Dealing With Exposure to Community Violence and Student Behavior: Positive Classroom Management Practices and Strategies for Middle-School Teachers

By

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Abstract

Exposure to community violence has been found to psychologically affect behavior. The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate (1) teacher perceptions regarding the impact of community violence on students and (2) the classroom management strategies middle school teachers are using to prevent and address inappropriate behavior in a fair and positive manner. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers who have experience working in areas of Toronto, Canada that have high levels of community violence. Findings revealed that there may not be a link between aggression and community violence exposure and that teachers were simply preventing and addressing misbehaviors using classroom management strategies required in any classroom. What was unique about teaching in these areas was providing students with emotional support and discussing violent events in the neighbourhoods such as shootings in the classroom. The implications of this study include increased availability of professional services for students, continuous reflection on practice, and professional development in conflict resolution for teachers.

Key words: Community violence, classroom management, positive discipline, emotional support, middle school
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter/Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: Introduction</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0 Research Context</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Research Purpose</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Research Questions</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Background of the Researcher</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Overview</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: The Literature Review</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Impact of Exposure to Community Violence on Student Behavior</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1 The psychological impact of exposure to community violence on behavior</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2 Discussing violent events in the classroom</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3 Family life as a buffer for aggressive and disruptive behavior</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Enforcing Discipline: Student Perceptions of Strict Discipline</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Reducing Misbehaviors and Disruptions</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1 Building rapports with students</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2 Creating a safe environment at school</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Conclusion</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Research Methodology</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0 Introduction</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Research Approach &amp; Procedures</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Instruments of Data Collection</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Participants</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1 Sampling criteria</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2 Sampling procedures</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Data Analysis</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Ethical Review Procedures</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Methodological Limitations and Strengths</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.7 Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 31

Chapter 4: Findings ........................................................................................................ 32
4.0 Introduction ................................................................................................................ 32
4.1 Aggression .................................................................................................................. 33
4.2 Impact of Community Violence on Students ............................................................ 35
   4.2.1 Emotional reactions ......................................................................................... 35
   4.2.2 Silence ............................................................................................................. 37
4.3 Preventative Measures in the Classroom ................................................................. 38
   4.3.1 Instructional strategies and other preventative measures................................. 38
   4.3.2 Building positive relationships with students ................................................. 39
4.4 Using Fair Disciplinary Strategies ......................................................................... 38
   4.4.1 Tone of voice .................................................................................................... 40
   4.4.2 Consistency ....................................................................................................... 40
   4.4.3 Parental involvement ...................................................................................... 40
   4.4.4 Student voice ................................................................................................... 42
4.5 Providing Emotional Support .................................................................................. 43
   4.5.1 Being a supportive figure in the classroom ..................................................... 43
   4.5.2 Addressing community violence in the classroom ......................................... 43
   4.5.3 Professional services at school ....................................................................... 45
4.6 Positive Teacher Attitude ....................................................................................... 46
4.7 Conclusion ................................................................................................................ 47

Chapter 5: Implications ................................................................................................... 49
5.0 Introduction .............................................................................................................. 49
5.1 Overview of Key Findings ....................................................................................... 49
5.2 Implications .............................................................................................................. 50
   5.2.1 Broad implications .......................................................................................... 50
      5.2.1.1 The need for access to professional services at school ............................. 50
      5.2.1.2 Implications for teacher practice ......................................................... 51
   5.2.2 Narrow implications ....................................................................................... 52
5.3 Recommendations ................................................................................................... 52
5.4 Areas for Further Research .................................................................................... 53
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Research Context

A single gunshot and a young man met his fate and died
He lay on the ground, on his chest, a spreading crimson stain
A grown man reduced to crying because of the pain
He called the distraught people standing around him to help
Tears soaked the ground as he breathed his last breath
And Muna’s heart shook – for she had never seen death (Mohamed, 2015).

The verses above – an unpublished poem I wrote called “A Girl Called Muna”– encapsulate the experiences of many young children in Toronto who have been exposed, and continue to be exposed, to both poverty and violence in a few priority neighbourhoods that pose risks to community safety due to gun and gang violence. Priority neighbourhoods, currently called Needs Improvement Areas, are areas that have been identified by the City of Toronto “…through the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020…as falling below the Neighbourhood Equity Score and requiring special attention” (City of Toronto, 2014). Exposure to community violence, which is the primary focus in this research project, can psychologically affect behavior. Jensen argues that “it hinders most students’ “physical, psychological, emotional, and cognitive functioning - areas that affect brain development, academic success, and social competence” (Jensen, 2009, p. 22). It can also lead to disruptive behavior and aggression in students (Henrich, Schwab-Stone, Fanti, Jones, & Ruchkin, 2004; Jensen, 2009; Bowen & Bowen, 1999; Perkins & Graham-Bermann, 2012). Thus, classroom management in schools situated in areas where the majority of students are exposed to community violence can be challenging for teachers (McCready & Soloway, 2010; Maring & Koblinsky, 2013). This research project examines the
classroom management strategies and perceptions regarding community violence impact of three successful teachers working in (or have previously worked) in two middle schools located in Riverside and Forest Park which are areas where community violence is present in Toronto, Canada.

