with Fully's mother, the special education teacher and I relayed our concern that Fully was having difficulty in his classes. We asked her about Fully's school experience the year before, wanting her to indicate some sort of academic difficulty. His mother told us that he never had problems in school, and that no one had ever questioned his academic ability. She did, however, tell us about Fully's first-time experience with marijuana two years prior. According to Fully's mother, Fully had smoked pot for the first time in the 10th grade. He had a horrible reaction to the drug, and began hallucinating. He never stopped hallucinating, his mother told us. Fully was, "psychotic or schitzo or something," she said. His mother then indicated that his series of prolonged absences were due to intense inpatient stays at a local psychiatric ward for adolescents. She commented that his doctor had indicated that his medication will "slow him down."

With urgency, Fully was set up for testing to identify his true capabilities and IQ.   His test scores indicated a full scale IQ of 63 that indicates mental retardation. With those results combined with Fully's big smile and mild mannered disposition, the alternative school team decided to work with him. Fully attended regular classes and received full-time one-on-one support in the

alternative school. He will participate in vocational training through Goodwill Industries. He chose to stay in our alternative school for one additional year.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Implications

There are two types of implications in this study. The first type of implications is for practice, and will include alternative education, its teacher characteristics, and its leadership. The second type of implication is for future research. These implications will discuss potential paths for future study.

Implications for practice

Implications for alternative education that stem from the study are numerous. The data reflects answers to questions that the researcher did not have prior to this study. The issues known about alternative education prior to this study rest on the notion that students who might otherwise drop out or face expulsion can receive a second chance at an alternative school. The history of alternative schools suggests an overarching concern for students who are not successful in a regular school environment, and who exhibit problematic behaviors in the form of acting out, aggression, persistent rule breaking, and truancy (Rayle, 1998; Raywid, 1994). Nonetheless, these students make the choice to continue with their schooling, and accept their placement into the alternative school, which has implications for resiliency.

The capacity for resiliency differs for each student. Studies show that a "lack of fit" contributes to academic risk that can break down a students' level of resiliency (Borman & Overman, 2004; Delpit, 1988). In this study, the students' placement shift from the regular school to the alternative school mitigates their

previous lack of success and serves as a protective factor that contributes to their resiliency. The alternative school serves as a protective factor that inhibits the continuation of students' negative feelings towards school (Borman & Overman, 2004). Like wise, the researcher's role as principal, one that affords her the opportunity to fulfill her own professional needs, serves as a protective factor from her past. That is, by serving these students, the researcher's ability to overcome her own troubled past is achieved.

Howard, Dryden, and Johnson (1999) discuss positive relationships rather than risk factors as having a greater impact on the positive or negative direction a student's life takes on. They assert, "it appears that it is never too late to change a life trajectory" (p. 310). This leads to the question as to whether or not the level of student resiliency, upon entering the alternative school, is influenced by placement into a caring and supportive school environment. Does the alternative school provide external strengths capable of bolstering student resiliency? Is the alternative school providing protective factors? Are these protections more along the lines of what Howard, Dryden, and Johnson (1999), and Winfield (1994) refer to as "protective processes", rather than individual features?

The resiliency literature proposes overreaching concern for processes that require us to change the structure of schools and communities and change our belief systems in order to help children achieve and maintain resiliency (Howard, Dryden, & Johnson, 1999; Winfield, 1994). This study provides insight into teachers' and administrators' efforts to make those changes. As well, the student voices serve as testimony to what teacher and administrator characteristics they

view as promoting their success.

What came anew for the researcher were the students' perceptions in their words with their voices. Prior to this study, the researcher was able to make her own inferences based on the information in the students' files; but following this study, the participants' words served as concrete evidence as to what urban alternative school students perceive as attributes of caring teachers, teacher actions that illicit damaging responses, as well as perceived opportunities to learn. The perceptions and experiences of these Wayward Academy students open the door for the reader to understand these students, take a look at their reality, and hopefully make better informed decisions regarding both reaching and teaching students in regular and alternative urban schools.

Re-thinking the line from Ludacris' (2004) song, "Get Back", the words, "you don't know me like that," summarize the disparity between student perceptions of their teachers from the past, and teachers from Wayward Academy. The data reveals that students take direction from Wayward Academy teachers while, in their previous school; overall, they were unable to accept teacher direction. Student words indicate that some level of a caring relationship between the Wayward Academy students and their alternative school teachers exists, which has been support enough to sustain taking direction. Noddings (1992) comments that caring cannot occur without previously established relationships.

