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# Middle school teachers' perceptions of barriers of managing student behavior

Winifred Nicole Whitlock  
*Walden University*

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April 2012

Abstract

Middle School Teachers' Perceptions of Barriers of Managing Student Behavior

by

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M.Ed., Albany State University, 2000

B.A., Albany State College, 1993

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Teacher Leadership

Walden University

April 2012

## Abstract

Despite training and support, many middle school teachers struggle to create, implement, and enforce research-based strategies to manage students' behaviors. The purpose of this case study was to examine teachers' perceptions about the barriers of managing student behavior. The research questions investigated 9 teachers' perceived barriers of managing student behavior at one middle school and the observed actions of these teachers' reactions to student behavior. Each participant was asked to participate in a 45-minute semistructured interview to examine their perceived barriers of managing student behavior and the strategies they use to manage student behavior relative to McGregor's theories X and Y. To support and compare teachers' perceived barriers, each participant was also observed teaching for two 45 minutes sessions. Interpretative data analysis strategies were used to read, review, record, and code the transcribed data from the interview transcripts and observation field notes. Predetermined and developed themes were triangulated from the interviews, observations, and review of literature. Findings revealed that the inconsistency among school administrators and the lack of support from parents as well as teachers were barriers for managing student behavior. Mutual experience shared among participants and the data collected indicated a need for professional learning for teachers and administrators in the area of student management. Results from this study will promote positive social change by providing insight on the barriers educators need to overcome to manage student behavior and the existing strategies that are being used. Furthermore, the results of this study could aid in reducing teacher burn out and teacher retention rate as well as increasing teacher morale.



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## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this degree to my children, Cartavia and Carterion, who believed in me when everyone else thought that it was just a dream. In addition to their beliefs, they completed a 7-day fast as I worked on my paper and we prayed. They never complained when I missed rehearsals, practices, or did not go out when we were supposed to be vacationing. If you were to ask my children who their role model is, they would say, "My Mama."

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank God for being with me every step of the way. He provided me with patience, endurance, and strength to complete this dissertation.

I am so grateful to my husband who did not complain about the dirty house, lack of home cooked meals, and the late nights that I worked on my paper. Thank you honey and I love you!

I would like to thank Dr. Schroll, my chair, who spent countless hours making sure that I did what I was supposed to do to get approved. Thank you for the phone calls, many emails, and supportive feedback. I would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Welch and Dr. Teresa Dillard, who guided me through this tedious process. I know that without the help of my chair and committee members, I would not have been able to complete this dissertation.

I would like to thank my friend Pamela Taylor, who peer edited my assignments and my proposal. Additionally, I would like to thank the school system for allowing me to conduct my research in one of their schools.

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## Section 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Background of the Study**

Managing student behavior in a structured learning environment (SLE) is a major issue for middle school teachers, especially new teachers (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Marzano, 2007; Wong & Wong, 2009). According to Danielson (2007), planning and preparation were key components of managing student behavior. Wong and Wong confirmed that students were aware when teachers were not prepared for class and the students took advantage of that lack of preparation. With the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 came the new Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) for students and more accountability for teachers (Georgia Department of Education, 2001). To help students understand the new standards, teachers had to teach students how to apply, analyze, and synthesize what they have learned (Krathwohl & Anderson, 2010), which meant planning for more hands-on and project-based learning activities in their classrooms. Duhaney (2005) confirmed that teachers must carefully plan each lesson as this fosters a clearer understanding of what students are expected to accomplish.

Effective teaching and classroom management skills are critical components in the teaching and learning environment. Teachers who are able to manage student behavior have students that perform better than teachers who do not (Canter & Canter, 2009; Larrivee, 2009; Wong & Wong, 2009). Well planned instructional strategies encourage participation and motivation, which decreases behavior problems (Larrivee, 2009). According to Wong and Wong (2009), teachers should prepare instruction as well

as assessments and create structured learning environments to maximize student learning. Multiple researchers have identified strategies for educators to prepare and manage student behavior (Canter & Canter, 2009; Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Frey, Lingo, & Nelson, 2008; Marzano, 2007; Tauber, 2007).

My goal was to examine what barriers exist for middle school teachers when trying to manage student behavior. Barriers identified by Hendley and Lock (2007) included (a) lack of administrative support, (b) lack of alignment of classroom and school rules, (c) funding, (d) teacher burnout, (e) class size, (f) lack of professional learning, and (g) lack of positive parental involvement. However, few researchers focused on middle grade teachers and student behavior. Middle school students are unique in that they are learning to be self-sufficient, seek individuality, and distrust relationships with parents and teachers (Sullo, 2007). All of these characteristics of the middle school learner influence their behaviors, and there is a need to continue to study teacher management of student behavior at the middle grade level.

### **Problem Statement**

The problem at the school under study, located in southwest Georgia, is that many of the teachers are struggling with managing student behavior (P. English, personal communication, March 7, 2010). Student office referrals steadily increased over the last 2 years, which indicated a trend of disruptive behavior was occurring. Sprick and Daniels (2010) wrote that it is the administrators' responsibility to ensure, by providing training and other tools, that teachers are managing student behaviors. During the principal's

informal and formal observations of the school being studied, the principal had documented evidence of students being disrespectful to teachers and other students, as well as some teachers ignoring these unacceptable behaviors (P. English, personal communication, March 7, 2010). This problem is one that many schools face (Dinkes, Kemp, & Baum, 2009).

Sugai and Homer (2006) suggested four reasons why teachers are not properly managing student behavior: (a) inconsistent school-wide and classroom rules, (b) teachers lacking the ability to implement as well as practice rituals and routines throughout the school year, (c) lack of professional training, and (d) lack of administrative and parental support. My study contributes to the body of knowledge needed to address teachers' lack of ability to manage student behavior by identifying and investigating teachers' perceived barriers of managing student behavior as well as observing teachers' classroom practices to identify possible causes for behavioral issues in the classroom. The results of this study raise awareness of this problem, identify specific issues, and provide educators and school leaders with strategies to manage student behaviors. In addition, this study provides administrators with data to make informed decisions about how to address the problem.

### **Background of the Problem**

Managing student behavior is a national and local problem. To reduce teacher shortage, increase student achievement, and maintain a viable curriculum, teachers need assistance in the area of managing student behavior (American Federation of Teachers,

2007; National Educational Association, 2008). The National Center for Education (NCES), which reports data with a .05 significance level from a combination of students, teachers, and principals on school crime and student safety, indicated that 18% of public schools reported that students disrespected teachers daily, 9% of the schools reported verbal abuse to teachers, and 3% reported sexual harassment (Dinkes et al., p.69, 2009). Thirty-five percent of public and private school teachers reported that student misbehaviors, tardiness, and cutting class interfered with their teaching and other students' learning (Dinkes et al, 2009). According to the NCES of 2008 (Dinkes et al., 2009) there were 1.7 million victims (ages 12-18) of nonfatal crimes at school. Dinkes et al. (2009) believed that an increase in minor or nonfatal classroom discipline problems enhances more serious discipline issues, such as vandalism, school rapes, fights, and guns. Any incidents that negatively interrupted the learning environment affected student achievement (Wong & Wong, 2009).

For more than 40 years, researchers reported that the lack of managing student behavior was one of the culprits of teacher burnout and shortage, low academic gains, and an increased need for professional learning communities (Canter & Canter, 2009; Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008; Wong & Wong, 2009). According to the South West Georgia Regional Educational Agency's (SW-RESA; 2009) need assessment, 53% of the school systems reported that teachers need training in managing student behavior (SW-RESA). Smith and Bondy (2007) stated that no matter what behavioral strategy a teacher used, some students continued to be defiant. Understanding

teachers' perceived barriers of handling student behavior might aide in decreased office referrals and increased student achievement (Gregory, 2005).

### **Nature of the Study**

I used a qualitative inquiry to collect, analyze, and interpret research through a case study design. Case study research focuses on a process, an activity, or an event of one or more individuals (Creswell, 2007). In addition, the cases are often bound together by time and activity (Creswell, 2007); whereas, my study was bounded by the perceptions of middle school teachers' barriers of managing student behavior, the participants' place of employment, and the students of the school under study. I conducted semistructured interviews with nine participants from the middle school under study to understand and explain each participant's perceived obstacles of managing student behaviors. I utilized the field notes from my classroom observations to explain the observable barriers of managing student behavior. Another characteristic of case studies is that the researcher as well as participants' perspectives and interpretations contribute to understanding the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2009).

According to Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2009), case study data can be collected in several ways: (a) field notes, (b) surveys, (c) quantitative measures, (d) interviews, (e) peer observer, (f) video and audiotaping, (g) reflective journals, and (h) documents in related literature. First, I obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), approval number 10-14-11-0085610 (Appendix A), and followed all procedures set by the IRB to protect the rights of my participants. Then, I emailed (see Appendix B) the

principal at the school under study to gain access to the classrooms to interview (during noninstructional time) and observed teachers. I then emailed (see Appendix C) all of the teachers, except the sixth grade teachers, at the school under study and asked them to be a part of my study. I was a sixth grade teacher at the school under study and I avoided conflict with my research by not including the sixth grade teachers. I wanted a minimum of nine teachers to volunteer to be a part of my study. The emails included detailed information of the purpose statement and research questions. I shared with the participants the intentions of collecting the data needed for my study and the process that I would utilize to protect their identity.

In Phase 1, I conducted one 30 to 45 minute interview with each of the nine participants about the perceived barriers of managing student behavior, what they needed to manage student behaviors, and strategies they practiced to overcome some of the barriers faced when trying to manage student behavior. I asked open-ended questions that focused on predetermined themes, such as lack of parental support, time management, lack of professional training, and strategies of managing student behaviors. I analyzed the data to see if new themes evolved. To ensure validity and reliability, I audiotaped and transcribed the interviews. I allowed the participants to review the transcribed interviews for any discrepancies. I utilized the results of the interviews to analyze teachers' beliefs and perceptions of the barriers they faced when managing student behavior and developed common themes, as well as noted nonthemes.

In Phase 2, I observed each participant's classroom twice for 45 minutes. After each observation, I conducted a 5 to 10 minute informal interview with each participant to clarify my field notes. I utilized the observational field notes to support and compare the analyzed transcribed interviews of each participant. The transcribed interviews and field notes were stored on a data stick and placed into a locked safe at my home.

Hatch (2002) stated that inductive analysis is best used when researchers want to “emphasize the discovery of meaning” (p.179), and inductive analysis was not recommended for studies that depended mainly on interviewing as a source of collecting data. I utilized interpretative analysis strategies to analyze each participant's interviews and observations. I coded what the participant was doing, what the participant said, and what went on during the time of the interviews and observations. The words and phrases that were consistently used by participants were used to enhance predetermined themes/units and develop new themes. In addition, I coded the strategies that teachers used to prevent behavior problems, the physical classroom setting, and what students were doing during instruction time. I used the themes to describe what and how the experiences of the participants created barriers for managing student behavior. In addition, the themes were used to suggest recommendation of overcoming the barriers for managing student behavior.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to identify and examine middle school teachers' perceived barriers of managing student behaviors. The data collected was used to

improve current educational issues that were directly related to the lack of managing student behavior. I desired to use the data collected, literature on managing student behavior, and McGregor's theories X and Y (1960) to help teachers increase student achievement and manage student behaviors.

I examined and analyzed the barriers that middle school teachers come across when trying to manage student behavior. I used research based practices to communicate to the teaching profession how to overcome the perceived barriers that teachers encountered when trying to create a structured learning environment. I recommended strategies to overcome the barriers of managing student behavior. The main objective was to provide research that helped teachers seek help from other teachers to become effective classroom managers. Recommendations of this study provided novice and veteran teachers with professional learning activities that help to decrease students' inappropriate behaviors and increase achievement. This study provided help to (a) student teachers and students pursuing degrees in education, (b) principals and mentors of new teachers, and (c) novice and veteran teachers who had classroom management skills that worked for most of their students but needed to enhance or add strategies for a small number of students.

### **Research Questions**

According to Creswell (2009), questions in a case study approach inquire about the qualitative rather than the quantitative factors of human beings. I examined the participants' beliefs, thoughts, and experiences of managing student behavior in a

learning environment. Through in-depth interviews, comprehensive observations, and accurate accounts of documented records, I sought to find answers to the following questions:

1. At the school under study, what were middle school teachers' perceived barriers for effectively managing students' behaviors in the classroom-learning environment?
2. What behavior problems were occurring in the classrooms of the teachers in the school under study?
3. What current practices were being employed by teachers at the school under study to prevent or address student behavior concerns?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Educational professionals need to understand teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes about the obstacles of managing student behavior, so professional learning and support can focus on meeting the needs of these teachers and addressing their barriers. McGregor's (1960) theories X and Y, which was based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, were directly related to the lack of motivation of students (theory X) and the needs of teachers (theory Y). McGregor believed that people fluctuate between the two theories. Theory X has motivational principles that aided teachers in managing student behaviors, and theory Y is used to support teachers' assumed barriers of managing student behavior by utilizing problem solving skills (McGregor, 1960).

With theory X, McGregor (1960) proposed that people have to be controlled and coerced into doing what was right. Fisher (2009) believed that educators should use theory X to motivate students whose work was based on self-interest. Teachers who practice theory X use rewards or punishments as a motivator and create rules and procedures for compliance (Fisher, 2009). Characteristics of theory X are students who dislike school; need to be redirected, controlled, or threatened; and are lazy (Larsson, Vinberg, & Wiklund, 2007).

Teachers who lack managing student behavior because of the assumed barriers exhibit the principles of theory Y (McGregor, 1967). The characteristics of theory Y are better suited for people who are creative, problem solvers, and motivated by self-actualization (Fisher, 2009; Larsson et al., 2007, McGregor, 1967). Self-actualization is the highest level of need in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Given the right tools and circumstances, teachers are taught to self-direct to manage student behavior (Fisher, 2009). Principles of theory Y are people: (a) who self-directed and self-controlled, (b) accepted and seek responsibility, (c) who solved problems with creativeness and imagination, and (d) who were intrinsically motivated to satisfy one's needs (McGregor, 1960).

The predetermined barriers of teachers managing student behavior are lack of parental and administrative support, time management, lack of knowledge and resources, and lack of self-efficacy (Fisher, 2009). According to McGregor's (1960) theory Y, teachers accept the responsibility that there are strategies to help them better manage their

time. In addition, administrators and other leaders utilize theory Y and provide teachers with research-based strategies for time management, instructional strategies, and parental support; as a result, teachers are able to overcome these barriers and satisfy their needs (McGregor, 1967).

### **Definition of Terms**

*Managing student behavior:* A learned skill that requires making adjustment and changes in students and their environments (Wong & Wong, 2009).

*Classroom discipline:* The procedures and strategies used to correct students' behaviors (Partin, 2009).

*Classroom management:* Includes, but is not limited to, creating and enforcing procedures and rules, being fair and consistent with disciplinary actions, and developing respectful relationships between the teacher and learner (Marzano, 2007).

*Effective teaching:* The process of being able to transmit one's knowledge to students through different instructional strategies (Marzano, 2007).

*Instructional strategies:* The process one uses to give a learner an opportunity to learn through analysis, creativeness, and practical thinking (Marzano, 2007).

*Student-centered classroom:* Place is where students learn, develop, and practice self-discipline strategies (Bear, 2009).

*Rituals:* How things are done in a classroom on a daily basis (Larrivee, 2009).

*Routines:* What is done in the classroom (Larrivee, 2009).

*Teacher burnout*: A teacher is suffering from emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishments (Goddard & Goddard, 2006).

### **Assumptions**

I assumed that participants' perceived barriers to manage student behavior were different and that they had experienced student behavioral problems at some level. I assumed some teacher participants had tried to manage student behavior. In addition, I assumed that all participants honestly answer each interview question to the best of their knowledge. Finally, I assumed that all participants participated for the duration of this study.

### **Limitations**

According to Creswell (2009), data can be tainted because of the relationship between the researcher and participants. Creswell stated that the participants might not act normal if they view the researcher as an outsider. The conclusions drawn from the collected data of these nine participants may not be generalized to all middle schools because of the demographics and the small representation of teachers.

### **Delimitations**

I restricted the study to interviews of teachers' perceived barriers of managing student behavior at the school, excluding the sixth grade teachers. I collected data before and after school, during teachers' planning periods, fall and winter breaks. Because data

was collected during the above mention times, data may be biased. I was a novice researcher, which caused weakness in the interview process.

### **Significance of the Study**

The goal of this case study was to provide knowledge to the teaching profession about the barriers of managing student behaviors and provide educators with strategies on how to overcome those barriers (Shin & Koh, 2007). My study contributed valid information to new teachers, mentors of teachers, and school administrators about teachers' perceptions of managing student behaviors as well as data from actual observations. The data provided a window into the minds of the teachers about their classrooms so awareness of the problem and informed decisions to address them could be made. According to Sokolowski (2008), teachers who experience the lack of managing student behavior are interested in understanding the nature and meaning of the barriers reported in this study. My study was conducted to gain a greater understanding of teachers' difficulties in managing student behavior. In addition, this study added to the current literature about how middle school teachers overcome barriers of managing student behaviors and provide research-based strategies to reduce behavioral problems.

I would like to present my findings to local colleges and universities in hopes that they would make changes to their required educational courses to include more intense training for how to manage student behavior.

### **Summary and Transition**

The purpose of this study was to investigate middle school teachers' perceptions of managing student behavior, as well as observe their classroom environment regarding the management of student behavior. More specifically, I analyzed barriers that teachers come across when trying to manage their classrooms. Recommendations in Section 5 offer educators some suggestions on how to overcome the perceived barriers of managing student behavior and provide research-based classroom management strategies to manage student behavior. I provided a detail description of the problem statement, the background of the problem, the purpose, methodology and significance of this study in Section 1. In addition, the assumption, limitations, and delimitation were discussed in Section 1. In Section 2, I provide literature that supports and refutes McGregor's theories X and Y as well as literature on managing student behavior. In Section 3, I provide detailed information about the case study approach. In Section 4, which is the analysis of the interviews, I report the similarities and differences of what is perceived by teachers. In Section 5, I offer suggestions for positive social change.

## Section 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to identify and examine middle school teachers' perceived barriers of managing student behaviors. Many educational issues have been linked to the lack of managing student behaviors, such as teacher burn out, high school dropout rates, student achievement, teacher retention, and effective instruction (Frey & Lingo, 2008; Hendley & Lock, 2007; Sugai & Homer, 2006). Marzano (2007) believed that empowering the teaching profession with knowledge to manage student behavior decreases teacher burn out and high school dropout rate and increases student achievement. To address this, Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) encouraged educators to design lessons that are age appropriate and utilize research based strategies to teach and manage student behaviors. Because the main area of concern for middle school teachers, especially new teachers, is their feelings of inadequacy in managing student behavior (Wong & Wong, 2008), McClowry, Snow, Tamis-LeMonda, and Rodriguez (2009) encouraged teachers to conduct a self-evaluation of their efficacy in managing students' behavior.

In this section, I first explain some educational concerns for middle school learners and teachers. Then I explore relevant information concerning the predetermined barriers of managing student behaviors, such as lack of knowledge and resources, lack of training, cultural differences/diversity, lack of time, and lack of instructional strategies (Partin, 2009; Smith & Bondy, 2007). I also examine theorists' views on managing

student behavior as well as research based best practices for managing student behavior. Finally, I provide evidence for the need for peer coaching as a professional learning tool for new or struggling teachers.

### **Strategy for Researching the Literature**

Using key words such as *managing student behaviors*, *classroom management*, *middle school behavioral issues*, and *structured learning environment*, I searched Walden's library databases for current peer reviewed journals and articles. The references of the articles and journals from EBSCO host, Pro-Quest, ERIC, and Sage led the search for literature to professional books and studies, which provided me with primary resources. Books related to this study's methodology, managing student behavior, classroom management, and several classroom management theories were purchased from Amazon.com. Professional websites, such as National Education of Association (NEA), American Federation for Teachers (AFT), and Georgia Department of Education (GADOE), were used to examine the lack of managing student behavior at the national and state levels.

### **Research to Support the Methodology**

Martinez (2009) used a case study approach to explore students' behavioral management skills after an ongoing training on student behavior. Martinez revealed that physical education teachers were not adequately prepared to deal with the increasing behavioral problems of students, which had gone from arguing among students to physical fighting. Smith and Bondy (2007), in their case study, found a similar trend with

teachers, and viewed teachers as catalysts for inappropriate behavior problems. As was shown in yet another case study, teachers exacerbate this problem when they get into power struggle with students and try to persuade them into acting appropriately (McGregor, 1960).

Campbell (2009) believed that a case study approach was the best approach to examine the different facets of effective teaching among eight instructors from a 2-year technical college. Campbell's goal was to compare the effective teaching strategies of teachers who participated in a faculty development program, and case study provided Campbell with in-depth perceptions from each of the eight teachers from which to draw these comparisons. In another study, Durr (2008) examined the burn out rate of teachers, and revealed that student misbehavior is a major factor contributing to teacher burn out. Durr used a questionnaire because the study included hundreds of teachers, but he could have used a multiple case study approach to examine teachers' perception of teaching in different regions of Ohio (Simons, 2009).

