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Perceptions of Discipline Policy, Practices, and Student Incivilities Related to Senge's Five Disciplines

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Walden University
2015

Perceptions of Discipline Policy, Practices, and Student Incivilities

Related to Senge's Five Disciplines

by

Nkoh Lovonne Gaston

MA, Central Michigan University, 2006

BBA, Davenport University, 2001

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

February 2015

Abstract

High occurrences of student incivilities are a growing concern in the K-12 education system. This problem may be directly impacted by systems thinking and inconsistent school policy enforcement. At a local high school, this problem affected student learning outcomes and teacher-student interpersonal relationships. The purpose of this case study was to explore the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding consistency in discipline policies and practices, as well as student incivilities as they related to Senge's 5 disciplines. The conceptual framework for this study was Senge's 5 disciplines of organizational learning: systems thinking, mental models, team learning, shared vision, and personal mastery. Using a case study design and responsive interviews, data from discipline procedure documents and data on student incivilities were collected from 9 teachers in Grades 9-12, as well as 2 administrators. The data were analyzed using Hatch's interpretive method. Findings indicated discipline policies and practices were ineffective and inconsistent, due to poor systemic communication structures and lack of classroom management. A recommendation was made to implement systemic classroom management policies and Positive Behavior Intervention and Support trainings. Positive social change occurs when administrators and teachers implement the systemic policies and trainings identified in this study in order to motivate students to change their patterns of incivility and, as a result, focus on learning.

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Dedication

      I dedicate my work to my mother, the late Nedra Lovonne Choice, and my uncle, the late Harold Artemis Choice, Sr. My mother and uncle encouraged me to pursue higher education. I made a promise to them, I would earn my degree, and they promised to be with me every step of the way. Unfortunately, my mother passed away after I started graduate school. Two years after I started my doctoral program, my uncle passed away. The memory of their love and support was instrumental to my getting here. Even though you are no longer here in the physical, I know your spirit is with me always. Thank you and I love you. Ned and Uncle Cho Cho, I kept my promise!

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

On a national level, numerous studies have been conducted concerning the behavior of students in K-12 settings (Koutrouba, 2013; Rose, & Espelage, 2012; Swearer,Wang, Maag, Siebecker, & Frerichs, 2012). Previous studies on student resistance and defiance have revealed some students intentionally resist school rules (Oliver, Reschly, & Wehby, 2011). In an earlier study on the aggressive and defiant behavior of youth, Willis (1981) found that youth felt the educational system was not the place to foster their success. Thus, students deliberately disregarded school rules. With this same view, Sheets (1996) conducted a study about responsiveness to teacher directives. According to Sheets, students make conscious decisions to ignore teacher directives with most cases resulting in suspension as a consequence of inappropriate student behavior. Dupper, Theriot, and Craun (2009) supported this contention, reporting out-of-school and in-school suspensions were mostly used for infractions such as disrespect and noncooperation. An unintended consequence of such disciplinary measures has led to more negative learning outcomes for students (Burke, Oats, Ringle, Fichtner, & DelGaudio, 2011).

Student incivilities have also been linked to violence in schools and continue to be a growing concern for government (Shaughnessy, 2012; Swinson, 2010). According to Nieman (2011) and Robers, Zhang, Truman, and Snyder (2012), student incivilities are a major concern in U.S. suburban and urban school districts. Some student incivilities outlined by Robers et al. included discipline problems such as victimizing teachers,

threats, and injury with weapons, while other findings showed more urban teachers than suburban teachers divulged being threatened with injury or being physically attacked.

Further, Neiman (2011) presented findings from U.S. public schools on the topics of crime and violence. Neiman used data from the 2009-2010 *School Survey on Crime and Safety*, which included information about school crime-related topics based on school administrators' perspectives. In the report, public school principals were asked about the constancy of incidents such as thefts, robberies, and physical attacks in their schools (Nieman, 2011). Parts of the survey focused on disciplinary actions, school programs, and the policies put into effect to reduce and prevent crimes and incivilities. The concluding data revealed crimes and incivilities included gang activity, classroom disorder, bullying and harassment of students, and student verbal abuse and disrespect for teachers (Neiman, 2011).

Michigan's Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI, 2011) also released a report entitled *School Safety Practices Report, 2009–2010 School Year.* As of the 2009–2010 school year, school districts were required to report student incivility data to the State of Michigan. In this report, 36% of Michigan schools reported at least one expulsion (CEPI, 2011). Fifty-eight percent of the total numbers of expulsions were infractions such as physical assault and use of drugs or narcotics, but firearm-related incidents were not reported (CEPI, 2011). In addition, the schools reported other school disciplinary problems had a higher rate of occurrence, including behaviors such as bullying, lack of respect for teachers, student insubordination, and students verbally abusing teachers, (CEPI, 2011).

Student incivilities have increased since the 2008-2009 school year throughout the United States. According to CEPI (2011), during the 2009-2010 school year, some districts had a 30% increase in reported student incivilities. Jefferson High School (JHS; a pseudonym) also had a high occurrence of student incivilities. According to the school's dean of students (dean of dtudents, personal communication, October 1, 2009; November 19, 2013), the high occurrences of student incivilities were partly due to the lack of policy enforcement and inconsistent implementation of disciplinary practices on the part of teachers and administration. For example, when a student has received a write-up for vulgar language and threatening a teacher, he or she is sent to the office. The student receives a warning and is then sent back to class. This action is inconsistent with school policy.

According to the JHS Student Handbook, threatening a teacher is an automatic suspension. Additionally, breaches in policy enforcement can destabilize academic success as well as disciplinary follow through and send students an inconsistent message; policy enforcement is unlikely to occur. The outcome leads to a repetition of the same behavior. This cycle has continued, resulting in an average of 10-20 students per day disciplined by the dean of students, as noted in the October 2009 weekly report of student infractions. Student incivilities and lack of policy enforcement affects a teacher's ability to be productive in the classroom (Lee, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2012; Yeung, Mooney, Barker, & Dobia, 2009). Teachers are also concerned for their safety and their ability to maintain an orderly learning environment (Douglas, 2013). Above all else, student

incivilities lead to poor student achievement outcomes (Sideridis, Antoniou, Stamovlasis, & Morgan, 2013; Sideridis, & Morgan, 2013).

While the goal of consistent and lawful disciplinary policies (Yell & Rozalski, 2008) is to ultimately change the behavior of students (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2011), JHS continually revises its policies and procedures with the hope of positively affecting student behavior and decreasing incivilities; however, incivilities continue to mount and student behavior remains unchanged. To further complicate the challenges JHS experienced for the 2012–2013 school year, students received the Student Handbook and the Student Code of Conduct book on the first day of school. The Student Handbook addressed 42 behavior infractions, while the Student Code of Conduct book addressed 55 infractions. This practice was confusing to students and teachers alike because it gave them two reference handbooks to follow, differing numbers and types of disciplinary infractions, and inconsistent implementation practices by leadership and teachers.

Aside from having two separate student guides, a Student Handbook and a Student Code of Conduct handbook, the matter has been exacerbated over the years by further developing more rules to address incivilities rather than looking for the underlying cause(s) of the problem (Senge, 2014). In other words, the list of unacceptable behaviors continues to grow rather than tracing the cause of incivilities. Each year there has been a failure to recognize and change the patterns of behavior at JHS. Despite the revisions of the two handbooks, a high rate of student incivilities has continued at JHS, with those most often reported incivilities including (a) profane or vulgar language, (b)

insubordination or defiance of authority, (c) prohibited articles or possession of electronic devices, (d) disruption of school and/or disorderly conduct, (e) fighting, and (f) habitual or persistent misconduct. According to Senge (2006), each time a less comprehensive solution is utilized, it causes ongoing harm.

According to Novotney (2009), the more students display incivilities, the more likely they will have negative learning outcomes. The National Center for Educational Statistics (2014) reported students spend more time being disciplined for their incivilities than they do learning. Not only are incivilities a problem at JHS, low student outcomes are a concern as well. The 2012-2013 grade point averages (GPA) for JHS were below 2.0, with 80% of the male athletes declared ineligible to play sports due to deficient learning. Further, the students at JHS had a 40% higher rate of incivilities (i.e., fighting, destruction of school property, lack of respect for authority, physical assaults on teachers, and truancy) than 20% of neighboring high schools (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2014).

Besides having a higher occurrence of incivilities and negative learning outcomes, the students at JHS are failing to meet the requirements for state assessments governed by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. The key aim of NCLB is to have students at a proficiency level or above grade level in order for a school to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP is the heart of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act signed into law January 2002 as NCLB. According to Michigan Department of Education (2008), schools that fail to meet AYP for 2 consecutive years are categorized as needing to improve, Year 1 (consequence: school transfer options). Schools that fail to

meet AYP in 3 consecutive years are in Year 2 (consequence: school transfer option and

supplemental services). Schools that fail to meet AYP in 4 consecutive years are Year 3

(consequence: school transfer option, supplemental services, and corrective action).

Schools that fail to meet AYP in 5 consecutive years are in Year 4 (consequence: school

transfer option, supplemental services, corrective action, and restructuring: planning).

Schools that fail to meet AYP in 6 consecutive years are in Year 5 (consequence: school

transfer option, corrective action, supplemental services, and restructuring: planning, and

restructuring: implementation). Table 1 indicates that JHS has not met AYP in previous

school years (Michigan Department of Education, 2008). Additionally, JHS students

scored lower than the state average on other Michigan standardized tests, such as the

Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) exam (Michigan Department of

Education, 2011).

Table 1

JHS Adequate Yearly Progress, Incivilities, and Grade Point Averages

School year	Student population	AYP	Average GPA	Total incivilities	JHS MEAP Scores	Michigan MEAP Score Averages
2009-2010	354	Not met	1.5	310	34%	72%
2010-2011	480	Not met	1.9	400	48%	73%
2011-2012	428	Not met	1.9	410	48%	73%
2012-2013	589	Not met	2.0	450	28%	72%

Schools are designed to help students achieve academically. Consequently, the educational system is judged for the quality and teaching its schools provide. According to Louis, Dretzke, and Wahlstrom (2010), when school leadership wants to improve the learning quality in the educational system, they change the way teachers and students interact with each other. Sebastian and Allensworth (2012) agreed that school leadership creates a learning organization based on their vision for school success. Leithwood, Pattern, and Jantzi (2010) stated leaders with others to create a collective sense of direction and purpose. Clearly, school leadership must develop a vision that is shared by all staff in order to achieve the overall focus (Kouzes & Posner, 2010; Kurland, Peretz, & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2010).

Along with consistent policies to govern the behaviors of students, school leadership and teachers must implement consistent disciplinary practices. For instance, the use of Senge's five disciplines (systems thinking, mental models, team learning, shared vision, and personal mastery) is useful as a worthwhile conceptual framework to support this paradigm shift towards consistency and having everyone in agreement (Joseph & Reigeluth, 2010). Without a paradigm shift towards consistency, policy enforcement and systematic thinking, problems arise in the educational system. Some of the problems that may occur are negative teacher attitudes and, more commonly, students' unacceptable behavior (Boysen, 2012; Plank, Bradshaw, & Young, 2009). Student incivilities create a challenge for the school environment and classroom teachers. Student incivilities are also a major source of stress for teachers and other staff (Pas,

Bradshaw, Hershfeldt, & Leaf, 2010) and can affect the teacher's ability to be productive

and maintain an orderly learning environment (Skaalvik & Slaalvik, 2010).

With school leadership spending more time dealing with student incivilities than

running schools (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2011), ultimately

the use of Senge's (2006) five disciplines may address incivilities as well as consistency

in discipline policies and practices. Senge's five disciplines may also validate the

standards by which every person's behavior is judged. Therefore, in this study I explored

the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding consistency in discipline policies

and practices as well as student incivilities as they relate to Senge's five disciplines. A

more detailed discussion is in Section 2.

Statement of the Problem

The problematic conditions leading to this study were inconsistency in discipline

policies and practices as well as the high occurrences of student incivilities at JHS. On

average, 10 student incivilities such as fighting, disrespecting teachers, using profanity,

and destroying school property occurred daily (dean of students, personal

communication, January 20, 2011). Further, some teachers felt unsafe in the environment

(dean of students, personal communication, February 27, 2011). Teachers also felt

students had more of an influence in the school environment than they had. For example,

when a student was sent to the office numerous times for disruptive behavior, the student

was counseled and sent back to the classroom. Teachers felt a lack of support from

administration when disruptive students returned to the classroom and resumed the same

behavior(s). The lack of support from administration resulted in teachers having negative

attitudes towards students and the school environment. Thus, there was a need to investigate the perceptions of teachers and administrators with regard to consistency in disciplinary policies and practices as well as student incivilities at JHS.

Since the 2008-2009 school year, incivilities have escalated at JHS. In 2008-2009, JHS experienced 110 reported incidents of truancy and 78 incidents of physical assaults. Increases in the 2009-2010 school year revealed 100 physical assaults and $1000 in property damage. During the school year 2010-2011, the physical assaults rose more than 50% to 400, with 22 incidents of bullying and $5000 in property damage expenses (CEPI, 2011). Table 2 indicates an increase in incivilities and property damage at JHS since the 2008-2009 school year (Michigan Department of Education, 2011). According to the dean of students (personal communication, February 10, 2011), student incivilities substantially increased and the students' learning outcomes decreased. Consequently, when a learning environment is not organized it can destroy organizational learning (Schyns & Schilling, 2013).

Table 2

Student Incivilities and Property Damages Expenses

School year	Incivilities (bullying, physical assaults, and threats, etc.)	Property damage Expenses
2008-2009	200	$800
2009-2010	255	$1000
2010-2011	400	$5000

In an attempt to address the incivilities and find possible solutions, school leadership held meetings with faculty and staff. Some meetings provided professional development, positive behavioral intervention training, and team building. All meetings addressed various ways to decrease student incivility and raise teacher morale. For instance, two videos of disruptive classroom behavior were shown to staff. The videos demonstrated effective and noneffective ways to eliminate student incivilities. Even with the meeting interventions, student incivilities and negative teacher attitudes persist. The ongoing occurrence of student incivilities continues to have a negative impact on student learning, the school environment in general, and teacher attitudes. The teachers are finding it difficult to do their jobs effectively due to distractions from students returning to class as well as a resumption of inappropriate behavior. On task students are also thrown off task by these distractions. According to Novotney (2009), schools that fail to resolve discipline issues have an increase of poor student and school outcomes, such as low GPAs and low morale in the environment (as noted in Table 1).

There are many possible factors contributing to occurences of student incivilities at JHS. Continual revisions of policies, discrepencies between students handbooks, and lack of teacher support are among the reasons problems exist in the environment. Bates (2013) advised using a systems approach in order to influence change in those affected by leadership decisions. One possible avenue of change would be to use a systems approach when attempting to effect positive change in regards to disciplinary policies and practices. Bui and Baruch (2010) utilized a systems approach in learning organizations to develop the learning organization model. The learning organization model was created to

help practitioners utilize a systems approach to positively effect change in an organization. This systems approach is seen in Senge's (2006) model as well, with all five disciplines used to effect positive organizational change. Bui and Baruch also developed theorectical contributions to clarify factors that sway Senge's five disciplines and their outcomes. The findings showed a systems approach is relevant in a learning organization to leadership that wants to be effective in learning organizations. In this study I explored the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding consistency in discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities as they relate to Senge's five disciplines.

Nature of the Study

This qualitative exploratory case study was rooted in Senge's (2006) five disciplines. With an inconsistency in the implementation of school discipline policies and practices and an increase in student incivilities, the need to understand the benefits to using Senge's five disciplines in the learning environment were useful to JHS and other learning environments. The location of this study was a small urban community in the state of Michigan with one high school, one middle school, and one elementary school. Specifically, during the 2012-2013 school year, JHS had a total population of 440 students with an ethnicity of 50% European American, 48% African American, and 2% other ethnicities. There were 70 professional staff members, of whom 18% have bachelor's degrees, 67% have a master's degree, 1% has a second master's or education-specialist degree, and less than 1% have a doctoral degree. The average staff member had approximately 15 years of professional experience: 26% have been in the district for 20

or more years, 53% for 10–20 years, and 21% for 10 years or less. JHS is located in one of Michigan's southeastern urban communities, which has a total population of 8,038 (4,294 European American, 3,160 African American, 485 Latino American, 16 Asian American, four Hawaiian American, and 79 Native American). The average household income was $29,057.00, with an average of 2.71 persons per household.