The words used by the students indicate that their previous teachers had blocked the potential for a caring relationship to develop by violating student

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understandings of redirection and proximity with harsh words, an attitudinal tone, and encroachment. Thus, the teachers, whether or not they wanted to in the first place, would not be permitted beyond the students' defensiveness.

Likely, a snowball effect may have occurred for one or more of these students, which, ultimately, may have led to their alternative school referral. Previous studies indicate that attendance and behavior improve as a result of teachers' caring (Munoz, 2002). Thus, with the presence of a roadblock to establishing student teacher/relationships, it is not surprising that the student participants were eventually referred to the alternative school for attendance issues and behavior problems. This snowball effect begins with the teachers' choice as to how they will engage a student, and worsens with additional consequences as the chain of events unfolds. For these reasons, what this study makes relevant and overly pressing is the need for all schools, not just alternative schools, to provide systems of staff development that will harvest caring for and about urban African American students. This will require organizational changes for, if all levels of the school organization are not on board, the potential for caring to be ineffective rises (Horsley et al., 1990; Kramer, 2000; Ianni, 1997).

In discussing the lack of caring, cultural mismatch comes into view. Culture in this case refers to "a group's history, language, values, norms, rituals, and symbols; it is these shared behaviors and knowledge that represent the sum total of ways of living and are important for any group's survival in a particular environment" (Irvine, 1999, p.247). Cultural differences between students and teachers have the capacity to thwart student perceptions of a teacher's caring

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(Bailey & Monroe, 2004; Delpit, 1988; Eamon & Altshuler, 2004). Although a teacher may believe they are acting or responding with care, the cultural difference between the student and the teacher may cause students to interpret the caring as non-caring. Irvine (1999) remarks that when a cultural mismatch occurs," there is cultural discontinuity" whereby, "the inevitable occurs: miscommunication and confrontation among the students, the teacher, and the home; hostility; alienation; diminished self-esteem; and eventual school failure" (p.247).

Based on the findings from this study, a major conclusion is that the voices of students, using their own words, offers an alternative way of understanding the obstruction of and links to urban African American students' success. The words of the Wayward Academy students are real. Their voices provide a critical basis from which educators and administrators can learn.

Prior to this study, the researcher spent an extensive amount of time investigating how caring impacts alternative school students. From the literature, we already know that caring is at the heart of interpersonal relationships (Ianni, 1997). We also know that caring is inclusive of compassion, involvement, commitment, and self-efficacy (Winningham, 2001; Edgar, 1998; Teasley, 2004, Ianni, 1992). What we did not know prior to this study is what the students' perceive as caring and non-caring, and what that caring and non-caring looks like.

The representations of caring alternative school teachers, as perceived by the students in this study, do not come as a surprise. The principal of Wayward

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Academy (this researcher) takes some credit for the role of caring at Wayward

Academy. Had the student/participants not identified Wayward Academy

teachers as caring, the principal's efforts would be lost. From the beginning

stages of inception, caring for others serves as a hallmark of the Wayward

Academy program. The principal intends to create a caring environment. All of

the Wayward Academy teachers were hired, in part, by the principal's gut feeling

that the person she was interviewing genuinely cared about kids, and has the

capacity to persist, regardless of the many behaviors that would (literally) knock

them over. Through weeks of in-service trainings on managing crisis, learning

styles, mediation, bullying, and team building, the principal of Wayward Academy

purposely developed a team.

The data reveals components of the team at work, which serves to further

strengthen the researcher/principal's belief that we must be able to reach our

students or we will not effectively be afforded the opportunity to teach our

students. The notion of the team is closely tied to what we know already about

communities. Like communities, teams share a common place, and over time,

come to share common sentiments and traditions that are sustaining

(Sergiovanni, 1994). Using the words and voices of this particular team would

provide behind the scenes perspectives of a fascinating, very tight-knit group of

people all of whom have made a major difference in the lives of Wayward

Academy students.

From the data, one of the most heavily weighed characteristics of student

dissatisfaction with their teachers comes from words they use. This study adds to

the existing literature that significantly correlates teachers' classroom practice with student behavior (Beyda, Zentall, & Ferko, 2002). Without teacher knowledge and willingness to understand the cultural underpinnings of students' interactions with peers, teachers, and others, students will continue to be misinterpreted, judged, or remediated, which can perpetuate cultural mismatch (Denbo, 2002). What we do not know is the process by which alternative school teachers are provided with the tools necessary in achieving knowledge and willingness. We can look to the Institutionalization process for some guidance.