### **Rationale for Research**

Marzano, Frontier, and Livingston (2011) explained that in poorly managed classrooms, teachers struggle to teach while learners struggle to learn. Marzano, Frontier, et al. found that in effective schools with effective teachers, students made the most percentile gain on standardized tests. In addition, there were also significant gains of students from effective teachers in ineffective schools, meaning that the teachers had more of an effect than the school (Marzano et al., 2011).

Choi and Lee (2008) confirmed that managing student behavior is one of the top issues that teachers face when trying to become an effective teacher. Effective teachers combine research based instructional strategies and classroom management strategies to maximize learning and minimize behavior problems (Choi & Lee, 2008). Marzano, Marzano, and Pickering (2003) also recommended teaching students how to be responsible for their own behaviors. Marzano, et al.'s research of 13 studies indicated that in classrooms where teachers practice self-monitoring and control strategies, disruptions decreased 23 percentile points, which was supported by theory X (McGregor, 1967). Marzano, et al. also provided details about how an educator can teach students how to be responsible for their own behaviors. Furthermore, Marzano, et al. suggested a need for educators to spend time outside of the school environment with students and possibly their families, which was confirmed in Weinstein, Curran, and Clarke's (2003) study. To assist teachers and inform the teaching profession, I helped educators understand the perceived barriers of managing student behavior in the learning environment.

### **Middle School Concerns**

#### **Cyber Bullying**

Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and instant messages were among social network sites that enabled cyber bullying (The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), 2006). According to Kite, Gable, and Filippelli (2010), cyber bullying occurs when a person is harassed via the Internet. Adolescents face being bullied this way by other students when they are away from school (Kite et al., 2010). Kite et al.

revealed that middle school students were not aware of the consequences of using the Internet. In addition, Kite et al. reported that 10% of the 588 middle school students surveyed were being bullied online. Twenty-nine percent of these students were not aware that the information they provided on the internet made it easier for bullies to harass them (Kite et al., 2010). NASSP (2006) confirmed that increasingly, social network sites are becoming serious threats to students by other students. In addition, Kite et al. stated that the Internet is a threat to children because of other adults that prey on kids, such as pedophiles.

### **Body Image**

Recent studies (Hyde, Mezulius, & Abramson, 2008; Vaughan & Halpern, 2010) reported that adolescent girls are more concerned with their body sizes and being accepted by their classmates than they are with academics. During adolescent years, girls are more in tune with the appearance of their body than boys are (Wang, Houshyar, & Prinotein, 2006). However, boys “will do almost anything, endure almost anything, and inflict on one other almost anything to be part of the group” (Cleveland, 2011, p. 42).

### **Addressing Adolescent Concerns in the Classroom**

Effective teachers create nonthreatening learning environment to offset what adolescent have to face outside of the classroom (Wong & Wong, 2008).

#### **Teachers’ Lack of Knowledge and Strategies**

Zuckerman (2007) used the documented accounts of 68 student teachers to “identify strategies for preventing and managing classroom discipline problems” (p. 4).

Zuckerman asked 141 students to keep a journal about discipline problems they encountered during their student teaching. Zuckerman noted 18 strategies that were most commonly used to prevent and manage student behavior. Of the 18 strategies, Zuckerman believed that changing the pace of the lesson, using nonverbal interventions, and using private discipline were the most effective. Senturk's (2006) findings were similar to Zuckerman's during a study that utilized a 34-item questionnaire and explored three models of classroom management practices. The results of Senturk's questionnaire revealed that expert teachers used preventive and developmental classroom management practices more often than reactional classroom management practices. These two studies demonstrated the importance of teachers creating a learning environment that is proactive in preventing behavior problems. The way a teacher establishes and creates a classroom environment can address students' behaviors before they become a problem (Canter & Canter, 2009).

Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, and Suga, (2008) provided summaries of reviewed texts, various organizations, and empirical studies to support their criteria for evidence based practices in classroom management. From this, Simonsen et al. noted five effective classroom management strategies:

1. maximize structure,
2. post, teach, review, monitor, and reinforce expectations,
3. actively engage students,
4. use strategies for inappropriate behaviors, and

5. use strategies for appropriate behaviors.

Detailed information was given on each strategy, which made each strategy understandable to apply in a classroom (Simonsen et al., 2008). The second strategy was applied using Skinner's (1953) reinforcement theory. Skinner believed that teachers reinforce positive behavior by giving students verbal praise and other incentives for behavior and good grades. This also applies to the principles of theory X (McGregor, 1960), in which educators use incentives to reinforce appropriate behavior, which helps to motivate students to become actively engaged.

Wong and Wong (2009) stated that when a person is hired to teach, they were hired to manage student behaviors and help them become productive learners. Wong and Wong believed that classroom management encompasses all those things that allow learning to take place. Teachers of well managed classrooms begin their school year with expectations, rituals, routines, and procedures that were posted, modeled, and practiced throughout the school year (citation). Magableh and Hwamdeh (2007) noted that these types of educators are role models for students and warned them about becoming ineffective teachers. Ineffective teachers are more stressed and tired and wear out quickly. In addition, ineffective teachers have a tendency of blaming everyone else for their problems (Simonsen, Sugai, & Negron, 2008). Students are able to quickly determine ineffective teachers (Wong & Wong, 2009), and students become disruptive. Teachers tend to question their effectiveness, the curriculum, and their instructional

strategies when they continuously encountered disruptive students (Canter & Canter, 2009).

Melnick and Meister (2008), in a study of beginning and experienced teachers, discovered that significant differences exist between new and experienced teachers in regards to classroom management strategies. Findings showed that experienced teachers tend to have fewer problems managing their classrooms than new teachers (Melnick & Meister, 2008). Knight (2007) recommended that administrators provide new teachers with professional assistance in the area of managing student behavior because peer coaching decreases the gap between new and experienced teachers in regards to managing student behavior. Canter and Canter's (2009) assertive discipline plan offered new teachers a framework to manage behaviors in a learning environment and principles to teach students how to self-discipline. An assertive teacher has high expectations, creates and implements a discipline plan, and builds positive working relationships with students and parents; however, assertive teachers also elicit very little input from students and parents (Canter & Canter, 2009).

### **Lack of Training**

Multiple studies have shown that coaching (a) reduces burnout and isolation, (b) promotes collaboration and sharing of ideas, (c) creates a process for addressing classroom management issues, and (d) transfers new learning into practice (Chitpin, 2006; Feger, Woleck, & Hickman, 2004; Hargreaves, 2005; Knight, 2007; Toll, 2006). Cognitive coaching, which is a form of peer coaching, is when a more experienced or

knowledgeable educator works closely with another educator to meet the needs of students (Knight, 2007). According to Deussen, Coskle, Robinson, and Autio (2007), there are five categories of coaching: data driven, student oriented, managerial, and two types of teacher focused (p. 4). The categories were created from the analysis of a survey completed by 190 coaches and 300 reading teachers in the western states. The names of each category represented how the coach used the majority of his or her time.

Data oriented coaches spent 45% of their time working on data. Teacher oriented coaches were similar to cognitive and peer coaches in that their major goal was to work directly with teachers to improve teaching practices and student achievement (Deussen et al., 2007). Smith and Bondy (2007) suggested that one of the coaching models be used to help teachers create a psychological supportive environment (PSE). The PSE was created using positive behavior supports, such as morning meetings, altering the physical environment and praising positive behaviors (Skinner, 1953; Smith & Bondy, 2007). The class meeting was a discussion between the students and the teacher about school related issues. The purpose of the meetings was to help student feel a sense of belonging, trust, and mutual respect (Wubbolding, 2007).

Many beginning teachers have trouble effectively managing student behavior in the classrooms (Melnick & Meister, 2008). Knight (2007) stated that coaching relationships open up lines of communication and provide assistance and encouragement to all teachers concerning student management, especially new teachers. Coaching is a type of collaborative professional learning that helps teachers through collaboration,

discussion, self-reflection, demonstration, and observation. In addition, coaching is supported by Vygotsky's (1978) social learning theory, people learn through joint interaction. The role of a coach is to mediate teachers' thinking and interaction in order to improve instructional practice and other educational issues (McGatha, 2008, p.141). Murray, Ma, and Mazur (2008) defined peer coaching as a partnership that focuses on support and collaboration to implement teaching strategies as well as management techniques. In their study, they theorized that peer coaching is similar to Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, where people learn from each other by sharing knowledge and skill. Results of the data indicated that 47% of the teachers thought the most effective aspects of a coach were sharing ideas, techniques, and strategies. Twenty five percent of the teachers reported that getting feedback was the most effective component used by coaches. Spricks and Daniels (2010) stated, "The more training that an administrator can give to teachers.....in shaping student behavior," the more opportunity teachers had in mastering classroom management (p.19). With the drastic educational cuts, peer coaching is a cost effective professional learning tool.

### **Lack of Time**

In classrooms where students were working with each other, exploring hands-on activities, and investigating with experiments, time was an issue for managing student behavior (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). When creating a differentiated classroom, rules and procedures were needed and were enforced (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). Tomlinson and McTighe suggested several key strategies that aid in designing and managing a

differentiated classroom. One of the strategies is to make valuable use of time during group work. For example, assign roles to each student in a group. In a group of three, one student was the timekeeper, the second student was the recorder, and the third student presented their findings. Some students did not work on one activity for long periods of time without socializing. Smith and Bondy (2007) agreed that time was a major issue when creating nonthreatening differentiated classrooms. They advocated planned morning meeting to allow students to have conversations with each other before the instructional time began. There were planned breaks or rotations among the activities (Cleveland, 2011).

Another strategy to maximize time in a learning environment was flexible grouping. In flexible grouping, students were grouped according to their ability and interests (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010; Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). Flexible grouping maximizes time and holds students accountable for their behaviors and their learning (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). Students are less intimidated working with someone that is on the same level. The third strategy is having planned activities for students who finish quickly. Finally, minimize movement and noise in the classroom by assigning group leaders. Group leaders are responsible for getting help from the teacher and supplies when needed. Guerico (2011) encouraged teachers to introduce and enforce these strategies during the first week of school.

### **Cultural Differences/Diversity**

Culture is the way a person lives in his community or home environment. It is advantageous for an educator to become knowledgeable about their students' culture and communities (Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2009). Behavioral problems occur when a teacher does not know or does not understand that students' behavior is reflective or influenced by their culture. In comparison to Wong and Wong (2009) and Zuckerman (2007), Lindsey et al. suggested strategies for establishing expectations for behaviors, developing caring classrooms, and using appropriate interventions for behavior problems. Tomlinson and McTighe (2006) agreed with the suggestion of posting a map of the world that highlights students' countries of origin. Also, observing the months that celebrate the many cultures is a way to promote respect and avoid stereotyping. They advised teachers to anticipate cultural differences that are likely to occur; however, be careful not to individualize activities based on culture. Additionally, Bruner (2008) was convinced that culture has a great impact on the mind.

A student's culture shapes their desires and identity. Their culture causes them to make decisions that might not be typical or normal as the world defines normal (Robin, Lindsey, R, Lindsey, D. & Terrell, 2006). Robins et al.'s goal was to offer teachers strategies that provide all students with an equal opportunity to learn. These strategies are creating physical setting, establishing expectations for behaviors, developing caring classrooms, and using appropriate interventions.

Developing a coaching relationship in the areas of language development, cultural diversity, and second language acquisition is helpful to new and veteran teachers. Dufon and Churchill (2006) discuss the growing number of English language learners (ELLs) in United States classrooms and the lack of training given to educators to manage linguistically diverse classrooms. Effective teachers requested appropriate training to equip them to teach students from diverse linguistic backgrounds (Dufon & Churchill, 2006).

Moreover, ELLs were noted as lazy and inattentive. These behaviors occurred because it took ELLs longer to figure out what the teacher was doing and saying than English speaking students (Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2009). To reduce classroom behaviors and make learning easier for ELLs, Dufon and Churchill suggested that the teacher plan for group activities by pairing the ELLs with a friend who is familiar with the ELLs native language. Tomlinson and McTighe (2006) confirmed the importance of allowing students to help other students. They believed the collaborating of ELLs with nonELL students aids in student management and behavioral issues.

Teachers made an effort to communicate with the parents or guardian. Positive communication and collaboration among parents and teachers provided the ELLs with a sense of belonging (Robins, Lindsey, Lindsey, & Terrell, 2006). According to Guerico (2011), getting to know your students is one of the best classroom management strategies a teacher utilized.

### **Lack of Instructional Strategies**

Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, and Sugai (2008) studied evidence based literature that supported five unique characteristics that are critical in creating a structured learning environment (SLE). The five characteristics are to discuss, review, model, and practice expectations, actively engage students to keep them focused, have strategies for inappropriate and appropriate behaviors, and arrange the classroom to allow for group as well as individual activities. The use of productive questioning techniques actively engages students in the learning process. According to Bond (2008), questioning strategies reduces behavior problems. Effective questioning techniques are an effective instructional strategy that plays a major role in today's classroom. Bond believed that teachers planned their questions before class and established expectations for the questioning period of class. This technique assists in keeping all students actively engaged and focused because the students are not sure when the teacher calls their name.

Additionally, three instructional strategies were supported by Simon et al. evidence based research, which were class wide peer tutoring, using computer software to assist with instruction, and graphic organizers to guide and structure notes. Simonsen, et al. believed that these instructional strategies had shown a decrease in students being off task and an increase in active academic engagement. According to Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010), these three strategies were used simultaneously to differentiate a focused lesson. Graphic organizers and peer tutoring were used to help students who need additionally support with the focused lesson. Computer assisted software were used to

assist students who finished the focused lesson quickly. Utilizing the five instructional strategies, suggested by Simonen et al., allows for group, partner, and individual activities in a differentiated structured environment, where students are actively engaged.

## **Behavior Theories**

### **Supports the Framework**

Most educators experience working with students who dislike school. Students who are often off task, daydream, and disrupt other students are characterized as students who are unmotivated to learn (Glasser, 2006). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Fisher, 2009) explained five levels of needs that help a person become motivated and do their work accurately and appropriately. McGregor's (1967) theories X and Y were developed from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Beginning with the lowest level of need, the five levels of needs are:

1. Physiological needs, which are food, clothing and shelter
2. Security needs, which are threats or loss of jobs
3. Social ego, which is acceptance of others, and
4. Self-actualization, which is the desire to become more than what is now.

According to Sager (2008), Maslow's theory is used in social settings to increase a person's motivation. He stated that the lowest level of need is addressed before dealing with the highest level of need, which is self-actualization. Fisher (2009) agrees that if a student's levels of needs are met, he or she becomes motivated to learn and uses appropriate behaviors. Administrators who practice the principles of theory Y believe that

teachers satisfy their need of self-actualization by utilizing the research based strategies of this study and other studies to self-direct themselves to become better classroom managers (Fisher, 2009; McGregor, 1960; & Sager, 2008).

### **Refute the Framework**

Canter and Canter (2009) trained more than 1,500,000 teachers how to use their assertive method, which was first developed in 1976. Curwin et al. (2008) stated that there was very little evidence that proved that those teachers were trained. The Assertive Discipline method is when a teacher was fair and consistent (Canter & Canter, 2001; 2009) with classroom rules. They believe that being fair and consistent as well as being proactive instead of reactive was more effective than meeting the needs of students.

The teacher establishes goals and boundaries that are strictly forced and reinforced daily. Canter and Canter (2009) believed that students and parents must adapt to the teachers' requirements; assertive classroom had little democracy. On the contrary, McGregor's theory X suggested that teachers should get students to buy into their rituals and routines and possibly allow students to help create the rituals and routines of the middle school environment. Teachers let students know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable through a discipline plan that promotes discipline hierarchies (Canter & Canter, 2009). Canter and Canter suggested that teachers be proactive instead of reactive; set guidelines and expect all students to follow them. In contrast to McGregor's theory X, which suggested that teachers motivate students to meet the student need, Canter and

Canter stated that the teacher dictated what was done in the classrooms and expect students to follow those rules or else (Canter & Canter, 2009; Tassell, 2004).

### **Neither Refutes or Supports**

Other theorists (Kounin, 1970; Dreikurs, Cassel, & Ferguson, 2007) believed that classroom management is a joint effort among teachers and students. Dreikur et al. suggested that students' misbehaviors are a result of feeling a lack of belonging to a social group. Dreikur et al. used Alders' (1935) five principles to develop his four mistakes goals (Goddard & Goddard, 2006). Alders' five principles are mutual respect, encouragement, feelings of security, rewards and punishments, and natural and logical consequences. Driekur's et al. four mistaken goals are: (a) to get attention, (b) to get power, (c) to get revenge, and (d) to display inadequacy. According to Dreikurs et al., "all children have intrinsic value, (p.39)" which was the same belief of Glasser (2006). Dreikurs informed parents and teachers that they must treat students as equal. Dreikurs et al. stated, "The alliance of parents, teachers, and children participating in a true democracy can bring peace and harmony to our homes and schools" (Dreikurs et al., p. 5.). According to Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010), students in traditional teacher centered classrooms exhibit more behavior problems than those taught in modern student centered classrooms or student/centered classrooms, where the teacher and student control the environment.

According to Curwin, Mendler, and Mendler (2008), teachers and students' needs are met to ensure a safe and orderly classroom. Curwin et al. (2008) stated, "The

challenge that we face as educators is to maximize the power that we have over the outcomes of children lives” (p. 4). In Curwin et al.’s book, they gave several examples of how administrators helped teachers (a) overcome and avoid stress, (b) minimize burn out, and (c) collaborate with colleagues about managing student behaviors. In compliance with McGregor’s theory X (1960), student and teachers practiced collaborative activities to feel a sense of belonging from their peers. According to Kinna and Kombe (2011), middle school teachers help students develop personal efficacy, self-confidence, and a sense of belonging. These authors suggested that administrators laugh and have fun with their teachers along with identifying stressful teachers. In addition, administrators supply stressful teachers with help and guidance, which yields higher job satisfaction. Supportive and understandable administrators promote positive and appreciated teachers, which indirectly creates safe and orderly classrooms.

Curwin, Mendler and Mendler’s book (2008) mostly focused on strategies, plans, and models for teachers to practice in their classrooms with their students. They focused on involving the students in the process of creating and enforcing classroom rituals and routines. Their theory was that there should be shared responsibilities of teaching and learning among the teachers and students, with the teacher guiding the process (Tassell, 2004).

### **Limitations of Previous Research**

As I researched the literature, there were few studies about managing student behavior at the middle school level. This was true because middle school evolved from

overcrowding (NMSA, 2008) of elementary and high schools. Middle School was developed to nurture children during their adolescent years, which included 10-15 years of age (Finna & Kombe, 2011; Virtue, 2011; & NMSA, 2008). Virtue (2011) stated that educators' principles and beliefs are important when viewed from the middle. There was need to view completed studies that address the concerns of the middle school learner and educators.

Finna and Kombe (2011) completed a 2 year study about a one- year accelerated program that focused on the dropout rate at the middle school level. Even though this study focused on the middle school teachers' academic needs, it did not address student behavior. The students reported a sense of belonging, satisfaction, and engagement, which allowed them to redirect and redevelopment their academic identities (Glasser, 2006; Virtue, 2011). Student behavior did not play a vital role in their study. In addition, the 1- year program was not enough to eliminate negative habits and influences concerning any educational issue.

Reinke, Lewis-Palmer, and Merrell (2008) completed a study that evaluated the outcome of the Classwide Consultation Model, which was a comprehensive assessment that provided feedback to schools about their current classroom management strategies. Evaluation of the model provided the two schools with analyzed data to make changes or improve their current management strategies. Moreover, they suggested that the sample size of their study were small, which limited a good representation of the teaching profession.

Several researchers used behavioral or management models to assist teachers with managing student behavior (Gregory & Ripski, 2008; Reinke, Lewis-Palmer, & Merrell, 2008; Simonsen, Sugai, & Negron, 2008). Gregory and Ripski conducted a study to discover teachers' ability to prevent inappropriate disciplinary actions of students by building trusting relationships. Gregory and Ripski suggested that future studies include "teachers' perceptions about how to approach their students and address misbehavior" (p. 347). No matter the teacher's experience, educational level, content area, or grade level, there were barriers to managing student behaviors (Simonsen, Sugai, & Negron, 2008).

### **Summary of Literature Review**

Teachers benefit from consistently practicing evidenced based management strategies (Marzano, 2007; Chiptin, 2006; & Knight, 2007). Marzano suggested that teachers teach students how to self-manage; however, Zuckerman (2007) believed that a teacher prevents behavior problems by creating well prepared and engaged lessons. Zuckerman and Senturk (2006) used student teachers to investigate preventive management strategies. Senturk believed that teachers should focus on management strategies that prevent behavioral problems rather than reactional strategies. According to Wong and Wong (2009), there is a difference between managing a classroom environment as oppose to disciplining the environment. New teachers used the above mentioned management strategies to decrease burn out rates, increase student achievement, and decrease student drop out rate (Knight, 2007).