1.1 Research Purpose

The primary purpose of this study was to learn how middle school teachers can utilize effective and positive classroom management in order to create a safe and encouraging environment that can help reduce challenging misbehaviors in the classroom. Another purpose was to investigate whether exposure to community violence in the aforementioned neighbourhoods has had a profound effect on student behavior as research suggests. This in turn, will hopefully help teachers create safe and nurturing learning environments within their classrooms as well as eradicate negative stereotypes about children who come from priority neighbourhoods.

Due to the small scale of this research, the main focus of my research was on the disciplinary measures and classroom management strategies that teachers can use and how they can create positive relationships with their students. My overall goal is to contribute to the efforts of the education community by learning about and sharing best practices of successful Canadian teachers for those working in priority neighbourhoods to utilize in their own classrooms. I hope that my research will help teachers provide positive learning experiences for students and bridge the gap between teachers, students, and the community.

1.2. Research Questions

The main question addressed in this research is: what positive disciplinary and classroom management strategies are teachers using to minimize, and positively address, student
misbehavior and disruption within the classroom? The subsidiary questions I will also answer are:

1. How do violent events in the neighbourhood affect students within the classroom?
2. How are teachers addressing the violence their students face in the classroom?
3. How do teachers prevent inappropriate behaviors from occurring?
4. How do teachers build rapport with their students?
5. What suggestions do successful teachers have for current and future teachers working in a priority neighbourhood?

1.3 Background of the Researcher

I completed a Double Major in English and History at York University. I was not sure what career I wanted. In my last year at York, I became a classroom volunteer for the second time at the middle school that I had attended. The teacher whose classroom I volunteered in involved me in the class activities; sometimes I supervised students and even taught those who struggled. I volunteered in this classroom for the entire school year – and I enjoyed it. That is when I decided I wanted to enter the field of teaching.

The topic I chose for my research is one that is personal. During the summer of 2004, my family and I moved to one of Toronto’s priority neighbourhoods. The verses from “A Girl Called Muna” tell the story of my first exposure to violence at age twelve during what came to be known as “The Summer of the Gun” (Ross, Chowdhry, & White, 2016). Shootings and gang-violence occurred almost every day that summer. Witnessing the young man’s last moments of life, along with many of my neighbors and other young children – some as young as four – is something I will never forget. As a result, while my experiences are not the same as every child growing up in areas such as Forest Park and Riverside, it has enabled me to have a deep sense of empathy and understanding of students who come from similar backgrounds as my own. I
understand what it is like to lose a loved one to violence. I understand the frustration and anger students feel because their teacher does not understand the struggles they face at home and in their neighbourhood. Students continue to be left behind and criminalized in schools and this is not fair. Thus, I have a strong interest in changing negative attitudes about priority neighbourhoods and students from these areas.

1.4 Overview

Taking a qualitative approach, this study’s research questions were answered through interviews with three teachers who have put in effort to help their students succeed by dealing with misbehaviors in a positive manner and have made their presence in the community known. These teachers have been interviewed about their methods in addressing and preventing misbehavior as well as creating a positive and meaningful learning experience for students. Chapter 2 contains a literature review on various works that examine the effect of community violence on the behavior of students, student perceptions of strict discipline, and positive disciplinary strategies teachers and schools can use. Chapter 3 is a discussion on research methodology which includes sampling procedure, participant bios, and data analysis. Chapter 4 outlines the themes that have emerged from my interviews and its connections with literature that already exists on this study’s topic. Lastly, Chapter 5 is a discussion of how my research and my findings have informed my goals for teaching.
Chapter 2: The Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter is a review of literature that exists regarding community violence and disciplinary strategies used to address inappropriate student behavior. More specifically, I review themes related to exposure to violence and poverty and discipline. The first section focuses primarily on literature in the area of community violence in priority neighbourhood schools. In this section, I focus specifically on the psychological impact of community violence on the behavior of children, discussing community violence in the classroom, and the influence of family life on behavior. In the next section, I reviewed literature on discipline. This section is a review of student perceptions of strict discipline in inner-city schools. In the last section, I review research in the area of positive disciplinary measures, focusing specifically on the effect of building rapport with students and making the school a safe environment for students.