This study was conducted in the participants' natural school setting. I was the primary data collection instrument for the study and responsible for each part of the study including interviews, collection of documents, reliability, validity, and protecting the rights of the participants. I conducted interviews (using a digital tape recorder) with the dean of students, principal, and nine teachers (40% of teaching staff). The data collected were categorized and analyzed (applied to each data set) using a coding matrix I developed. A more detailed discussion of the methodology appears in Section 3.

Research Questions

This study included one primary research question and three sub questions. The research questions explored the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding consistency in discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities according to Senge's five disciplines (furthered discussed in Section 2). I sought to answer the following research question and subquestions:

Research Question 1. What are the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding consistency in discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities related to Senge's five disciplines?

Subquestion 1. What barriers, if any, do teachers and administrators have regarding consistency in discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities related to Senge's five disciplines?

Subquestion 2. How do teacher and administrator experiences at JHS influence their thinking related to using Senge's five disciplines as a model to address consistency of discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities?

Subquestion 3. What characteristics of Senge's five disciplines are currently in place at JHS to address consistency of discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding consistency in discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities related to Senge's (2006) five disciplines at JHS. Understanding the benefits of using Senge's five disciplines may be useful to JHS and other learning environments. Very few studies of urban populations have used Senge's five disciplines to address consistency in discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities (Mac Iver, 2007). Senge's five disciplines are defined as ongoing studies and practices adopted by people as individuals and groups (Senge et al., 2000).

Conceptual Framework

Researchers have conducted studies and developed conceptual frameworks to explain leadership, behaviors, changing behaviors, and sytematic thinking (Senge, 1999; Donaldson & Johnson, 2007). Senge et al. (2000) introduced the five key disciplines of

organizational learning, ongoing studies, and practices adopted by people as individuals and groups. The five disciplines are personal mastery, shared vision, mental models, team learning, and systems thinking. This study was rooted in Senge's five disciplines as a model for administrators and teachers to address student learning outcomes and incivilities.

Senge (1999) introduced systems thinking to explain the relationship between structure and behavior in a system. Systems thinking begins with comprehending feedback showing how actions can strengthten or even out each other (Senge, 1999). In the discipline of systems thinking, humans learn to comprehend change and interdependency. Individuals have the necessary tools to handle any influences that mold the consequence of their actions. Senge (2006) stated systems thinking views goals and problems not as confined events, but as parts of larger structures, allowing leadership to react to problems with leverage. In that aspect, leadership would not find who to blame, but instead would look at how their decisions affect the entire school.

To further this point, Senge (2006) explained how structure influences behavior. Senge stated people in the same structure produce similar qualitative results. Whenever problems arise, or performance falls short of expectation, finding someone to blame is not difficult. However, it is not external forces that cause crisis. The system itself caused the crisis. In understanding this concept, school leadership would look for underlining reasons for problems in order to change patterns of behaviors, such as inconsistency of discipline policies and practices as well as high occurrences of student incivilities.

For example, JHS has a high occurence of student incivilities, an average of 10 per day (dean of student, personal communication, January 28, 2012). The causes of these incivilities and recurring patterns are investigated by leadership. In other words, leadership attempts to refocus their energy and change their behavior that had a negative impact on attitudes and behavior. Senge (2006) referred to this action as personal mastery. Senge stated personal mastery is the discipline to explain and expand one's own vision, focus one's energy, cultivate patience, and objectively see reality. This process is continual and a necessary part of the learning organization, its spiritual foundation. Personal mastery is also pursuing one's life as an inventive work, which means living from a inventive perspective and deepening one's personal vision (Senge et al., 2000).

Schools play an important part in personal mastery by establishing a context whereby people have time to reflect on their vision and, further, to establish an organization's commitment to truth wherever possible. An organization without personal mastery is deep in a reactive mindset that increases the fear of systems thinking (Senge, et al., 2000). Additionally, to display personal mastery it is important for school leadership to realign their communication structures to change patterns of behavior. In essence, realigning communication structures coupled with changing patterns of behavior is systems thinking. According to Senge (2006), emerging through the quality movement and reengineering, this form of systems thinking sees an organization as a set of information-flow instructions. By realigning the communication structures, the patterns of behavior of the organization will change.

To further the conceptual framework, Senge's (2006) other disciplines are discussed. How effective are learning environments when there is a lack of a shared vision? Learning environments that are in need of environmental change seek initiatives to guide that change. As Senge et al. (2000) pointed out, initiatives are not the answer to needed change. The approach should consolidate existing initiatives, eliminate battles over turf, and facilitate the ability to work together for a common end.

Whenever there is a genuine vision in a learning environment, people learn and excel. They learn because they want to, not because it is a requirement. According to Senge (2006), shared vision discipline is a set of tools and techniques for bringing different aspirations together around what people have in common, namely their connection to a school. In the process of building a shared vision, people also build a sense of commitment together. They collectively visualize the future they want, including the values and goals they feel are necessary to achieve their goal. Consequently, a school cannot clearly state its sense of purpose with an absence of a continuous process, for building a shared vision.

Wheatley (2011) stated everyone needs to be able to trust keeping values and visions will continue in an organization. Organizations with a system supporting shared leadership for all members, allows them to engage in decision making and actions. This concept is beneficial to the entire organization. In other words, vision based on authority does not make it sustainable. Shared visions are helpful in seeing schools through a crisis. However, unless people understand it or truly commit to the vision, the true potential is not recognized (Senge, 2006). Policies and practices of organizations are suppose to

embody shared values, provide focus and meanings for its members (Kouzes & Posner, 2010; Sergiovanni, 2012). The lack of a shared vision by school administrators and staff will undermine efforts to improve schools and student achivement.

Shared vision is ultimately a collective "mental model" of what the organization wants to achieve**.** Mental models are one's internal pictures of the way the world works, one's personal assumptions or generalizations that affect one's view of the world. They lie below one's consciousness and affect one's behavior and response to encounters with others and with how one takes action. Mental modeling also involves emerging, examining and improving the internal pictures of the way the world work. Leaders must model a dedication to laudible actions and visionary goals (Bolman & Deal, 2008). That is to say, leaders must endeavor to model desired behaviors through their actions (Shein, 2010).

Smith, Barnes, and Harris (2014) stated a learning organization is one that is experienced at creating, obtaining and transferring knowledge, and changing its behavior to demonstrate current knowledge and insights. In order for learning organizations to grow they must be willing to provide opportunities, allowing for key assumptions to surface. In conducting educational conversations about mental models, they must be balanced between inquiry and advocacy. When balance is properly maintained, new models emerge. Thus, the organization becomes stronger and the commitment from its members is deepened (Senge, 2014).

The practice of working with mental models helps one see the metaphorical pane of glass they look through and helps them re-form the glass by creating new mental

models that serve them better. Two types of skills are central to this practice: reflection and inquiry. Senge (2006) stated the discipline of mental models is turning the mirror inward, to view one's internal worldview. The commonly used warning is that people should not ask a question unless they already know the answer. In contrast, people ask questions in the practice of this discipline because they are trying to learn more about their own and each other's attitudes and beliefs (p. 9). Capelo and Dias (2009a) agreed, stating that mental models are used by leadership to interpet the world around them.

According to Carroll and Foster (2009), the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future is urging school leaders to mobilize learning teams. The goal of the teams are to transform the educational system into learning organizations. Team learning, according to Senge (2006), is the capacity of a team to create the results its members truly desire. It involves three critical dimensions of needs: (a) for thinking insightfully about complex issues; (b) for innovative, coordinated action; and (c) for interdependent roles between teams in learning organizations. Team learning is important to teams because it is the fundamental learning unit in organizations. Team learning also involves mastering the practices of discussion and dialogue.

Dialogue is the exploration of complex issues and the practice of deep listening while suspending one's own views. Senge (2006) stated dialogue also involves learning to recognize the patterns that undermine learning when teams are interacting. Patterns of defensiveness are deeply ingrained within the way teams operate. However, learning can be accelerated when patterns of defensiveness are recognized and surfaced creatively.

As for discussion, it is the presentation and defense of different views searching for a better view to support decisions. Discussion and dialogue are potentially complementary and can be used very effectively in the context of team learning, thus changing teams for the better (Sarid, 2011).

Continuing this thought, Senge (2006) suggested three ground rules for dialogue: suspending assumptions, regarding one another as colleagues, and choosing a facilitator who holds the context of dialogue. In other words, understanding has to be produced beyond the capacity of anyone who thinks alone. A learning team masters the art of moving back and forth between dialogue and discussion (Senge, 2006). On one hand, discussion focuses on presenting and analyzing alternative views with the hope of discovering a preference for a course of action; whereas dialogue seeks to discover new views, discussion seeks to clarify the preference of known views. Carroll and Forster (2009) suggested educational systems should invest in team learning, in contrast to educational systems designed in a different era.

Operational Definitions

Creswell (2013) stated scientists define terms that are clearly about their research and communicate the findings accurately. Terms are defined in order for the reader to have a clear undersanding of their meaning. The following terms are operationally defined as they relate to understanding the conceptual framework (Senge's five disciplines) and significance of the study (to expand knowledge and understanding of Senge's five discipline in the educational system).

Attitude: A disposition that projects positive or negative behavior toward something and influences the way one thinks (Greenwald, 2014).

Discipline: Consequences for unacceptable behavior aimed at changing the behavior of students (Osher, Bear, & Sprague, 2010).

Incivility: Unacceptable major and minor classroom behaviors that are a distraction in the learning environment (Boysen, 2010).

Learning disability: Inability of learning organizations to learn from past mistakes, recognizing and addressing ongoing threats effectively (Senge, 2006).

Mental models: Reflections and enquiry skills focused around developing awareness and individual perceptions as well as the perceptions of others (Senge et al., 2000).

Personal mastery: Approaching one's life as a creative work, which means living from a creative perspective and deepening one's personal vision (Senge, 2006).

School improvement leadership: Process by which leadership identifies direction for the school and motivate staff (Hallinger & Heck, 2010a).

School leadership: Person or persons utilizing staff with a shared vision to ensure school quality and development, and student learning. (Hallinger & Heck, 2010b).

Shared vision: Shared image of the future that fosters genuine commitment and enrollment, rather than compliance (Senge, 2014).

Systems thinking: A conceptual framework, body of knowledge and tools to look at a system holistically, instead of as individual parts (Senge, 2014).

Team learning: Align and develop a team's capacity to create results desired by its members (Senge, 2014).

Assumptions

Assumptions of this study were (a) using Senge's five disciplines will help improve students' behavior and decrease their incivilities, (b) participants have not received training using Senge's five disciplines, and (c) participants will answer the interview questions honestly, due to receiving confidentiality.

Limitations

I identified potiential weaknesses of this study (Creswell, 2013). First, the interview time was limited, due to staff and class schedules. Second, my biases were a potential weakness. I was solely responsible for collecting and analyzing the data necessary for the study. Participant interviews were audiotaped, analyzed, and transcribed. To limit bias, I used member checking, which is solicitation of participants' views of the findings and interpretations. I maintained contact with participants to ensure accuracy from the interviews (Merriam, 2014). Each participant was allowed to view his or her interview transcripts for accuracy. Lastly, the findings from this case study are not generalized to all Michigan schools (Yin, 2014). Reliability and validity are detailed in Section 3.

Scope and Delimitations

This study was confined to interviewing the principal, dean of students, and nine Grade 9-12 teachers (40% of the total teaching staff). This study took place in the state of Michigan in the participants' natural settings. I am a teacher at JHS, which gives me first

hand knowledge of school environment and access to administrators and teachers. I was also confined as to when the interviews took place. Administrators and teachers have a 50-minute prep and a half hour lunch. Neither their prep nor lunch was sufficient time to conduct a 15-question interview. Most of the teachers drive more than 30 minutes to arrive at work by 7:30 a.m. There was not enough time to conduct interviews before students arrive at 7:45 a.m. Staff meetings are also conducted after school, which limited me from conducting afterschool interviews. Therefore, I interviewed the participants at a mutually agreed upon time. The mutually agreed upon time was not classroom time.

Significance of Study

This study contributes to research on urban high schools by highlighting administrator and teacher practices which addressed consistency of discipline policies and practices and changing student incivilities. Little research has focused exclusively on addressing consistency of discipline policies, practices, and student incivilities as they relate to Senge's five disciplines. According to Yin (2014), research is systematic, critical, and self-critical inquiry that aims to contribute to the advancement of knowledge and wisdom. This study contributes to the body of knowledge by exploring the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding the use of Senge's five disciplines as a model to address systemic disciplinary policies and practices as well as student incivilities.

On a local level, this study may serve as a model for JHS's leadership, by helping the leadership manage a more systematic approach (Senge, 2014), understanding how their decisions impact the entire school. Local application could also help improve

consistency with discipline policies and practices and reduce student incivilites through implementing Senge's five disciplines as a model and a yearly training in which to govern JHS's school system. Not only will JHS's administrators, teachers, and support staff have a true understanding of Senge's five disciplines; they could be effective in implementing Senge's five disciplines in their everyday practices.

This study effects social change by highlighting administrator and teacher practices that motivate students to change their incivility, through the use of Senge's five disciplines. The results of this study may (a) expand the knowledge of Senge's five disciplines to approach problems without focusing on expediency, (b) increase understanding of how to align the communication structure to change patterns of behavior, and (c) help expand the understanding of how to deal with incivilities to improve the learning environment. A possible social change outcome of this study may be for school systems to develop workshops that will utilize Senge's five disciplines to promote the development of positive learning environments conducive in decreasing student incivilities and increasing student achievement. Future research may be helpful to teachers and administrators, by ensuring they have developmental opportunites that expand their practitioner knowledge and instructional practices.

Summary

I addressed the benefits to using Senge's five disciplines as a model for administrators and teachers to address consistency in discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities at JHS. JHS has a high occurrence of student incivilities. Students spend more time being disciplined than they do learning. I used Senge's five

disciplines as the conceptual framework, with systems thinking being the principal one. According to Senge (2014), systems thinking integrates the disciplines, fusing them into a coherent body of theory and practice.

Senge's five disciplines provide a framework to understanding interrelationships among individuals, organizations, and larger delivery systems. Therefore, it provides the organization with a basis for implementing strategies that would respond effectively to a complex system, the need for evidence-based practices, and a focus on enhanced personal outcomes (Senge, 2014). Section 2 presents literature on Senge's five disciplines, school leadership, discipline policies and practices, as well as incivilities, thereby validating this study's purpose and the significance of the study. In Section 2 references other studies that have taken place and suggest ways this study contributes to the extant body of knowledge. Section 3 outlines the research design and the methodology used for the study.

Section 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this case study was to explore the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding consistency in discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities at JHS according to Senge's (2006) five disciplines. A review of the literature yielded the key themes discussed in this research. The findings from the literature review are helpful to all stakeholders (i.e., administrators, teachers, and students), allowing them to view the learning environment systematically and collectively and bring awareness to the factors that are deteriorating the education system. The key terms (*incivilities*, *discipline*, *policies and practices, Senge's five disciplines, leadership*) were searched on the Walden University library website using Academic Search Premier, Education Resource Information Center, and ProQuest Central databases.

The literature review is organized as follows. The review begins with a discussion of leadership and school improvement, focusing on research connecting the two. Next, a review of literature related to the connection between leadership and student achievement is presented, followed by a discussion of teacher attitudes related to student interaction. Literature related to the methodology of the study is then presented, and the review concludes with a discussion of Senge's systematic approach to improving a learning organization.

Understanding Leadership and School Improvement

Past researchers sought to understand leadership and its connection to school effectiveness (Coelli & Green, 2012; Hallinger & Heck, 2010a). According to Sentocnik

and Rupar (2009), leadership is responsible for defining the school's mission and vision and creating environments conducive to high-quality teaching and learning. Bosu, Dare, Dachi, and Fertiq (2011) stated educational leadership brings about school reform. Educational leadership creates the conditions, supports, and culture that enable teachers to be successful. In other words, a leadership role is not just performed by administration (Pyhalto, Soini, & Pietarinen, 2011).