Learning how to effectively use evidenced based management strategies requires professional learning/training. The literature review of this study promotes peer coaching as one of the best types of training for middle school teachers who are experiencing difficulties in managing student behavior (Knight, 2007). Peer coaching is used to train new teachers as well as struggling teachers how to use research based instructional instructional strategies and manage student behaviors. Peer coaching teaches new teachers how to effectively utilize their classroom time to implement classroom management strategies ( Wong & Wong, 2008).

Some teachers admit that cultural differences play a vital role with managing student behavior. It is difficult to build trusting relationships with students, if they did not understand what made them cry or laugh (Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2009). Teachers who develop an understanding of their students' diversities tend to manage students' behavior better than teachers who do not understand or acknowledge that there are cultural differences (Robin, Lindsey, R, Lindsey, D., & Terrell, 2006).

I discovered theorists who supported McGregor's theories X and Y (1960) and theorists who contradicted McGregor's theory. Regardless of the strategies or theory an educator used to manage student behavior, student needs were acknowledged when trying to manage their behaviors (Alder, 1935; Dreikurs, Cassel, & Ferguson, 2004; Kounin, 1970; Wubbolding, 2007). All of the theorists studied agreed that student's lack of belonging, mutual respect, and feelings of insecurity were vital to managing student behavior. Some theorists believed that the person in charge establishes rules, guidelines,

as well as boundaries and expects everyone else to abide by the rules (Canter & Canter, 2009; Curwin, Mendler, & Mendler, 2008).

### Section 3: Research Method

#### **Research Design and Approach**

Teachers who are proactive with establishing rules and setting norms are less likely to encounter major behavior problems from students (Partin, 2009). The administrative staff at the school where I conducted my study had noticed an increase of office referrals over the last 2 years. Using a case study approach and data collected from teachers, I attempted to explain the story behind teachers' perceived barriers and practical experiences of managing student behavior. According to Simons (2009), case study approach is used to study the uniqueness of a phenomenon and gain a deeper understanding of the bounded case. Simons stated, "It is through analysis and interpretation of how people think, feel, and act that many of the insights and understandings of the case is gained" (p.4). The collected data explained what prevents the managing of student behaviors, which was the uniqueness in the bounded case being studied.

#### **Research Questions**

The research questions were used to investigate teachers' perceived barriers of managing student behavior in middle school classrooms and the observed reactions of teacher-to-student behavior. The research questions were guided by McGregor's (1960) theories X and Y. Mc Gregory believed that there are two kinds of people in a working environment: One type of person is lazy and needs to be motivated to get the job done, and the other type of person enjoys working and is self-motivated to improve his or her

existing condition. Marzano, Pickering, et al. (2010) believed that teachers who are provided with professional learning using motivational strategies improved in the area of student management.

In my study, I utilized semistructured interviews to examine the participants' beliefs, thoughts, and experiences of managing student behavior in a learning environment. I conducted comprehensive observations to explain actual accounts of participants' classrooms. I sought to find answers to the following questions:

1. At the school under study, what were middle school teachers' perceived barriers for effectively managing students' behaviors in the classroom-learning environment?
2. What behavior problems were occurring in the classrooms of the teachers in the school under study?
3. What current practices were being employed by the teachers in the school under study to prevent or address student behavior concerns?

### **Rationale for Methodology**

The purpose of this research was to examine and characterize middle school teachers' perceived barriers of managing student behavior at one school. I used a case study design, which can be qualitative or quantitative (Creswell, 2007; & Hatch, 2002). Qualitative inquiry allows the researcher to interpret the participants' views of their world (Merriam, 2002). Basic interpretive studies, such as case studies, are flexible and permit the researcher to gain more detailed information than a survey or questionnaire (Simons,

2009). My research study was qualitative with interviewing being the main source of data collection and observations used to support the analyzed data of the interviews. I desired to empower teachers to identify and overcome the barriers of managing student behavior. This case study approach involved telling the stories of teachers' experiences of managing student behavior and examining these stories to offer a more complete picture of what got in the way of appropriately managing student behavior.

I utilized the intrinsic approach as the model for my study design. Simons (2009) stated that intrinsic case study is where the researcher has personal interest in the case itself. I conducted in-depth interviews with each participant to understand their perspectives and uniqueness of their world and barriers of their experiences. I observed the participants' classrooms to capture the visual of the phenomenon being studied and to cross-check the developed themes of the interviews. My primary interest was to identify, explain, and understand the participants' perceived barriers of managing student behavior in order to provide a case study research that indicated what gets in the way of managing student behavior. Awareness of the problem, which is the lack of managing student behavior, and the barriers of overcoming the problem, should encourage educators to evaluate their effectiveness for managing student behavior and seek positive social changes. According to McGregor's theory Y (1960) educators can be self-directed to effectively manage student behavior, which student achievement and teacher retention would increase.

I considered other quantitative and qualitative designs to identify the barriers of managing student behavior before I determined that case study was the best approach. A survey design, using a questionnaire and a random sampling, would not present the participants' perceptions and beliefs about the phenomenon studied. In addition, this approach would not have allowed me to determine what was going on in the participants' minds. A phenomenological approach would have allowed me to identify and explain the barriers of managing student behavior, but was not best for collecting data at one school. I wanted to study the problem at the local level, and a case study approach is the best approach when a researcher is studying one setting, bounded by a case, and using a theory that is linked to practical application to help solve the problem (Cooper & Morgan, 2008).

### **Participants and Justification of Participants**

According to Creswell (2009), there were procedures and guidelines to follow when gaining access to participants and research sites. Creswell suggested that researchers follow these procedures to gain access to participants: (a) obtain permission from a human subject review board through a proposal; (b) allow a research committee to review the studies; (c) obtain permission from the participants, using a consent form; and (d) obtain permission from the appropriate office for documents and archives.

I emailed (see Appendix B) all of the teachers, except the sixth grade teachers, at the school and asked them to be a part of my study. I was a sixth grade teacher at the school; therefore, sixth grade teachers were not part of this study. The emails included

detailed information of the purpose statement and research questions. I explained to participants how they would help contribute to providing an understanding of the barriers of managing student behavior. I protected participants' identity by using pseudonyms, and I protected the data collected by storing it in a safe at my home.

Teachers who agreed to be part of my study were provided with a consent form, which explained that they could quit participating in this study at any time. I preferred a minimum of nine teachers to volunteer to be a part of my study. The first nine teachers who volunteered to participate and signed the consent form became participants of my study. Nine teachers were considered a good representation of the 39 teachers at the school (Simons, 2009) why?. I gave every teacher an opportunity to be a part of my study, avoiding harmful awareness to any one individual. Selecting teachers voluntarily provided my study with participants from different levels of teaching experiences, backgrounds, and diversities. Participants of this study included three males and six females. Teaching experiences of the participants ranged from 1 year to 32 years of teaching, with most participants being in the range of 4 to 15 years. Ethnicity of the participants included African Americans, Caucasians, and Hispanics. One participant had a specialist degree, two had master degrees, and six had undergraduate degrees. Due to the exclusion of sixth grade teachers, the fact that there are only six teachers per grade, and four male teachers at the school, I believe specific demographic would compromise the identities of the participants. The time spent conducting the interviews and

observations as well as the small school population allowed data collected from nine participants to provide rich detailed data (Simons, 2009).

### **Setting**

The site of this study was located in a small rural city in Southwest Georgia with a population of approximately 5,000 people. Ninety-one percent of the students in Blue County School district are minorities and economically disadvantaged, which means that they qualified to receive free or reduced lunches. At the time of the study, the middle school students' ages ranged from 11 to 16 and they were regular and special education students.

At the time of the study, the school consisted of 39 teachers and 430 students. Of the 39 teachers, 12.5% of them were men and 87.5% were women. Twenty one of the teachers had little experience, which is 1 to 3 years of teaching experience. Nine of the teachers had middle years' experience, which is 4 to 10 years of experience. Nine teachers had more than 10 years of teaching experience. Seventeen teachers had their baccalaureate and 10 of these had more than 20 years of experience, 13 teachers had master level degrees, and nine had a specialist degree.

### **Role of the Researcher**

When I conducted this study, I had been an educator at the school for 7 consecutive years. I conducted the interviews, transcribed the interviews, and analyzed the data independently. Having worked at the studied site and collecting the data increased the likelihood of biases occurring in this study. Although every effort was made

to exclude my biases, these biases helped to gain insight and understanding of the interviews and the interpretation of the collected data. I was able to identify and confirmed the participants' perceived barrier of the lack of training in the area of student management. I created the interview questions (see Appendix D) and had two people with doctoral degrees review the interview questions to eliminate biases. To further eliminate my biases, I had participants to check their transcribed interviews to eliminate misinterpreting the data.

The participants and I had participated in collaborative professional learning activities. I did not believe those interactions had an effect over the data collection. I did not have any leadership role over any of the participants. Hatch (2002) warned researchers about choosing participants who were passionate and had knowledge about the phenomenon studied. I asked all teachers at the school to help examine the problem, which were the perceived barriers of managing student behavior and the strategies they used to manage student behavior. To ensure validity and reliability, I audiotaped the interview, transcribed the audiotape, and asked the interviewee to view the transcript for any discrepancies (Creswell, 2007; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The transcriptions, audiotapes, and field notes are available upon committee members' requests, who are the only ones that can view the raw data, according to the rules and regulations of IRB (10-14-11-0085610).

## Data Collection

The primary data collection of my study was semistructured interviews from nine participants. According to Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2009), data could be collected in several ways. I utilized member checking by having the participants check over the transcribed interviews for discrepancies (Creswell, 2007). I observed each participant's classroom twice to add to the validity of the interviews. Johnson (2008) explained that using more than one data collection strategy increases the accuracy of the data. Data collection procedures are explained in more detail later in this section.

I asked all teachers via email at the school to be a part of my study. The email explained the purpose of the interview, about how long the interview would last (45 minutes), audiotaping of the interview, the right to end the interview at any time, and the purpose of the attached consent form. After the participants agreed to participate in my study, I asked each participant to sign the consent form (see Appendix D). The participants and I came to an agreement for the best times to conduct the interview, but the times did not interfere with instructional time. I interviewed the participants in their classrooms during afterschool hours.

Hatch (2002) informed researchers to make sure that they have all necessary equipment and make sure the interview setting is nonthreatening to the interviewee. In the interview, I asked rich qualitative questions, probing questions, and clarifying questions. The interview questions (see Appendix E) were centered on three main questions, which were my research questions (Hatch, 2002). Hatch stated that essential

questions are the most important questions and they provide the researcher with data that is related to the phenomenon studied. I used the results of the interviews to analyze the middle school teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of the barriers of managing student behavior and the strategies they used to manage student behavior.

Utilizing Janesick's observational protocol (Appendix F), I observed each participant's classroom twice to explain what the teachers and students were doing as well as describe the physical environment. I gathered detailed descriptive notes and avoided misrepresenting what I actually saw. Each participant and I came to an agreement of the best times for me to observe his or her classroom. The focus of the observations was the teachers' responses or reactions to the student's behaviors. Although observations took longer in the field than interviewing, observations were useful to gain insight and an understanding of the analyzed interviews (Simons, 2009).

### **Data Analysis**

There are different variations of how to analyze qualitative data, and it was suggested by Simons (2009) and Hatch (2002) that an interpretative analysis is the best fit for a case study approach. The researcher constructed interpretations (Hatch, 2002, p.180). Data analysis, as explained by Creswell (2007), consists of three phases. The first phase is preparing and organizing data (Simons, 2009). The researcher codes the data, which is condensing the organized data into themes or categories (Creswell, 2007). The researcher then reports or presents the data in charts, manuscript, and tables (Hatch, 2002). Hatch and Creswell agreed that the analysis of data is intuitive, time consuming,

nonlinear, and overwhelming to a novice researcher. Hatch explained and provided concrete models for three analysis strategies, which are topology analysis, inductive analysis, and interpretative analysis. Which of these strategies did you use?

According to Hatch (2002), inductive analysis is searching for patterns in the data, building relationships between the patterns, and producing a meaningful whole. Hatch stated that interpretative analysis is giving meaning to the data or making sense of the phenomenon studied. In addition, Hatch stated that topological analysis is decomposing the collected data into categories and themes to test a hypothesis or theory. According to Simons (2009), the researcher develops research questions that delves into the body of knowledge held by the participants to discover the underlying theme.

### **Preparing and Organizing Interview's Data**

Creswell (2007) suggested a six-step analysis plan, which begins with organizing and preparing data for analysis. Then, examine all of the data and begin a detailed analysis with a coding process, which generates descriptions, categories, and themes. Next, determine how the descriptions and categories are represented in the narrative and interpret the data (pp. 191-195). I organized and prepared my data by giving each interviewee an alias, then coding and transcribing the interviews. In addition, I reviewed the data and decomposed it into smaller units, so that it was easier to manage (Merriam, 2002).

Coding uses words and phrases to draw meaning from the research questions. Coding, which is a process used in most analyses, reduces the data into meaningful

themes or categories (Hatch, 2002). Open coding is a process where the researcher carefully scans the data, by circling or highlighting meaningful words or phrases (Hatch, 2002). Coding is looking for what people were saying and doing, as well as what was going on in the environment (Creswell, 2009). Using the terminology from my research questions and the interview questions, I developed the codes and made descriptive notes from the participants' interviews to inform the codes and looked for new codes to develop. Hatch stated that the researcher already has some codes in mind and looks for other ideas to arise. Merriam (2002) stated that they move from descriptive codes to analytical codes. I analyzed the codes to report the finding of my study.

I thoroughly read the transcribed interviews to depict tone and mood of the interviews. As suggested by Creswell (2009), I color coded and used descriptive categories, then made connections among the categories to narrow them into six categories, which appeared to be most often used by the participants. I used tables, drawings, and graphs, to determine how the themes were presented in this study. Finally, I compared and interpreted the data while setting aside my preconceived notions about managing student behavior (Merriam, 2002).

### **Preparing and Organizing Observation's Data**

I read and reread the field notes of the observations and connected each teacher's field notes to a developed theme or a new theme. The extensive data collection of this study caused the themes to become more focused and yielded a better understanding of the developed themes (Simons, 2009). I used the field notes to reduce the data to align

with the research questions and the conceptual framework. The use of multiple methods counterbalanced the biases of the researcher and interviewee (Creswell, 2007).

### **Reliability and Validity**

All researchers wanted their findings to be trusted. Hatch (2002) believed that a researcher has one or more strategies to establish quality because the strategies make the findings of studies valid and reliable. Creswell (2009) explained several strategies, such as peer review, triangulation, and engagement in data collection, for promoting validity and reliability. The strategy that I think is the most powerful is adequate engagement in data collection. Merriam (2002) stated that no one says how much time in the field was too long or too little, but a researcher becomes saturated with data for their study. The researcher is aware of the pros and cons about one's study. Merriam suggested that researchers look for studies that challenge their findings.

### **Quality**

Because I was the main instrument for data collection in qualitative research, ensuring quality was different in qualitative research. Multiple data analysis strategies validated and increased the credit worthiness of research studies (Johnson, 2008).

“Qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures, while qualitative reliability indicates that the researcher's approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects” (Creswell, 2009, p. 190). To ensure quality of this study, I utilized member checking, two data collection procedures, peer reviewers, and an extensive time in the field (Simon, 2009).

### **Methods of Protection**

Creswell (2009) stated that ethical issues arise during a study. It is the researcher's responsibility to protect the participants, research site, and disclosure of participants' personal information. Addressing these issues, I emailed the principal and gained access to the building to conduct interviews with teachers who agreed to be a part of my study. Secondly, I used coding and aliases to protect the participants and avoided association of the collected data from the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The collected data was stored on a data stick and locked in a safe at my home. Participants were made aware of the purpose of this study, which was to raise awareness about the perceived barriers that educators faced when managing student behavior. Moreover, I shared with participants how the results of this study benefited all educators, such as decreased teacher burn out and high school drop-out rates as well as increased student achievement, as supported in the literature review of this study.

### **Summary of Methodology**

Data collection, data analysis, and reporting were not a one, two, three step process; they were often intermingled within one. Instead of a fixed approach, data analysis was a spiral or overlapping process (Creswell, 2009). Data analysis was a systematic approach to understanding the phenomenon studied (Hatch, 2002). Hatch stated, "Analysis is organizing and interrogating data in ways that allow the researcher to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, and generate theories" (p. 148).

First, I collected the data through semistructured interviews in a nonthreatening environment. I transcribed, coded, and analyzed the interviews. I observed each participant to enhance and support the interviews. Then, I used member checking, thick descriptions, peer debriefing, and extensive time in the field to ensure quality of my study. I allowed participants to view the transcribed interviews to check for accuracy. In addition, I used two coworkers, who have a doctorate degree and knowledge of qualitative research, to review my study. A peer reviewer, who enhances the validity of a study, reviewed and asked questions about one's study (Creswell, 2009). To ensure validity and reliability, Creswell suggested that qualitative researchers documented detailed procedures of steps and processes of their data analysis strategies, which I did in this research. In Section 4, I report the findings of the analyzed data. This section identified the common barriers that teachers come across when trying to manage student behavior, the needs of the teachers in relations to managing student behavior, and strategies teachers used to manage student behavior.

## Section 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to investigate middle school teachers' perceptions of managing student behavior, as well as observe their classroom environments regarding the management of student behavior. Through a qualitative case study approach, interviews and observations of nine teachers were conducted to examine what hinders teachers from managing student behavior. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. At the school under study, what were middle school teachers' perceived barriers for effectively managing students' behaviors in the classroom-learning environment?
2. What behavior problems were occurring in the classrooms of the school under study teachers?
3. What current practices were being employed by the school under study teachers to prevent or address student behavior concerns?

The intended outcome of the data collection process was to provide knowledge to the teaching profession about the barriers of managing student behaviors and provide educators with strategies on how to overcome those barriers. The theories that guided the research and interview questions (see Appendix D) were McGregor's theory X and Y (1960). McGregor's theory Y suggested that teachers use democratic characteristics and motivational strategies (theory X) to build relationships with their students (McGregor &

Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 2006). This section includes a review of the data collection, which was outlined in Section 3. Also in this section, I present the findings of participants' responses and interpret their responses to student behaviors during the classroom observations. It was suggested by Simons (2009) and Hatch (2002) that an interpretative analysis is the best fit for a case study approach.

### **Data Collection**

#### **Individual Interviews**

After receiving confirmation from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), with approval number 10-14-11-0085610, I sent an email (see Appendix B) to all teachers at the school and asked them to be a part of my study. I excluded sixth grade teachers because I am the sixth grade chairperson. According to the IRB rules and regulations, researchers should avoid biases in their studies and not interview their subordinates. The email explained the purpose of the interview, how long the interview should last (45 minutes), audio taping of the interview, the right to end the interview at any time, and the purpose of the attached consent form (see Appendix D), which included permission to participate in this study.

After a week of waiting to hear from potential participants, seven teachers agreed to participate. Then, I sent the same email to all teachers excluding the sixth grade teachers and the seven teachers who had agreed to participate in my study.

Approximately a week after the second email, two more participants agreed to participate in my study. I was able to interview all nine participants after school in each participant's

classroom, which did not interfere with any classroom instructional time. Hatch (2002) informed researchers to make sure that they have all necessary equipment and that the interview setting is nonthreatening to the interviewee.

After receiving feedback about my interview guide from two people who have their doctoral degrees, I conducted semistructured in-depth interviews with each participant. I was advised to speak slowly and clearly when asking the interview questions. I was reminded to take notes of the interviewees' tones, gestures, and facial expressions during the interview process. They believed the interview questions would provide data that would answer the research questions. There was no suggestion to add or delete a question (Personal Communication, Hassie Mays & Yoshi Yoda, January, 2011). According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), a researcher's interpretation of the collected data was guided by the interviewees' facial expressions, gestures, and tones. Interview questions are created to gain insight of the research questions (Hatch, 2002). My interview questions were used in the interview guide (see Appendix D) to explain some behavioral issues at the school and what practices teachers employed to address the behavioral issues. Once the consent form was signed, each interviewee was given a copy of the interview guide.

The audiotaped interviews lasted from 30 to 48 minutes. To adhere to the time constraints and the schedules of each participant, the interviews took place over a 3-week period. I used the results of the interviews to analyze the school's teachers' beliefs,

attitudes, and perceptions of the barriers of managing student behavior and the strategies they used to manage student behavior.

After each interview, I listened to each audio recording for connections to predetermined themes. I made notes of participant's responses that validated predetermined themes. Then, I transcribed each audio-recording. I began to analyze the transcribed interview data for new themes. According to Creswell (2007) and Simon (2009), qualitative researchers need to analyze the data from the beginning to the end of the data collection process.

To ensure validity and reliability, I audio-taped the interviews, transcribed the audio recordings, and asked the interviewee to view the transcripts for any discrepancies. When participants review the transcribed data for discrepancies, this process is called member checking (Creswell, 2007). I hand delivered transcriptions to each participant and asked that they return them with any changes within a week. After a week, I emailed participants and asked them if there were any parts of their transcription that they needed me to delete or not report. All the participants replied to the email with no changes to the transcribed interviews. I collected the transcriptions from each participant and put the transcriptions in a locked safe in my home.