Institutionalization is a process that will organize systems of behavior to the solution of a certain problem which, in this instance is the need for caring to pervade all activities and aspects of an alternative school program (Eisenstadt, 1964; Horsely et al., 1990). Institutionalization is only one part of the necessary provisions needed to provide teachers with knowledge and willingness needed to effectively care for students. What else is needed? Are certain types of people more suited to care for urban African American students and if so, what are the characteristics that make them more suited? Are what Sarason (1982) calls "defects of virtue" an attribute that a school leader could recognize during the hiring process? What about those whose virtues aren't defective and why do some people "distance from their habitual ways of thinking " but end up acting or responding inappropriately because what they see is not what is real (Moss, 2006). These and many other questions would play into developing a comprehensive program to address the needs of regular and alternative school teachers of urban, African American students. This brings attention to the present

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state of alternative schools and also, urban educational reform.

Presently, the state of alternative schools is still widely unknown (Munoz, 2002). Research programs for non-traditional students are seriously underrepresented in the literature, more specifically; alternative school literature is still largely dependant upon outdated studies. However, qualitative inquiry holds a place in the present literature on alternative schools (De La Ossa, 2005; Munoz, 2002). This study adds to that body of knowledge, and reiterates the importance of qualitative methods in understanding alternative school students. One of the few qualitative studies from this past year indicates that alternative schools, according to its students, "come closer to satisfying student needs…than do conventional schools" (De La Ossa, 2005, p.25).

Findings, such as, better attendance, better grades, and overall better attitude indicate that alternative schools are making a difference in the lives of their students but, that difference has not yet been satisfactorily measured against achievement. This is indicator of why many urban school reforms have not impacted alternative education- no one has bothered to investigate the potential for alternative schools to not only raise student resiliency, efficacy, and attitude but also, raise their achievement level. In fact, alternative schools are typically not included in urban school reform agendas (Munoz, 2002).

The fact that alternative programs are not included in urban school reform agendas is alarming. Many of this issues faced in urban schools are the same issues faced in alternative schools, especially alternative schools in urban areas. In fact, in another qualitative study, urban students identified the need for urban

school reform that would provide an affective learning environment, student-teacher relationships, and   teachers who believed in the students as learners (Wilson & Corbett, 2001). What students identify as constituting affective urban school reform embodies what the literature points towards as successful components of alternative schools (De La Ossa, 2005; Munoz, 2002, 2005). Alternative schools could provide a forum from which some of the components of urban school reform could be measured.

Implications for Further Research

The primary purpose of this research endeavor is to portray African American alternative school students' perceptions of their school experiences, past and present. In the telling of the participant and other student stories, the researcher is able to realize that the stories could go on or rather, go back and become even more revealing and in-depth. Ways to accomplish this could include interviewing over a longer period of time, interviewing family members, and interviewing the teachers from the students' past. Another avenue to take that would provide further insight into students would be to interview each student's past and present teachers to gain a better understanding of the differences in which these students are perceived across regular and alternative schools. Another future possibility for this research would be to expand the sample to include students from various alternative schools in other low-income and urban school districts both within and outside of Wayward County.

As well, investigating teacher perceptions, both the teachers from the students' previous school and Wayward Academy, would add a different view

point that could provide insight into why teachers' respond the way they do. This study purposefully neglects teacher understandings because in light of this research student voices and stories may be sacrificed if the focus is shared with teachers. However, further research of teacher perceptions and stories would be not only appropriate, but also informative.

Over the past four years while this researcher was a graduate student, she has been thinking and rethinking the logistics of this study (and many variations of it). In the beginning, as a novice would, the researcher had big plans. She had no idea what her study would look like, but she had vision for the final product. She envisioned developing a new method for institutionalizing caring in alternative schools. Her naïveté took the better part of two years to acquiesce. She finally decided to bite off one small morsel of her big plans.

Now, her original big plans (although incredibly ostentatious) seem but a minor piece of a much larger solution to the problem of teachers caring or not caring for students. From this study, several other issues of importance have been raised that indicate that caring or the institutionalization of caring is one concept that would sit amongst many others when thinking about a method exclusive of the delivery of alternative education. Other aspects of a method would include many of the ideas and frameworks expressed in the review of the literature such as hope, community partnerships, and school reform.

Hope in school is a necessity. Without hope, teachers' efforts in urban schools would be in vain. Community partnerships are one way urban schools can promote hope (Taylor, 2004; Irvine, 1988). Irvine remarks that successful

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urban schools create partnerships with community members and organizations to supplement existing endeavors and create opportunities for students outside of the school. She views successful urban school partnerships as "cooperative and collaborative" (p. 241). In order to cooperate and collaborate involved parties must hold (or develop) similar values. Values then, bind different groups to a mutual cause. This is evident in work by Taylor (2004).