Feeney (2009) viewed leadership from a collaborative perspective. In the educational system, past leadership did not emphasize collaboration. Leadership viewed their role as having many responsibilities that meet the needs of numerous people. Leadership roles have been transformed to pedagogical leaders. However, pedagogical duties are lost due to daily preoccupation with administrative duties. Feeney concluded leadership's focus has to change from managerial approaches to focusing on a learning culture.

Fullan (2010) argued the focus of leadership should be sustaining the organization by changing the individuals and the system. However, some leadership does not connect decisions with possible outcomes (Hannay & Earl, 2012). Fullan continued by stating that leadership at every level of the system is essential for reform, especially leaders who embrace capacity building and develop other leaders who continue the path of reform. Nonetheless, Pyhalto et al. (2011) stated much progress has been made to understand the effects of leadership as it relates to school performance.

Moos and Moller (2003) believed educational systems are similar to public sectors and institutions. Education is manageable like any other service and institution.

Andreadis (2009) related leadership should manage the organization as an open system where learning shows growth and sustainability. Leithwood et al. (2010) contended leadership takes a back seat when it comes to instruction that advocates student achievement.

Singh and Al-Fadhli (2011) argued if schools want to meet the expectations placed on them by such laws as NCLB, leadership has to operate in multiple capacities. School leadership has to look at the relationship between them and other subsystems in order to improve student outcomes (academic, attitudinal, and behavioral). Bua (2013) believed school leadership's quality dictates the failure or success or of a school system.

According to Valentine and Prater (2011), school leadership's behavior advocating curriculum and instructional improvement were linked to student achievement. According to Sergiovanni (2012), leaders have an important responsibility in the school environment. School leadership mobilizes staff with a shared vision that is conducive to learning and nurturing for the growth of students. The effects of school leadership on school performance are evident in the directions of the academic and social conditions and learning outcomes of the students. Struggling schools need leadership that strives for improvement. Therefore, school improvement leadership is important to the educational system.

Hallinger and Heck (2010a) stated school improvement leadership involves leaders identifying the direction of the learning environment, motivating staff, and coordinating strategies for improving teaching and learning. School-improvement leadership implements academic expectations by way of curriculum standards, processes,

structures, and academic support of students. Leithwood et al. (2010) agreed school improvement leadership affects the circumstances that shape learning environments that are beneficial to students.

School improvement is the process of using policies and practices to direct educational change. School effectiveness provides knowledge to be used in school improvement. Fullan (2010) submitted school improvement leadership supports staff professional development and learning. School improvement leaderships also facilitate efforts to implement and sustain change in the learning environment (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). Ultimately, schools facing challenges should have improvement strategies that are flexible and addresses classroom management (McCready & Soloway, 2010).

Leadership style has a greater focus than leadership practice. There are different styles of leadership of value to the educational system, such as distributed and transformational leadership. Researchers are focusing on ways leadership is delivered among teachers, administrators, and parents or from leadership to teachers in schools (Leithwood, Mascall, & Strauss, 2009; Marzano, & Defour, 2009). Continuing this concept further, Spillane, Parise, and Sherer (2011) suggested *distributed leadership* could implement a more feasible method of building a learning-focused environment that represents high-performing schools.

In recent years, researchers focused their attention on leadership roles that brought about school improvement over time (Leithwood et al., 2010; Leithwood et al., 2009). Transformational leadership transforms others to take a leadership role by motivating and raising their ability levels as well as team psychological safety (Raes et al., 2013).

Leaders pique the interest of followers and colleagues to look at their work with insight. The leadership also brings awareness to the organization's vision. According to Hallinger and Heck (2010a) leaders are transformational leaders or cultural leaders. No matter which viewpoint is utilized, there exist two aspects of leadership: (a) influence followers and (b) goal development and achievement.

Hallinger and Heck (2010a) agreed a transformational leader seeks to build the organization capacity. In the learning environment, leadership also supports changes that aid teaching and teachers and student learning. Sergiovanni (2012) stated high levels of commitment and performance were factors of schools with a healthy culture.

Marsh and LeFever (2004) conducted a study to see if principals could be productive leaders. In this study the authors compared the work of principals to policies for student improvement and school reform. The study revealed leadership was effective when they used community collaboration coupled with management support.

Cuban (1988) believed teachers and administrators are bosses, solo practitioners, directing others while taking orders and managing conflict, and are expected to lead. Teachers need continual learning in practices and strategies that support student success (Johnston & Hayes, 2007). The leadership can accomplish this task by being supportive of teachers (i.e., being a good listener) and encouraging students to succeed (Daresh, 2007). Spillane (2011) contended managing and leading schools are in the hands of multiple individuals. Continually, leadership has to find a way to do what is in the best interest of the students and teachers. Sergiovanni (2012) maintained leadership has to take a different approach if they want schools to get better.

According to Marx (2006), by the year 2050 no single race will dominate the student population. In order for school leadership to be successful, they have to facilitate learning by becoming a "bridge of knowledge and encouragement" (p.149) direct the school by becoming a guide to all students, and be experts in classroom management (Leone, Warnimont, & Zimmerman, 2009; Roache, & Lewis, 2011; Ullucci, 2009). Leone et al. concluded future school leadership has to stay current with emerging trends. The emerging trends in schools are becoming more economically and ethnically diverse.

Connection between Leadership and Achievement

According to Brown, Anfara, and Roney (2004), school leadership that uses expediency to resolve issues is doing a disservice to the learning environment. However, other researchers believed that spending time on quality instruction has more of an impact on student achievement. Leadership in low-performing schools has to focus on improving organizational health if they want to improve student achievement (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009). Thus, instruction time should be based on the needs of the students, ultimately raising student achievement (Fullan, 2010; Leithwood, Pattern, & Jantzi, 2010).

In a study by Masumoto and Brown-Welty (2009), school leadership improved learning outcomes by using multiple instructional and transformational practices. The schools were also successful from encouraging parent involvement and community resources. Research by Treble (2009) indicated schools can also be transformed when quality teaching and professional learning exist.

Ross and Gray (2006) also studied transformational leadership coupled with teacher commitments. However, their study focused on the importance of teacher efficacy. Teachers believe their efficacy will encourage students to learn. Data were collected from 3,074 teachers representing 218 elementary schools. The researchers concluded (a) transformational leadership impacted teacher efficacy of the school, (b) only teacher efficacy predicted a teacher's commitment to community partnerships, and (c) how committed a teacher was to the mission of the school was directly and indirectly affected by transformational leadership.

Rodriguez (2008) conducted research on urban schools and how the culture affects student success. The researcher viewed the relationships in the school and their connection to the school's culture. The students' experiences were based on their interaction with the adults in the school. Rodriguez found most research focuses on the school size and student outcomes. However, research should focus on the relationships within the schools. Thus, a culture of success should be nurtured within the learning environment in order for students to succeed.

According to Noguera (2002), urban school reform continues to be a challenge. Mac Iver (2007) conducted a longitudinal case study on school-reform efforts. Mac Iver looked at student outcomes in one urban high school. Despite every effort to reform the school, the school did not meet state-mandated goals. The reason for the failure was due to the students' patterns of behavior: poor academic achievement and attendance prior to attending high school. It was concluded that school leadership would have to reform the school from a systematic approach, not a school-centered focus.

Leadership affects the learning environment through their interactions and decision making. Their decisions impact teachers, students, and all staff directly or indirectly. Printy (2008) conducted a study on the effects of principals on teacher community-of-practice participation. In this study it was revealed teachers have an opportunity to learn in communities of practice due to principal involvement. Mullen and Hutinger (2008) agreed principals must make professional development of teachers a priority.

Hallinger and Heck (2010b) debated past research did not adequately address the modeling of change in leadership of educational processes and student learning. Chance and Segura (2009) studied events and behaviors (e.g., leadership behaviors and organizational structure) in improving and sustaining student achievement. They concluded that instructional leadership behaviors and organizational practices contributed to improved student achievement.

Leithwood, Mascall, Strauss (2009) and Leithwood et al. (2010) conducted research on the connection between student achievement and shared leadership. The findings showed higher achieving schools operated on shared leadership among all stakeholders. Miller and Rowan (2006) previously stated a collective leadership approach is more viable and has a positive impact on student achievement.

Miller and Rowan (2006) conducted a study on the effects of organic management on student achievement. Organic management is viewed as leadership inviting teacher participation and staff cooperation and collegiality. The researchers viewed the relationship between student achievement in elementary and high school and organic

management, concluding organic management was not a determinant of student achievement. Leadership has the power to create environments that help students to learn systematically and show academic improvement (Andreadis, 2009).

<div align="center">**Teacher Attitudes and Student Interaction**</div>

Research shows school principals have a direct and indirect impact on student achievement and teachers. The school leadership designs the structure for teachers' working conditions in the learning environment (Bolkman & Goodboy, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2010). In order for the learning environment to be effective, there has to be trust and shared leadership. Researchers have suggested that teacher involvement in a leadership capacity had a positive effect on school improvement (Bolkman & Goodboy, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2010).

Research shows leadership impacts teaching and learning (Marshall & Oliva, 2010). Recent research on leadership roles in the development of teachers lacked the focus of teacher commitment (Cheung, 2009). Leadership has the power to reform schools by managing, creating conditions and changing the culture that enable teachers to excel in their field (Dumay, 2009; Macneil, Prater, & Busch, 2009; Wood, Spandagou, & Evans, 2012). According to Cheung (2009), leadership has to nurture teachers with students who resist learning. The more students display undesirable behavior, the less comfortable it is for teachers to teach. As research points out this is a leading cause for teacher burn-out (Cha & Cohen-Vogel, 2011; Pas, Bradshaw, Hershfeldt, & Leaf, 2010).

Easley (2005) also conducted research on urban school reform on teachers and morals in leadership. In this study, Easley pointed out most school reform is conducted

from the top level downward. "Teachers believed the leadership's top-down approach ignored their ethical and moral ways of instruction" (p. 165). The teachers approached instruction to their students morally and ethically, due to understanding their impact on the students.

Trust issues arise when learning organization's culture is negative and when teachers are not included in the decision-making process. Kolb, Song, & Kim (2009) stated that "building trust and acknowledgement of the possible effect of employee trust on organizational commitment is crucial" (p. 163). Studies have been conducted on relationships between teachers and principal and among teachers on classroom instruction. The findings showed when shared leadership and teacher support was present; teachers did not have issues with trusting leadership nor being committed to the organization (Hulpia, Devos, & Van Keer, 2011; Kolb, Song, & Kim, 2009; Louis, Dretzske, & Wahlstrom, 2008).

When teachers lack the resources they need to be effective in the classroom, student learning outcomes and behaviors deteriorate. Student incivilities increase as teachers become exhausted from trying to address the negative behaviors. This deterioration in the classroom leads to teacher exhaustion and teacher frustration (Clunies-Ross, Little, & Kienhuis, 2008; Osher et al., 2010). Nonetheless, in addition to student incivilities there are other factors that contribute to teacher burnout, such as roadblocks to success, unfavorable workplace conditions, and large class sizes (Cheung, 2009).

According to Flecknoe (2005), changing teacher behavior may be the first step to improving the learning environment. Teachers should practice following the positive and productive behavior of their coworkers, such as veteran teachers (Duke, 2006). Flecknoe contended teachers should be open to listen to students about changing their behavior. In the learning environment, teachers would benefit from being encouraged to change their behaviors.

According to Hill-Jackson, Sewell, and Waters (2007), teachers have to possess the knowledge, skills, ability, and appropriate *attitude* to handle classroom diversity. Unfortunately, teachers who lack knowledge, skills, abilities, and the appropriate attitude bring negativity to the classroom. Displaying the appropriate behavior is also necessary for effective teaching and makes students feel valued (Baloglu, 2009; Moolenar, Sleegers, & Daly, 2012). Students are not engaged in negative behaviors when they feel valued. Students are also less likely to resist authority when teachers have a caring attitude about their lives and experiences**.**

Incivilities are unacceptable classroom behaviors that distract from the learning environment (Boysen, 2012). Teachers are often blamed for the negativity and incivility in a classroom environment. Boysen disagreed and stated, both teachers and students are to blame for classroom incivility. Beaty-O'Ferrall, Green, and Hanna (2010) expressed teacher's practices may add to unfavorable conditions in which students feel mentally uncomfortable and avert engaging in school. Research showed teachers will experience fewer challenging behaviors when they respond to students' psychological needs (Beaty-O'Ferrall, Green, & Hanna, 2010; Gregory & Cornell, 2009). A student's negative school

experiences could lead to more negative behavior outcomes, such as delinquency (Gregory & Cornell, 2009).

However, Gillett, Vallerand, and Lafreniere (2012) found using intrinsic behavior motivators to deter discipline problems have proven to be affective. Students respond to a class, based on their like or dislike for it. When students dislike a class, they are likely to be disruptive and act uncivilized. Nonetheless, Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, White, and Salvoey, (2012) submitted it is in the teacher's hand to create learning environments. Teachers create environments that either help students learn or not learn. An effective teacher understands sources of the intent and act of creating learning environments.

One effective way to create a learning environment is to have a healthy teacher–student relationship. A study by van Tartwijk & Hammerness (2011) and another by Anderman, Andrzejewski, & Allen, (2011) focused on the interpersonal relationship between student and teacher. These studies discussed the pedagogical, methodological, and interpersonal perspective in the learning environment. The teacher decides what materials and methods are used to teach the student. Anderman et.al, built on this article, stating teachers must project a positive attitude and an atmosphere that encourages students to learn.

Researchers of effective classroom management feel it is important to focus on teacher interpersonal behavior (Anderman et.al, 2011; van Tartwijk & Hammerness, 2011). Teachers cannot create learning environments nor be effective in the classroom when interpersonal relationships are negative. Toste, Heath, and Dallaire (2010) showed teacher interpersonal behavior, student achievement, and students' motivations are

closely related. Teacher-student relationship is a part of student experiences and an asset to promoting student achievement (Hamre, Pianta, Downer, & Mashburn, 2008; Macleod, MacAllister, & Pirrie, 2012). Students are more engaged in classrooms when the teacher–student interpersonal relationship is healthy. Students engage in learning and do better academically in classes where teachers project positive attitudes and job satisfaction (Ackoff & Greenburg, 2008).

Another aspect of the classroom relationship depends on the students' perception of the teacher. Patrick, Ryan, and Kaplan (2007) conducted a study on perceptions in the classroom social environment. The authors stated students' perception of teacher support influences students to be active in the learning environment. Students are more likely to engage in their academics when teachers are perceived as caring about students' learning (p. 84). In this aspect, a positive perception of teacher attitude and behavior has a positive impact on students. Therefore, teachers need to be mindful of the students' perception in the classroom, in order to avoid having a negative impact.

Alderman and Green (2011) focused on the importance of the interpersonal relationships between teacher and student. Student success is impacted by the quality of the teacher-student relationship. From a pedagogical, methodological, and interpersonal perspective, a teacher decides what materials are used to help students learn as well as methods used for behavior management in the classroom (Tillery, Varjas, Meyers, & Smith-Collins, 2010). Thus, it is the teacher that sets the tone for the classroom environment.

Nicolaidou and Ainscow (2005) conducted a study on understanding failing schools. The schools that were reported as failing had to implement new improvement measures including yearly inspections of standards and education quality. Overcoming teachers' attitudes and behavior was an obstacle to the improvement plan. Consequently, the school leadership and teachers' attitudes negatively affected the students. Ultimately, the teachers had to adapt to the new changes to improve the school (Nicolaidou & Ainscow, 2005).

According to Pace and Hemmings (2007) different approaches to student discipline are reasons for negativity in the classroom. A teacher may use harsh punishments when students challenge his or her authority. However, another teacher may use support as a way to get students to trust their authority (Gregory & Cornell, 2009). Another reason for negativity in the classroom is when communication is one sided and students feel their opinion is not valued. Therefore, more researchers understand the value of the students' voices (Sanacore, 2008; Zion, 2009).

Mitra (2004) purported listening to students enhanced teacher efficacy and self-worth. Similarly, DeFur and Korinek (2010) conducted a study on student perspectives. The researchers asked questions pertaining to leadership, the nature of schools, and teaching that influence students' learning. The researchers concluded that students' perspectives may be useful to school improvement.