### **Classroom Observations**

After collecting, transcribing, and deducing interview data into six meaningful themes, I observed each participant's classroom twice. I explained to the participants before the interviews began that I would need to observe their classrooms. Additionally,

when participants signed the consent form, they gave permission for me to observe their classrooms. I observed each participant's classroom for approximately 45 minutes to make a connection to the literature, predetermined themes, and newly developed themes. At the end of the day, for about 5 minutes, I clarified some observed incidents with each participant. The second observation, which took place no more than 3 days after the first observation, was completed with the same students and approximately the same amount of time. Simon (2009) stated that observations allow the researcher to validate the data collected in the interviews.

I obtained permission to use Janesick's (2004) observational tool (see Appendix F), with approval ID# 59935334. Utilizing Janesick's observational tool electronically, I observed (see Appendix G) each participant's classroom twice. The observational notes aided in description of what the teachers do in relation to student misbehavior as well as the physical environment of the classroom. I gathered detailed descriptive notes and talked with each participant for 5 minutes after the observation, to avoid misinterpreting what I actually saw. These observational notes were saved on a data stick with a protected password. I observed participants' classrooms during my planning periods, so no instructional time was lost. The focus of the observations was to see the teachers' responses or reactions to the students' behaviors. The observations were useful to gain insight and an understanding of the analyzed interviews and for narrowing the developed themes (Simons, 2009).

### **Tracking Data**

Before the interviews began, the interviewees were given another consent form (see Appendix D). They were asked to read the consent form and sign it. The participants were made aware of the storing of the collected data. I explained to each participant that the interviews would be transcribed by me and placed on a data stick with a protected password. In addition, the transcribed interviews, audiotapes, and field notes from the observations will be kept in a locked safe at my home for 5 years after the completion of this study.

### **Data Analysis**

According to Hatch (2002), inductive analysis means searching for patterns in the data, building relationships between the patterns, and producing a meaningful whole. Hatch stated that interpretative analysis gives meaning to the data or makes sense of the phenomenon studied. In addition, Hatch stated that topological analysis means decomposing the collected data into categories and themes. I used this analysis procedure to test McGregor's theories X and Y. Data analysis, as explained by Creswell (2007), consisted of three phases. The first phase is preparing and organizing data. The second phase is condensing the organized data into themes or categories, and reporting the data in charts, manuscripts, and tables (Hatch, 2002).

### **Individual Interviews**

I used the inductive approach to analyze the data I collected for this study. I reread each transcription for patterns and key ideas. Then, I read the responses of each

participant for interview question 1. Each common idea, wording, and phrase from interview question 2 one was given a name (Merriam, 2002). I followed this process for every question. Eventually, these names were condensed into themes. Using Microsoft tool bar, I highlighted (coded) each similar phrase that appeared more than three times throughout the transcriptions. Every different phrase was given a different color of highlighting.

According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), a researcher should note similarities in data that consistently address the research questions. Using axial coding, I reread the highlighted wording of each question to combine and condense data into meaningful categories (Hatch, 2002). The themes that emerged from the data were evident in the coding of the data. Six themes were confirmed and developed from axial coding: (a) inconsistency among administrators, (b) lack of parental support, (c) lack of teacher/coworker support, (d) lack of student support, (e) lack of consistency with rituals and routines, and (f) lack of training.

### **Classroom Observations**

I read and reread field notes of each participant. I looked for words and phrases in the notes that connected to the research questions and developed themes. Some documented evidence, such as posted rituals and routines, supported and contradicted the interview data, which will be described in this section. I moved back and forth between the developed themes and the observational data, made notes, and looked for meaningful connections. I was able to make a connection between the interview data and the

observational data. I observed three of the six themes, which were perceived lack of student support, perceived consistency of following rituals and routines, and perceived lack of coworker support. Additionally, I observed teachers reactions to students' misbehaviors and the lack of usage of the school discipline notebook.

### **Findings**

The conceptual framework of this qualitative case study was based on McGregor's (1960) theories X and Y. According to McGregor and Cutcher-Gershenfeld (2006), there are two types of students in a school or work environment: Some students are lazy and need to be motivated to do the right thing and other students enjoy school and are self-motivated. Understanding teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes about the obstacles of managing student behavior will contribute to professional learning and support for meeting the needs of teachers and addressing their barriers.

McGregor (year) believed that people fluctuate between the two theories. Some theorists believed that the person in charge establishes rules, guidelines, as well as boundaries and expects everyone else to abide by the rules (Canter & Canter, 2009; Curwin, Mendler, & Mendler, 2008). Lack of belonging, mutual respect, and feelings of insecurity are all vital to managing student behavior (Marzano, 2006).

### **Research Question 1**

The first research question asked: What were middle school teachers' at the school under study perceived barriers for effectively managing students' behaviors in the classroom-learning environment? Responses to Interview Questions 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10,

11, 13, and 14 were the foundation for the development of the six themes of this study. The six themes of this study were the perceived lack of parental, teacher/coworker support, and student support; perceived lack of consistency with rituals and routines as well as among the administrators; and the perceived lack of training. The lack of training and parental support were predetermined themes; lack of coworker and student support were developed from the data. According to the data collected and the literature reviewed, these themes were directly related to the problem studied at the school, which was teachers struggling to manage student behavior.

### **Theme 1: Coworker Support**

#### **Individual Interviews**

The participant's responses to interview questions 2, 3, 5, and 6 guided the development of themes related to the school's teachers' perception of barriers to managing student behavior. The first theme was the lack of coworker support. Teachers depended on each other for support with instructional and management strategies (Knight, 2007). Two participants stated that they needed coworker support to manage student behavior. Participant 1 stated,

I have the most concern where the teacher and I don't have the same expectations for the students in the same learning environment. When other teachers allow students to break school rules, such as chewing gum or dress code violations, then it affects my position with students.

Participant 6 stated,

Um, [laughing] I feel like a lot of times I am out on a limb by myself. I guess it's because I am one of the few strong disciplinarians in the school. It seems like discipline always get put on me. Participant 6 what are you going to do? Can you talk to them? So as far as any help [laughing] you know they try but you know it always seems to fall back on.

In addition to sharing that they needed coworkers' support, two participants shared how coworkers supported them in managing student behavior. Participants believed that collaborating with their coworkers about behavioral issues and consequences, before sending the students to the office, had helped with managing student behavior. Participant 5 explained,

I'm really reflective as a teacher and so when I look at it, and I go your micromanaging them. I'm watching other teachers on campus and I'm like well they do not have to do this. Other two teachers who are on my team are really working; we're working to work on those kids together and that's been a help. So, I do feel supported; I just still don't feel like it is working. You know, I'm just not there yet; I just don't have all the pieces put together.

Participant 8 stated,

As with teachers we have discussed it [student behavior]. If it is more of a bullying type of thing, then you know we report that because we did have one student that was being bullying and we reported that. I think we pretty much

addressed it and talked to the students about what they are doing in relation to bullying.

### **Classroom Observations**

Teachers discussed with each other the problem and what needed to be done to correct the problem (McGregor's Theory Y, 1960). In my observation, teachers depended upon each other to manage student behavior. While observing Participant 5, Participant 6 entered into the classroom and gave Participant 5 and the students some instructions about reenacting the fire drill. Participant's 5 responses made it apparent that the practiced fire drill three days prior was not done to the satisfaction of the teachers on that hall. The fire drill was to be practiced again. The students discussed their dislike for Participant 6 telling their class what to do. Participant 5 tried to explain why another fire drill was necessary but did not address the students' responses about Participant 6.

Before entering Participant 6's classroom for the first observation, I noticed that a student was sitting in a desk outside of the door. I made note of the student sitting outside of Participant 6's door. Later, I assumed the student did not belong to Participant 6 because Participant 6 made a statement in reference to the student. Participant 6 stated,

I cannot tell him [student on the outside of the door] what to do. He doesn't belong to me right now....go outside and tell him to go to his teacher's room and get his stuff.

I observed Participant 1 and another teacher in the same classroom but not in a coteaching situation. Participant 1 told me that these were two separate classes in this

classroom. The other teacher went to use the restroom, and Participant 1 had to reprimand one of the other teacher's students. The other teacher's student was causing classroom disruption by banging on the window. According to what I observed and the participants' responses, the teachers at the school practiced sending misbehaved students to other teachers' classroom as a form of time out and expected each other to manage student behavior, which is considered coworker support.

## **Theme 2: Student Support**

### **Individual Interviews**

The collective responses of participants indicated that the lack of support from students was a barrier to managing student behavior. McGregor's theory X (1960) suggested that teachers should get students to buy into their rituals and routines and possibly allow students to help create the rituals and routines. Teachers at the school believed that the lack of student support was one of the main barriers to managing student behavior. Participant 4 stated,

One of the biggest hindrances is the lack of support from other students, when disciplining a student. When one student acts out, the others will follow or not do what I ask them to do because I just punished their friend.

Participant 3 stated,

Every time the students would talk I would reprimand them and [the students would] say, "That is not what we are supposed to do." Then, a couple days later I try to do a discussion and I could not get anybody to talk. I think I had beaten

them down for talking again and again. I was afraid students did not want to learn because I was too hard on them.

According to Participant 1, students know what teachers expect and they are aware of the rituals and routines. Teachers believed that students took advantage of coteaching situations and the frequent change of connection classes. Participant 1 shared,

When I am teaching alone, students know exactly what they are supposed to do. They know what to expect. When students come in with another teacher, the students don't adhere to the rituals and routines. They will be like-they will do things they will not normally do, like talk extremely loud. They are all over the room. They are not focused on what they are supposed to be doing. That is a concern.

Participant 2 stated,

The problem that I do have and I have had, every nine weeks I get a child that doesn't think my class is important and they don't care about doing their work in my class. They say this is boring and they look at my class like, "Oh I don't have to pass this to make it to the next grade."

### **Classroom Observations**

I observed Participant 1 helping or talking quietly to two students, and I noticed a banging noise in the back of the classroom. Approximately two minutes later, Participant 1 asked the other students where that noise was coming from. Participant 1 had to get up and go to the back of the classroom and reprimand three students, who did not belong to

Participant 1 at that time. Another teacher came into the classroom, and Participant 1 explained to that teacher what had just happened. Because of the banging on the window by three students, Participant 1's instructional time with two students was interrupted.

In Participant 2's room, two students got up and went to the filing cabinet, retrieved big construction papers out of the filing cabinets (which was for unfinished projects), and passed them to students. Students began to work on the construction paper using glue, scissors, and colored pencils. Some students got up and got magazines from a bin of magazines. Students went into a closet and brought out some magazines. While all of this movement was taking place, I did not hear the teacher give any directions. At the end of class, I asked the teacher how did the students know what to do and who decides who goes to the filing cabinets and closet to pass out materials. The teacher pointed to a poster/chart on the wall that had helpers for the week at the top and names of student by each class period. During this observation, Participant 2 asked a student to come out of the closet because Participant 2 stated, "You are bringing out all the magazines."

In Participant 5's classroom, while the participant was explaining to one student the words that were circled on their papers, one student tried to say something to Participant 5. Participant 5 said, "Give me a minute." After explaining the circled words, Participant 5 went over to the student who had tried to say something and asked the student what he needed. The student said that he could not see the circled words on the board. The students were supposed to circle the words along with Participant 5 who were using a document camera. Participant 5 allowed the student to go to her desk and look at

the paper under the document camera but she warned him not to touch anything. He went up to Participant 5's desk and began to copy the circled words. As I watched him, he watched Participant 5. Every time she was bent over helping someone, he would do something to the document camera, the paper under the document camera, or both, which caused the other students to groan and moan.

### **Theme 3: Parental Support**

#### **Individual Interviews**

All of the participants believed that the inconsistency of parental involvement, which is the third theme, hinders them from appropriately managing student behavior.

Participant 1 stated,

I may be able to talk with them about some strategy that will help with their child.

They [parents] may be able to give you some insight that you didn't know about but which is very helpful. But in the end, I think as the teacher, you are responsible for that classroom, and you need to be creative and come up with something. You can't rely on them to manage your class for you.

Participants at the school wanted parents to be involved in all activities at the school, such as parent teacher conferences, school plays, sports, parties, and talent shows. Participants wanted parents to punish their children when it was necessary. In addition, participants thought that parents should support the consequences given to their children and remind their children of the teachers' rules.

Participant 2 stated,

They [students] misbehave because of lack of parental involvement. They know that their parents are not going to do anything. They know their parents are not going to come out, so what does it matter? What if they [students] cut up? They get a spanking at school, and they have to go home to OSS? Their moms are at work or may not be at work but they get to walk the streets all day and get to hang out with other kids that have dropped out of school. You know that is fun for them. They know that there is not going to be any discipline at home.

Participant 3 stated,

Parents can be the biggest assets or the biggest hindrance to managing student behaviors. You know, parents seem to be from one extreme to another... They should tell their kids to quit the behavior or you know you will have consequences at home.

Participant 4 stated,

They [parents] should tell their kids to quit the behavior or you know you will have consequences at home. I don't think that happens as much nowadays or it's to an extreme. A lot of times I have called parents and they would say, "I am going to beat that child tonight," and I would say, "Please don't do that. It's not a beatable offense." But you know, it seems to be one extreme to another. And I am not so much sure that that happens so much now. And a lot of times the parents would say that I will take care of it and the behavior never changes and you can't

get in touch with the parent at all. You call and call and the phone been disconnected and there is no phone number or whatever and it's just not there.

Participant 5 stated,

The worst thing a parent can do is undercut a teacher's authority, and it happens all too often. I hear a lot of, "you won't call my mama" and "my mama is going to do this or that." I will be happy to talk to your mama, but the reason for having a structured environment is so students can learn safely. Alright if you [parent] are giving your kid the message that he or she doesn't have to respect me, then I will have a problem when I have an emergency situation. The kid doesn't stop or listen to me because mama or daddy has given them the idea that they don't have to listen to me.

Participant 6 stated,

There is nothing I can do with your child if you can't control your child yourself. This is your job. It is my job to help and mold and do anything else, but you are the parent and if you can't do it, you can't expect for somebody else to do it.

Participant 7 stated,

I believe that a student, in their early developmental, in their early education that that child was shown how they should behave in that class, home training. You know home training is the key. It starts at home. I want to make it real clear that I am saying some parents do teach their kids at home and then the child does get in the environment and cut up.

The participants indicated that they are ultimately responsible for management of their classrooms. They felt like when control is lost because of one or two students, parents should support the teachers.

Participant 8 stated,

Most of the ones [parents] that I have called on the phone, the students do what they are supposed to do. They support the teacher, and the students tend to do better. There are a few odd ones in there that it doesn't matter what the mama does or what the daddy does they are going to come and show out anyway. Most of my students, the ones who are not misbehaving, it seems to be a lot of parent involvement and influence from the parents about what they are supposed to do when they come to school.

Participant #9 said,

I think the role of the parent is to be involved and [they] have to be supportive of the teacher and the school.

### **Classroom Observations**

During the observations, I did not see any participant come in contact with parents. I did not hear participants use parents' names as a motivational tool or scare tactic to get students back on task. I did observe students causing interruption during classroom lectures. I did observe students off task and students soliciting other students into side conversations.

## **Theme 4: Inconsistent Administrators**

### **Individual Interviews**

Administrators being more consistent with discipline problems, which was the second most discussed theme of my study. Participants at the school felt like the administrative staff was inconsistent with the consequences given to students.

Participant 2 stated,

Some administrators are not following through with what is written in the discipline plan book. Now I have had two incidents about bullying and bullying is a serious offense. One administrator is saying, “Well, that’s really not bullying and they were just picking at him.” That is what happens for two different situations, but you see it really depends on what administrator comes to assist you. If you get another administrator, you don’t have to worry about those students for the rest of the week because that administrator is going to find something for the student to do. With that administrator, they are in trouble and he/she is going to call their mama.

Participant 3 stated,

They let some kids off with what other kids got in trouble for doing.

Teachers at the school used a school wide discipline plan. The participants believed that the administrators did not follow the guidelines of the discipline book or the code of conduct, which is the rules, laws, and consequences of misconduct at the school being studied. Participant 6 shared,

Once you follow through those steps [of the discipline plan]. The administrators say that students will get a paddling, ISS, OSS something serious, some serious consequences, and you are saying that is not happening. You would say that is your problem or concern with managing student behavior. It is that they are not following through with what they said they would do if the teachers go through the steps.

Participant 4 stated,

When you send them to one administrator they will do something and the other one will not. The inconsistency is there, so the most important thing as far as discipline is you have to be consistent.

Participant 8 stated,

Well, one of the administrators is very supportive. If I tell that one what happened he or she will jump right on it.

### **Classroom Observations**

During the observations, I did not see any participant come in contact with administrators. I did not see participants send students to the discipline office or ask for an administrator to come to their rooms. I did not hear participants use administrators' names as a motivational tool or scare tactic to get students back on task. I did observe students causing interruption during classroom lectures and while students were working activities. I did observe students off task and students soliciting other students to

participate in side conversations. Although participants did address some of these behaviors, I did not observe any participant using the discipline notebook.

### **Theme 5: Rituals and Routines**

#### **Individual Interviews**

When trying to manage student behavior, the lack of implementing and following rituals and routines are perceived to be barriers for teachers at the school. All participants stated that a structured learning environment is vital to the success of managing student behaviors. Participants 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, and 9 believed that teachers' classrooms should be neat and organized, which made it easier to manage students safely and orderly.

Participant 5 stated,

Not being able to influence my kids to do the right thing like follow the rituals and routines. I know all of the classroom management strategies, but I can't seem to implement them [classroom management strategies].

Participant 1 stated,

The teacher has set up, so that when the students come in to the classroom they know exactly what they are supposed to do. There is a pattern to the way the classroom is run. There is not total chaos; the kids know what to expect. Maybe there is a format to the way the class is run. For example, at our school we all have the same structure. It is supposed to be in all classes where there is an opening, mini-lesson, work session, and closing and to me that is some type of

structure. So, I have to every now and then remind myself, no, that is not the ritual and routine.

Participant 2 stated,

It [classroom] is organized in a way that the transition of the students in the classroom, the rituals and routines, everything runs smoothly. The classroom is also neat and tidy. The arrangement of the desks is conducive to a positive learning environment. Even the way the materials, the student folders, the handouts, the way everything is passed out and collected are rituals and routines. The teacher has established a system or routine on how the students enter the classroom, what they do with their belongings, how they go about sharpening their pencils, how they go about getting their portfolio work. Everything, there is a process. Of course, it is learned over time, you know.

Participant 9 stated,

I believe students should be allowed time to socialize, and I know that they cannot socialize in my classroom. However, the understanding of them needing to socialize gets in my way of managing them the way that they need to be managed.

Participants explained that they create and practice classroom rituals and routines.

When trying to managing student behavior, the lack of implementing and enforcing rituals and routines are perceived to be barriers for teachers at the school. Participants believed that students know what to do, where to find the materials to do the work, and when it is time to transition to the next activity. Participant 7 explained,

Well-organized supplies must be in place. Everything has to be aligned perfectly if it's not then they'll [students] know it, and then you'll have problems from that point. And so for it to be an instructional environment, it has to have to look like it's ready to go when the students get in there. They have to know that it is time to go to work. If it's not like that, they are going to know they can play. I realize now what classroom management is. From the onset when you first get in that classroom your rituals and your routines have to be on point. That's where the problem is. If you back off that [rituals and routines] the first time, the students will see that, and when they see that they already know they got you. It's on from that point on; if you say you are going to do something, follow the rule.

Participant 8 stated,

You have your routines and rituals. The students understand when they come in the room what it is they that are supposed to do. As a teacher you would follow that same routine and ritual in the same order, so to help them stay on task. Of course, if we are late changing class, because you know we change half way between classes and I may have to finish the mini-lesson up when we come back from lunch. When that one thing [changing class late], as when they go to lunch and come back from lunch, they have totally changed personalities.

### **Classroom Observations**

During my second classroom observation of Participant 3, I was able to hear a student verbalize the rituals and routines of doing a performance based assignment.

Participant 3 asked a student to go over the rules of the lab and the instructions for that activity. Another student was asked to explain the consequences of disobeying the lab rules. During the interview,

Participant 3 stated,

In the lab, but not as much in the classroom, they are having a hard time understanding that when I give them the procedures that is a script. I want it to be followed exactly, but to keep them on it doesn't always happen. You know someone will break from what they are supposed to do. In the labs, they don't talk; they play. They should do exactly what they are supposed to do because it makes me nervous [and] because I want to make sure everybody is safe.

In all of the participants' classrooms, there were ritual and routines posted. There were rituals and routines for the instructional framework, which included an opening, work period, and closing. There were rituals and routines for how to go to an assembly program, how to go to the restroom, what to do during fire and tornado drills, what to do during reading time, what to do in cooperative learning groups, and what to do in labs or project type work. Most of the rituals and routines were posted in front of the classrooms, but a few were posted by the bulletin boards, which were located in the back of the classrooms. A couple of rules were displayed on a Promethean board using a running marquee.