2.1 Impact of Exposure to Community Violence on Student Behavior

Priority neighbourhoods are low-income areas of Toronto that often have high incidences of violence and crime. According to “Strong Neighbourhoods: Responding to a Call to Action: A Progress Report on Strong Neighbourhoods Strategies”, a report written by the City of Toronto and United Way Toronto, there is a high concentration of poor families living in these neighbourhoods (City of Toronto & United Way Toronto, 2012). Therefore, many of the children living in these areas come from low-income families. Research shows that exposure of children to violence in their neighbourhood has a direct impact on their behavior, making it a significant factor affecting academic achievement at school. This is relevant to my study because I am
researching how teachers working in schools situated within priority neighbourhoods can effectively and positively handle misbehaving students. I believe that to do so, knowing the reasons why some students are disruptive and aggressive is the first step.

2.1.1 The psychological impact of exposure to community violence on behavior

Research shows that exposure to poverty and violence can often lead to aggressive and disruptive behavior at school (Jensen, 2009; Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 1998; Perkins & Graham-Bermann, 2012). For example, Gorman-Smith and Tolan (1998) found that exposure to violence led to feelings of aggression, anxiety, and stress. Participants in this study were boys from Grades 5-7 who had been identified by their teachers to have serious behavior issues. They were asked questions about violence they had witnessed and how often these violent events occurred. They were also questioned about other stressful events (for example, parent losing a job), parenting strategies, levels of anxiety or depression, and levels of aggression. When exposure to violence increased, the level of aggression also increased (p. 113). Misbehavior was found to be related to the stress and anxiety that resulted from witnessing violence in their neighbourhoods. Recent findings show similar results (Cooley-Strickland et al., 2009; Jensen, 2009; Maring, 2006). Misbehavior is linked to high levels of stress, which is triggered by the exposure to violence in the neighbourhood (Cooley-Strickland et al., 2009; Jensen, 2009). The stress is externalized and thus, students are disruptive and aggressive. Cooley-Strickland et al. (2009) suggest that the disruptive and aggressive behavior is a result of difficulty controlling emotions. However, Maring (2006) found a different reason behind the disruptive and aggressive behavior: middle school students acted aggressively in order to “make others fearful and to protect oneself from perceived danger” (p. 66). It served as a defense mechanism.
Exposure to community violence can also lead to feelings of fear. Furthermore, it does not always lead to externalization of emotions. In a study to learn the effects of exposure to community and school violence on middle school and high school students’ school behavior, grades, and attendance, Bowen & Bowen (1999) found that exposure to community violence had a profound effect on students. The study involved male and female students from different ethnic/racial backgrounds, income levels, and environments they live in (urban, suburban, rural). The study looked at four variables of danger: fear of neighbourhood danger, fear of school danger, crime and violence in school, and neighbourhood peer culture (perceptions students had about getting involved with crime, violence, altercations with police, and drug and alcohol usage in their neighbourhood). Out of all four variables, the fear of falling victim to community violence resulted in the least amount of “trouble avoidance at school” (p. 335). In addition, “increased neighborhood danger was associated with lower trouble avoidance” (p. 335). Students were afraid of becoming a victim of the violence in their neighbourhood and it was this fear that was affecting their behavior; when levels of violence were high, school attendance was low and students tended to avoid getting in trouble at school.

It is clear that since the nineties, research has shown that aggression in children is linked to the violence that they witness and experience in their neighbourhoods. It is important that teachers understand and realize that some students from priority neighbourhoods do not just happen to be disruptive and aggressive. There is a reason for it and the origin of this reason stems from psychological and emotional effects of the environment they are growing up and living in. Without a doubt, it is frustrating to face high numbers of aggressions and disruptions in the classroom. However, using positive classroom management requires one to possess empathy and that stems from understanding students. Knowing the environment students come from and its psychological impact can make this possible. While empathy and understanding is necessary
in order to positively manage students, I also believe that it is important not to label or stigmatize these children. Firstly, not every child living and growing up in a priority neighbourhood where community violence is present is disruptive or aggressive at school, nor struggles with academic achievement. Secondly, I believe that it is possible for these students to be successfully and positively managed by teachers. Unfortunately, much of the focus of the research in this area is on the behavior and other psychological impacts of community violence, not solutions.