Another reason for negativity in the classroom is based on cultural differences between teachers and students, creating teacher biases. When educators ethnically differ from students, they bring biases to the classroom. The teacher's biases have a negative

impact on students. According to research, education leaders make policies and procedures based on their individual values (Vincent, Randall, Cartledge, Tobin, & Swain-Bradway, 2011). Caucasian American and middle-class individuals are the main policymakers in education systems. Students' behavior is judged by cultural norms, which are biased. When disciplining a student for disruptions, the punishment is based on cultural influence.

Rocque (2010) researched Midwestern schools on disciplining students. Students were disciplined for disobedience, conduct, disrespect, and fighting. However, a comparison on cultural interaction demonstrates that most African American student behaviors are considered inappropriate (Bryan, Day-Vines, Griffin, & Moore-Thomas, 2012). For example, European American educators viewed fighting in a playful manor and humor as aggression and insults. Unfortunately, complications arise whenever there is an overlap of management issues and urban schooling. When minority students do not comply by behaving in a "normal manner," the teachers feel they are problematic and the student is more likely to be suspended (Markowitz & Puchner, 2014).

Cultural conflict may arise with discipline issues, as with instructional practices and pedagogy. Teachers who project biases in their learning environment have a negative impact on student behavior. Students resist learning in biased learning environments. In order for teachers not to bring biases to the classroom, they must be prepared for multicultural classrooms. According to Milner (2011), there is still much to be known about reforming cultural diversity and management.

Hill-Jackson et al. (2007) conducted research on multicultural education. Based on their research, by 2010, 85% of the teacher population will be Caucasian women. National Education Association (2010) reported Caucasian women were 87% of teacher workforce; 23% work in urban school. However, the student population was 40% composed of minority students. Therefore, it is very important to understand how teachers can build learning communities and manage students in culturally congruent ways, in order not to bring cultural biases that breed negativity (Milner, 2011).

Review of Literature Related to Method

For this study, I chose to conduct a qualitative case study. Qualitative research is a type of scientific research that incorporates an investigation. The investigation seeks to answer research questions, collect evidence, and produce findings (Merriam, 2014). This method was chosen because the study seeks to explore the human side and conceptual framework of Senge's five disciplines. According to Stake (2010) a case study explores an event, a program, a process, an activity, or one or more individuals and is bounded by activity and time. Additionally, various data-collection procedures are used, in a case study, over a sustained period of time to collect detailed information.

According to Yin (2014), a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon in its real-life context. The confines between context and phenomenon are not evident. A qualitative rather than a quantitative design was chosen for this study. A qualitative design is more flexible; data collection and research questions can be adjusted during an interview (Creswell, 2013).

In contrast, quantitative questions are closed-ended or fixed. For instance, Vidic (2010) conducted a study to examine the perceptions of teachers regarding student behavior. The study involved 143 classrooms from Zagreb County and the City of Zagreb. The teachers were given the Pupil Behavior Patterns (PBS) closed-ended questionnaire. The findings showed a significant difference in perceptions of classroom teachers and extended stay teachers.

Similarly, Ding, Yeping, Ziaobao, and Kulm (2008) conducted a quantitative study on Chinese teachers' perception of student misbehavior. A questionnaire was given to 244 elementary and high schools teachers in two provinces of China. The study concluded 65.6% of teachers were not concerned with classroom management. However, their concern was to understand psychological reasons for students misbehaving and suggested utilizing school psychologists.

For the researcher's study, the principal, dean of students, and 9 teachers were interviewed (in their natural setting) to gather information on their perceptions in regards to consistency of discipline policies and practices and student incivilities as they relate to Senge's five disciplines. Similarly, Kyriacou (2010) explored high school teachers' perceptions on student behavior. This study surveyed 141 high school teachers regarding the factors that contributed to student misbehavior, the frequency of student misbehavior, and the strategies for addressing student misbehavior. Twenty teachers from 10 high schools in Japan were randomly selected for this study. The data was analyzed for similarities to see if the same student behavior problems existed in Western education

(UK, USA, and Australia). Further, each study (referenced above) explores teacher perceptions of student behavior.

Review of Differing Methodologies

After a review of literature and methods used in other studies, the researcher determined a qualitative approach would be applicable to this study because it allows the researcher to study the participants in real-life context over a sustained period of time. In a qualitative study, McCready and Soloway (2010) conducted a study on findings from a two-year research project, Sociocultural Perspectives on Behavior and Classroom Management (SPBCM). SPBCM examined data regarding cultural and social context of undesirable student behavior from four schools in Toronto, Canada. Like the current research study, the SPBCM goal was to understand teachers' perceptions of undesirable student behaviors and the strategies used to address the behaviors. In this study, 50 teachers were chosen to participate in individual and group interviews. The study concluded that administrators and teachers should utilize professional development to develop behavior strategies for classroom management, in order to address challenging student behaviors.

Researchers continue to conduct studies to explore causes and strategies to decrease incivilities (Thompson & Webber, 2010; Vallaire-Thomas, Hicks, & Growe, 2011). Thompson and Webber conducted a 36-week study using a Student-Teacher Agreement Realignment Strategy (STARS), with 10 student participants. The goal of the strategy was to serve as an intervention between student and teachers perceptions of the school's rules and to improve student behavior. By recording students' compliance to

classroom rules, nine out of 10 students' behavior improved with a reduction in office disciplinary referrals. Similar to the current research study, this study seeks teacher perceptions of school rules and to improve student behavior. However, the current research study does not focus on student perceptions of school rules.

Unfortunately, not all schools utilize strategies such as STARS. Most often they utilize a reactive approach (office referral, suspension, etc.) to student disruptive behaviors (Thomas & Webber, 2010). Utilizing a reactive approach, such as suspensions, does little to decrease student behavior. According to Lee, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan (2011), suspension policies may affect a student's ability to complete high school. Further, when students display inappropriate or dangerous behaviors they are suspended or expelled from school. Sharkey and Fenning (2012) stated suspensions are not effective and may exacerbate student incivilities.

Brown (2004) conducted a study at Project Succeed Academy (PSA). PSA was strategically opened to combat the large number of students being suspended and expelled within the Cincinnati school district, due to discipline problems. Data was collected and analyzed from 188 parents and 17 teachers and other staff members using a likert-scale survey. The findings showed PSA experienced a decrease in non-mandatory suspension by 23% and district expulsions by 12%, in PSA first year of implementation. Further, the program was successful and discipline was a surface issue. However, extensive research uncovered literacy and barriers to academic achievement as relevant.

Riordan (2006) conducted a study regarding student behavior and its relationship to student suspensions. The study showed that student suspensions not only affected their

academics, but the community as well. However, students' behavior is not solely

responsible for high rates of school exclusion. Consequently, when a student displays a

disruptive behavior in the classroom, they are removed for the learning environment for

extended periods of time or suspended or expelled, which results in academic

underachievement. Thus, the student being removed from the learning environment has

an adverse effect on that student's opportunity to learn (Chin, Dowdy, Jimerson, & Rime,

2012).

      According to Fullan (2010), there exist constant and unruly actions in educational

systems. Student incivilities are a distraction, the main cause of teachers leaving the

profession, and an impediment to the overall success of students, teachers, leadership,

and the educational system. Student incivilites ultimately result in a learning environment

having unfavorable learning outcomes, causing schools to close (Michigan Department of

Education, 2011).

      However, students cannot show academic improvement when they display

incivility (Algozzine, Wang, & Violette, 2010; Boysen, 2012). School leadership has

increasing concerns about student incivilities, inside and outside the classroom

environment (Fullan, 2010). Consequently, when leadership is ineffective in managing

the school or has an ineffective disciplinary plan of action, student incivilities increase

and teacher morale decreases (Kendziora & Osher, 2009). The learning environment

lacks the foundation of a disciplinary system. Teachers become disillusioned and lose

their passion for teaching or worse, leave the teaching profession (Cha & Cohen-Vogel,

2011).

Researchers believe there are other methods that may be used to improve school discipline (Auld, Belfiore, & Scheeler, 2010; Cornell, Sheras, Gregory, & Fan, 2009; Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010). One approach to improve school discipline is through an ecological approach, focused on improving efficacy and classroom activities. In other words, this approach focuses on improving the classroom setting more than improving the students (Osher et. al.).

Another approach to discipline is classroom management. Classroom management approaches are based on the teacher's experience and assumptions (Englehart, 2012). Consistent classroom management practices are geared towards preventing problems rather than solving problems (Evans & Lester, 2010). Research suggests approaches to classroom management should be utilized at different systemic levels (Hart, 2010).

In contrast, researchers believe decreasing student incivilities requires implementing positive behavioral interventions and supports (Flannery, Sugai, & Anderson, 2009; Morrison & Vaandering, 2011). Muscott, Mann, and LeBrun (2008) presented a report on New Hampshire schools that implemented positive behavioral interventions and supports in 28 early-childhood programs and K–12 schools. The research showed that schools experienced a 71% improvement, by having a decrease of 1,032 suspensions and 6,010 in office-discipline referrals, recovering 571 days of leadership, 1,701 days of learning, and 864 days of teaching. The study concluded that the program was successful and the school experienced an overall increase in student-learning outcomes and reduced student incivilities.

A range of discpline problems are present in an educational system (e.g., bullying, defiance, and fighting). Research indicated school staff underestimated the frequency of some incivilities such as bullying (Bradshaw, Sawyer, and O'Brennan, 2007; Crosby, Oehler, & Capaccioli, 2010). Novotney (2009) stated schools that fail to resolve discipline issues increase poor student and school outcomes. Continuing this idea further, most schools use expediency to resolve discipline problems, such as office referrals and suspensions. In a study by Dinkes, Kemp, and Baum (2009) during the 2005–2006 school year, 74% of discipline actions were suspensions lasting more than five days. Nonetheless, suspensions coupled with positive and proactive alternatives to suspensions are effective deterrants to student incivilities (Bear, 2012; Bradshaw, Mitchell, & Leaf, 2010; Fenning, Pulaski, Gomez, M. Morello, Maciel, Maroney, Schmidt, Dahlvig, McArdle, T. Morello, Wilson, Horwitz, & Maltese, 2011).

According to Bear (2012), school discipline goes beyond punishing students for their behavior. Leadership and teachers should include strategeies that help students with self-discipline. Students and other members of a systems tend not to see how their attitudes and behavior are influenced by the systemic structure of the environment, nor do they see how they also influence the system. An educational system that operates in this manner is a detriment to the students. Lumby (2009) espoused strongly that students should have precedence over the interests of staff and the organization. Therefore, no school should plan to succeed if it is a detriment to students. Further, the qualitative approach allows for an in depth inquiry into a phenomenon. For this study, the researcher seeks to explore administrator and teacher perceptions of consistency of discipline

policies and practices as well as student incivilities. Therefore, using a qualitative approach was the correct method for this study.

Michigan Incivilities

Student incivilities affect the learning environment inside and outside the classroom. Student incivilities (i. e. bullying) effect students that witness the incivility as well as the intended victim (Rivers, Poteat, Noret, & Ashurt, 2009). Teachers cannot effectively teach students, students cannot learn, and the learning environment slowly deteriorates. By reducing the number of student incivilities, school leadership can improve both the behavioral and educational outcomes of students.

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2014), there is an increase in the number of student incivilities in the educational system. Student incivilities have increased since the 1990's. Under the Clinton Administration, *zero-tolerance* policies were implemented as a part of the Gun Free School Act of 1994. The Gun Free School Act of 1994, required schools to suspend students at least a year if they brought a weapon to school. The zero-tolerance policy's main focus was to help keep schools safe. Many states adopted zero-tolerance procedures, including Michigan. Michigan Department of Education's Office of Safe Schools developed a Model Code of Conduct, which school districts can adopt to revise their local codes.

Additionally, some school districts in Lower Michigan have experienced an increase in student incivilities, despite districts adopting the Model Code of Conduct (Michigan Department of Education, 2008). The incivilities range from violence with physical injury to weapons possession and bullying. As a result, the students have

received up to an 888 day expulsion, which is permanent expulsion. Students at JHS have displayed the same incivilities. According to the JHS (2009) report students received from 43- to 888-day expulsions, due to violent and prohibited behavior. Borum, Cornell, Modzeieski, Jimerson (2010) stated school violence prevention policy needs to relate to teacher actions and student behavior, in order to be effective. Their lack of discipline policy enforcement enables student incivilities to increase. As mentioned above, student incivilities affect the teacher's ability to be productive and maintain an orderly learning environment (Gregory, Cornell, & Fan, 2012).

According to Brown (2004), when school leadership decreases the number and degree of incivilities, the learning organization will improve. Goldstein, Young, & Boyd (2008) agreed positive learning environments reduce student incivilities. Research suggest that implementing school-wide preventive behavior measures (Flannery, Sugai, & Anderson, 2009; Sugai, 2009), other than zero-tolerance (Martinez, 2009), are more effective in student behavior management (Gut & MCLaughlin, 2012; Nooruddin & Baig, 2014).

Systematic Approach to Improving a Learning Organization

Systems Thinking

According to Senge et al. (2000), a system is a kind of entity that continues to exist and function as a whole when interacting with its parts. Senge et al. also defined a system as "any perceived whole whose elements hang together because they continually affect each other over time" (p. 78). Fullan (2010) stated organizations need to develop

strategies and trainings to develop more "system thinkers in action," which will change the system.

Thus, *systems thinking* is a body of tools and knowledge to look at a system holistically, rather than as individual subsystems (Senge et al., 2000). Zulauf (2007) argued that people don't see a connection from decisions to possible outcomes. Thinking systematically, (i.e., looking at an organization as a whole) allows for seeing how each subsystem is related to each other. Senge et al. stated in systems thinking people learn to understand change and interdependency and are more capable of dealing with the forces that mold the consequences of our actions. Systems thinking is rooted in an expanding body of theory about the behavior of complexity and feedback—inherent tendencies of a system that lead to stability and growth over time.

Senge et al. (2000) continued by stating that from childhood we learn how to break problems apart and see the world in fragments. In this manner subjects and tasks are easier to manage, but we pay an unseen price. We are unable see the consequences of our actions; we no longer have an inherent sense of connection to a greater whole. Leon (2008) agreed systems thinking requires a distinction between (a) behavioral patterns of the system, (b) chosen structures, (c) mental models, and (d) resulting events that coexist in the organization.

Senge et al. (2000) stated "every organization, whether it deliberately creates them or not, is governed according to some explicit principles" (p.53). Skarzauskiene (2008) posited analytical thinking is based on the principle of cause and effect. Previous efforts to reform the educational system included controlled, centralized, and uniformed

procedures. Those efforts were undercut by the cultures of adults and youth. Thornton, Pelter, and Perreault (2004) believed today's problem stem from past problems.

Veteran leadership does not solve issues in the educational system. They address old problems and practices by renaming them. However, using systems thinking can be beneficial to improving student achievement in the educational system. Skarzauskiene (2008) argued system thinking is relevant to leadership. Shared vision, values, knowledge, and power are the foundations of leadership. Holistic thinking is useful when implementing the leadership role. In other words, to fully understand a system, one needs to design it.

Shared Vision

Organizations fail when they do not have a shared vision. Leon (2008) confirmed that without a common aim, no system would exist. Senge et al. (2000) indicated that a shared vision promotes a focus of collective purpose. People with a collective purpose can learn to be committed to an organization or group by creating a shared vision of the future they desire to build and the guiding practices and principles by which they desire to achieve.

Shared vision is such a shared image of the future that fosters genuine enrollment and commitment, contrast to compliance (Senge, 2014). In order for a learning organization to be effective it has to have trusting relationships and a healthy leadership (Kolb, Song, & Kim, 2009). Crother-Laurin (2006) defined healthy leadership as the retainment of the right people through which the leadership vision is put into action. The success of students should be a shared vision priority. Harris and Muijs (2005) advised

education is a process that continually adds value to the students. This process is a shared

vision based on the needs of the students.

Whenever there is a genuine vision in a learning environment, people learn and

excel. They learn simply because they want to, not because it is a requirement. According

to Senge et al. (2000) a shared vision is the set of tools and techniques for bringing all of

these contrasting goals into positioning around their commonalities—for exanple, their

relation to a learing environment. A group of people can create a sense of commitment

when creating a shared vision. However, without a continuous process for creating a

shared vision, a school is unable to express its sense of purpose.