During my second observation of Participant 6, I was in the classroom before the students had entered or before Participant 6 had changed classes. I could hear Participant

6 talking to students, from the outside of the classroom, about how to go through the rituals and routines of the classroom. During the observations of Participant 6 and most of the other observations, I heard the participants remind students of time left to complete each activity. Participant 6 stated, “You have 6 minutes left to complete those five questions on the Promethean board.” Additionally, I heard Participant 6 remind one student about what he or she was supposed to be doing at that time.

The participants of this study believed the consistency of their daily rituals and routines help to prevent classroom disruptions and manage student behavior. During my 5 minute informal meeting with Participant 1 and Participant 7, I was informed that every teacher at the school was supposed to follow an instructional framework, which consisted of an opening, mini-lesson, work period, and closing.

Participant 1 stated,

In a structured learning environment, it is evident that there is an instructional framework, which is the opening, mini-lesson, work session, and closing.

Participant 6 shared with me that for the first two weeks of school, every teacher practiced the rituals and routines with their students of (a) walking in the hallway, (b) entering and exiting the classroom, (c) going and coming from the restroom, and (d) acting appropriately in assembly programs.

Participant 1 stated,

Administrators do try to help at the beginning of the school year. They have the teacher go through rituals and routines with the students and they [teachers] have the student practice the rituals and routines.

### **Theme 6: Training**

#### **Individual Interviews**

The last theme that will be discussed was the lack of training in the area of managing student behavior, which was validated by the answers to interview questions #7, #8, #9, and #10. In the last 5 years, three of the teachers that participated in this study had received training or professional learning in the area of student management.

Participant 1 stated,

For the last six years, I have not been offered any classroom management training ...but professional learning definitely needs to be offered to us.

Participant 2 stated,

The only classroom management training that I ever had been to was that Terry Alderman workshop six years ago.

Participant 4 stated,

Not specific training, well you know, before I came here. We have had speakers come in and talk about it, and I guess you can call that training.

Although some participants indicated that there had not been any training at the school nor the local college of attendance by participant 6, some participants admitted to reading

books and collaborating among their peers about student management. Collaborations and reading books are forms of training in the area of classroom management.

Participant 6 stated,

No, no training here, and the college I went to they do not do those kinds of things.

Participant 7 stated,

I have read a lot of books, but no formal training.

Participant #8 stated,

I think just going to a science workshop and learning, you know the different manipulatives we can use in the workshop, I mean they [students] seem more engaged, especially when they start doing the little things. You know, it gives them hands on because they definitely do not like to sit there and listen to stuff. But, they are participating in their education... The increase use of manipulatives and keeping them engaged, I don't know which one but between the two of them, they have decreased behavior for me.

### **Classroom Observations**

During the time I did the classroom observations and interviews, which lasted about 7 weeks, I did not see or hear of any professional learning in the area of student management. Being that I observed the participants during their classrooms' times, I did not observe any professional learning.

## Research Question 2

### Individual Interviews

Research question 2 of this qualitative case study asked: What behavior problems are occurring in the classrooms of the school's teachers? The analysis of interview question #4b (Appendix D) was used to investigate the answer to the second research question. Participant 1 commented about the typical middle school child,

At the middle school level and I'd say if a child would like get smart with you or sassy mouth. I consider that a typical behavior problem at the middle school.

They would play on the floor and that kind of thing at the middle school.

Participant 6 stated,

It's just the rude and disrespectful behavior. I truly do not have a problem with the talking. They are middle school kids, and they are going to talk. You know, it's just when you get caught talking go ahead and accept the punishment. For some reason our students don't know how to do that. They want to deny it and when you tell them, look I did catch you, and this is when the rude and disrespectful behavior comes into play. That's my main issue.

Most of the participants discussed students talking out of turn as being the number one typical behavior in the classrooms. Participants believed that when more than one or two students talk out of turn, it takes away from instructional time. In addition, participants believed that when they reprimanded students for any misbehavior, students become confrontational. Participant 3 stated,

Talking out of turn, staying where they are supposed to be at a certain time, especially when we get up to do labs. It is real important, especially when I have some of the bigger classes with 16 to 18 and they are moving around the lab.

[Students are] not staying on task, just talking, and students not understanding the significance of studying the work before doing the labs are typical behavior problems for me.

Participant 4 stated,

The biggest things, at least here, the kids feel like they have to have to the last word. Now I don't have to have the last word but it is annoying. Okay I say you need to be quiet and the kids say okay, and I say you don't have to say ok anymore and they say okay. They are being passive aggressive by saying, "I don't want to do that." Students are just being defiant.

Participant 8 stated,

The class that gives me the most problem is the class that likes to talk about everybody else. So a lot of time is spent correcting that particular behavior more than I want to.

Participant 9 stated,

More so talking you know your normal wanting to talk out of turn. Students not being prepared for class, which causes disruption and not having supplies. To me that is a big issue. I have issues with that almost every day. I don't have paper. I

don't have pencil. I left something in my locker. I left it in somebody's room. You know whatever it is and that ends up causing disruption and time constraints.

### **Classroom Observations**

In Participant 1's classroom, I observed students banging on the window during instructional time. I observed Participant 1 one redirecting two students, who appeared to have gotten off task. Participant 1 snapped her fingers twice and asked the two girls to separate.

In Participant 2's classroom, I observed a male student taking a female student's project. The female student told the male student, "If you don't give me back my project I will hit you in the back of your neck."

In Participant 3's classroom, I observed a student passing out materials to begin the project in the lab part of the classroom. Every time the male student gave materials to the other students, he would say something to them and they would laugh. Later in class, the teacher was explaining some concepts and the students were listening; however, no one was writing. I noticed two girls talking and passing folded paper to each other, which appeared to be notes unrelated to the lesson that was being taught. After reading the folded paper, the girls laughed. Participant 3 continued to teach. Participant 3 stated, "You should be writing this information down because it will be on the test." Students began to write. I did not observe any student asking questions while Participant 3 was teaching.

In Participant 4's classroom, I observed two students talking to one student, while Participant 4 was teaching. It appeared that the one student did not know what to do. The two students pointed to the textbook and flipped the pages of the textbook, then the student starting participating in the class discussion. I noticed students asking other students for pencils and paper.

In Participant 5's classroom, I noticed that all of the students were sitting in desks in groups of three's and 4's, except one student was sitting alone in the back of the room at the table. During this observation, the one student sitting at the table got up and Participant 5 told him to sit down. As the student was going to his seat, he said something and Participant 5 said, "No, no!" During the second observation, some students entered the classroom laughing and talking loudly. Participant 5 asked the students, "Please settle down and take a seat."

In Participant 6's classroom, I observed students sleeping while other students were working on their assignments. Participant 6 reminded one student what she was supposed to be doing at that time. That student replied, "That wasn't me" and, "I wasn't doing anything." Participant 6 walked over to the student's desk and said something. Student replied, "That wasn't me; I didn't do anything." Participant 6 said to the student "By, go over to Ms. XXXX class; I told you that I wasn't dealing with this today." The student left saying "Guidelee, I didn't do anything." I did not notice what the student had done, but she was removed from the classroom.

In Participant 7's classroom, I observed a confrontational discussion between Participant 7 and one of the students. Participant 7 told a student that he was missing about 6 assignments. Participant 7 told the student what the assignments were, but the student did not write down anything. Then the student tried to get clear about what he was missing. The student asked Participant 7 to print out what he is missing. Participant 7 told the student that there would be no printing of missing assignments. Participant 7 told the student that when they get on the computers, they will be able to see what they were missing. As Participant 7 continued to let all of the other students know what they are missing, the first student began to say that he had done that work and was not going to do double work. The loudness and the tone of the student's voice were not appropriate. Participant 7 abruptly stopped talking to other students about their missing assignments, and asked the first student, "Did you turn it in?" The student said, "Yes." Participant 7 and the first student continued the debate about the work for another 3 to 5 minutes. Eventually, Participant 7 told all the students to go to the computer and complete whatever assignments that the computer software program was telling them that you were missing. Apparently the software program was where Participant 7 was getting the information about missing assignments from, because Participant 7 was looking on the computer screen while talking to the students.

In Participant 8's classroom, I observed students constantly and consistently blurting out answers and questions. One student blurts out, "Man, how are we supposed to do this?" Another student blurts out, "Participant 8, is this stuff right?" During my

second observation, students were working in groups of three's creating a foldable. I could hear talking and laughing among students in each group. Two students were laughing loudly. As the students continued to work on their projects, Participant 8 walked around the room. Students would ask Participant 8 questions, but no one raised their hands. A few times, students asked questions at the same time.

In Participant 9's classroom, I did not observe any interruptions during instructional time or while students worked in groups of two's. Participant 9 walked around the room and pointed out what was right or wrong about the project. Participant 9 consistently reminded students of the time left before it was time to clean up their stations. I heard students talking about the assignment because I heard words such as plasma, liquids, and gases. I did not observe any one laughing. One student did look at another group's work and he quietly said to his partner "So, that is how you do that part."

### **Research Question 3**

#### **Individual Interviews**

Research question 3 asked: What current practices are being employed by the school under study teachers to prevent or address student behavior concerns? The analysis of interview question 4a was used to investigate the answer to the third research question. Participants explained how they addressed student behavior. Participant 1 shared, "I would follow the discipline plan; with the typical behavior problems, I just follow the discipline plan."

Every participant discussed the discipline book, which was an adopted school wide discipline plan. Some participants reported using the discipline plan book for all inappropriate behaviors, and other participants explained other procedures that they used before using the discipline plan book.

Participant 3 stated,

If it is something that is really bad, they do not get credit for doing that lab assignment and they have to pass the safety test before they can come back in. For talking out of turn, I give one verbal warning. Next, I will put them outside the door for just a few minutes. Thirdly, I would begin using the discipline step plan.

Participant 4 stated,

Different things, like sometimes a kid will get in trouble in my class. I will send them out. I always try to go through the administrators. I say, "Well this is what I am going to do," and they say "yes." Then I do it.

Participant 5 stated,

This is my normal routine. I am going to redirect you. From there, you know, I probably will call the parent. If they're moving through the steps I'm going to use the discipline notebook.

Participant 8 stated

I take them outside of the room and have a talk with them, and then I begin the discipline ladder.

Participant 7 stated,

I tell them that I am writing this down. I am putting paper work behind your name. I am starting a paper trail on you. So once this paper trail begins, you know you are going to get into trouble.

Participant 2 explained the discipline plan book in details,

The Discipline book that we use helps with the structure of students' discipline issues and consequences. Every homeroom teacher has a book with all of their homeroom students' names in the book. They [homeroom teachers] teach their 1st block and if a child misbehaves in homeroom, they write the kid's name, the infraction, and consequence in the book. They put them on a step [there are five steps]. On every step, the teacher has to contact the parents. Then that book of the homeroom teacher goes with the kids- the whole class to their 2nd block class. [90% of the homeroom students remain together throughout the school day]. Then the teacher has a kid that disrupts in the next block/period, then when they look in the book and they are like oh Johnny you are already in here because you cut up in Ms. So and So's class so that's going to be your next step. That teacher callsthe parents and writes down the infractions. So this is consistent, even with physical education classes and connection classes; the book follows the student. At step 4, there is a parent teacher conference with the student, all of the student's teachers, and an administrator. On the fifth step, the student is sent to the office on an office referral.

One participant explained how using different instructional strategies helped with managing student behavior. Participant 8 shared,

I have been doing this [utilizing manipulatives] all year ... doing the manipulatives and doing the student discipline notebook have caused my office referrals to decrease.

### **Classroom Observations**

All of the participants referred to the discipline notebook that the teachers at the school used to document discipline. I did not observe any participant using the discipline notebook. I observed Participant 1 separating two students for inappropriate behaviors. Participant 2 had to tell a student to be quiet using a stern and authoritative voice. Participant 2 had to do this because one student had threatened to hit another student in the neck during work period of the instructional framework. Participant 6 removed a student from the classroom for misbehaving. I observed Participant 3 redirecting students to avoid failing grades. Participant 3 stated, “You should be writing this information down, because it will be on the test.” Students began to write.

Participant 9 used researched based instructional strategies during both observations. In Participant 9’s classroom, I observed project based learning. Students worked in small groups and Participant 9 worked around the classroom and talked to students about their work. Participant 9 praised students when they were doing good work and reminded students of the time left before class was over.

Taken from the field notes

On the first observation, Participant 9 selected four boys to demonstrate what particles do in a solid, then in a liquid. Four students stood very closely together while another student tried to get between them. Participant 9 explained that particles could not get into solids because they are packed together. Then they continued to demonstrate the other states of matter using the same students. On the second observation, students began to do a group activity, which was to draw a picture for each state of matter, such as, liquid, solids, gas, and plasma. Students were working and talking among their groups about their projects. Participant 9 walked around the room and pointed out what was good and what needed more work.

### **Inconsistent Data or NonTheme**

#### **No Professional Learning**

All the participants except one believed that they needed some professional learning in the area of student management.

Participant 6 stated,

No training is going to work. What it all boils down to is the only way you are going to get kids to behave is if they see that you care. I don't consider myself to be a master teacher by no way shape form or fashion. You are going to have two or three issues, but when you have every child is sitting in here running over you, you have to stop and a look at yourself. These kids know it is not about color. It is

not about gender. It is about whether or not the kids can genuinely feel that you care.

### **Instructional Strategies**

Only one participant made reference to the lack of instructional strategies as causing student management to improve in the classroom, which is indicated that instructional strategies had an impact on managing student behavior.

Participant 8 stated,

I have been doing this [utilizing manipulatives] all year ... doing the manipulatives and doing the student discipline notebook have caused my office referrals to decrease.

### **Teacher Bias**

I did not have any leadership roles over any of the participants, but I did work at the school that was studied. In my field notes, I made note of participants' tones and how careful the participants stated the exact names of coworkers and students. I had to remind the participants that the information presented in this study is confidential and no one would hear the interviews but my committee members at Walden University and me.

Sometimes the participants were not quite clear on the interview questions.

Participants attempted to answer the question and at the end of their answer, they said, "I hope I answered your question." On the interview question about the rituals and routines, Participant 4 explained his or her daily schedule. Participant 4 explained what he did in the beginning of school until the end of the day. I wanted Participant 4 to explain one of

his or her class schedule. I asked a clarifying question, which was for the participant to explain the rituals and routines of the class that he or she was instructed to teach that school year. I asked for that class because the participant referred to those students during most of the interview. Additionally, because I was a novice researcher, the interview process was weak.

### **Evidence of Quality**

Multiple data analysis strategies were used to validate and increase the credit worthiness of this qualitative case study. Results of this data were generated from interviews of teachers of the school. In the interview process, I created field notes of teacher's hand gestures, usage of repetitive wording, and body language. During the interview, I sometimes repeated the interviewees' responses to establish clarification and validation. The deferment of drawing conclusions was vital in establishing quality of a research study (Hatch, 2002). Each teacher participant was observed twice for 45 minutes each. I utilized Janesick's (2004) observational tool (Appendix E) to avoid conflict with interpretations and observations. I listened to the audiotapes twice. I read and reread the transcribed interviews and the field notes of the interviews, as well as observations. I coded repetitive wordings and phrases, and then I created meaningful themes. The extensive time spent in the field collecting data helped to narrow the themes and yielded a better understanding of the predetermined and newly developed themes. Interpreted meanings of the collected data and direct quotes of the participants were used to explain the phenomenon being studied.

To ensure quality of this study, I utilized member checking (Creswell, 2007). I allowed the participants approximately one week to review the transcribed interviews for accuracy. The transcriptions were hand delivered to each participant and no participant made any corrections to the transcriptions. No one other than the researcher and the participant viewed his or her individual transcription.

Two people, who worked in my school system but not my school, with doctoral degrees reviewed and provided feedback on the interview guide. I was advised to speak slowly and clearly during the interview process. I was reminded to take notes of the interviewees' tones, gestures, and facial expressions during the interview process. They believed the interview questions would provide rich data that would answer the research questions. There was no suggestion to add or delete a question. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005), a researcher's interpretation of the collected data was guided by the interviewees' facial expressions, gestures, and tones. The interview questions were created to gain insight of the research questions (Hatch, 2002).

### **Summary**

The goal of this qualitative case study was to gain an understanding of middle school teachers' perceptions regarding the management of student behavior. Using analyzed interviews and observations of nine participants, Section 4 explained what hinders middle school teachers from managing student behavior. The interview questions were designed to elicit comprehensive and detailed conclusions to answer the research questions. Six themes were developed and explained as barriers of managing student

behavior. Additionally, two nonthemes were discussed. Section 5 will include an overview of this study, interpretation of the findings, implication for social change, and recommendations for future studies.

## Section 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Overview**

The purpose of this study was to investigate middle school teachers' perceptions of the barriers of managing student behavior. I utilized a qualitative case study approach to explore three research questions, which were: (a) At the school under study, what were middle school teachers' perceived barriers for effectively managing students' behaviors in the classroom-learning environment? (b) What behavior problems were occurring in the classrooms of the school under study? (c) What current practices were being employed by the teachers at the school under study to prevent or address student behavior concerns? These research questions were explored using analyzed transcriptions and descriptive observations.

I chose this site because there was documented evidence that teachers were struggling with managing student behavior. The number of office referrals had increased and teacher retention had decreased. According to Dinkes et al. (2009), this problem is not just in this school, but several schools. All teachers, except the sixth grade teachers, were invited to participate. Nine teachers voluntarily agreed to be interviewed, observed, sign a consent form, and review the transcription of his or her interview. The data reported from these nine participants indicated that teachers are having difficulties managing their students' behaviors because of the perceived inconsistency among administrators and the lack of support from coworkers, students, and parents. They

reported that the lack of consistency with ritual and routines, as well as the lack of professional learning, were barriers to managing student behavior.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

Data was generated from transcribed interviews, field notes of observations, and existing literature. The theoretical framework for this study was guided by McGregor's theories X and Y (1960). Theory X proposed that students have to be manipulated into following rituals and routines (McGregor, 1960). Teachers, who were intrinsically motivated and can be self-directed, were considered to have characteristics of theory Y (McGregor, 1960). McGregor's theories X and Y implied that meeting the needs of teachers and students, such as the basic necessity to survive, job security, and acceptance, reduces the barriers of managing student behavior.

### **Research Question 1**

What were middle school teachers' at the school under study perceived barriers for effectively managing students' behaviors in the classroom-learning environment? Sugai and Homer (2006) suggested four reasons why teachers were not properly managing student behavior: (a) inconsistent school-wide and classroom rules, (b) teachers lacking the ability to implement as well as practice rituals and routines throughout the school year, (c) lack of professional training, and (d) lack of administrative and parental support. Participants at the school reported that administrators lack consistency. They believed that the positive support from other teachers, students, and parents were needed to effectively manage student behavior. According to the

participants, professional learning in the area of student management was needed and consistency among the administrators needed to be improved. Additionally, they thought that they were not consistent with enforcing their classroom and school wide rituals and routines. They believed that these issues prevented them from effectively managing student behavior.

### **Theme 1: Coworker Support**

Principles of McGregor's theory Y (1960) are solving problems, accepting and seeking responsibilities, and being intrinsically motivated to satisfy a need. Participants had a desire to seek help from their coworkers. They wanted their coworkers' assistance with managing student behavior. Teachers depended on each other for support with instructional and management strategies (Knight, 2007).

Participant 5 stated,

Other two teachers who are on my team are really working; we're working on those kids together and that's been a help. So I do feel supported; I just still don't feel like it is working. You know, I'm just not there yet; I just don't have all the pieces put together.

I observed that teachers put students in time out in another teacher's classroom. One participant perceived his or her classroom was being overused because that person was a strong disciplinarian. "It seems like discipline always gets put on me" (Participant 6). Knight (2007) recommended that administrators provide struggling teachers with professional assistance in the area of managing student behavior. He recommended peer

coaching, which opened up lines of communication among teachers. I observed Participant 6 sending a student to another teachers' classroom for acting inappropriately.

One of the interviews showed that teachers collaborated before submitting an office referral that would yield severe consequences, such as being suspended or expelled from school.

Participant 8 stated,

As with teachers we have discussed it [student behavior]. If it is more of a bullying type of thing, then you know we report that because we did have one student that was being bullying and we reported that. I think we pretty much addressed it and talked to the students about what they are doing in relation to bullying.

Teachers were not consistent with addressing the rules of the school, such as dress code violations, picking at other students, using profane language, and chewing gum.

Participant 1 stated,

I have the most concern, where the teacher and I don't have the same expectations for the students in the same learning environment. When other teachers allow students to break school rules, such as chewing gum or dress code violations, then it affects my position with students.

The inconsistency of all teachers enforcing the school rules, not collaborating about most behavioral issues, and the over use of one management strategy were issues that caused teachers to feel like they were not being supported by their coworkers. Any

incidents that negatively interrupted the learning environment affected student achievement (Wong & Wong, 2009). Dinkes et al. (2009) believed that an increase in nonviolent discipline problems causes more serious discipline issues, such as vandalism, school rapes, fights, and guns.