2.1.2 Discussing violent events in the classroom

Addressing what goes on in the neighbouring areas outside of the school within the classroom may prove helpful. Because research has shown that students are suffering from levels of anxiety and stress caused by exposure to violence, addressing what is happening outside of the classroom might be helpful in helping students cope as well. Research shows that students do wish to discuss violent events that occur in the neighbourhood (Ozer & Weinstein, 2004; Campbell & Schwarz, 1996). Campbell and Shwartz (1996) conducted a study looking at the types of exposure to community violence that middle school students face. They found that a majority of the students had discussed what they had witnessed or when they were victimized to someone. A high number of students spoke to friends and family, but a few did speak to teachers. Ozer and Weinstein (2004) also found that although students wished to talk about the violent events they had been exposed to, many choose to remain silent because others (teachers for example) feel “uncomfortable or unwilling to talk about violent experiences” (p. 474). Ozer and Weinstein (2004) point out that being able to discuss what happened can help students cope. Maring (2006) found teachers who listened to students who wanted to discuss the community violence in the neighbourhood felt that it helped “foster youth resilience” (p. 85). Teachers should be prepared to listen to students when they need to talk. Unfortunately, there has been
little research conducted to investigate the effectiveness of discussing the violence that occurs in the neighbourhood within the classroom. More research needs to be conducted in this area.

2.1.3 Family life as a buffer for aggressive and disruptive behavior

When students in the classroom are often aggressive and disruptive, it is easy to shift blame onto home and family life. There is research that suggests that growing up in a stable home where children are monitored by parents can improve aggressive and disruptive behavior. Parental monitoring is “typically indicated by reliance on regularly enforced curfews, tight supervision, and knowledge of children’s whereabouts, peers, and activities” (Ceballo, Ramirez, Hearn & Maltese, 2003, p. 587). In a study of young children conducted by Richters and Martinez (1993), safe and stable homes were found to be related to student behavior and academic achievement. The children in the study lived in at-risk neighbourhoods where they have been exposed to community violence. The “odds of early adaptational failure among children from stable, safe homes” were extremely low while it was significantly higher for children who came from unstable homes and highest for children who came from both unstable and unsafe homes” (unsafe homes are ones where drugs and guns are present) (p. 625). In another study involving early adolescents, Pettit, Bates, Dodge, and Meece (1999) found that there was a higher number of students with behavior issues who were unsupervised and unmonitored when hanging out with friends compared to students who were monitored and supervised (p. 773). In addition, there was an even higher number of students with behavior issues who came from homes “characterized by lower levels of parental monitoring and in neighbourhoods characterized by lower levels of rated safety and security” (p. 776). There are very few psychological explanations for why supervised and monitored students do not act out as much as students who are not monitored or supervised. In one study, lowered levels of
depression and hopelessness was the explanation for this (Ceballo, Ramirez, Hearn & Maltese, 2003, p. 590). Children feel that parental monitoring and supervision shows that they are cared for (p. 590). This makes me wonder whether forming a positive and caring teacher-student relationships with students who come from homes where parental supervision is absent can improve their behaviors in the classroom.

In contrast, there is other research that shows that family life does not buffer aggression and misbehavior. In an earlier study of parental supervision in neighbourhoods where community violence is present, Coley and Hoffman (1996) compared the relationship between parental supervision and disruptive behavior in low-crime neighbourhoods and high-crime neighbourhoods. They did find the highest number of disruptive students were those who were unsupervised but monitored children in high-crime neighbourhoods (p. 61). However, they also found that the fewest number of disruptive children came from high-crime neighbourhoods where they were both unsupervised and unmonitored by parents (p. 61). In another study, Gorman-Smith and Tolan (1998) did not find the home to be a factor in buffering aggression caused by exposure to community violence. In their study, boys who came from stable family homes were as aggressive as the boys who did not (Gorman-Smith & Tolen, 1998, p. 114). In other words, stable family homes do not prevent aggressive and disruptive behavior in students exposed to neighbourhood violence.