Wheatly (2011) stated that everyone needs to be able to trust that keeping values

and visions will continue, in order to lead**.** In other words, shared vision based on

authority does not make it sustainable. Shared visions are good in seeing schools through

a crisis. However, unless people understand them or truly commit to the vision, the true

potential is not recognized (Fullan, 2010). Learning environments that are in need of

environmental change look for initiatives to guide that change. As Senge (2006) pointed

out, initiatives are not the answer to needed change. However, what the school system

needs is a new approach to guide that change. The approach should consolidate existing

initiatives, eliminate "turf battles," and should make it easy for all to work toward a

common end.

Marsh and LeFever (2004) conducted a study to see if principals could be

effective leaders by comparing them to policies for student improvement and school

reform. In order to be effective, the principals used collaboration with management

support and student performance-driven communities. The researchers found that it was critical for the principal's work to be framed by policy context.

Personal Mastery

Personal mastery is seen as a way to approach our life as an innovative work, living from an innovative perspective and deepening our personal vision. Senge (2006) defined personal mastery as the discipline to steadily define and expand one's personal vision, focus one's energies, develop patience, and see reality objectively. Senge et al. (2000) stated personal mastery is the process of expressing a comprehensive view of one's own vision—creating outcomes preferred in one's life—coupled with a practical evaluation of the present view of your own life. Personal mastery can deepen your capability to make desirable choices and accomplish the outcomes you have selected.

As stated in the preceding section, schools play a crucial part in personal mastery by setting a context where people have time to reflect on their vision (Senge, 2006). Past researchers exposed that organizations without personal mastery have a reactive mindset that increases the fear of systems thinking (Senge, 2006). Whenever problems exists in the learning environment, members tend to place blame on other team members and repeat previous mistakes. Senge (2006) referred to this as a *learning disability* and a *reactive mindset*. A learning disability is the inability of learning organizations to learn from past mistakes, recognizing and addressing impending threats effectively. Thus, people with a reactive mindset blame everyone else for existing problems, rather than seeing how they contribute to the problems.

Team Learning

In a learning organization, interacting as a part of a group and using an open

dialogue, can be useful to improving the learning environment. Senge et al. (2000) stated,

the discipline of team learning involves group interaction. Through discussion and

dialogue, groups of people mold their universal thinking, learning to gather their actions

and energies to accomplish collective goals and acquiring ability and intelligence

exceeding the total of individual members' talents. Team learning can be utilized in the

learning environment, amongst teachers and parents, community members, and in any

groups that seek favorable changes in learning environments. Team learning develops

and aligns the skills to build the outcomes desired by team members.

Team learning builds on shared vision and personal mastery. In order for an

organization to act as a whole, the team needs to know how to act together. Learning as a

team is beneficial for the organization; team members tend to show growth. Team

learning has the potential for high quality learning outcomes (Decuyper, Dochy, & Van

den Bossche, 2010). According to Senge (2014), Even though people maintain their

individuality, their efforts commonly move in the same direction. Their effort and time is

not wasted achieving common goals, because they completely understand one another.

Team learning starts with a dialogue. The dialogue allows for team members to suspend

assumptions and think from new angles (Senge, 2014). Team members have the option to

participate or not to participate. Therefore, with dialogue, team members feel a part of the

"whole" (p. 77).

Mental Models

Leon (2008) acknowledged systems thinking requires a differentiation between the resulting event, the behavioral patterns of the system, chosen structures, and the mental models that coexist with the organization. Senge (2006) espoused mental models are inquiry and reflection skills based upon building awareness of one's own and other's perceptions and attitudes. Operating with mental models can also help one more honestly and clearly explain current reality. Considering most educational mental models are often nonverbal and not visual, one important act for an educational system is to cultivate the capability to communicate productively and safely about discomforting and dangerous subjects.

Chrispeels, Burke, Johnson, and Daly (2008) conducted a study on the alignment of school districts and leadership-team mental models. They believed principals have to recognize the usefulness of school-leadership teams for school improvement. In any case, student achievement to the highest level is attainable when school leadership work as a team. Marzano, and DeFour (2009) stated one person alone cannot handle the enormous task of leading schools; it has to be a team effort. In working together as a team, using a mental model framework clearly impacts the mental model behavior yielding quality decision making in the learning system (Capelo & Dias, 2009b).

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

Leadership can make the difference in schools to increase school productivity and revitalize struggling schools. Unless leadership learns from past mistakes and takes a holistic approach, the school system will continue to deteriorate. Leadership must create

environments that encourage students to learn systematically with improved results (Andreadis, 2009). On one hand, the role of leadership has a direct and indirect impact on teaching and learning; on the other hand, teacher leadership plays an important role as well. An effective way to create a learning environment is to have a healthy leadership and teacher–student relationship. According to Moolenar, Sleegers, & Daly (2012), the interpersonal relationship between teacher and student is important. Teachers must project a positive attitude and an atmosphere that encourages students to learn.

According to Thornton et al. (2004), systems thinking can be useful in improving the achievement of students. In order to change the educational system, leadership has to change the way it operates and thinks. Research shows that systematic thinking is beneficial to improving student achievement. Leon (2008) concluded without a common aim or holistic analysis, no system would exist. Thus, school leadership has to approach the educational system systematically or it will cease to exist. The next section focuses on the methodology of the study.

Section 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding consistency in discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities related to Senge's five disciplines (systems thinking, mental models, team learning, shared vision, and personal mastery) at a local high school, referred to in the study as JHS. I selected this design to explore the factors contributing to the inconsistency of discipline problems and practices as well as the high occurrence of student incivilities at JHS. I gathered the data by examining unobtrusive documents (Student Handbook, Student Code of Conduct Book, student incivility reports, staff meeting minutes and school annual reports), reviewing internal communications, and interviewing the principal, dean of students, and nine teachers (40% of teaching staff).

In some schools the leadership has a "reactive mindset" (Senge, 2006). The school leadership at times used expediencies, such as replacing faculty and staff, and disciplining students, to solve perceived problems. These actions have a "domino" effect, passing from teachers to students. Between 2008 and 2013, a high occurance of student incivilities, lack of respect for authority, low grade-point averages and declining student enrollment have occurred at JHS (previously noted in Tables 1 and Table 2). According to Senge (2014), a school system going backward does not show signs of improvement. Consequently, the education system develops a learning disability, when there is a lack of systematic thinking and policy enforcement from leadership. The findings from this study may help the JHS educational system address these concerns by presenting teacher

and administrator perceptions regarding discipline policies and practices, student incivilities, and Senge's five disciplines to improve leadership practices.

Research Design

A qualitative case-study approach was chosen for this study. According to Yin (2014), a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon in its real-life context. The confines between context and phenomenon are not evident. Stake (2010) further stated a case study explores an event, an activity, a process, a program, or one or more individuals and is bounded by activity and time. Additionally, various data-collection procedures are used, in a case study, over a sustained period of time to collect detailed information. Qualitative research is a type of scientific research that incorporates an investigation. The investigation seeks to answer research questions, collect evidence, and produce findings (Merriam, 2014). This method was chosen because I sought to explore the 'human side" and conceptual framework of systems thinking. A qualitative rather than a quantitative design was chosen for this study. A qualitative design is more flexible; data collection and research questions can be adjusted during an interview (Creswell, 2013). I used in-depth interviews to gather information. In contrast, quantitative questions are closed-ended or fixed.

If a quantitative method had been selected, questionnaires and structured observations would be used (Briggs, Morrison, & Coleman, 2012). In a quantitative study, features are classified, counted, and a statistical model is constructed to explain what was observed. According to Miles and Huberman (2013), quantitative researchers know clearly in advance what they are looking for when conducting research. A

researcher uses tools, such as questionnaires or equipment to collect numerical data as a part of his/her study. The researcher tends to remain objectively separated from the subject matter. In this qualitative study I was the primary data gathering instrument and the design emerged as the study unfolded. Therefore, a quantitative study would have been less effective for this study.

In addition, the conceptual framework, rooted in Senge's five disciplines was used for this study. The five disciplines were used as a model for administrators and teachers to address student incivilities at JHS. One school was chosen as the subject of this case study, JHS. The study may be helpful to all Michigan high schools, but I am not able to use one school as a "broad representation" for all schools. I was justified in using a case study design because the study was exploratory and I only looked at a small sample of a population (Hatch, 2002).

Research Questions and Subquestions

A research question acts as a signpost to guide readers by stating specific goals for the study (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). In a case study, research questions are topics explored in interviews, observation, and documents and should not be more than 12 questions (Cresswell, 2013). The following research questions were chosen to guide the study.

Research Question 1. What are the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding consistency in discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities related to Senge's five disciplines?

Subquestion 1. What barriers, if any, do teachers and administrators have regarding consistency in discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities related to Senge's five disciplines?

Subquestion 2. How do teacher and administrator experiences at JHS influence their thinking related to using Senge's five disciplines as a model to address consistency of discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities?

Subquestion 3. What characteristics of Senge's five disciplines are currently in place at JHS to address consistency of discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities?

Context of the Study

According to Creswell (2013), the context of a study places the case in its setting: the physical, historical, or economic setting for the case. This study took place at a high school in southeastern Michigan. The high school was located in an urban community with a population of 8,038. JHS has 440 students (60% African American and 40% European American).

The participants in this study were the principal, dean of students, and nine teachers (40% of the teaching staff). I interviewed each participant in regards to consistency of discipline policies and practices and student incivilities as they relate to Senge's five disciplines (personal mastery, team learning, system thinking, shared vision, mental models). The participants were interviewed in his or her natural setting (i.e., classroom and office). I am a teacher in the school district. In order to eliminate a conflict of interest, I did not have interaction with the students. I audiotaped the interviews, used

member checking (views of participants for credibility of findings and interpretation) and

triangulation (use multiple and different sources to corroborate the evidence) to eliminate

biases.

Measures for Ethical Protection

First, after obtaining Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB)

proposal approval (01-28-14-0056801) and school district approval, I sent a letter of

invitation to potential participants (teachers and administrators). Next, I gave the

participants a letter of consent at the research site to participate in the study, including

information about the research study. The letter of consent clearly stated participation

was strictly voluntary and no compensation was given for participation. Participants had

the option to withdraw from the study at any time without any harmful consequences to

them personally or professionally. I informed the participants they have confidentiality

while they participate, as well as after the study has been concluded. The participants

chose a pseudonym for their name that was used during the interview process. The

interviews were held in a private location, of their choosing, during noninstructional time.

Only the participants and I were able to identify the participants of this study. Lastly, I

was bound by Walden University guidelines in the use of human subjects.

Role of Researcher

My role as the researcher was researcher-participant, during the interviewing of teachers, principal, and dean of students. I had freedom to ask questions and put words and experiences of the participants into print (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). I conducted interviews (Appendix A) in the learning environment, the participants' natural setting. Merriam (2014) believed the relationship between the researcher and participant depends on (a) the attitude of the participant, (b) definition of the situation, and (c) personality and skill of the researcher. In order to establish a researcher-participant working relationship, I was nonjudgmental and respectful to the participants.

I am a Grade 9-12 business accounting teacher at JHS. I have a non-supervisory role over the participants at JHS. I am a former student of JHS. After attending college and returning to the community, I was asked to teach in the school district. I also graduated with or know personally the parents of the students at JHS. At the time of my hire, some of the same faculties were employed in the district when I was a student. Therefore, I have a rapport with administrators and teachers.

Due to previous experience and knowledge, I brought certain biases to the study. I made every effort to ensure objectivity throughout the study. I stayed objective by focusing on the factual information presented, not my own opinion (Briggs, Morrison, & Coleman, 2012; Creswell, 2013). However, my biases shaped the way I viewed and understood the collected data. I continued this study with the understanding that being in a leadership role and educator position presents some difficulties. I openly stated any

conflicts of interest, used a peer reviewer to help address the conflict of interest, audiotaped the interviews and allowed participants to review interview transcripts.

Criteria for Participant Selection

I used different groups of participants (principal, dean of students, and teachers) to explore the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding consistency in discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities according to Senge's five disciplines for this study. The first criterion for the participants was they were from Michigan, due to the study exploring an urban school in Michigan. I used JHS for the study. The second criterion was participants a part of the JHS learning environment (i.e., faculty, staff). Therefore, the groups chosen for participation were the school's principal, dean of students, and nine teachers (40 % of teaching staff). The principal was the first line of leadership in the school system. It is the leadership who must be productive for students to achieve (Fullan, 2010). For this reason, the principal's perception was needed for this study. The dean of students mainly deals with student incivilities. As part of this study, I addressed student incivilities from the dean's first-hand knowledge that coincides with reported data to Michigan Department of Education. No information was used to identify student's personal information (i.e., name, social security, student identification number).

Teachers spend more time with students than any other school staff. The relationship between the teacher and student impacts the learning environment (Toste, Heath, & Dallaire, 2010). I met with 25 teachers and asked them to participate in the study. However, not all teachers participated in the study. After teachers agreed to

participate, I asked them to sign a consent form. I used purposeful sampling (selecting participants who fit the criteria) to select 10 teachers from the group of volunteers and two administrators (principal and dean of students). This research aimed for 10 teacher participants (40% of the teaching staff) and one principal and one dean of students. However, only nine teachers, one principal, and one dean of students were accepted as participants. The fewer the participants, the more in depth the inquiry must be per participant. I did not interview the students because I was restricted by time. It would have been time consuming to obtain parental consent for students to be interviewed. Therefore, I used unobtrusive data (e.g., school improvement data, weekly reports, archival records) to address underlying causes of their incivilities (Boysen, 2012; Senge, 2014.). Based on the purpose of the study, I was justified in using each group of participants.

Data Collection

Yin (2014) described six sources of evidence: archival records, documentation, participant observation, direct observation, interviews, and physical artifacts. Yin discussed the three principles of data collection. The first principle is the use of multiple sources of evidence, *triangulation,* which creates strength for the study. I triangulated document analysis, interview data, communication review, and used member checking (allowing participants to checking their responses for accuracy). The second principle is to create a case-study database (organization of information). I organized and documented the collection of their data (journals, etc.). The third principle is to maintain a chain of evidence to increase the reliability of the information.

For this study, data collection took place at JHS, the only high school in Jefferson City, Michigan (pseudonym). I gathered qualitative data by interviewing the principal, dean of students, and nine teachers (40% of the school's teaching staff). Thus, data collection involves using multiple sources of information such as audiovisual, documents, interviews, and observations (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). In qualitative research, Merriam (2014) maintained that interviews, observations, and documents are the traditional sources of data.

Interviews

For the purpose of this study, I used *responsive* interviewing (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Rubin and Rubin referred to responsive interviewing as an approach to in-depth interviewing research. I wanted the human view and established a rapport with the interviewees. I interviewed the participants at an agreed upon time other than instructional time, approximately 30 minutes. I gave each participant 15 interview questions (noted in appendix A) prior to conducting the interview. It is less time consuming when participants are aware of questions being asked of them and potentially reduces participant nervousness in anticipation of any interview questions. Additionally, I wanted the interviewees to be prepared and give thoughtful answers to the interview questions.

Interview questions. I used one set of 15 interview questions for the group of participants. The principal, dean of students, and teacher interview questions addressed consistency of discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities as it relates to Senge's five disciplines. After reviewing the literature, the interview questions were

developed. Three individuals with terminal degrees reviewed the interview questions for content reliability. I used interview responses, archival documents, and state reported information to serve as evidence of students' incivilities (Yin, 2014). I audio-taped each interview, transcribed the participant interviews verbatim, and stored data on my personal password-protected computer. I, alone, had access to my personal password-protected computer. I used field notes on a regularly basis, to log information for the study.

Documentation

Yin (2014) suggested documentation is one of the major six sources of case study evidence (in addition to archival records, interviews, physical artifacts, direct observation, and participant-observation). "Documents are stable, unobtrusive, exact, span time and many events (p. 102)." I used the following documentation for the study: (a) *Student Handbook* and *Code of Conduct* book (SHB & COC). The SHB and COC documents disciplinary policies and practices implemented by the school leadership, student incivilities that cause concern, and help to explore the inconsistency and lack of policy enforcement in the educational system; (b) personal communications, (c) staff training materials to explore administrators and teacher perceptions of and experiences with student incivilities, and (d) School Annual Reports from the past five school years, which documents a timeline of the problem being studied. Creswell (2013) referenced documentation as an unobtrusive source of information.