## **Theme 2: Student Support**

Teachers believed that students knew the rituals and routines of the classrooms as well as the hallways. According to Curwin, Mendler, and Mendler (2008), teachers should focus on involving the students in the process of creating and enforcing classroom rituals and routines. What was clear to Moen, Davies, and Dykstra (2010) in their findings was that teachers needed to be fair in developing and implementing classroom rules.

Participant #1 stated,

When I am teaching alone, students know exactly what they are supposed to do.

They know what to expect.

Participant 6 shared with me that the ritual and routines of the school were practiced for the first two weeks of school. Wong and Wong (2008) advocated the practicing of ritual and routines the first days of school. I saw ritual and routines posted in every classroom. I heard participants constantly reminding students of the rituals and routines of their classroom.

Participant 1 stated,

Administrators do try to help at the beginning of the school year. They have the teacher go through rituals and routines with the students and they [teachers] have the student practice the rituals and routines.

If students felt like a teacher referred their friend to the office, they did not do their work. McGregor's theories X and Y (1960) suggested that teachers coerce students into helping create and following classroom's rituals and routines. Teachers wanted students who were well behave to encourage other students to stop misbehaving. Praising students for good behavior and providing incentives is a method, suggested by McGregor's theory X (1960), used to motivate students with inappropriate behavior to support teachers' classroom rituals and routines. (McGregor & Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 2006).

Participant #4 stated,

One of the biggest hindrances is the lack of support from other students, when disciplining a student. When one student acts out, the others will follow or not do what I ask them to do because I just punished their friend.

The participants believed that well behaved students modeled appropriate behaviors, and they believed this encouraged other students to do the right thing, which are follow school rules and regulations. According to Vygotsky's (1978) social learning theory, students learn through joint interactions by sharing knowledge and skill.

### **Theme 3: Parental Support**

Parents could be an asset or they could be a hindrance to the success of managing student behavior. Participants wanted parents to get involved in all school activities. Elias and Noordin (2011) suggested that parents utilize the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) to get involved in their children school and social activities.

Participant 3 stated,

Parents can be the biggest assets or the biggest hindrance to managing student behaviors.

The participants believed parents should support the school wide discipline plan and the rituals and routines of teachers' classrooms. Participants believed that the parents that needed to come to the school, for academic as well as behavior, were difficult to contact.

Participant 2 stated,

They [students] misbehave because lack of parental involvement. They know that there parents are not going to do anything. They know their parents are not going to come out so what does it matter.

The teachers did not expect the parents or administrator to manage their classrooms, but they expected help from the parents and administrators. Participants at the school desired to become better student managers, which is the basis on one of Maslow Hierarchies of Needs (McGregor, 1960).

Participant 1 stated,

I think as the teacher you are responsible for that classroom and you need to be creative and come up with something you can rely on to manage your class.

The participants believed that they are ultimately responsible for management of their classrooms. Sugai and Homer (2006) believed that teachers used effective strategies for managing student behavior; however, behavior should be supported through a systemic process. Elias and Noordin (2011) believed that school's guidance counselor should create activities that involved the parent, teachers, and students, which would create networking among the three groups.

#### **Theme 4: Inconsistent Administrators**

Spricks and Daniels (2010) believed that administrators were a vital factor in most educational issues. The participants thought that the administrators were not consistent with the code of conduct. Participants believed that the discipline notebook, adopted by the school, could be beneficial for managing student behavior, if administrators would follow the policies printed in the notebook. Certain administrators would not view the policies for consequences of infractions; they would give out whatever consequence they felt was necessary at that time.

Participant 2 stated,

Some administrators are not following through with what is written in the discipline plan book

Administrators had been known to give students different consequences for the same violation of ritual and routines. It is believed that students were not given the punishment that fits the violation.

Participant 6 stated,

Once you follow through those steps [of the discipline plan]. The administrators say that students will get a paddling, ISS, OSS something serious, some serious consequences, and you are saying that is not happening.

Spricks and Daniels believed that it was the responsibility of the administrators to provide the teachers with the mechanisms that increase student motivation, address student behavior, and create orderly environments. (McGregor, 1960).

#### **Theme 5: Rituals and Routines**

According to Danielson (2007), planning and preparation were key components of managing student behavior. Wong and Wong (2009) confirmed that students were aware when teachers were not prepared for class and the students took advantage of that lack of preparation. Students should know what to do, where to find the materials to do the work, and when it is time to transition to the next activity. Participants believed that teaching in labs or doing performance based projects is more difficult to keep rooms organized and students safe.

Participant 3 stated,

In the labs, they don't talk they play. They know exactly what they are supposed to do. It makes me nervous because I want to make sure everybody is safe.

Teachers should prepare instruction and create structured learning environments to maximize students' learning (Wong & Wong, 2009).

### **Theme 6: Training**

Professional learning in the area of student management increased teacher retention, decreased teacher burn out, and increased student achievement (Knight, 2007; Murray, Ma, & Mazur, 2008; Spricks & Daniels, 2010) In the last 5 years, only three participants had received training in the area of student management. The training that the three participants received was provided by their colleges or universities. Participant 3 stated, "It's only been one semester ago that I had a classroom management training class in college. Participant 5 stated, "Yes, about two years ago in my Masters' program I had a course."

Participants believed that professional learning, in the area of student management, would make the school wide discipline plan more effective and consistent. Coaching was a type of collaborative professional learning that assisted teachers through collaboration, discussion, self-reflection, demonstration, and observation (McGatha, 2008; Smith & Bondy 2007). Participant 4 stated, "Even after 25 years, I feel like there are many things I need to learn. I still feel like I lose students." Participants at the school could use the coaching model, which would be less cost effective than workshops and seminars, to self-direct into better classroom managers (Knight, 2007; McGregor, 1960).

**NonThemes/Instructional Strategies**

Keeping students actively engaged in the learning process, by preparing and implementing enjoyable but rigorous lessons could reduce behavior problems (Weimer, 2010). According to Larrivee (2009), researched based instructional strategies increases motivation and participation. Participant 8 believed the increase usage of manipulatives caused office referrals to decrease. Even though Participant 9 believed that he or she did not encounter many behavior problems, he or she did not discuss instructional strategies as a factor for success with managing student behavior. From my observations in Participant 9's classroom, I believed the instructional strategies and lesson was rigorous and fun-filled, which caused student engagement to increase and inappropriate behaviors to decrease (Larrivee, 2009; Weimer, 2010). During both classroom observations of Participant's 9, students had to demonstrate learning with their bodies, apply real life situations to drawings, and create pictures of different states of matter. Given the appropriate instructional strategies and environments, students can be motivated to learn and teachers can overcome barriers to managing student behavior (Larrivee, 2009; McGregor, 1960; & Wong & Wong, 2009).

**Research Question 2**

What behavior problems were occurring in the classrooms of the school under study teachers? Participant noted behavior problems as violating dress codes, talking out of turn in the classroom, talking in the hallways, insubordination, bullying, and cursing. Teachers were advised to plan for behavior problems before the school year begins

(Simonsen et al., 2008; Wong & Wong, 2009). Even though most participants considered the behavioral issues at the school as nonviolent, they reported that when several students talk out of turn or curse, it caused major classroom problems. They indicated that when three or more students are misbehaving at the same time, the classroom became chaotic. The constant misbehaving of several students takes away from teaching the curriculum (Marzano, 2008; Wong & Wong, 2009). Participant 5 stated, “But you have enough kids not following the little stuff that it just creates chaos.”

During the observations, I observed several nonviolent incidents in every classroom except 1. I observed blurting out or speaking without being recognized to speak, dress code violations, side conversations and passing notes, laughing and nonschool related talking while doing cooperative work or project based learning, sleeping in class, inattentive students, and students not having their materials to work, such as pencil and paper. Sometimes, the participants ignored the nonviolent incidents or they were not aware of these inappropriate behaviors taking place. It appeared that side conversations among students, blurting out, and violation of dress code did not bother some of the participants. Wong and Wong (2009) believed that ignoring the nonviolent behavioral issues increases violent behavioral issues. The participants that did address students' inappropriate behaviors did not use the discipline plan book, which was adopted by the school.

According to the National Center for Education (NCES) of 2008 (Dinkes, et al., 2009) there were 1.7 million victims (ages 12-18) of nonfatal crimes at school. A couple

of the participants did say that bullying and being disrespectful to the teacher had occurred in the classrooms. Traditional bullying, as well as cyber bullying, became a major concern in public schools (Couvillon & Ilieva, 2011). The participants wanted the administrators of the school under study to clarify the definition of bullying. One participant stated that she thought picking on a person was considered bullying, but the principal thought that was just a characteristic of a middle school student. According to Rodkin and Roisman (2010), bullying can be deceptive in middle school aged students. They referred to bullying as socially connected bullying, which was hidden in classrooms and schools.

### **Research Question 3**

What current practices are being employed by the school under study teachers to prevent or address student behavior concerns? Teachers at the school had to verbally reprimand students, publicly and privately. I observed a student being disruptive during class that the participant had to take the student outside of the class and talk to the student. I assumed the participant had a discussion with the student about the inappropriate behavior, because the student came back in the room and did not do anything else inappropriately, at least not during my observation.

All of the teacher participants follow a school wide discipline book (SWDB), which was outlined in the students' handbooks, teachers' handbook, and posted in most teachers' classrooms. The SWDB, which was explained in detail in Section 4, consisted of five steps before a student can be referred to the office and at every step a student's

parents must be contact. Although I observed several behavior problems, I did not see any participant use the SWDB. The teacher participants believed the discipline notebook was a great tool for managing student behavior. However, the notebook needed some minor revisions and the administrators needed to follow the guidelines of the notebook. Participants made suggestions to alter or add to the existing school wide discipline plan. Participant 2 suggested that the school under study use a neighboring county's school wide discipline plan and the alternative school discipline plan. Participant 2 explained, "It is a lanyard...It's like a discipline book, but it is like a miniature version of the book."

The explanation of the neighboring school's discipline plan was very similar to the school under study's plan. The neighboring county's plan appeared to be more student- focused and less cumbersome for teachers. At the neighboring county the students wore something similar to a lanyard, which consisted of documentation of the students' schedules, medical issues, and daily behavioral problems. At the school studied, the discipline book traveled with each teacher's homeroom class. If a student's schedule was changed during the course of the school year, then that student's information would not be in the discipline notebook. Participants believed that looking for the discipline notebook that misbehaved students were located in took away too much planning time.

Participant #8 suggested a change in one's instructional strategies would help with managing student behavior. Simonsen, Sugai, and Negrón (2008) have studied, implemented, and practiced a school wide positive behavior support plan. They noted that

the primary goal of a school wide plan is to support all students and teachers, which is managed by the administrators.

### **Practical Application**

Managing student behavior was one of the key components to being a successful teacher (Marzano, 2007). Participants at the school indicated that there were barriers that prevent them from managing student behavior as effectively as they would like to manage the behaviors. The participants explained that they needed more consistency among the administrators, and more support from parents, students and their coworkers, as well as training in the area of managing student behavior. They thought that all parties mentioned should be responsible for the success of the students. McGregor's theories X and Y (1960) could be used as a guide to manage student behavior. Theory X suggested that students lack motivation and need to be persuaded to manage their behaviors. Application of findings should be guided by a theory, model, and strategies (Tauber, 2007).

Fisher (2009) suggested using rewards to encourage students to follow rituals and routines. Teachers, administrators, and parents could practice the characteristics of theory Y to decrease barriers of managing student behavior. Theory Y proposed that people who are intrinsically motivated can self-direct and solve problems. Administrators, parents, and teachers naturally want students to be successful. Therefore, the perceived barriers of the problem has been identified and the principles of McGregor's theory Y may be used

as a foundation for professional learning to decrease the barriers of managing student behavior (McGregor, 1960).

### **Implications for Social Change**

Because little was known about middle school teachers' perception of managing student behavior, this study was conducted to gain a greater understanding of teachers' difficulties in managing student behavior. This study was designed to contribute valid data to new teachers, mentors of teachers, and school administrators about what teachers perceived as barriers of managing student behaviors. Findings of the data have conveyed awareness to the problem at the school and may help to make informed decisions to address the problem at all schools in the county. Teachers who have experienced the phenomenon that was studied will be interested in seeking professional knowledge to overcome barriers of managing student behaviors and utilize research based strategies to reduce behavioral problems (Sokolowski, 2008). Educators should examine their effectiveness for managing student behavior and seek positive social change to decrease teacher burnout and increase student motivation, as well as teacher retention (McClowry, Snow, Tamis-LeMonda, & Rodriguez, 2009 & Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007).

The conceptual framework that guided this study was based on McGregor's theories X and Y (1960), which was grounded by Maslow hierarchies of needs, beginning with the lowest level of needs:

1. Physiological needs, which is food, clothing and shelter
2. Security needs, which is threats or loss of jobs

3. Social ego, which is acceptance of others, and
4. Self-actualization, which is the desire to become more than what is now.

These hierarchies of needs were correlated to the participants' perceptions of barriers to manage student behavior. The teachers indicated that a positive change in the support from parents, coworkers, and students will promote and build positive relationships with teachers and students, create structured learning environments, reduce the threat of teachers leaving the education profession, and maximize student learning. Principles of McGregor's theory Y (1960) are solving problems, accepting and seeking responsibilities, and being intrinsically motivated to satisfy a need. The data indicated that teachers at the school desired professional help to become better student managers. The Southwest Georgia Regional Agent (SWRESA) can use the data collected in this study to modify and develop professional development workshops on managing student behavior.

Participants believed that educators can decrease behavior problems by creating positive relationship and allowing students to see that they care about what happens to them (Canter & Canter, 2009). Participants believed that office referral would decrease if they would enforce the rituals and routines that had been established by the administrators. Additionally, participants believed that they needed to be updated on the literature and strategies concerning bullying and student management for middle school students.

Findings of the data indicated that the definition of each behavioral infraction needed to be more precise and consistency among administrators needed to be strengthened. Through yearly updates of discipline plans and applications, minor changes would decrease teachers' barriers to managing student behavior, increase teacher retention, and increase student achievement. Administrators are responsible for providing teachers with the necessary training to increase student achievement (Sprick and Daniel, 2010). All stakeholders must do what is necessary to make the learning environment an enjoyable experience for all students (Paciotti, K. D. & Covington, 2007). Findings of teachers' perceived barriers of handling student behavior could be presented to local colleges and universities in hopes that they will make changes to their required undergraduate and graduate educational courses to include more intense training for how to manage student behavior.

### **Recommendation for Actions**

Gregory and Ripski (2008) indicated that teachers use a variety of strategies to manage student behavior. Findings of this study reported that teachers believed that their coworkers, as well as parents and students are not supporting rituals and routines of the school. It is crucial that the administrators use practical applications to address the needs of the teachers and become more consistent concerning consequences to student behavior. According to Sugai and Homer (2006), administrators were the key to the success of a school wide discipline plan. I would like for the administrators to begin with the findings of this study and note teachers' beliefs and perceptions concerning student

behavior and provide research based professional training for parents, teachers, and students in the area of student behavior. With a review of the literature, collected data, and the findings, I am making the following recommendations for the school studied:

### **Theme 1: Coworker Support**

I suggested that the teachers at the school use a coaching model to increase support from their coworkers. Coaching was a type of collaborative professional learning that helps teachers through collaboration, discussion, self-reflection, demonstration, and observation (Murray, Ma, & Mazur, 2008). The grade chairpersons or team leaders could initiate a discussion during weekly teachers' meetings. In addition, coaching was supported by Vygotsky's (1978) social learning theory, which theorized that people learned through joint interaction.

### **Theme 2: Student Support**

I recommended that the teachers use research based strategies that teach students how to be responsible for their own behaviors. I suggested beginning with positive reinforcement, such as incentives and verbal praises of grades and behavior. Positive reinforcement was a strategy that was supported by Skinner's theory (1953) and McGregor's theory X (1960). Smith and Bondy (2007) suggested using psychological supportive environment (PSE). The PSE was created using positive behavior supports, such as morning meetings, altering the physical environment and praising positive behaviors (McGregor's theories X and Y, 1960; Skinner, 1953; Smith & Bondy, 2007). The class meeting was a discussion between the students and the teacher about school

related issues. The purpose of the meetings was to help students feel a sense of belonging, trust, and mutual respect (Wubbolding, 2007).

I observed that students and teachers lacked questioning strategies. Students were allowed to blurt out answers and questions. I am suggesting that teachers plan their questions before class and establish expectations for the questioning period of class (Bond, 2008). This technique assisted in keeping all students actively engaged and focused because the students were not sure when the teacher called their name.

### **Theme 3: Parental Support**

Bandura's Social Cognitive theory (1999) suggested that students' behaviors were reflective of what was modeled by parents and other family members. I suggested that parents read articles, books, and attend workshops that promote positive interactions between them and their children. Elias and Noordin (2011) suggested that parents (a) be attentive to their children extra curricular activities and school activities, (b) understand the needs of their children, and (c) try to decrease family conflicts. I suggest that the school counselor plan some intervention programs, which involves parenting skills, for parents.

### **Theme 4: Inconsistent Administrators**

Simonsen, Sugai, and Negron (2008) believed that effective intervention in the area of student management should be done utilizing a theory, a model, and strategies that are proven by evidence to work. To overcome the barriers presented in the Section 4,

I recommend that the administrators and teachers utilize McGregor's theories X and Y (1960), which were grounded by Maslow's Hierarchies of Needs.

#### **Theme 5: Rituals and Routines**

Rituals and routines were necessary for teachers to create a safe and orderly environment. In a middle school environment, McGregor's theory X (1960) suggested that teachers get students to agree to their rituals and routines and possibly allow students to help create the rituals and routines. I suggested that teachers at the school continue to practice the rituals and routines the first week of school, two days after Christmas break, and 1 day after Spring break.

Teachers can increase their knowledge in the area of instructional strategies, which will increase student engagement and reduce office referrals. Flexible grouping is an instructional strategy that maximized time and held students accountable for their behaviors and their learning (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006). Students were less intimidated working with someone that was on the same level. I suggested that teachers at the school participate in professional learning that focus on researched based instructional strategies.

#### **Theme 6: Training**

I recommend that the administrators use components of the School-wide Positive Behavior Support model (SWPBS), which incorporated training for teachers, students, administrators, and district personnel (Simonsen, B., Sugai, G., & Negrón, M., 2008).

The collective responses of the participants indicated that training was needed at all levels to decrease the barriers of managing student behavior.

Teachers who lack managing student behavior because of the perceived barriers of this study should apply McGregor's theories X and Y (1960). The characteristics of theory Y was better suited for people who were creative, problem solvers, and motivated by self-actualization (Fisher, 2009; Larsson, Vinberg, & Wiklund, 2007, McGregor, 1967). Self-actualization was the highest level of need in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Given the right tools and circumstances, teachers were taught in professional learning activities to self-direct to manage student behavior.

The findings of this study will be disseminated at a local board meeting, which will be open to the public. All stakeholders will be given an opportunity to ask questions about the findings and validity of this study.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Taking into consideration the findings of this study and the literature reviewed, future studies on the roles of school level and district level administrators in relation to student management are needed. The participants of this study indicated that the school level administrators are not consistent with making decision about students' consequences of misbehavior. In addition, the teacher participants wanted more support from the parents and students. To begin to address all of the barriers presented in this study, the district level administrators have to become more concerned about the process of managing student behavior in the classrooms.

Additionally, this study revealed that teachers are lacking the training to manage student behavior. Two-thirds of the participants admitted to not receiving training in the area of student management. Future studies that investigate the necessity of training in the area of student management and how often teachers and administrators should receive training in the area of managing student behavior. Knight (2007) believed that schools should adopt the peer coaching model. Knight believed that master teachers could be trained to become peer coaches. Peer coaching model would eliminate costly workshops, consultants, and seminars for all teachers.

Finally, I recommend that a replicate of this study be conducted to do a comparative analysis of the results. In two years, a future researcher could target the teachers who did not participate in this study to determine if the results are similar or contrasting.

### **Reflections**

Thinking through the whole process, I would have to say the data collection was the most undesirable experience and the data analysis was the most rewarding experience. I emailed teachers and asked them to be a part of my study. After about two days, no one had responded. I was about to cry and I did not know what to do. Having held the math coach position at the school under study two years ago, I wondered did teachers still view me in that role. On the third day, about three teachers saw me around the school and told me that they would love to participate. By the end of that week, I believe I had about seven potential participants. I sent out another email to get more

participants, but I began to prepare with the potential participants to conduct the interviews. Approximately two weeks, I had 11 potential participants.

Initially, I thought I would be able to interview all the participants within two weeks and conduct the observations with three weeks. Scheduling the interviews was a difficult task because the only time that the participant agreed to being interviewed was in the afternoons. No one agreed to do the interview before school being that we had to be on duty at 7:30am. One participant was the band teacher and I had to work around band practice, which means that I conducted an interview at 5:30pm. Another participant had a new baby and she wanted to get home to the baby, but she really wanted to participate. After the Thanksgiving break, the participant was able to spend some quality time with the baby. Most participants did not want to stay in the afternoons on Mondays and Fridays. Additionally, we had scheduled faculty meetings on Tuesdays.