2.2 Enforcing Discipline: Student Perceptions of Strict Discipline

What has research learned about how urban students themselves perceive strict disciplinary measures in their school? A study of the perceptions and experiences of American high school students regarding zero tolerance in two different schools by Nicole L. Bracy (2011) found that students believed that there was an absence of due process, harsh punishments, and inconsistency in the application of punishments (p. 380). McNeal and Dunbar Jr. (2010) found
mixed results. Participants in their study were mainly African American female high school students. Similarly to Bracy’s study, students felt that there was inconsistency in the application of punishments (p. 305). Students felt that school administration showed favoritism; those who were liked by staff, especially athletes, often escaped punishment (p. 306). Sheets (1996) also found that high school students, who attended a school labeled for having a high number of behavioral issues, felt there was inconsistency and “injustices” in the application of punishments (p. 15). Some students were subjected to harsher punishments in comparison to other students who violated the same rules. Furthermore, students pointed out that teachers took advantage of their position of authority in order to create rules that were unfair. They spoke of teachers who created new rules “whenever they felt a need to exercise control, or to remove students who were predicted to fail, or whom they did not like” (p. 16). The main concern for students in these studies was consistency and fair treatment in the administering of discipline. Another concern for students was the absence of student voice. The interviewers in Bracy’s study (2011) had witnessed numerous situations where students were suspended and “written up” without having the chance to explain their side of the story; as a result, students felt frustrated and helpless (p. 381). Students were expected to comply and accept decisions, thus creating an authoritarian school environment. Sheets (2011) found similar results: students wanted to be able to express themselves and “not having an opportunity to be heard was unfair and an abuse of teacher power” (p. 13). Unfair discipline and the silencing of student voices will cause students to rebel. Part of the main goal of this research was to learn how teachers ensure they are fair when they discipline their students.

2.3 Reducing Misbehaviors and Disruptions

Most suspensions and expulsions occur from misbehaviors that occur within the classroom (Toronto District School Board, 2015). Furthermore, since optional attendance
restricts mobility in Toronto, students are forced to attend schools in their neighbourhoods (Globe and Mail, 2013). Thus, working in priority neighbourhoods can pose classroom management challenges for teachers particularly when there are “social and cultural differences between teachers and students” (McCready & Soloway, 2010, p. 114). The challenge is exacerbated when community violence is also a characteristic of the community (Maring & Koblinsky, 2013).

2.3.1 Building rapport with students

Some teachers are often unprepared to effectively handle students in a manner that is positive and pushes them to reform their own behavior. A study conducted by Maring and Koblinsky (2013) found that teachers feel unequipped and fearful when teaching in schools located within violent neighbourhoods. They also found that there is a lack of support and resources for teachers (Maring & Koblinsky, 2013). If teachers are feeling unequipped and fearful, how can they effectively connect with students? Bradley and Corwyn (2002) argue that the attitude and mindset of teachers have influence over the behavior and academic success of students (p. 383). Furthermore, when teachers have negative perceptions and low expectations of their students, the chances of negative interactions between students and teachers will be high (p. 383).

One way to build rapport with students is being a supportive figure within the classroom. Research has shown that teacher support can minimize aggressive and disruptive behavior in students (Benhorin & McMahon, 2008; Brewster & Bowen, 2004). Benhorin and McMahon (2008) found that there was a link between levels of teacher support and aggressive behavior. According to teachers that were interviewed, high levels of support resulted in lower levels of aggressive behavior in students. Furthermore, Benhorin and McMahon (2008) stressed that when teachers establish themselves as supportive figures within the classroom, students “may be more
likely to confide in their teachers, seek support in times of need, and aspire to be like them” (p. 736). Similarly, Brewster and Bowen (2004) found that “perceptions of teacher support corresponded to a decrease in levels of problem behavior” (p. 62).

A second way to build rapport is getting to know students. James and Taylor (2010) and Mosher (2008) highlight the importance of learning who students are outside of the classroom. The racialized students interviewed in both studies spoke negatively of the teachers who did not attempt to know them nor learn of the problems they are dealing with outside of school (James & Taylor, 2010; Mosher, 2008). An extremely important part of getting to know students that McCready and Soloway (2010) emphasize is culturally responsive classroom management (p.120). Teachers “making space in the curriculum to discuss issues relevant to students’ everyday lives is one way teachers can demonstrate they care for their students” (p. 120). An obvious and significant issue relevant to the lives of students from priority neighbourhoods is community violence and poverty. Furthermore, when students are disengaged from their learning because lessons are not culturally responsive, disruptions and misbehaviors will occur (Sheets, 1996). In my research, my goal was to learn whether teachers working in these neighbourhoods address what occurs in the neighbourhood and what the results of doing so has been. Another goal was to learn about other ways these teachers have managed to form positive relationships with students (especially students who are resistant) and how it has minimized misbehaviors and disruptions within the classroom.

2.3.2 Creating a safe environment at school

In Section 2.2, I discussed the perceptions and concerns of students regarding harsh discipline and authoritarian school climates. Goodman (2006) argues that to change perceptions of unfair and inconsistent discipline and decrease misbehaviors, schools need to make a clear distinction between school rules (being on time for example) and moral offences (stealing for
example) (p. 225). This way, when students are disciplined, they will not feel as if they are constantly getting in trouble “for no reason”. Students will also see that they are not being disciplined so that teachers and administration can exert their power or authority (Jensen, 2009). Discipline should be reforming, not authoritarian, so that students improve (Goodman, 2006; Jensen 2009). I think that this is especially important for students who come from neighbourhoods where they are exposed to gun-violence and constant police presence. These students need to feel safe more than anyone else. It may serve as a buffer and students may come to view their school as a safe place from the violence (Henrich, Schwab-Stone, Fanti, Jones, & Ruchkin, 2004).