Data Analysis

According to Marshall and Rossman (2010), data collection and data analysis must be a simultaneous process in qualitative research. Hatch (2002) defined data

analysis as a systematic search for meaning that asks questions of the data. Primarily, qualitative data analysis classifies people and events, and the properties which characterize them. With interpretive data analysis, the researcher becomes an active participant in the research process. Merriam (2013) contended data analysis consists of making detailed description of the case and its context in case-study research. Janesick (2010) suggested the researcher use interpretive commentary related to the data as a checkpoint for data analysis. The researcher should lead the readers with themes; the data can speak for itself. Thus, data analysis consists of categorizing, examining, testing, tabulating, or otherwise recombining evidence, to draw empirically based conclusions (Yin, 2014).

For this study, I used interpretive data analysis: Hatch's (2002) steps to interpretive data analysis, among others. I (a) read the data for a sense of the whole; (b) reviewed research journals and/or bracketed protocols and record these in memos; (c) read the data, identified impressions, and recorded impressions in memos; (d) reread the data, coding places where interpretations are supported or challenged; (e) wrote a draft summary; (f) reviewed interpretations with participants; and (g) wrote a revised summary and identified excerpts that support interpretations. I created and organized files for the data (Creswell, 2013).

In addition to the data-analysis process, I used coding for the data. I used qualitative software NVivo 10 as a support of the data-analysis process. Some researchers believe there are advantages and disadvantages to using computer-assisted analysis tools (Creswell, 2013; Hatch, 2002). NVivo 10 is designed to save time by taking chunks of

data to be identified, retrieved, isolated, grouped, and regrouped for analysis. I used

Nvivo 10 as a support to organize and analyze documents, by coding at nodes or sets that

represent ideas, themes, people or places. The NVivo 10 assisted with creating memos to

capture observation and link them to the research and use a matrix to compare items and

identify patterns. According to Creswell (2013), the use of coding will help researchers

organize the material into a description of the setting or people and categories or themes.

Trustworthiness

As described earlier, the third principle of data collection (Yin, 2014) is to

maintain a chain of evidence to increase the reliability of the information. Using this

method makes it easy for the reader, an external observer, to follow the direction of the

evidence. I used the following strategies to ensure reliability of the study. First, I detailed

the focus of the study, the context in which the data was gathered, the participant's

position and criteria for selection, and the researcher's role in the Data Collection

(Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2014).

Secondly, I triangulated the data using multiple sources (interviews of

administrators and teachers and document analysis) when collecting the data. I used

member checking, solicitation of participants' views of the findings and interpretations. I

maintained contact with participants to ensure accuracy from the interviews (Merriam,

2014). Each participant was provided with my work, cell, and e-mail address. Using these

methods strengthens the reliability and validity of the study (Merriam, 2014). Lastly, I

gave a detailed description of the data-collection and -analysis strategies for clarification

of the methods used in the study. In order to deal with discrepancies, I reviewed the chain of evidence and contact the participants for verification of information.

Summary

This case study was to explore the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding consistency in discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities as related to Senge's five at JHS. I was responsible for each part of the study including, interviews, collection of documents, reliability, validity, and protecting the rights of the participants. I conducted interviews with the dean of students, principal, and teachers. The data collected were categorized and analyzed using a coding matrix I developed.

Section 4: Data Analysis and Presentation

Introduction

The problem addressed in this study was the inconsistency in discipline policies and practices as well as the high occurrences of student incivilities at JHS. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding consistency in discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities as they relate to Senge's (2014) five disciplines: systems thinking, mental models, team learning, shared vision, and personal mastery. In this section, the data are presented, along with a description of the strategies used for recording and analyzing the data. Data were collected through interviews with nine teachers and two administrators, internal communications review, and document analysis such as Student Handbook and Code of Conduct (SHB & COC), staff training materials, and staff meeting minutes. The findings are discussed and presented under 1 main research question and 3 subquestions. The research questions included the following:

Research Question 1. What are the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding consistency in discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities related to Senge's five disciplines?

Subquestion 1. What barriers, if any, do teachers and administrators have regarding consistency in discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities related to Senge's five disciplines?

Subquestion 2. How do teacher and administrator experiences at JHS influence their thinking as related to using Senge's five disciplines as a model to address consistency of discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities?

Subquestion 3. What characteristics of Senge's five disciplines are currently in place at JHS to address consistency of discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities?

The next section includes a discussion of the data collection process followed by the presentation of the findings.

Data Collection Process

Fifteen participants were recruited in February 2014. One participant became ill and was not interviewed. Each person was assigned a pseudonym. The participants were interviewed from February 20-24, 2014 during their prep hour. Three participants' interviews were disqualified due to their not being certified teachers. Therefore, a total of nine teachers and two administrators' interview responses were used to determine administrator and teacher perceptions of discipline policy and practices, as well as student incivilities as related to Senge's five disciplines (systems thinking, mental models, team learning, shared vision, and personal mastery).

The interviews were audio-recorded using two digital recorders. The interviews ranged from 11-minutes to 27-minutes in length. The audio-recorded interviews were downloaded to a password-protected file on my computer. The files were electronically sent to Verbal Ink (transcription company), and the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim. Verbal Ink signed a confidentiality agreement before they received

and transcribed the interviews. A hardcopy of the verbatim interview transcripts were e-mailed to me and stored in a secured file. I downloaded and printed hard copies of the interview transcripts and secured them in my locked file cabinet.

An interview journal was also used to take notes during the interviews (see Appendix B). I recorded the start and ending time, the date of interview, and the participant's number on the interview journal. Notes taken during participant one's interview, using the interview journal, also appears in Appendix B as a sample. All documentation will be destroyed after 5 years.

Data Analysis

To analyze the interview data, I used Hatch's (2002) interpretive data analysis. First, I read the data to get a sense of the whole. I used a research journal to keep immediate track of interview responses and referred back to it to make a connection between my thoughts and interview responses, recording notes in memos to analyze the data collected. I then reread the data, identified impressions, and recorded impressions in memos, coding places where interpretations were supported or challenged. I created and organized files for data and coded the data as well. Next I wrote a draft summary. I reviewed interpretations with interview participants, wrote a revised summary, and identified excerpts that supported interpretations.

For communications review, I read internal documents such as e-mails from the dean to all staff as well as e-mails from staff to the dean. The communication outlined thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and indications of issues concerning staff members. I created and organized files for communications and coded the communications as well.

For the document review, I collected documents such as the Student Handbook, Student Code of Conduct Book, staff meeting agendas and trainings, and School Annual Reports. The Student Handbook and Code of Conduct book outlined all the infractions, expectations for student's behavior, and the consequences for any infractions.

Findings

In this section, I report the outcomes from administrator and teacher interviews and the data collected as they related to the research questions. I conducted interviews with fourteen participants, with three interviews disqualified, leaving data from eleven interviews to answer the research questions. I also reviewed internal communications such as staff and discipline committee communications to provide answers to the research questions. The communication review addressed the overall perception of the school, provided insight into the mindset of individuals, pressing issues within the learning environment believed to be hindering progress at JHS, and updates regarding staff or discipline meetings.

Finally, I analyzed documents, including the Student Handbook, Student Code of Conduct Book, staff training materials, staff meeting agendas, and discipline policies and procedures to provide answers to the research questions. I analyzed the data to answer how the results from the study impacted a broader issue and how characteristics of Senge's (2006) five disciplines were used to address the inconsistency in discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities.

Perceptions: Research Question 1

Research question 1 asked. *"*What are the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding consistency in discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilitiesrelated to Senge's five disciplines*?"* Interview questions 5, 12, and 14, the review of internal communications, and the document analysis provided the data to answer Research Question 1. The themes that emerged from the main research question were *ineffective policies, communication structures,* and *classroom management and restorative justice.*

Theme 1: Ineffective policies and communication structures. The first theme that emerged was the perception of discipline policies and the way communications between administrators and teachers realigned. Data from interview questions 5 and 12, the communication review, and the document analysis contributed to this theme.

Interviews. The fifth interview question asked: "What is your perception of school discipline policies and practices effectiveness and what ways have communication structures, between administrators and teachers, been realigned to address student incivilities*?"* Six of the 11 participants (one administrator and five teachers) indicated the discipline policies and practices were ineffective and communications structures were not well aligned. J. Stout stated, "Well, my perception, first, is that the school the discipline policies that we have are not effective and I think that the communication structures between administrators and teachers are not very aligned."

The 12 interview question asked: *"What actions are taken by teachers to reinforce administrator's decisions, which balance each other's decisions, regarding*

discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities?" Four of the 11 participants (four teachers) indicated teachers and administrators do not reinforce each other's decisions. P. Ross felt there were no actions taken by teachers to enforce administrators' decisions by stating, "I can't speak of any actions that teachers are using to reinforce the administrators decisions." T. Harris agreed and stated, "I don't think there's reinforcement. Administrators harp on things that are not as important as what's occurring in the classroom."

      Communications review. I reviewed a memo from the dean to the staff as referenced in Appendix C. The memo indicates there existed a disconnect in communication structures between administrators and teachers regarding discipline. On January 21, 2014, a communication was sent to all staff, regarding the upcoming staff meeting. The dean referenced concerns that teachers were addressing with him. The dean stated that "teachers feel most write-ups were not seeing responses. Also, there was a continuous disregard for school rules by the students."

      Document analysis. The staff meeting minutes, student handbook, and student code of conduct book were analyzed regarding the theme of ineffective policies and communication structures. The staff meeting minutes had "behavior management" as an agenda item. The issues that were addressed were the lack of responses to teachers that have disciplined students for their incivilities. Due to the poor communication structures students are continuing to disregard school rules. The Student Handbook addressed 42 behavior infractions, while the Student Code of Conduct book addressed 55 infractions.

Theme 2: Classroom management. The second theme that emerged was that student incivilities occur due to poor classroom management and tools used to deter the behavior. Data from interview question 14, the communication review, and the document analysis contributed to this theme.

Interviews. Interview question 14 asked: *"How often does student incivility occur in the learning environment and what tools are currently being utilized, by administrators and teachers, to deter student incivilities?"* Eight of the 11 participants (two administrators and six teachers) indicated student incivilities occur daily and restorative justice is the tool being utilized to deter student incivilities. M. Dosler stated, "Students incivilities occur daily. We are starting to use Restorative Justice, but not as a whole." D. Smith agreed by stating, "Student incivilities occur daily and restorative justice is a really important piece of the puzzle that has been missing." Three of the 11 participants (three teachers) stated poor classroom management as the most obvious reason for student incivilities. P. Ross stated, "I would say about 10 percent of the staff gives about 90 percent of the work to our dean of students for constant behavior challenges instead of really fixing the challenges with the students." B. Bass continued this point by stating, "It's an overall understanding of the classroom by the teacher. It really depends upon the effectiveness in the teacher's particular level of communication with the kid."

Communications review. I reviewed a memo from the dean to the staff as referenced in Appendix C. The memo indicates there is an issue with students constantly being sent out of the classroom and discipline steps are not being followed. On October

1, 2009 a communication was sent to all staff regarding how students are constantly being sent to the dean's office. The dean stated, "Teachers must first try to resolve the issue with students in the classroom before sending them to the dean. If issues can't be resolved in the classroom, make sure to complete discipline form and send it to the dean."

Document analysis. The staff's meeting minutes and student infractions were analyzed regarding the theme of classroom management. The staff meeting minutes had "students outside of the classroom" as an agenda item. The issues that were addressed were too many students are being sent out the classroom for their incivilities, teachers need to use discipline forms, and hall sweeps were being conducted. Due to the poor classroom management there has been an increase in student incivilities and increased number of students out of classroom being sent to dean's office.

Barriers: Research Subquestion 1

Research subquestion 1 asked: "What barriers, if any, do teachers and administrators have regarding consistency in discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities related to Senge's five disciplines?" Interview questions 6, 9, 10, and 11, the review of internal communications, and the document analysis provided the data to answer Research Subquestion 1. The themes that emerged from the first research subquestion were *communication structures, discipline team and staff meetings, and discipline system.*

Theme 1: Communication Structures. The first theme that emerged was the type of dialogue that allows teachers to have input regarding discipline procedures. Data

from interview question 6, the communication review, and document analysis contributed to this theme.

Interviews. The sixth interview question asked: *"*What current dialogue is available for teachers to have input regarding discipline procedures and what are the procedures for notifying administrators, teachers, and students of discipline policy changes*?* Nine of the 11 participants (two administrators and seven teachers) indicated the discipline team is the current dialogue. J. Stout stated, "The dialogue between administrators and teachers regarding discipline procedures is; we have a discipline team." Nine of the 11(two administrators and seven teachers) participants indicated teachers and administrators are notified of discipline policy changes at the staff meetings. C. Mane stated, "As far as being notified, the only time maybe teachers are told is during staff meetings." Two of the 11 participants (two teachers) indicated the dialogue and notifications takes place through e-mail on district website. E. Nicey stated, "The district does a very good job, the district website is really pretty good. If there are any changes in policies and procedures there's correspondence to that goes out."

Communications review. I reviewed a memo from the dean to the staff as referenced in Appendix C. The memo indicates there existed a problem with the communication structures and this problem was affecting the staff regarding discipline. On January 28, 2012, a communication was sent to all staff, regarding the upcoming staff meeting. The dean stated, "All suggestions are welcomed to fixing communications issues regarding discipline."

Document analysis. The staff meeting minutes were analyzed regarding the theme of communication structures. The staff meeting minutes had "proper communication for discipline" as an agenda item. The issues that were addressed were everyone is not on the same page when it comes to discipline and the way discipline issues are communicated must improve. Due to the poor communication structures there is an increase in student incivilities.

Theme 2: Discipline Team and Staff Meetings. The second theme that emerged was the opportunities to address consistency of discipline policies, practices and student incivilities. Data from interview question 9, the communication review, and document analysis contributed to this theme.

Interviews. The ninth interview question asked: "What current opportunities exist for administrators and teachers to address consistency of discipline policy and practices as well as student incivilities*?* Nine of the 11 participants (two administrators and seven teachers) indicated the discipline team and staff meetings were opportunities to address consistency of discipline policies, practices as well as student incivilities. D. Smith stated, "We – at our teacher meetings, we have discussions about things like that, again, the discipline committee." Two of the 11participants (two teachers) indicated there were no existing opportunities, no consistency. T. Harris stated, "There are no opportunities, no consistency."

Communications review. I reviewed a memo from the dean to the staff as referenced in Appendix C. The memo indicated the recent increase in student incivilities calls for a closer look at the current discipline policies and more staff is needed for

discipline committee. On October 10, 2013, a communication was sent to all staff, regarding the upcoming staff meeting. The dean referenced discipline committee and discipline policies will be discussed at the upcoming staff meeting. The dean stated "we will be revisiting our discipline policies for possible changes. Staff is encouraged to join the discipline committee."

Document analysis. The staff meeting minutes were analyzed regarding the theme of discipline committee and staff meeting. The staff meeting minutes had "discipline" as an agenda item. The issues that were addressed were the increase in student incivilities, possible changes in current discipline policies, and staff joining the discipline committee. The discipline team will be responsible handling discipline policies and student discipline.

Theme 3: Discipline tracking systems and discipline team. The third theme that emerged was the system in place to analyze and use data to improve discipline policies, practices, as well as student incivilities. Data from interview question 10 and 11, the communication review, and document analysis contributed to this theme.

Interviews. The tenth interview question asked: "What systems are in place to analyze and use data to improve discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities*?* All of the 11 participants (two administrators and nine teachers) stated the discipline tracking system, MISTAR, is a system that is in place. M. Dosler stated, "I know that we recently started using more features in the MISTAR program- student visits and the behavior logs."

The eleventh interview question asked: "What systems allow for revisions of

current discipline policies and practices that are ineffective in addressing student

incivilities?*"* Six of the 11 participants (one administrator and five teachers) indicated the

discipline team and staff meetings are systems that allow for revision of ineffective

policies and practices. D. Smith stated, "Again, the school the discipline team and teacher

meetings." Five of the 11 participants (one administrator and four teachers) indicated

right before the beginning of the school year meeting is a system to address ineffective

discipline policies and practices. Z. Paider stated, "I guess we make revisions at in the

summertime before the school year starts, the discipline that meets is supposed to go over

those things."