Observing the teachers during my noninstructional time was hectic. Being that I was the grade chairperson, I conducted meetings with the sixth grade teachers on Mondays. Every Wednesday and Thursday, teachers are to assist students who failed their last assessments. Every time I scheduled an observation on Tuesdays or Fridays, the potential participants seemed to be absent. To get all of the observations completed, I had to take two personal days.

The data analysis was a tedious process but it was worth it. I never thought that the lack of coworkers or student support would prove to be barriers for managing student behavior. I was glad that I was able to keep an open mind while analyzing the data.

Before I analyzed this data, I viewed my classroom as mine. I believed in collaboration among teachers, but I did not see how another teacher could hinder me from managing my students. Findings in this study showed how teachers who do not enforce rituals and routines did not their coworkers. From research that I had done throughout my doctoral study, I knew that I needed my students to be supportive of my classrooms' rituals and routines. If they did not support the rituals and routines, I did not see that as being a barrier to managing them. I have learned that teachers may manage students differently but teachers need the help of administrators, coworkers, students and parents to manage students more effectively.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to identify and examine middle school teachers' perceived barriers of managing student behaviors. Utilizing interviews and observations, the data was collected in an attempt to answer the three research questions. I utilized the analyzed data and the researched literature on managing student behavior to interpret the participants' responses. Based on the findings, it was determined by the participants' perceptions that the lack of support from the coworkers, parents and students were barriers of managing student behavior. Additionally, professional learning in the area of student management and the lack of consistency among administrators as well as teachers enforcing rituals and routines were believed to be barriers of managing student behavior.

Over the last decade, the state curriculum has changed from Quality Core Curriculum to Georgia Performance Standards now to Common Core Georgia

Performance Standards (CCGPS). Over the last two decades, students have gone from playing ball on the outside to playing gaming system inside now to playing gaming system with people all over the world. The fact is the curriculum and the students' interests are changing. The teaching profession needs to continue to research best practices to educate and support teachers in the area of student management. One of the main factors in teacher burn-out and the lack of retention is student behavior (Knight, 2007).

This study was intended to bring awareness to the teaching profession about some of the perceived barriers that prevent teachers from effectively managing student behavior. McGregor's theories X and Y (1960) were used to guide the collected data. The findings yielded recommendations that can be used to improve current educational issues that were directly related to the lack of managing student behavior.

Recommendations of this study provided novice and veteran teachers with professional learning activities of strategies that helped to decrease students' inappropriate behaviors and increase student achievement. Recommendations were made to help to students, teachers, administrators, and parents in the area of support, consistency, training, and instructional strategies.

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## Appendix A: IRB Approval

Dear Ms. Whitlock,

This email is to notify you that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved your application for the study entitled, "MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF BARRIERS OF MANAGING STUDENT BEHAVIOR."

Your approval # is 10-14-11-0085610. You will need to reference this number in your doctoral study and in any future funding or publication submissions. Also attached to this e-mail is the IRB approved consent form. Please note, if this is already in an on-line format, you will need to update that consent document to include the IRB approval number and expiration date.

Your IRB approval expires on October 13, 2012. One month before this expiration date, you will be sent a Continuing Review Form, which must be submitted if you wish to collect data beyond the approval expiration date.

Your IRB approval is contingent upon your adherence to the exact procedures described in the final version of the IRB application document that has been submitted as of this date. If you need to make any changes to your research staff or procedures, you must obtain IRB approval by submitting the IRB Request for Change in Procedures Form. You will receive confirmation with a status update of the request within 1 week of submitting the change request form and are not permitted to implement changes prior to receiving approval. Please note that Walden University does not accept responsibility or liability for research activities conducted without the IRB's approval, and the University will not accept or grant credit for student work that fails to comply with the policies and procedures related to ethical standards in research.

When you submitted your IRB application, you made a commitment to communicate both discrete adverse events and general problems to the IRB within 1 week of their occurrence/realization. Failure to do so may result in invalidation of data, loss of academic credit, and/or loss of legal protections otherwise available to the researcher.

Both the Adverse Event Reporting form and Request for Change in Procedures form can be obtained at the IRB section of the Walden web site or by emailing [irb@waldenu.edu](mailto:irb@waldenu.edu):  
[http://inside.waldenu.edu/c/Student\\_Faculty/StudentFaculty\\_4274.htm](http://inside.waldenu.edu/c/Student_Faculty/StudentFaculty_4274.htm)

Researchers are expected to keep detailed records of their research activities (i.e., participant log sheets, completed consent forms, etc.) for the same period of time they retain the original data. If, in the future, you require copies of the originally submitted IRB materials, you may request them from Institutional Review Board.

Please note that this letter indicates that the IRB has approved your research. You may not begin the research phase of your dissertation, however, until you have received the **Notification of Approval to Conduct Research** (which indicates that your committee and Program Chair have also approved your research proposal). Once you have received this notification by email, you may begin your data collection.

Both students and faculty are invited to provide feedback on this IRB experience at the link below:

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=qHBJzkJMux43pZegKImdiQ\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=qHBJzkJMux43pZegKImdiQ_3d_3d)

Sincerely,

Jenny Sherer, M.Ed., CIP

Operations Manager

Office of Research Integrity and Compliance

Email: [irb@waldenu.edu](mailto:irb@waldenu.edu)

Fax: 626-605-0472

Tollfree : 800-925-3368 ext. 1341

Office address for Walden University:

155 5th Avenue South, Suite 100

Minneapolis, MN 55401

## Appendix B: Email to Principal

Dear Principal,

I am writing to request permission to gain access to the classrooms. I would like to interview and observe ten of the teachers at your school, excluding the sixth grade teachers. Because I am a sixth grade teacher, it is recommended that I do not include them in my study. I propose to explore teachers' perceptions of barriers when managing student behavior. I will use a case study approach, where I seek to identify and examine middle school teachers' perceived barriers of managing student behavior and the strategies they use to manage student behavior at your school. Your school was chosen because it is a middle school located in Southwest Georgia and is aware of the problem being studied.

The problem is that teachers are struggling to manage student behavior. My goal is to provide help to student teachers and students pursuing degrees in education, principals and mentors of new teachers, and novice and veteran teachers who have classroom management skills that work for most of their students, but need to enhance or add strategies for a very small number of students.

For data collection purposes, I will need approximately 10 teachers who are willing to participate in my study. Each interview will last approximately 30 to 45 minutes. The interviews will be conducted before school or after school; I assure you that the interviews will not affect instructional time. In addition, I would like to observe teachers during my planning period.

If given the permission to enter the classrooms, I will be contacting the teachers via emails and asking them to be a part of my study. Only teachers who volunteer to be a part of my study will be interviewed and observed. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this email or my research, please contact me or my advisor.

Sincerely,

Winifred Whitlock

## Appendix C: Email to Participants

Dear Teacher,

I am pursuing a doctoral degree in Teacher Leadership at Walden University. Your principal, has agreed to allow me to interview teachers before or after school and observe teachers during my planning periods. I am asking you to be a part of my study.

I propose to explore teachers' perceptions of barriers when managing student behavior. I will use a case study approach, where I seek to identify and examine middle school teachers' perceived barriers of managing student behavior at your school through interviews and observations. You are being asked to be a part of my study because you are a teacher at school under study and you do not teach sixth grade. You can contribute to helping solve the problem at your school, which are teachers' perceived barriers of managing student behavior.

I am asking you to voluntarily participate in an audiotaped interview that will last approximately 30 to 45 minutes. I would like to interview you before or after school. After my data from the interviews have been completed and transcribed, I would like to observe you twice to view the strategies you use to manage or prevent student behavior. Your participation in my study is voluntary and no monetary incentives will be given. However, your responses in the interview will give me valuable information to help novice and veteran teachers who have classroom management skills that work for most of their students, but need to enhance or add strategies for a very small number of students.

All of your responses and identifying information will be kept confidential. Only my doctoral chair and I will have access to the data collected from you. In my study, I will use an alias name to identify your data.

I will need you to sign a consent form, which gives me permission to allow you to be a part of my study. You will be given a copy of the consent form. You have the right to drop out of my study at any time. I would like to assure you that your consent to participate or not participate would not affect your employment or our relationship. Should you have any questions regarding this email or my research, please contact me or my advisor.

Sincerely,

Winifred Whitlock

## Appendix D: Interview Guide

### Interview Guide

#### Research Questions:

1. At the school under study, what were middle school teachers' perceived barriers for effectively managing students' behaviors in the classroom-learning environment?
2. What behavior problems were occurring in the classrooms of the teachers in the school under study?
3. What current practices were being employed by the teachers in the school under study to prevent or address student behavior concerns?

#### Checklist:

1. Secure an appropriate place for the interview (prefer the interviewee's classroom)
2. Tape recorder, batteries, and power cord
3. Extra Consent forms
4. Check to see if the room temperature is okay with the interviewee

#### Protocol:

1. Give a brief explanation of my study and purpose of the interview.

The purpose of this study will explore middle school teachers' of ABC perceptions and beliefs about the barriers of managing student behavior. The purpose of this study is to explain and gain an understanding of the barriers of managing student behavior. Using the literature, I will explore and examine existing strategies of managing student behavior.

2. Remind the interviewee that the interview will be recorded and he/she may stop the interview at any time; however, this interview should not take more than 45minutes.
3. Explain to the interviewee that their identity will not be reveal. The tape and notes will only be used for my doctoral study at Walden University and will be locked in a safe at my home.

#### 4. Are there any questions?

Fifteen interview questions were developed from the literature review and from my experience as a middle school educator. The purpose of the essential questions is to identify and explain the barriers of managing student behavior.

#### Interview Questions

1. Based on your experience, what does a structured learning environment look like?
2. What concerns do you have about managing student behavior?
3. Educators are always trying to improve their practices. What prevents you from managing students' behavior as effectively as you may want to?
4. What are typical behavior problems, if any, that you face in the classroom currently or in the past?
  - a. How did you address these behavior problems?
  - b. What additional support was provided? By whom?
5. What do you feel are the reasons students misbehave in the classroom setting or in school in general?
6. What do you feel are reasons that students behave in the classroom setting or in school in general?
7. Assuming training has been provided, would you please explain some of your recent training in classroom management? Did the training have a positive impact in relation to managing student behavior, please explain?
8. Are there any programs/models in your school that support classroom management or managing student behavior? If so, can you please explain these programs/models to me?
9. If nothing were in place, what programs or support would you suggest that would support you in your classroom?
10. Do you feel like you need more training in the area of managing student behavior? Why or Why not?
11. Tell me about your daily schedule in relations to managing student behavior?
12. What are your classroom procedures, rituals, routines?
13. What role do the administrators play with student management in your classroom?
14. What role do parents play with managing your students' behaviors?
15. Is there anything you would like to add?

#### Notes to self:

1. Introduce myself first

2. Ask the interviewee is she comfortable; offer water or drink
3. Do not forget to ask clarifying and probing questions
4. Do not forget to thank interviewee for their time, patience, and being a part of my study

## Appendix E: Consent Form

### Consent Form

You are invited to take part in my research study to learn more about middle school teachers' perceptions of barriers to manage student behaviors. You are being asked to be a part of my study because you are a teacher at ABC Middle School and you do not teach sixth grade. You can contribute to helping solve the problem at your school, which are teachers' perceived barriers of managing student behavior. Please read this form and ask any questions you have before agreeing to be part of the study.

A researcher named Winifred Whitlock, who is a doctoral student at Walden University, is conducting this study. She teaches six grade math and is 6<sup>th</sup> grade chairperson at the school under study.

#### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to identify and examine middle school teachers' perceived barriers of managing student behaviors. The data collected will be used to improve current educational issues that are directly related to the lack of managing student behaviors. I will examine and analyze the barriers that middle school teachers come across when trying to manage student behavior. Then, I will explain to the teaching profession how to overcome the perceived barriers that teachers encounter when trying to create a structured learning environment. Next, I will recommend strategies to overcome the challenges of managing student behavior. The main objective is to provide research that will help teachers seek help from other teachers to become effective classroom managers

#### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Complete an interview that will be audiotaped and should take no more than 45 minutes
- Read your transcribed interview and make revisions
- Allow me to observe your classroom twice for 45 minutes

#### **Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

By signing this consent form, you are volunteering to participate in my study. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the study. No one at Mitchell County Middle School will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. If you feel stressed during the study, you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal.

**Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

There are no risks to you in participating in this study. Your participation in my study will help student teachers and students pursuing degrees in education, principals and mentors of new teachers, novice and veteran teachers who have classroom management skills that work for most of their students, but need to enhance or add strategies for a very small number of students.

**Compensation:**

Unfortunately, there will not be any monetary compensation for participating in this study.

**Confidentiality:**

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher's name is Winifred Whitlock. The researcher's faculty advisor is Dr. Derek Schroll. You may ask any questions you have now. Alternatively, if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher, the advisor, or the director or research at Walden University.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. I have received answers to any questions I have at this time. I am 18 years of age or older, and I consent to participate in the study.

Printed Name of

Participant

Participant's Written or

Electronic\* Signature

Researcher's Written or

Electronic\* Signature

## Appendix F: Observational Protocol

**Observation Protocol****Study Note Template in Janesick Format****Winifred Whitlock****Observation Notes**

<b>Notes to Self</b> <i>Here you can include your own concurrent thoughts, reflections, biases to overcome, distractions, insights, etc.</i>	<b>Observation</b> <i>Here you should include exactly what you see and hear from the objects, people, and/or settings you are observing.</i>

Adapted from Janesick, V. J. (2004). Figure 2.1. In *“Stretching” exercises for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed., p. 20). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

## Appendix G: Permission To Use

- **Order detail ID:** 59935334
- **ISBN:** 978-0-7619-2815-7
- **Publication year:** 2012
- **Publication Type:** Book
- **Publisher:** SAGE PUBLICATIONS
- **Rightsholder:** SAGE PUBLICATIONS INC BOOKS
- **Author/Editor:** Winifred Whitlock
- **Your reference:** Winifred Dissertation, Data Collection
- **Permission Status:**  **Granted**
- **Permission type:** Republish or display content
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- **Republication date:** 02/27/2012
- **Circulation/ Distribution:** 1
- **Type of content:** Figure/ diagram/ table
- **Description of requested content:** Descriptive Case Study about MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF BARRIERS OF MANAGING STUDENT BEHAVIOR
- **Page range(s):** 54-57
- **Translating to:** No Translation
- **Requested content's publication date:** 01/02/2012

## Appendix H: Example of Observation Notes

**Participant #5**

<p><b>Notes to Self</b> Here you can include your own concurrent thoughts, reflections, biases to overcome, distractions, insights, etc.</p>	<p><b>Observation</b> Here you should include exactly what you see and hear from the objects, people, and/or settings you are observing.</p>
<p>I wonder why he is sitting alone. This child probably is a behavior problem because there are two more empty desk, that are available. The child is not sitting in proximity to the board, instructional chart.</p> <p>I can't make out what the letter reads from here</p>	<p>8:00 am On the promethean board is a Do Now Agenda</p> <p>beside the board there were papers that read "Board=Paper; paper that says Classroom Routines" ; paper that says Classroom Rules; During this time students were looking at the board and writing</p> <p>On the Chalk board there is another Agenda (Do now, independent reading, read aloud, mini-lesson work session, closing); 3 instructional charts (1) Common organizational structures (2) common organizational structures (3) Graphic features</p> <p>On chart stand EQ and work session (again)</p> <p>Students sitting in groups of 3's, there were 7 groups and one student sitting alone by the exit door</p> <p>On the wall behind teacher's desk is Word Wall with words below it that reads "verb tense, heading, letter of complaint, present tense inside address, past tense, salutation, present perfect, past perfect" and these words also have the definition.</p>

	<p>On the bulletin board, there is words that reads Book of the month, Then there is a cover of a book and a letter;</p> <p>More words on the wall: words that read student work and it have a two pieces of paper that say task, teacher commentary, and pieces of student work word that read Standards with three pieces of paper that says standard ongoing, and two other papers that have a lot of words on them</p> <p>word that read Task</p>
<p>I believe that were taking AR test because the said that it was AR time</p>	<p>During the reading time, several students were given a folder and left the room (about 4)</p> <p>Book shelf, in the back of the room next to the bulletin board, is filled with different kinds of novels.</p> <p>On one side of the room, are 5 desktop computers where students were constantly going to and from Students were only using 4 of the desktops because I was sitting at one of them</p> <p>Above the desktop were posters, (1) Cooperative Work Routines, (2) Criteria for Accelerated Reader Certification Levels (3) Rituals and Routines for AR (4) Sentence Where Word Found Chart</p> <p>At 8:30 a timer sounded and the teacher told them what they should be doing next, which was a read aloud think aloud</p> <p>Student go up and teacher told him to sit down, as he was going to his seat, he said something and teacher told him no, no.</p> <p>8:35 After the transition, teacher begin to read to students, she read something for</p>

	<p>two minutes and discuss what they were to do next, then they lined up by rows and went to the restroom around 8 :39 Students came back from restroom</p>
<p>mumbling, singing, humming, it could be reading out loud but quietly</p> <p>I need to talk with teacher about this</p>	<p>8:40 Teacher told students to get rid of everything except something to write with.....she said this 3 times. Then she told about 4 students individually to clear their desk.</p> <p>Teacher gave directions for assignment called Comparison Matrix</p> <p>8:44 Students sat and looked at teacher ....some students were making noises, teacher continued to teach</p> <p>I could hear quiet noises around the room</p> <p>Another adult was in the room sitting beside one student</p> <p>8:48 I left the room.</p>

## Appendix I: Example of Transcription

1. **Interviewer:** Based on your experience, what does a structured learning environment look like?

**Interviewee:** In my years of experience, I would say that a structured learning environment is organized. It is organized in a way that the transition of the students in the classroom; the rituals and routines everything run smoothly. The classroom is also neat and tidy. The arrangement of the desk is conducive to a positive learning environment. Even the way the materials; the student folders; the handouts; the way everything is passed out and collected. It is not necessary meticulous but there is a system in place and that to me is a structured learning environment.

**Interviewer:** What do you mean by a system? Is there a system for how they?

**Interviewee:** Like an approach; the teacher has established a system or routine. How the students enter the classroom. What do they do with their belongings? How do they go about sharpening their pencils? How do they go about getting their portfolio work. Everything, there is a process. Of course, it is learned overtime, you know.

2. **Interviewer:** What concerns do you have about managing student behavior?

**Interviewee:** My main concern was the parental involvement. Having the parent as part of the behavior process and of course issues with trying to contact parent and we don't always have the right information or the numbers have been disconnected and when you can't get the parents out here. And then the good parents you always see, they are always out here. The misbehaving students and the parents you want to see you never see them. Also, a lack of you know if we are getting on to your child here are you going to support the children or you going to reinforce this behavior change at home or is it just a disconnect. You know like when the child gets home, is like nothing happened and that's like my concern.

**Interviewer:** So, are you saying that on one hand; it's parents pretty much. But on one hand it's that you saying "are they gonna support you and the school rules and regulation and the consequences. And the other thing that I am hearing that you are saying is that the parents are not getting involved enough -in what we have going on at the school. Not just discipline, but in every aspect

**Interviewee:** Yeah, discipline and everything even like our family nights and our PTA and stuff. But on the discipline aspect of it, you know if you give a child like ASD and take form home and they sign it. But you have already tried to contact the parent or just say you tried to contact the parent but didn't reach the parent but they got that form to take home. Well if the parent never signed it, then that kid will automatically will go to

ISS and the parent might not ever know anything about it because you can't get up with them or they will not sign the paper for their child to have ASD

14. **Interviewer:** I am going to skip down to my question #14 since we are on that and it says What role does the parent play in managing student behavior? Does that kinda fit or answer the same question you are talking about now?

**Interviewee:** Well, you do have parents that manage student behavior but it's not severe behavior. It's not severe behavior. Yeah, you know I can shoot some email to some parents and be like your child is busy they will not stay seated they are easily distracted and they are just talking- talking. And that usually you know nip in the bud pretty quickly. But then when you have a student that is disrespectful and constantly classroom disruption you know you look at home situation like that child is running that household and if he is cutting up and acting and he is probably doing the same thing at home . Even the parents , I have been teacher conference where the parents have been like Oh throw the hands up in the air and say oh I don't know what to do about him and he is doing the same thing at home. A month ago I had a parent say well he does that same thing at home and I am going to send him to live with his daddy. And you are like Oh that's how you handle it you know you send him to live with someone because you basically gave up. That's not that's only reinforcing negative behavior. That's not helping the child or turning that problem around

9. **Interviewer:** So this is similar to something on #9. Do you know of something or some programs out there that we can give to help them manage their students' behavior?

**Interviewee:** Well if we can get them [parents] school. If we can get them to come here, we got like you know like our Alternative school and Mr. XXX. They have a program in place. He took those students to a prison to see what it was like..Laughing. But if we could have the parents to come in and be like is this future you want for your child. You know and give them the harsh reality of what is going to happen if behavior doesn't change and then maybe. And that goes into another issue: How do we get the parents here, you know

3. **Interviewer:** #3 says, Educators are always trying to improve their practice, what prevents you from managing student behavior as effectively as you may want to?