Furthermore, Goodman contends that “a snugger fit between disciplinary interventions and the content of misconduct is in order” (p. 225). If a student is constantly late, teachers and administration need to figure out why the student is late instead of assuming the student is simply tardy and immediately resorting to punishment to “correct” the student. In Mosher’s study (2008), an interviewee spoke of continuously being suspended for being late to school (p. 830). No one attempted to learn that the reason he was always late was because he was responsible for getting his little brother ready in the mornings and dropping him off at school (p. 830). Some strategies Goodman (2006) gives to positively handle situations such as this includes speaking with parents, finding someone to be the student’s buddy, and providing opportunities for students’ to make-up missed work (p. 225). I believe these are good ideas.

2.4 Conclusion

In this literature review, I examine research on the impact of exposure to community violence on children, student perceptions of harsh and unfair discipline, and the disciplinary strategies that can reform and minimize students’ misbehaviors. This review makes clear that the
consequences of exposure to violence can be dealt with using classroom management skills that teachers are taught in teacher education programs (i.e. building rapports with students, using culturally responsive teaching). Furthermore, it also shows how teachers can play a significant role in reducing misbehaviors within the classroom. The review also raises questions about the responsibility of teachers and schools to be sensitive to factors outside of the classroom and take action for their students’ futures. In light of this, the purpose of my research was to investigate: (1) whether community violence has had an impact on student behavior within Toronto classrooms and (2) how teachers are using classroom management strategies that are positive and effective in reducing challenging behaviors whilst building a positive learning environment. This will guide how I plan to conduct my research and my interviews with teachers who are successfully working (or have) in priority neighbourhood schools in the next chapter.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter is a description of this study’s research methodology that explores how successful teachers who have experience working in Toronto priority neighbourhoods where community violence is the norm are using positive classroom management and disciplinary strategies to reduce and reform misbehavior in their classrooms. This chapter begins with an explanation of the research approach, research procedures, and tools utilized for data collection in this study. The next section is a discussion of the criterion and sampling procedures I used to select participants as well as information about participants. I then explain the procedures I used to analyze data, followed by a review of ethical considerations. The following section outlines the methodological limitations and strengths of this study. I then conclude the chapter with a short summary of the research methodology I have undertaken to learn how community violence has impacted certain Toronto neighbourhoods and how teachers are positively reforming and/or eliminating misbehavior.

3.1 Research Approach & Procedures

This research study was conducted using a qualitative research approach that involves a literature review (see Chapter 2) and semi-structured interviews with three teachers. In my literature review, I reviewed relevant literature and research to my study in the areas of psychological impact of exposure to violence and poverty, student perceptions of strict discipline in their schools, and positive disciplinary strategies. My semi-structured interviews were
conducted with three middle school teachers (Grades 6-8) who are important for this research study. Further details regarding the interviews and participants are in the next sections of this chapter.

Using a qualitative research approach is valuable to my study for a number of reasons. While the main focus of quantitative research is on numerical data, the main focus of qualitative research is on encapsulating multiple perspectives and developing “deep understanding” on a given matter (Trumbull, 2005, p. 101). Furthermore, according to Neuman (2014), the aim of qualitative research is “to develop a deep understanding of a phenomenon as it is experienced in a particular setting rather than to draw broad conclusions about a particular aspect of human behavior” (p. 71). This “deep understanding” is found mainly through interviews with participants. These participants are deliberately chosen for their experience and insight regarding the phenomenon the researcher is exploring (Neuman, 2014). In a qualitative approach, participants are asked open-ended questions that require participants to provide deep and thoughtful answers about their “experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledge” (Trumbull, 2005, p. 103). This was done to gain a deeper understanding about community violence affecting Toronto middle school students and how teachers who work with them are creating positive and safe learning environments.

The literature review in the previous chapter revealed that students living in priority neighbourhoods are often disruptive and aggressive within the classroom as a result of exposure to poverty and violence. Undoubtedly, this poses a challenge for teachers working in priority neighbourhoods. Using a quantitative approach would not have been fruitful in revealing teacher perspectives and solutions regarding this issue. Thus, using a qualitative research approach was a suitable approach for this study because I was able to learn about and understand what classroom management and disciplinary strategies successful teachers were using to positively minimize
misbehavior while still maintaining good student-teacher relationships. In addition, interviewing successful teachers working in priority neighborhoods has offered the most relevant insights and other information that teachers working, or hope to work, in priority neighborhoods can utilize to provide safer and encouraging learning environments for students.

