Reflexivity Statement
Katherine Evans, Assistant Professor, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia

My interest in this research topic has evolved over the course of several years. As a college student, as a youth minister, and as a classroom teacher, I have worked extensively with adolescents who have been viewed as "behavior disordered," "at-risk," or "oppositional-defiant," as well as those who have had a history of behavior labeled as "delinquent" or "challenging." While it has always been a desire to work more effectively with students who manifest challenging behaviors, as a teacher educator, it has now become a primary focus of my work to help other teachers also work more effectively with those students. In both the literature and in my work with teachers, particularly pre-service teachers, I have noted that student disciplinary problems are often attributed with driving teachers out of the profession. Further, misbehavior is often framed as one of the most problematic deterrents to learning.

As a teacher educator, I desire to promote positive classroom climates that are conducive to learning and to the well-being of all children. I view exclusionary discipline practices as harmful to the well-being of children and as exacerbating student challenging behavior, serving to exclude, rather than teach, students who do not comply with normative or socially-constructed rules about appropriate behavior. Further, I struggle with many of the conventional beliefs regarding classroom management, which imply a top down approach to controlling students or to managing their behavior. As Danforth and Smith (2005) have articulated, the idea of management "implies an active teacher role and a passive student role," where the "responsibility for order falls on the teacher and his or her abilities to control the activities of the classroom" (p. 57).

While I do not deny the importance of creating a classroom climate that facilitates learning, I come to this research having observed too many teachers who take up approaches to classroom discipline that I construct as disrespectful and oppressive. Further, it appears that some teachers tend to view their students as "disposable youth" (Giroux, 2003) who can easily be excluded from their classrooms. While I approach this research with a desire to avoid over-simplified accusations of teachers and while I make the assumption that many teachers lack the knowledge and resources, both physical and emotional, to relate to students who are exhibiting behaviors that they deem as challenging, I also believe that teachers have choices in how they respond to such students. I acknowledge that, at times, those choices have been constrained by institutional expectations; yet, there remains for these teachers the choice to take up an "ethic of care" (Noddings, 2005) or to perpetuate unjust disciplinary practices that serve to exclude and harm students emotionally, socially, and academically.

Much of what I have studied about classroom discipline has been framed by such questions as "What Works in Classroom Discipline?" or "Classroom Discipline that Works" (Marzano, 2003). I approach not only my research, but my work as a teacher educator, not through questions about what works, but rather, I agree with Butchart (1998) who stated that "all manner of barbarity works, if the end is orderliness alone. The question is, what works to assure the sorts of civility and dignity that is essential in the short term for effective learning, and vital in the long run for democratic life?" (p. 3). Tracing the history of disciplinary practices in America, Butchart claimed that since the 1950's, the focus of classroom disciplinary literature has been predominately on what works for the short term control of students, rather than on the long term goals of fostering dispositions and character that contribute to the goals of a democratic society. It is the latter goal of education in which I am interested.

A related question then becomes that of the role of education; if the role of education is strictly limited to the dispensing of knowledge, then exclusionary approaches to discipline are necessary; removing the barriers (i.e., misbehaving students) to the transmission of information is essential in guaranteeing the learning of those students who indeed are motivated to learn, leaving those who are not interested in learning out of the equation. However, if as Dewey (1916) and others have suggested, education is about preparing children for independent, contributing, productive citizenship, then it is not acceptable to exclude any child from the educational equation. It is indeed the responsibility of the school to find a way to reach every child. As long as discussions about the role of education remain tangential to discussions about classroom practices in general, and classroom discipline in particular, I assert that there will continue to be disagreement about how teachers should approach the issue of school discipline.

Noguera (2003) suggested that schools serve three primary purposes: to sort students into tracks for economic and social roles as adults, to socialize them into the values and norms of society, and to establish social control. Most teachers, he argued, were not drawn into education because they desired to sort, socialize, or control students, but because they believed in the higher ideals of education, namely to inspire, enlighten, and empower students. While these notions of the purpose of schooling have been challenged by many (e.g., see Bowles & Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America*; Apple, *Education and Power*), for this study, I maintain that the purpose of education is to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed in order to live in and contribute to an egalitarian society.

I acknowledge that schools are not solely responsible for ensuring an egalitarian society, but they do at least play a part in such by providing students with opportunities, knowledge, and skills for potential success in such a society. I believe that all children can learn and have the right to do so in an educational environment where they are honored and expected to learn. Discipline, then, should not merely be about punishing misbehavior, but rather as an avenue for teaching (Noguera, 2003). Based on current research (see Chapter 2), there is ample evidence to suggest that simply punishing misbehavior is not an effective deterrent and may produce toxic educational environments (Hyman & Snook, 2000; Noguera, 2003). My own research with restorative justice (Hopkins, 2002, 2004; Sullivan & Tifft, 2001; Zehr, 1990, 2002) leads me to believe that there are indeed alternatives to exclusionary and coercive disciplinary practices, alternatives that I view as restorative approaches to discipline.

I define restorative discipline as an approach to addressing student behavior that is guided by six underlying values: 1) A belief in the unconditional value and worth of each individual student; 2) a conviction on the part of the teacher that children's behavior is dynamic and modifiable; 3) an attempt to address the underlying needs that motivate student behavior, rather than simply the behavior itself; 4) a view of student behavior that affords students the opportunity to learn from their choices, appropriate or inappropriate, i.e., that every behavior is a learning opportunity; 5) a move to include the student in decision-making about their behavior, allowing them opportunity to make things right with those whom they have wronged; and 6) a recognition that students' behavior is integrally connected to their membership within a community; thus, in addition to considering factors that contribute to that behavior, there is also an attempt to maintain or reintegrate students into that community.

Thus, as I interviewed students about their experiences with school discipline, I bring with me a history of working with students who have often been constructed by those in authority as "problem students," "discipline problems," or "delinquents." Further, I adhere to notions of justice and restoration that strongly influence how I view relationships in general, but

specifically relationships between teachers and students. My educational history and my experiences serve to guide this research into students' experiences with exclusionary discipline practices.

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