Communications review. I reviewed a memo from the dean to the staff as

referenced in Appendix C. The memo indicated staff will be utilizing electronic

discipline forms, on MISTAR, which goes directly to the discipline team. On October 15,

2013, a communication was sent to all staff, regarding the upcoming staff meeting. The

dean stated using electronic discipline forms should help improve the discipline process.

Staff should see a faster response time from the discipline team.

Document analysis. The staff meeting minutes and discipline plan of action was

analyzed regarding the theme of discipline tracking systems and discipline team. The

staff meeting minutes had "electronic discipline forms" as an agenda item. The issues

were staff can utilize the MISTAR system to send discipline forms to the discipline team.

MISTAR keeps all data regarding discipline. The discipline team has a "holistic" view of

all student discipline data on one system. The discipline team can analyze the data to see

if any changes are necessary. The discipline plan of action gives a functional assessment and intervention plan of all data collected.

Experiences: Research Subquestion 2

Research subquestion 2 asked: *"How do teacher and administrator experiences at JHS influence their thinking related to using Senge's five disciplines as a model to address consistency of discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities?"* Interview questions 1, 3, and 4, the communication review, and document analysis provided the data to answer Research Subquestion 2. The themes that emerged from the second research subquestion were *learning environment, discipline committee, staff meetings, and restorative justice.*

Theme 1: Learning enviornment. The first theme that emerged was the type of learning environment teachers and administrators work in and how the teachers and administrators views of the learning environment affect the way they interact with other adminstrators and teachers, as well as students. Data from interview question 1, the communication review, and document analysis contributed to this theme.

Interviews. The first interview question asked: "What is your overall perception of the learning environment and in what ways does your perception affect the way you interact with administrators, teachers, and students?" Three of the 11participants (three teachers) indicated the learning environment was disorganized. J. Stout stated, "The learning environment here is much disorganized and it extremely affects how I deal with administration and other teachers." Four of the 11participants (four teachers) indicated the learning environment was not conducive to learning. A. Cleary stated, "The

environment, the type of school that we're classified as, the learning environment is not conducive to learning." Four of the 11participants (two administrator and two teachers) indicated the learning environment was chaotic. M. Dosler stated, "Well, I think the overall learning environment is a little chaotic." All of the 11 participants (two administrators and nine teachers) indicated their perception of the learning environment affects the way they interact with adminstrators, teachers, and students. However, they try to bond with the students. F. Barre stated, "It's an opportunity to bond with students."

Communications review. I reviewed a memo from the dean to the staff as referenced in Appendix C. The memo indicates student incivilities are increasing and students' academics are suffering. On February 10, 2011, a communication was sent to all staff, regarding the upcoming staff meeting. The dean referenced the increase in student incivilities and low scores on State assessments. The dean stated "we must address the 10-20 students per day being discipline and learning outcomes."

Document analysis. The discipline committee meeting minutes were analyzed regarding the theme of learning environment. The discipline committee meeting minutes had "behavior management" as an agenda item. The issues that were addressed were student in-school truancy and behavior modification. More intervention strategies are needed to modify student incivilities. Students do not learn when they are misbehaving and they hinder other students from learning as well.

Theme 2: Staff Meetings, Discipline Committee, and Restorative Justice. The second theme that emerged was the opportunities that administrators and teachers had to

address student incivilities. Data from interview questions 3 and 4, the communication review, and document analysis contributed to this theme.

    Interviews. The third interview question asked: *"What opportuninties are available for administrators and teachers to openly and productively address student incivilities?"* Five of the 11 participants (one administrator and four teachers) indicated they address student behavior at staff meetings. J. Stout stated, "The only opportunities that are presented here at this school is just during staff meetings." Two of the 11participants (two teachers) indicated the discipline committee is an opportunity to address student incivilities. E. Nicey stated, "We have a discipline team, so there are opportunities." Four of the 11 participants (one administrators and three teachers) indicated restorative justice was another opportunity to address student incivilities. PI-5 stated, "I work with the Safe and Supportive Schools and we do restorative justice."

    The fourth interview question asked: "How often do you address student incivilities and in what ways have you realigned your personal vision in order to be committed to the school's vision of reducing student incivilities?*"* Eight of the 11 participants (two administrators and six teachers) stated they address student incivilities daily and realign their personal vision by building a rappoire with the students. C. Mane stated, "I address these incivilities daily. I realign myself or my personal vision by building a rapport with them." Three of the 11participants (three teachers) stated they seldom have to address student incivilities. P. Ross stated, "I am properly prepared for class, I don't reach for those minor things that students may display."

Communications review. I reviewed a memo from the dean to the staff as referenced in Appendix C. The memo indicates there student incivilities continue to be an issue in the learning environment. On January 18, 2013, a communication was sent to all staff, regarding the upcoming staff and discipline committee meeting. The dean referenced student incivilities and using restorative justice. The dean stated "the discipline committee implemented restorative justice to help with student incivilities. We have to work together to decrease student incivilities."

Document analysis. The discipline committee meeting minutes and restorative justice program overview was analyzed regarding the theme of staff meeting, discipline committee, and restorative justice overview. The discipline committee meeting minutes had "behavior management" as an agenda item. The issue that was addressed was the proper utilization of restorative justice to help reduce student incivilities. The purpose of restorative justice is to resolve conflict and repair relationships. Utilizing restorative justice will decrease the number of students disciplined.

Characteristics: Research Subquestion 3

Research Subquestion 3 asked: "What characteristics of Senge's five disciplines are currently in place at JHS to address consistency of discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities?" Interview questions 2, 7, 8, 13, and 15, the review of internal communications, and document analysis provided the data to answer Research Subquestion 3. The themes that emerged from the third research subquestion were *mental models, personal mastery, shared vision, and team learning*.

Theme 1: Mental Models. The first theme that emerged was modeling behavior and how being a mental model helps reduce student incivilities. Data from interview question 2 contributed to this theme. No data from the Communication Review or Document Analysis addressed the theme of Mental Models.

Interviews. The second interview questions asked: "In what ways do you model behavior you want to see from administrators, teachers, and students and how does being a mental model help students to modify and improve their incivilities?*"* Nine of the 11 participants (two administrators and seven teachers) stated they model the behavior they want to see from their students, as well as administrators and fellow teachers. F. Barre stated, "I try to model behavior by professionalism –appearance, communication, relationships with administrators, staff, and students. Students pick up on that and mimic the behavior." Two of the 11 participants (two teachers) stated they stay positive and tell students what they need to know. T. Harris stated, "I just try and stay positive and not complain about every little occurrence. So I try to make sure they hear the truth."

Theme 2: Personal Mastery and Training Opportunities. The second theme that emerged was how administrators and teachers used knowledge gained during training to improve student incivilities. Data from interview question 15, the communication review, and document analysis contributed to this theme.

Interviews. The fifteenth interview question asked: "What training opportunities are administrators and teachers encouraged to attend and in what ways have you utilized knowldege gained during team learning to address and improve student incivilities?*"* Seven of the 11 participants (seven teachers) stated JHS has not offered many trainings

opportunities to staff concerning student invilities. D. Smith stated, "I don't see a whole lot of training opportunities as a staff to deal with discipline; encouraged to attend, as far as discipline, not so much." Four of the 11participants (two administrators and two teachers) stated they use prior knowledge to improve student behavior. C. Mane stated, "Truthfully, a lot of my knowledge I gained has been from previous training in teams that I had from previous schools."

Communications review. I reviewed a memo from the dean to the staff as referenced in Appendix C. The memo indicates there is lack of trainings regarding discipline. On October 15, 2013, a communication was sent to all staff, regarding the upcoming professional developments. The dean referenced training did not include discipline. The dean stated "we will be having training on differential learning, not discipline."

Document analysis. The staff meeting minutes was analyzed regarding the theme of personal mastery and training opportunities. The staff meeting minutes had "PD-differentiated instruction" as an agenda item. The issues that were addressed were all staff is expected to attend PD the morning of parent-teacher conferences. Any staff that has attended trainings on their own fill-out PD training logs.

Theme 3: Shared Vision. The third theme that emerged was how the participants worked together to implement or re-create a shared vision of reducing student incivilities. Data from interview question 7 and 8, the communication review, and document analysis contributed to this theme.

Interviews. Interview question 7 asked: "What steps have been taken to implement a shared vision for administrators and teachers in order to reduce student incivilities?*"* Eight of the 11 participants (twoadministrator and six teachers) stated the discipline team and restorative justice was a step to implement a shared vision. C. Mane stated, "I am part on the discipline team, so we have the shared vision between us." Three of the 11participants (three teachers) stated they weren't sure any steps were taken due to a high turnover with administrators. Z. Paider stated, "I'm not sure the steps have been taken and it could be due to the fact that there's been a change in administration every school year, new administration, new vision."

Interview question 8 asked: "What opportunities are given to administrators and teachers to re-create a collective vision for reducing student incivilities?*"* Eight of the 11 participants(two administrators and six teachers) stated the discipline committee has been an opportunity for teachers and administrators to re-create a collective vision. B. Bass stated, "We bring information into discipline committee meetings and work on it, and then take it to the teachers and their leadership staff." Three participants (teachers) stated there were slim opportunities for administrators and teachers to re-create a collective vision. J. Stout stated, "The opportunities are very slim. Administrators feel one way and teachers feel another way."

Communications review. I reviewed a memo from the dean to the staff as referenced in Appendix C. The memo indicates there existed disconnect in the school's mission and staff on reducing student incivilities. On October 28, 2013, a communication was sent to all staff, regarding the upcoming staff meeting. The dean referenced concerns

that teachers were addressing with him. The dean stated "at tomorrow's staff meeting the principal will be addressing the overall vision of the school. Staff please address any concerns you have at that time."

Document analysis. The staff meeting minutes was analyzed regarding the theme of shared vision. The staff meeting minutes had "principle's vision and goals" as an agenda item. The issues that were addressed were JHS had a new administrator and the staff was unclear of the vision. The discipline committee will be working closely with the new administrator and staff to make sure everyone is committed to the vision of reducing student incivilities.

Theme 4: Team Learning. The fourth theme that emerged was the opportunities for teachers and administrators to learn from each other and learn together to address student incivilities. Data from interview question 13, the communication review, and the document analysis contributed to this theme.

Interviews. Interview question 13 asked: "What training opportunities are available for administrators and teachers to learn from each other's expertise and work as a cohesive unit to address student incivilites?*"* Four of the 11participants (one administrator and three teachers) stated staff meetings were opportunities. P. Ross stated, "The great opportunity that we have for training is we have our staff meetings after school." Two of the 11participants (two teachers) suggested that restorative justice was an opportunity. D. Smith stated, "Restorative justice, I think it's a good place for teachers to learn." Three of the 11 participants (one administrator and two teachers) stated professional devlopment was an opportunity. C. Mane stated, "I would go back to

our professional developments that we have." Two of the 11participants (two teachers) stated professional learning communities (plc) were opportunities as well to learn from each other's expertise and work as a cohesive unit in addressing student incivilities. E. Nicey stated, "Professional learning communities, plcs, there are opportunities."

Communications review. I reviewed a memo from the dean to the staff as referenced in Appendix C. The memo indicates there is a need for staff to participant in professional developments, especially ones regarding discipline. On October 22, 2013, a communication was sent to all staff, regarding the upcoming staff meeting. The dean referenced concerns that teachers were addressing with him, regarding discipline trainings. The dean stated, "We are doing our best to bring more trainings regarding discipline." In the meantime, the discipline committee will be holding training on restorative justice during the discipline committee meeting. All staff is encouraged to attend."

Document analysis. The staff meeting minutes and restorative justice training materials was analyzed regarding the theme of team learning. The staff meeting minutes had "positive behavior support" as an agenda item. The issues that were addressed were the need for training in restorative justice and building relationships with students, to help reduce student incivilities. JHS implemented restorative justice practices as a positive way to address student behavior whiling restoring relationships.

Discrepant Cases

Discrepant cases are counter to themes uncovered during the data analysis process (Creswell, 2013). During the data analysis process, no discrepant cases were identified.

During member checking, the participants agreed the themes identified represented their responses correctly.

Evidence of Quality

Creswell (2013) stated that in qualitative research, validity is used to suggest whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher and participants. Merriam (2014) also stated qualitative researchers are the sole instrument for gathering, collecting, and analyzing data. Therefore, the researcher's interpretations of reality are accessed primarily through observation and interviews. In order to ensure credibility or evidence quality, I used different strategies to validate the accuracy of the findings. To validate the findings, I employed triangulation, using multiple sources to collect data such as in-depth interviews of administrators and teachers, unobtrusive data (Student Code of Conduct Book and Student Handbook, staff training materials, and staff meeting minutes), and internal communication review. I triangulated the data by comparing the administrator and teacher interview responses, document analysis, and communication review to determine the areas of agreement as well as the areas of differences. I also employed member checking, having participants review their interview transcripts for data accuracy and trustworthiness. The participants decided to receive and review their interview transcripts electronically. In April 2014, I sent the participants an electronic copy of their interview transcripts. After reviewing their interview transcripts, they sent an e-mail stating "approved, no discrepancies were noted." I used Hatch's (2002) interpretive data analysis along with color coding and categorizing the data into themes and checking for the existence of discrepant cases.

Conclusion

In Section 4, the findings of in-depth interviews, communication review, and document analysis were summarized. Review of the research questions and subquestions, data collection process, and data analysis methods were also included.

Most participants interviewed agreed and stated, "The learning environment was chaotic and not conducive to learning." The participants also agreed the only opportunities they had to collectively and openly address student incivilities were the discipline committee and staff meetings. Furthermore, the participants believed building relationships with students, modeling behavior for students, and restorative justice can be used as a deterrent to student incivilities. The major themes that emerged were: (a) ineffective policies and communication structures, (b) classroom management, (c) communication structures (d) discipline committee and staff meetings (e) discipline tracking systems and discipline committee (f) learning environment (g) staff meetings, discipline committee, and restorative justice (h) mental models (i) shared vision (j) team learning and (k) personal mastery and training opportunities. During the study, no discrepant cases were identified. During member checking, the participants agreed the themes identified represented their responses correctly. Section 5 presents a more detailed discussion of the one main research questions and three subquestions of the study. Section 5 also includes the interpretations of the findings, implication for social change, and recommendations for action and further research.

Section 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The problem addressed in this study was the inconsistency in discipline policies and practices as well as the high occurrences of student incivilities at JHS. This study explored the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding consistency in discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities as related to Senge's (2014) five disciplines (mental models, personal mastery, shared vision, system thinking, and team learning). This study also explored whether Senge's five disciplines were a viable instructional framework in the educational system.

The data were collected using a qualitative case study approach. Triangulation was used and data were collected through in-depth interviews, a review of internal communications, and analysis of documents such as Student Code of Conduct Book and Student Handbook, and School Annual Reports. The participants were Grade 9-12 teachers and administrators at JHS.

Interpretation of the Research Findings

The conceptual framework for this study was Senge's five disciplines, with systems thinking being the principal one. According to Senge (2006), "systems thinking combines the disciplines, incorporating them into a comprehensive body of theory and practice" (p. 12). Senge's five disciplines provide a framework to understanding interrelationships among individuals, organizations, and larger delivery systems. The interpretation of the findings were based on how they were related to the conceptual framework and themes in the literature review.

Main Research Question

The main research question addressed the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding consistency in discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities as related to Senge's five disciplines. The themes that emerged from the main research question were ineffective policies, communication structures and classroom management. The main perceptions were the discipline policies and practices were ineffective, due to poor communication structures and poor classroom management. Six of the 11 participants indicated the discipline policies and practices were ineffective and communications structures were not well aligned. Along with consistent policies to govern the behaviors of students, school leadership and teachers must implement consistent disciplinary practices.

Four of the 11 participants indicated teachers and administrators do not reinforce each other's decisions. Policies and practices of organizations should embody shared values and provide focus and meaning for its members (Kouzes & Posner, 2010; Sergiovanni, 2012). Without a pardigm shift towards consistency, policy enforcement, and systematic thinking, problems such as student incivilities will arise in the educational system (Plank, Bradshaw, & Young, 2009). According to Senge (2014), by realigning communications structures the patterns of behavior will change. Additionally, to display personal mastery it is important for school leadership to realign their communication structures to change patterns of behavior.