Taylor's "Values for Life" curriculum is an example of a reform effort that promotes a socially and culturally integrated populace by replacing a sense of emotional instability with a sense of emotional resilience, and a connection to community. Using a system of reform such as Values for Life curriculum would enable community leaders (in businesses, religious organizations, and government etc.) to join forces with schools, under a single purpose, to close the achievement gap for poor and minority students.

Additionally, future study could focus on any other meaningful understandings these same students have of their alternative school experience. Their information would not be overwhelming. Their voices represent many voices, voices that are underrepresented and often devoid from the mainstream. Embarking on a full-fledged ethnography of Hair, Sticky, Complaint, and Atty would most certainly reward the educator looking to find ways to better (or best) serve urban African American alternative school students. The researcher attempts to show you who these students are. Further study of them would continue that process. To know them is to love them. Thus, further understandings from their voice just might make the reader fall in love too. These

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kids need as much love as they can get.

Finally, future study could further examine the role of iatrogenic harm in education. This study provides examples of iatrogenic-like actions and responses of students and teachers. However, this study does not claim that these actions and responses are, in fact, iatrogenic or caused by iatrogenesis. Throughout the research, the researcher was hoping to build a theory of iatrogenic harm. Instead, her data fell short. Her attempt to use storying to inform a formal theory of iatrogenic harm, "a theory that should remain sensitive to the many faceted-nature of a person's lived experience" again, fell short (Moss, 2006).

At this point, this study does not suffice in defining how iatrogenic harm is related to education. What this study begins to explore is a theory of iatrogenic harm. Further study should continue to examine student/teacher interactions under the scrutiny of the lens provided by iatrogenic harm, but be weary of claiming that iatrogenic harm is in fact what is going on in urban classrooms serving African American youth. This study moves towards a theory, but is unable to pronounce that a theory has yet to be established. In order to pronounce a theory of iatrogenic harm, a different approach is warranted. A major step towards this would be to distinguish (rigorously) the elements of iatrogenic harm in education, and then, use those elements to analyze the stories of the participants, teachers, and (in some cases) the researcher.

<center>Limitations</center>

This qualitative study has several limitations. The most obvious limitation is the size of the sample. Only four students participated in the study. Future

study should use a larger number of students from different alternative schools. Additionally, the findings of this qualitative inquiry are grounded in these four students' perceptions, which are not necessarily those of all of the alternative school students. Again, the small sample size limits the scope of inquiry and is not intended to produce universal or generalizable results. These limitations are addressed through using various research strategies, such as: member checking, follow-up interviews, using discipline and academic reports, using reflections of past informal and formal conversations with students, teachers, parents, staff, and other administrators both in and outside of this particular alternative school, and use of student journals. By addressing these limitations, the data is checked and rechecked for accuracy.

Another limitation of this study is how the analysis process rests in the understandings and interpretations by a white woman and of African American teenagers. Thus, this analysis is from the perceptions of a woman whose cultural affiliation is far removed from that of the participants. However, the researcher's level of insider knowledge about the students, their behaviors and needs, and the schools and district they attend balances out the cultural disconnect. That is, the researcher's prior understanding of and working in the culture of the participants greatly impacts the reliability of the analysis and interpretation of the findings. The researcher is able to compare the data with what she knows to be true from her own observations, daily interaction with students, and conversations with students, teachers, and parents.

Likewise, the fact that the researcher is also the principal could be viewed

as a conflict of interest. To address this limitation, the researcher hired interviewers from outside of the school. Additionally, to address informed consent, the researcher hired a transcriptionist and had all identifiers removed before reviewing the focus group output.   With these limitations in mind, this qualitative inquiry provides detailed information regarding the lives of four teenage African American alternative school students. The stories in this study reflect their feelings, their voices, and their social conundrums as they relate to school and their understandings of teachers and their own position within an alternative school setting.

A final, yet, prominent limitation rests in the fact that this study does not engage the teachers of these students, either past or present, into any part of this study. A larger more comprehensive study would incorporate teacher perceptions and stories as well as student perceptions and stories.

Closing Remarks

The lives of Hair, Sticky, Complaint, and Atty represent four urban, African American alternative school students' perceptions of their school experiences. Although some of their responses are expected, much of what they reveal sheds new light on their growth. I was unable to recognize the positive changes each of them has made until I wrote their stories, read their interviews, and scoured their files. Their responses indicate that, overall, the alternative school has helped them achieve successful steps towards success. In the Wayward school district, steps towards success are huge strides that should not be ignored. Hair, Sticky, Complaint, and Atty deserve a captive audience. I am grateful to have provided

the forum from which they could take center stage.

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