3.2 Instruments of Data Collection

In qualitative research, data is mainly collected through three methods: interviews, observations, and documents (Trumbull, 2005). Due to the restriction on the parameters of this research project, the sole instrument of data collection used in this study was the semi-structured interview protocol. The semi-structured interview protocol involves the preparation of “open-ended questions” before the interview (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p.315). This was appropriate for my study because it aided me, as the researcher, to keep the interviews focused on my research purpose and questions. While each interview was structured to maintain focus, it can be criticized for leaving “little room for variation in response except where an infrequent open-ended question may be used” (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 363). However, my semi-structured interviews did allow for some flexibility by allowing me to “probe” participants when necessary (Arthur & Nazroo, 2014, p. 111).

In addition, it allows for researchers to delve into what Galletta (2013) calls the “lived experience” of each participant. With the use of the semi-structured interview protocol, I was able to learn about each teacher’s experiences teaching in their school and how they have dealt with the challenge of effectively handling misbehaviors and aggression without the need to resort to sending students to the office or even suspension. Furthermore, because each interview has been conducted individually with each teacher, interviewees felt more comfortable sharing details about their experiences in the classroom unlike in a group interview where “because of the public nature of the process, prevents delving as deeply into the individual” (DiCicco-Bloom
& Crabtree, 2006, p. 315). It also provided the space for teachers to contribute additional and unexpected information that I had not intended to look for, but is a valuable and relevant addition to my research. My semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix B) is divided into four sections: (1) background information, (2) teachers’ perspectives and experiences working in an at-risk community, (3) classroom practices used in managing behavior, and (4) supports, challenges, and next steps.

3.3 Participants

According to Neuman (2014), “[b]ecause the nature of the participants’ insights is key to the quality of the final study, selecting a case that has a strong potential for offering relevant insights is critical (p. 72). Thus, participants interviewed were selected with care. In this section, I discuss the sampling criteria I used to select these participants, the strategies I used to find suitable teachers, as well as brief bios of my interviewees.

3.3.1 Sampling criteria

There are several criteria I had developed to assist me in selecting suitable teachers to interview for this research study. Because I was interested in learning about teacher perspectives and best practices regarding positive management of aggressive and disruptive behaviors in the classroom, teachers must:

1. Have taught or are currently teaching in middle schools located in areas of Toronto that have been identified by the City of Toronto as priority neighbourhoods. These areas are also ones where students are exposed to gang and gun violence. To protect the identity of participants, the neighbourhoods they work(ed) in have been given pseudonyms.

2. Have a minimum of four years working with students who come from these neighbourhoods. This is significant because teachers will have had time to develop
successful classroom management and disciplinary strategies, thus gaining valuable experience and insights.

3. Have reported a low number of incidences occurring in their classroom to the school office. This is significant because it demonstrates that students are generally behaving while these individuals are teaching.

4. Have demonstrated leadership in their school and surrounding community by running after-school activities for students and creating positive relationships with students and parents. This shows that these teachers are dedicated to the success of their students.

3.3.2 Sampling procedures

Because this is a qualitative study, using a probability sampling would not have been appropriate (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2013, p. 78). Probability sampling involves the random selection of participants and is suitable when “the aim of a study is to test hypotheses empirically” (Ritchie et al., 2013, p. 78). This was not suitable for this study because the goal was not to test a hypothesis nor obtain statistics. This left me with non-probability sampling. In this approach, participants are intentionally chosen “to reflect particular features”, making it an inappropriate procedure to use for qualitative studies especially small ones (Ritchie et al., 2013, p. 78). Because this study is qualitative and small-scale, I have used non-probability sampling.

Furthermore, within non-probability sampling is a few sampling approaches that include: purposeful sampling, convenience sampling, extreme or deviant case sampling, and theoretical sampling. In purposive/purposeful sampling, certain criteria are often prepared beforehand and used to select participants (Ritchie et al., 2013). Criteria can include age, socio-economic status, and certain experiences (Ritchie et al., 2013). In addition, purposeful sampling allows the researcher to “ensure that all the key constituencies of relevance to the subject matter are covered” ((Ritchie, et al., 2013, p. 79). Convenience sampling is an easy sampling method where
the researcher possesses prior access to participants (Ritchie et al., 2013; Patton, 1990). On the other hand, extreme or deviant case sampling involves the selection of participants based on “highly unusual manifestations of the phenomenon of interest, such as outstanding successes/notable failures” (Patton, 1990, p. 182). In theoretical sampling, the researcher continuously tests theory by analyzing data obtained from different groups of participants at a time (Ritchie, et al., 2013, p. 80). Due to the restrictions on the parameter of this study, I did not use this approach.