The use of Senge's five disciplines is useful as a worthwhile conceptual framework to support this paradigm shift towards consistency and consensus (Joseph &

Reigeluth, 2010). Therefore, a practical application in schools would be to utilize Senge's (2014) five disciplines as trainings and a permanent model to govern behaviors, consistency in discipline policies, pratices, and communication structures.

Research Subquestion 1

The first research subquestion addressed the barriers that teachers and administrators have regarding consistency in discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities as they relate to Senge's five disciplines. The themes that emerged from the research question were communication structures, discipline committee, and staff meetings, and discipline tracking systems. The main barrier at JHS was that their communications structures were only as effective as the committees they have in place. JHS is limited to having dialogue regarding changes to discipline policies and practices at staff meetings, discipline committee, and some e-mail communications. Additionally, JHS utilizes electronic discipline forms that send discipline notifications immmediately to the dean and discipline committee without teacher's input.

Nine of the 11 participants indicated the discipline team is the vehicle for dialogue regarding discipline, and teachers and administrators are notified of discipline policy changes at staff meetings. Two of the 11 participants indicated the dialogue and notifications take place through e-mail on the district website. Senge et al. (2000) believed, through dialogue and discussion, groups of people transform their collective thinking, learning to circulate their energies and actions to achieve universal goals.

In a learning organization, inteacting as a part of a group and using an open dialogue can be useful to improving the learning environment. With dialogue, team

members feel a part of the whole (Senge, 2014). Therefore, a practical application in schools would be to utilize multiple sources of consistent, open dialogue and have systems in place to address consistency regarding discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities.

Research Subquestion 2

The second research subquestion addressed how teachers' and administrators' experiences at JHS influence their thinking as it relates to using Senge's five disciplines as a model to address consistency of discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities. The themes that emerged were learning environment, staff meetings, discipline committee, and restorative justice. The main experience described was the phenomenon of working in an learning environment which was chaotic and not conducive to learning, where student incivilities occur daily and are addressed during staff meetings, discipline committee, and the use of restrorative justice. Further, it was emphasized that these experiences affect the way staff interact with each other as well as students.

Four of the 11 participants indicated the learning environment was not conducive to learning as well as chaotic. The more students display undesirable behavior, the less comfortable it is for teachers to teach. As research points out this is a leading cause for teacher burn-out (Cha & Cohen-Vogel, 2011). Student incivilities increase as teachers become exhausted from trying to address the negative behaviors. This deterioration in the classroom leads to teacher exhaustion and teacher frustration (Clunies-Ross, Little, & Kienhuis, 2008; Osher, et al., 2010).

Eleven of the 11 participants indicated their perception of the learning environment affects the way they interact with administrators, teachers, and students. Palmer (2010) stated it is in the teacher's hand to create learning environments. An effective teacher understands sources of the intent and act of creating learning environments. Using intrinsic behavior motivators to deter discipline problems has proven to be affective (Banks, 2014).

According to Gut and McLaughlin (2012) when school leadership decreases the number and degree of incivilities, the learning environment will improve. Banks (2014) agreed positive learning environments reduce student incivilities. Therefore, a practical application would be for teachers and administrators to use Senge's five disciplines as a model to address consistency of discipline policies and practices as well as deterring student incivilities.

Research Subquestion 3

The third research subquestion addressed the characteristics of Senge's five disciplines that are currently in place at JHS to address consistency of discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities. The themes that emerged were mental models, personal mastery, shared vision, and team learning. Nine of the 11 participants stated they model behavior they want to see from the students and the students mimic the teacher's behavior. Displaying the appropriate behavior is necessary for effective teaching and makes students feel valued (Baloglu, 2009). The participants' behavior is also modeled for administrators and teachers.

Four of the 11 participants stated professional learning communities were opportunities to learn from each others' expertise. According to Senge (2014) people can retain their individuality while their efforts will move in a common direction. Less time and effort is spent on reaching common goals, because they completely understand each other. Eight of the 11 participants stated they implement a shared vision during discipline committee and restorative justice meetings. Hallinger and Heck (2010a) noted school leadership mobilizes staff with a shared vision that is conducive to learning and nurturng for the growth of students.

Other than restorative justice training, there has been no opportunity for team learning in the areas of classroom management and discipline practices. Four of the 11 participants stated they use prior knowledge gained from past trainings and personal mastery to improve student incivilities. Team learning builds on personal mastery and shared vision. One person alone cannot handle the enormous task of leading schools; it has to be a team effort. Leon (2008) confirmed that without a common aim, no system would exist.

Senge (2014) pointed out that initiatives are not the answer to needed change. However, what the school system needs is a new approach to guide that change. Fullan (2010) stated organizations need to develop strategies and trainings to develop more "system thinkers in action," which will change the system. Mullen and Hutinger (2008) agreed principals must make professional development of teachers a priority. Therefore, a practical application would be for JHS to utilize Senge's five disciplines as a model for

staff to work, learn, and attend trainings as a cohesive unit, in order to change the present environment as well as student incivilities.

Implications for Social Change

This study contributes to research on urban high schools by highlighting administrator and teacher practices which address consistency of discipline policies and practices and changing student incivilities. Little research has focused exclusively on addressing consistency of discipline policies, practices, and student incivilities as they relate to Senge's five disciplines. According toYin (2014), research is systematic, critical, and self-critical inquiry that aims to contribute to the advancement of knowledge and wisdom. This study contributes to the body of knowledge by exploring the perceptions of teachers and administrators regarding the use of Senge's five disciplines as a model to address systemic disciplinary policies and practices as well as student incivilities.

On a local level, this study may serve as a model for JHS's leadership, by helping the leadership manage a more systematic approach (Senge, 2014) in understanding how their decisions impact the entire school. Local application could also help improve consistency with discipline policies and practices and reduce student incivilites through implementing Senge's five disciplines as a model and a yearly training in which to govern JHS's school system. Not only will JHS administrators, teachers, and support staff have a true understanding of Senge's five disciplines; they could be effective in implementing Senge's five disciplines in their everyday practices.

This study will bring social change by highlighting administrator and teacher practices that motivate students to change their incivility, through the use of Senge's five

disciplines. Social significance of this study will (a) expand the knowledge of Senge's

five disciplines to approach problems without focusing on expediency, (b) understand

how to align the communication structure to change patterns of behavior, and (c) help

expand the understanding of how to deal with incivilities to improve the learning

environment. A possible social change outcome of this study may be for school systems

to develop workshops that will utilize Senge's five disciplines to promote the

development of positive learning environments conducive in decreasing student

incivilities and increasing student achievement.

Recommendations for Action

After careful consideration of the results from this study, recommendations were

formulated for practical application in the following areas: school district, administrators,

and teachers. I recommend the school district implement district-wide trainings which

includes Senge's (2014) five disciplines. I further recommend the school district

implement monthly professional developments, on a weekday. During the interviews,

most participants stated they do not attend weekend professional developments.

For administrators, I recommend the implementations of regular trainings to

include classroom management and positive behavior interventions for all staff members.

Bradshaw, Mitchell, and Leaf (2010) believed decreasing student incivilities requires

implementing positive behavioral interventions and support. I further recommend the

implementation of trainings to include Senge's five disciplines as a holistic approach and

model to reduce/change student incivilities. The school system needs a new approach to

guide that change (Senge, 2014).

For teachers, I recommend utilizing Senge's five disciplines in everyday practices. Team learning aligns and develops the capacities of a team to create the results its members truly desire (Senge, 2014). Therefore, I further recommend that teachers join the discipline committee to ensure a more collective input with discipline policies, practices, and student incivilities.

Recommendations for Further Study

Although studies have been conducted regarding student incivilities, there has been a paucity of literature that relates discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities to Senge's (2014) five disciplines. The lack of research and the findings from this study suggest further research is needed within the areas of discipline policies, practices, and communication structures.

Comparative Qualitative Studies

Future research in the area of teacher and adminstrator perceptions regarding discipline seems to be warranted. A qualitative approach could be used employing an interview to explore the perceptions of middle school teachers, administrators, and students regarding discipline policies, practices, and student incivilities. Questions of inquiry could include perceptions of the learning environment, discipline policies, and practices.

A quantitative approach could also be used by employing a survey with a 5-point Likert-type scale, with responses ranging from *disagree strongly* to *agree strongly*, to see how middle school teachers and students differ in their perceptions of discipline policies and practices. Questions of inquiry could include how teachers and students tend to differ

in the way they view discipline policies and practices and each other, as well as the learning environment as a whole.

A mixed methods approach could be used employing a survey to compare teacher and administrator perceptions of the current communication structure with follow-up interviews with a sample of teachers to explore the issues in depth. Questions of inquiry could include what forms of communication structures are in place and the effectiveness of communication structures. The targeted population could be middle school administrators, teachers, and students.

Researcher's Reflection

In 2006, I entered the Doctorate of Education program at Walden University. I was told it was a 3-year program, only nine semesters. I was a little apprehensive about an online program, especially one that only allowed me to take one class a semester. This degree would be the first degree I received online. I was accustomed to face to face contact, with my instructors being available when I needed them.

In the beginning, my focus of my study was concerning "attitudes." I had a preconceived idea that teachers', administrators', and students' attitudes were the cause of student incivilities. The more I researched and studied the problem of high student incivilities; I realized the cause of the problem was a combination of perceptions and reactions to people in the learning environment, as well as ineffective policies and practices. I researched theories and read research studies on how to improve the problem and organization. This is how I was introduced to Senge's five disciplines.

My study evolved into studying the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding discipline policy, practices, and student incivilities as they relate to Senge's five disciplines. I knew I had to interview administrators and teachers, in order to get a full understanding of their perceptions regarding discipline policy, practices, and student incivilities. I thought teachers would be reluctant to participate in fear of losing their jobs or some form of retaliation from administrators.

Student incivilities were a continuous concern in my work environment. Therefore, I thought it would only be appropriate to conduct my study in my work environment. The interviewees were my coworkers and supervisor. I did not want them to participate if they felt obligated to do so. I invited them to participate in my study. I was surprised how they were more than willing to participate because of the subject matter. My experience shaped my belief that any organization can improve by having effective communication structures, policies and practices, and proper training of staff.

Conclusion

The problem addressed in this study was the inconsistency in discipline policies and practices as well as the high occurrence of student incivilities at JHS. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding consistency in discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities as they related to Senge's five disciplines, interpret and apply those perceptions to the local problem, and make recommendations to the school district, administrators, and teachers. The research questions for this study addressed the perceptions of administrators and teachers regarding consistency in discipline policies and practices as well as student

incivilities as they relate to Senge's five disciplines, the barriers administrators and teachers have regarding consistency in discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities as they relate to Senge's five disciplines, how administrators' and teachers' experiences at JHS influence their thinking in regards to using Senge's five disciplines as a model to address consistency of discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities, and the characteristics of Senge's five disciplines currently being utilized at JHS to address consistency of discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities. Research was conducted using personal interviews, communication review, and document analysis.

The findings of this study indicated the main perceptions were the discipline policies and practices were ineffective, due to poor communication structures and poor classroom management. The main barriers at JHS were that their communications structures were only as effective as the committees they have in place. JHS is limited to having dialogue regarding changes to discipline policies and practices at staff meetings, discipline committee, and some e-mail communications. The main experiences for staff were working in a chaotic learning environment which is not conducive to learning, student incivilities occur daily and are addressed during staff meetings, discipline committee, and restrorative justice, and these experiences affect the way staff interact with each other as well as students. The characteristics of Senge's five disciplines being utilized at JHS were (a) mental models-participants model behavior they want to see from the students and the students mimic the teacher's behavior, (b) personal mastery-participants use prior knowledge gained from past trainings (c) shared vision- participants

implemented a collective vision during discipline committee and restorative justice

meetings, and (d) team learning-restorative justice, discipline committee, staff meetings,

and professional learning communities were opportunities to learn from each others

expertise. A possible social change outcome of this study may be for school systems to

develop workshops that will utilize Senge's five disciplines to promote the development

of positive learning environments conducive to decreasing student incivilities and

increasing student achievement.

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Appendix A: Administrator and Teacher Interview Questions

Study Title: Perceptions of Discipline Policy, Practices, and Student Incivilities
Related to Senge's Five Disciplines

Date:

Time:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Study Description: The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of
teachers and administrators regarding consistency in discipline policies and
practices as well as student incivilities as they relate to Senge's five disciplines
(mental models, personal mastery, shared vision, systems thinking, and team
learning).

Questions

Mental Models

• What is your overall perception of the learning environment? In what
ways does your perception affect the way you interact with administrators,
teachers, and students?

• In what ways do you model behavior you want to see from administrators,
teachers, and students? In what ways does being a mental model help
students modify and improve their incivilities?

• What opportunities are available for administrators and teachers to openly
and productively address student incivilities?

Personal Mastery

- How often do you address student incivilities? In what ways have you

    realigned your personal vision in order to be committed to the schools

    vision of reducing student incivilities?

- What is your perception of school discipline policies and practices

    effectiveness? In what ways have communication structures, between

    administrators and teachers, been realigned to address student incivilities?

- What current dialogue is available for teachers to have input regarding

    discipline procedures? What is the procedure for notifying administrators,

    teachers, and students of discipline policy changes?

Shared Vision

- What steps have been taken to implement a shared vision for

    administrators and teachers in order to reduce student incivilities?

- What opportunities are given to administrators and teachers to re-create a

    collective vision for reducing student incivilities?

- What current opportunities exist for administrators and teachers to address

    consistency of discipline policy and practices as well as student

    incivilities?

Systems Thinking

- What systems are in place to analyze and use data to improve discipline

    policies and practices as well as student incivilities?

- What systems allows for revisions of current discipline policies and practices that are ineffective in addressing student incivilities?

- What actions are taken by teachers to reinforce administrator's decisions, which balance each other decisions, regarding discipline policies and practices as well as student incivilities?

Team Learning

- What training opportunities are available for administrators and teachers to learn from each other expertise and work as a cohesive unit to address student incivilities?

- How often does a student incivility occur in the learning environment? What tools are currently being utilized, by administrators and teachers, to deter student incivilities?

- What training opportunities are administrators and teachers encouraged to attend in order to properly address student incivilities? In what ways have you utilized knowledge gained during team learning to improve student incivilities?

Appendix B: Interview Journal

Questions	Participant: J. Stout Date: Feb. 20, 2014 Start Time: 1:00 Answers/Notes Stop Time: 1:12
Q1	learning environment disorganize, distressed
Q2	try to be prepared, led by example
Q3	staff meetings
Q4	daily incivilities, cursing is a huge issue
Q5	effectiveness, policy not effective, students don't mind consequences, need stricter rules
Q6	dialogue, discipline team doesn't communicate to all staff
Q7	referral form
Q8	administrators and teachers not on same page
Q9	inconsistency leads to more incivilities
Q10	tracking system, not sure how it works
Q11	no systems in place, no funding for In-School Suspension (ISS), parents not accountable, politics run school
Q12	no response
Q13	no training during the week, want teachers to attend weekend professional developments
Q14	daily incivilities, referral done online, no real deterrents for student incivilities
Q15	no real trainings, knowledge gained through own know-how more individualized

Appendix C: Communication Review

Date	Communication Source	Description of Communication
10/1/09	Personal Communication from Dean	Lack of policy enforcement
10/30/09	JHS Weekly Review	Student Incivilities Increased
01/20/11	Personal Communication from Dean	Student Incivility Concerns
02/10/11	Personal Communication from Dean	Student incivilities
02/27/11	Personal Communication from Dean	Teacher Safety Concerns
01/28/12	Personal Communication from Dean	High occurrence of Student incivilities
1/19/2013	Discipline Team Communications	Positive Behavior Support
10/22/2013	Staff Meetings Communications	Positive Behavior Support
11/12/2013	Staff Meetings Communications	Positive Behavior Support
11/15/2013	Discipline Team Communications	Discipline Forms
11/19/2013	Staff Meeting Communications	Behavior Management
01/10/14	Staff Meetings Communications	Behavior Management
1/21/2014	Staff Meetings Communications	Behavior Management
02/21/14	Discipline Team Communications	Intervention Strategies

Appendix D: Document Analysis

Restorative Justice Program Overview

Restorative Justice Referral Process

Discipline Referral Form

Discipline Plan of Action Form

Student Handbook

Staff meeting minutes