**Interviewee:** Okay, I say the administration. Because there is a lack of communication among administrators. Ok years ago, when we had an administrator that handled discipline, that was all he did. I felt like it went smoothly. You know, I never had a problem. I mean it would be like give me that kids. You know, if that child was being blatantly disrespectful. But now, we only have two administrators and it was the lack of communication between them, then it the lack of consistency you know one administrator

want to handle this- this way and the other one is saying no, no we can't do that. Then you have cases where students are misbehaving and you know it should be like this is OSS like in the code of conduct if this child does this then he is OSS and they say Oh No let's just put him in ISS for a day. You know and I mean like that to me is the problem is the lack of consistency. And it's, it's like different strokes for different folks and it's also not how you just handle children differently you handle if it is the same incident you handle it two different ways. Also, teachers depending on the teacher it's handled differently too. You know like, in some cases I feel like Um you know like our principal will look at me and she would take care of something and it would easily be nip in the bud then I have other people on my team and she would be like did you really see that, or did you really do. And you know it's basically overall consistency of how they handle situations.

**Interviewer:** I notice like you said, Um the handbook and the handbook may say like for fighting students will get three days home for suspension are you saying that they may say for certain children well no, we are going to put them in ISS.

**Interviewee:** Right, like you know we had the code conduct in the handbook for a long period of time and they took it out. But then it was like a general guideline and to me that's like if it is written down, if it is on paper you know that's the way we should follow it and if you don't want to follow it like that you know adjustments need to made to that document. You know you just can't handle situation however you want to Because you have other kids who are going on and they are telling their mamas and daddies oh you know I got in a fight and I got 3 days OSS and you know he got 2 days ISS you know, I mean that to me is and I think it got put back in our handbook. I know like MsYYYY will refer to it, she will be flipping through that book and how do I handle this and she says oh well that's too severe, oh I will just do this. And I will be like if it is in that book and that child did this then that is what needs to happen.

4. **Interviewer:** What are typical behavior problem do you face in your classroom, if any, that you face in your classroom? You can talk about currently or in the past.

**Interviewee:** My, everything run pretty smoothly at least since we created numeracy and I do not have a ton of kids in the classroom you know and I can all this behavior is managed. The problem that I do have and I have had I mean like every nine weeks you got that child that doesn't think art is important and they don't care about doing their work and it's usually it's the kid that really good that does well academically you know that make good grades they are looking at this like this is boring and they look at this like oh I don't have to pass this to make it 9th grade and I am like actually sometimes I say that um if you fail this and some other or another connection or PE you will fail. And they look at me like well I am passing all of my other classes and I am like ok. I usually try to fix it I usually say I try to relate art back to um a career or like what can they do with this in the future and how like 80% of the job market is art based and all the

different career that they can have and have this as background and also of course they have to at least a fine art requirement in high school to graduate of course fixing to have students to graduate with no fine arts credits...laughing um if they don't take band. So, sometimes that gives them a little bit more of incentive to do and at the same time I say well you are saying that right now because you don't this project and you don't like what we are doing but we are not going to draw everyday you know we do different things we work with different materials we work with different techniques just because you are complaining and don't like this particular thing doesn't mean that it is going to be this way next week.

**Interviewer:** So most of your problems come from them not thinking your class is important?

**Interviewee:** Right, that's basically, that bottom line, that's it.

**Interviewer:** And then the way you just explain by trying to show them importance of your classroom is that's how you try to address that problem and trying to make them show kind of ownership or some kind of that you can have some kind of future in this. And for some of them it works and for some of them it doesn't.

**Interviewee:** Yeah,

**Interviewer:** So, for the ones who don't work for, what happens?

**Interviewee:** Well when their grades drop they realize oh wow she is really grade it us on this. Then they want to turn it back around and do everything they can to pull it up because they think that I am just going to give them grades, But then when they see that grade coming down at the 3 week progress, or 6 week report, then they are like wanting to do something to pull it up

**Interviewer:** Well What about the faculty or the administrators do they support you?

**Interviewee:** I think some do and I think about a couple years ago when I was down in your classroom and we were drawing on the board and I felt like they were really getting it you know they were seeing what they really needed to see. Laughing...And then I get called to go cover the scoliosis screening because it was said that the kids weren't going to have to draw that on the test. I don't know like , when I was like. They support me when they need me to draw a sign or do something for a parade float or do this that and the other but as far as me being in my classroom and teaching my kids I don't feel like my curriculum is supported.

**Interviewer:** Or you were saying even when you tried to connect your curriculum to the math classroom? You feel like in that situation it wasn't supported either.

**Interviewee:** It's just not right, it's just overlooked, it's just like...I feel like at one point you know I felt like a couple years ago, I was binding over backwards I was just to connect math in here I am trying to connect social studies and you come in my room and you do 5 by 5 and check my board and you see all these things and there is evidence but to me you look at it as that just a pretty picture or an art project you don't see that when we did African mask in 7th grade that we actually I threw up a map of Africa and that what's they talk about in 7th grade history and you know we talked about the economy of Africa and not we just didn't do the African mask project we talked about everything

dealing with Africa you know when we do sixth grade and we talk about Mexico and we do that project there and Australia you know the kids knew what indigenous meant before Ms. MMMM ever taught it and she came to me and said WOW did you teach the kids about Australia or something because they already knew about everything we are about to go over and I was like yeah cause that is what I do you know but then I got like. I want say I mean I know that I have coworker here that support and you support me and then it's a bunch other teachers that I see and support me asst. principal yes, supports me loves me but then above that I just don't feel like I am supported in my curriculum

5. **Interviewer:** You may have already answered this –on #5 it says why do you feel are the reasons What do you feel are the reasons students misbehave in the classroom setting or in school in general and I think you talked about your classroom but what about anybody's classroom?

**Interviewee:** In general, I broke this down as in like the smart kid, average kid, first of students misbehave for many reasons. Okay, so to me I look you know I look at a whole and even when I had to go and cover other classes and stuff you know smart kids misbehave because they are bored to death. Because the curriculum is not um what's the word I am looking for strenuous or rigorous

**Interviewer:** Rigorous

**Interviewee:** Okay, it's not rigorous enough for them

**Interviewer:** or keeping them engaged

**Interviewee:** Right they are not engaged they are uninterested in the activity you know and then you got some the average kids and I also think because the teacher is not providing enough structured and enriching activities and so when average kids are misbehaving because they are bored and you know they want to entertain others and it also could be a lack of respect for the teacher. May You know because this a two way street and the teacher is not respecting them and she is disciplining them in front of the whole class instead of like pulling the child to the side and reprimanded them you know she made it a point to get on to them in front of everybody else . So sometime you look at the average kid and then you know like I've got kids that you know teachers will come to me and they would be like that child you are going to have a time with that child and I mean I've only had like like this new group I've only had them for a week and I had a teacher had a teacher to tell me about some kids that they are going to be holly terror and I am like really cause that child have done his work he I he has not been a problem at all and I was like you know I don't see and it's been a difference between classes too and you know that goes back to what kind of classroom environment you create for the students. You know because some classroom they are set up just and the kids walk in and they are like oh yeah we are going to be able to do whatever we want to in here or you know the teacher haven't established themselves you know day 1. To you know to model to set an example to show how things are learned and that goes back to having a structured classroom and I said kids respected and okay then your poor academic kids,

they misbehave because lack of parental involvement. they know that there parent aint going to do anything. they know their parent aint going to come out so what does it matter. so what if they cut up and they spank and they have to go home to OSS. and their mom is at work or maynot even at work and they get to walk the streets all day and get to hang out with other kids that have dropped out of school. you know that is fun for them they know that there is not going to be any discipline at home. I mean I remember when I got in trouble you know if I had was out of school for a day because I was trouble or whatever you know my mom had me cleaning thehouse and washing clothes and like you know painting the house painting the barn you know I mean like I just didn't enjoy my time and watch t.v. I was in serious trouble and also with the poor academic students you know you look at those kids are probably the kids who are probably the kids who are running their homes you know they are not going they don't have respect for their mama and daddy then they are not going to have respect for me. And also with poor academic kids you know some teachers you know and I call myself guilty of it to especially you know when I was first teaching you look at the way kids are dressed and what they wear and like their shoes aren't shining and they are dirty and scuffed and go ahead you put a label on them you say well I am already working in the SES school so I know that all the kids are poor and so you associate kids that are poor academically and poor like in general with being bad you know you immediately label them and sometimes they are like some of the sweetest kids you know you just got to pull that out of them and that is how I break down students misbehaving

**Interviewer:** So, I am hearing you say that if you had to say why students misbehave in classrooms you would break it down like academically, basically

**Interviewee:** Yes, because no child I mean it really goes back to

**Interviewer:** and I know that it is some exceptions to every rule but for the most part, smart average to the low academic

**Interviewee:** Yes

6. **Interviewer:** What do you feel are the reasons students behave in classrooms or in general?

**Interviewee:** The reasons students behave okay 1st of all the structure in the CLR is strong. Okay and even and this me coming from an art teacher aspect of course like this would be consider a less structure environment we don't have desk we have tables and the kids can sit together and the kids are allowed to talk but see there is still structure among all that and I you know I am organized and I am respectful to the student you know I try and yes some of the jokers get on my nerve but I am going to pull them to the side and say LISTEN we need to talk about this I never want to discipline anybody in front of the class and I also you know I created a positive environment you know the kids and I feel like a lot of the students feel real comfortable me I mean like sometimes I feel like I am the teacher I am the mama I am the guidance counselor I am the grandma and

you know I am the best friend I am the sibling because they come to me and they just want to tell me about everything

**Interviewer:** So that trusting relationship

**Interviewee:** Yeah, you know and I establish that relationship since the beginning of school or since I have had them you know I teach everybody from sixth to eighth grade. I see these kids enter this school and I see them leave this school. So a lot of that, you know a lot of that could happen over the years and they feel comfortable talking to me in the hallway talking to me in the CLR. Also, students behave because a teacher you know makes learning fun makes learning interesting and it's keep the students engaged without busy work you know busy work does not keep kids engaged. If they are doing a task an activity that is enriching and rewarding it will keep them behaving because that's another thing that's leading back to misbehaving you know that goes back to they are not engaged they are bored to death you can't just give them busy work.

7. **Interviewer:** Have you recently had any training in CM?

**Interviewee:** Um, the only CM I ever had was that Terry Alderman workshop six years ago

**Interviewer:** Well did that training have a positive impact or do you use some of those strategies that you learned in workshop?

**Interviewee:** Ummmm, I think that okay when I ... graduated from college I was so excited to teach art yeah! Yeah! But I didn't learn anything about CM or structure, like that workshop was basically my whole class on CM instruction. Because I was thinking oh I am going to get to teach this- this and they are going to learn how to do this and I didn't ever think about there is a whole lot Laugh you got to establish a routine it is more than just going in there and teach what you want to teach and that [Terry Alderman's workshop] help me with that with structure and see I- I was here like maybe a month and Mr. NNNN pulled me in that office and I was boo hoo crying because I had like three fights in one week and it was rough Laughing and Mr. NNNN said that you are going to go to this workshop on CM and I said ok whatever I don't care [Laughing real hard] because that was my that's bunch has graduated that was a rough, rough kids

**Interviewer:** Oh, that group did that just graduated last year?

**Interviewee:** Well none of them probably graduated because they were like 17 in the 8th grade I mean it was rough

**Interviewer:** So your first group just graduated

**Interviewee:** Umm, yeah last year, yeah it was rough?

**Interviewer:** Well do you know of any programs or models that are out there that um teachers could probably benefits from that could help them in managing student behaviors.

**Interviewee:** Ummm. I don't know of anything, I know that RESA used to do that program

**Interviewer:** So after the Terry Alderman thing , you just kinda

**Interviewee:** Oh, I was rolling after that I didn't need anything after

**Interviewer:** So the Terry Alderman's you really was probably a good program

**Interviewee:** But did he die

**Interviewer:** Yeah, but his program still exist and his books and stuff are still out there

**Interviewee:** Yeah, cause I got one of his book

**Interviewer:** so if you had to um

**Interviewee:** I don't know I feel like I could teach a CM workshop now, I mean after going to that and after six years of experience

**Interviewer:** I probably the best teacher , in my opinion, probably would be experience huh?

**Interviewee:** Yes, because I mean every kid is different. And it just but there-- there are some things that did not work with that[Terry Alderman's workshop] too. You know he was almost speaking from a stand point of like you got all these nice little kids and this nice school and you have little crazy behaviors like they are throwing paper airplane across the room and that's is nothing compared to some of the behavior problems out here Now in my master's program I read these crazy books about it was this book written by this white lady trying to tell you about how to handle discipline issue in inner city schools and I can't remember the name of it and it was like how do you know a little old white lady probably never been in a public school in the hood in your life and you are going to tell everybody how to treat the poverty stricken kids and how discipline them you know that just to me just doesn't you really got to have the experience. You know we've got, we've got this public, you know we got our county school we got the city school we got other school [private school] we got other school, I mean it's all different you can't say 1st of all I think if you can work here you can work anywhere in the country But you can't come from other school and come work here and think that you know everything or other school and you know everything because every even within the schools you got different discipline issues and stuff like that [laughing softly]

**Interviewer:** Are there in programs or models in your school that supports CM or managing student behavior?

**Interviewee:** Well ,I think what we are doing this year with the little discipline books and that's great and I mean I feel and I see positive things with that too and then I see negative issues with that too.

**Interviewer:** What do you mean with the discipline book?

**Interviewee:** Well, you know the discipline book so yall got the discipline books and so your discipline books travel I mean if you are doing it correctly I mean your books travel with the kids. And so you see that

**Interviewer:** Explain that process

**Interviewee:** Okay, every HR teacher has a book and so they teach their 1st block and if a child misbehave in there they [HR teacher] write the kid's name, they put them on a step they contact their parent they write the infraction then that book goes with the kids-

the whole class to their 2nd block class then the teacher has a kid that disrupt in there then when they look in the book and they are like oh Johnny you are already in here because you cut up in Ms. NNNN's class so that's going to be a 2 and let me call your parent and write down the infractions and so this is consistent because you had and even with PE and connection and so I have that child and then I make a little note and I go back and find the child HR book and write in that book and I discover that the child is on step 4 or 5 then I got to call a PTC and write a referral and I am like WhOOAA this is crazy he was just cutting up in my class and now he gotten a referral but it is goood because the child knows that they can not get away with anything because it is connected it is all connected now the problem with that system is that you know 1st of all I think the 6th and 7th grade got it down but then the 8th grade I don't what they are doing with those discipline book because half of the time they can't even find the discipline book when you go to write somebody down in there. And then another thing is like I will do it and Coach YYYY will do it we will go find those HR teachers and find those books and put it down and we will contact the parents and but then you got other people and Ms. Gordon too, she will contact. But then you got Coach Fine, Mr. WYYY, the other teachers, they are just like whatever you know like I will call their parents and I will handle it but I am not going to write in no book But that's the disconnect there

Interviewer: So it really could be a good program or good model, but if the teachers don't work it

**Interviewee:** yeah, well see this , this is what other county does okay they all the kids have and I actually told Mr. XXXX about this and two days later he had this book thing and I was like that was actually talking to you about . all the kids had um they were wearing like a lanyard with this card on it and if the teacher and it's got the parent contact info on the back and on the little thing you see the teacher if the child cut up in the class, the teacher write on this little thing that is attached to the child the child goes everywhere with this and this is during the day and you see that you just did this day all this and it is wherever the child goes and so that way it is right there with that child so it's like a discipline book but it like a miniature version of the book but see the teacher still keep a record of it or a binder but it let's another teacher know that during 1st block and 2nd block you did this , Oh well I am going to have to take some serious actions because you have been cutting up all day.

**Interviewer:** if nothing was in place, what programs or support would you suggest? Oh, you just gave me that...it would be the other county thing which would modify our thing or make better okay next question do you feel like you need more training in the area of managing student behavior?

**Interviewee:** UMMMmm, No, not really

**Interviewer:** Why not?

**Interviewee:** Well I know people that do. Like I feel like if our administration would come up with a way that they are going to handle it and they would follow that code of

conduct and you know it just like I know that some issue that I've had to me it's like what was the most recent thing okay in my opinion this child was being clearly disrespectful not to me but to another teacher I witnessed it and so my thing is that child is being disrespectful and that is an automatic write up I mean given the student just mouthing off and you say something to Mr. XXXX who is not an administrator but he is supposed to be handling all of the discipline issues and he is like did you follow your steps, did you follow your steps did you call the parent, did call the parent, and I am like it was blatantly disrespectful that's a write-up and then like so it is not, it goes back to that whole thing about being consistent and having that communication and everybody communication of knowing what's is going on. Now I have had two incidents about bullying and bullying is a serious offense and you got Mr. XXXX saying well that's really not bullying and they were just picking at him aaahhh I am sorry but picking at him is bullying and that's what happen for two different situations but see it really depends on who you get you know what administrator or who comes to assist cause see if you get Ms. XXXX OH YEAH you don't have to worry about those jokers for the rest of the week because she is going to find something for them to do and they are in trouble and everything and she is going to call their mama and you know it is handled but then you know you got was it really bullying I mean that's so severe we don't want laughing they want to know verbatim what was being said and what was going on and exactly what words were used in the bullying and to me picking and all that is the same thing so maybe we need to have a book that defines bullying and this is what bullying is disrespectful and this is what disrespectful is. So let's back up so training then really I would thing if a training was in place whether you were young or old or new or whether you have been teaching for years everybody needs to go to it because everybody need to be on the same page. Yes, I would say I would go to that I mean administrators included everybody need to go to this workshop. Maybe at least once a year just to I mean cause the kids change and of course they come up with new ways to be sneaking and do things like that so of course that's important but then I also I don't think anything new would come out a new way to handle behavior or maybe a new way that we track behavior or handle that do you know what I mean. But like kids have been misbehaving for years, years, years, years and you probably never gonna figure out how to stop it completely because it will always be something but at least if we were all on the same paageee. Yes

**Interviewer:** Okay, So I am hearing you saying that if you suggested something then it would be for the whole school then at least you know everyone heard the same thing

**Interviewee:** Right, everybody heard the same thing. Now people will take from there and take how they want to but at least you got all the information and it was all done the same way

**Interviewer:** But the major issues like the bullying and that they say that they can automatically get written up for the bullying and the blatantly disrespectful they need to spell those out

**Interviewee:** Right they need to spell out what constitutes as a artificial referral you know what is an official referral

**Interviewer:** What are your classroom rituals, procedures and routines?

**Interviewee:** Okay, the students have. Well I have six classes for 45 minutes each and that's really not enough time to do some art project but we make it work and we make it work because we have a nice schedule. Students enter quietly, and this of course is over a week, I mean if we get them to school we spend a week establishing this but then I get new kids every nine weeks so I kinda have to spend it up in 3 days they enter the CLR quietly, they have a 10 min daily draw, which I use the timer and that's kinda like using the mini lesson for them to do the daily draw then once the buzzer goes off on the timer, I will get in front of the kids and I will either show them a PPT or I will do a demonstration of what our project is going to be or what we are working on then they have the rest of the time to do a work session and during this work session time I go around and I constantly I mean I monitor the students and I you know I talk to them periodically you know I might not talk to a kid the whole day because they are doing a good job and I don't see any reason to correct them then I might spend 20 minutes with one kid because they are really not getting it But every but I know everybody is working and I am up moving around monitoring then 5 to 10 minutes towards the end of class we clean up and I usually have a student helper who pick up the portfolios and they back in the filing cabinet and students get their thing sand they lined up outside the door.

**Interviewer:** Is there anything else that you would like to add?

**Interviewee:** long pause....No, I think I am good

**Interviewer:** Okay, Well, I think that is it

**Interviewee:** Okay

## Curriculum Vitae

WINIFRED WHITLOCK

## EDUCATION

Walden University

**Ed. D. in Teacher Leadership****2012**

Dissertation: "Middle School Teachers' perceptions of barriers of managing student behavior"

Albany State University

**M.Ed. in Middle Grades Education****2000**

Magna Cum Laude

Albany State College

**B.A. in Mathematics****1993**

Cum Laude

## TEACHING CERTIFICATES

State of Georgia (T6 for grades 4-8)

Certified to teach mathematics, English-Language Arts, and Social Science

## AWARDS

Nominated Teacher of the Year

**2011**

Wrote and received a Grant

**2006**

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

The School Under Study

**2004-Present**

Designed classroom instruction to correlate with the Georgia Performance Standards

Provided after-school tutoring to low performing math students

Team Leader

**1998-2000**

Junior Varsity Basketball Coach

**1997-2001**

Pelham Middle School

Designed classroom instruction to correlate with Quality Core Curriculum

Middle School Girls Basketball Coach

**2002-2004**

Albany Technical College  
Adjunct Mathematics Instructor  
Taught and modeled work ethics as well as remedial math concepts

**2002-2005**

COMMITTEES

Curriculum Coordinating Council

MEMBERSHIP

Georgia Association Educators  
National Educational Association  
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development