I used a combination of purposeful sampling, convenience sampling, and extreme case sampling in this study. I used a purposeful sampling method because participants have had to fulfill the set of criteria I outlined in Section 3.3.1. I needed to learn about their experiences and insights teaching and disciplining students who live in these neighbourhoods so that other teachers – pre-service, newly qualified, or current – can benefit. Thus using a purposeful sampling approach in this study was the most appropriate. In addition, I used convenience sampling because due to my experiences as both a student and classroom volunteer in different priority neighbourhoods, I was able to use my connections with teachers who are working and have worked in these areas to find participants whose teaching and classroom management skills I have witnessed to be exemplary in reducing severe misbehaviors while providing positive learning environments for students. Furthermore, I also used my connection to fellow student teachers who were able to witness excellent and positive teaching and classroom management skills of teachers. Lastly, I have used an extreme case sampling approach because I wanted to learn insights from teachers who have been very successful working with these students.

3.3.3 Participant bios

For this study, I interviewed David, Greg, and Mary. To protect their identities, these teachers interviewed for this study, their schools, and the neighbourhood they currently work in,
or have previously worked in, have been given pseudonyms. David currently teaches Grade 6 at Riverside Middle School. He has been working in this school for sixteen years. Extra-curricular activities he has run for students include coaching the boys’ soccer team and cooking breakfast for students in the school’s breakfast club program. He has also participated in community barbeques. Greg previously taught Grade 8 at Riverside Middle School. He had worked in this school for six years. Extra-curricular activities that he had run for students included coaching both the intermediate boys’ and girls’ basketball teams, organizing the Grade 8 graduation trips, and coordinating the graduation of Grade 8 students. Mary previously taught Grade 7 at Forest Park Middle School. She had worked in this school for ten years. Extra-curricular activities she has run for students include student council, dance club, and homework club.

3.4 Data Analysis

Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault (2015) describe data analysis as a “process of inductive reasoning, thinking, and theorizing” (p. 168). A common first step in data analysis after transcribing is to organize data according to specific themes or categories (Spencer, Ritchie, & O’Connor, 2013). These themes or categories are identified by the researcher according to the “meaning of the data, or to the structure of an account” (Spencer et al., 2013, p. 203). After I conducted and transcribed each interview, I used a grounded theory approach and organized the data I had obtained into groups according to different categories and subcategories (Creswell, 2013). After rereading the data, examining the themes in my literature review, and looking for any themes and concepts that reoccurred (Taylor et al., 2015), I found 7 main themes: (1) aggression, (2) impact of community violence on students, (3) preventative measures in the classroom, (5) using fair disciplinary strategies, (6) providing emotional support, and (7) positive teacher attitude. More information about subthemes and my findings are discussed in Chapter 4.
3.5 Ethical Review Procedures

Fontana & Frey (1994) contend that “[b]ecause the objects of inquiry in interviewing are human beings, extreme care must be taken to avoid any harm to them” (p. 372). For this reason alone, having ethical procedures in place are important. Interviewees must feel comfortable and safe at all times. Seidman (2013) contends that the methods researchers use to locate and contact participants is crucial; it can “affect the beginning of that relationship and every subsequent step in the interviewing process” (p. 44). He cautions against selecting people who are: students, friends, people the researcher supervises, and people with whom the researcher has a relationship with outside of the research (Seidman, 2013). The simple reason for this is because participants may not feel comfortable in being open with their answers due to their relationship with the researcher (Seidman, 2013). The teachers I have selected for this study were those who I have or had professional relationships with; they were former supervisors and former teachers. Seidman (2013) also warns against persuading reluctant individuals from participating in the research study. The risk of conducting a difficult interview with the participant, who had been reluctant, to begin with, is high (Seidman, 2013). In addition, participants may not feel comfortable because they had not been willing to participate in the first place. Despite the desire to interview a potential interviewee because he/she has valuable insights, I did not convince any teacher who was reluctant or unwilling to participate in my research study. In addition, participants should not feel judged or coerced in any way during the interview. Thus, I was a neutral figure; I did not make any suggestions for answers, agree or disagree with statements or answers the interviewees gave, nor gave my own personal opinions on any matter throughout the interview (Fontana & Frey, 1994).

In addition, I informed interviewees about the following essential aspects that I honored and upheld:
- All participants will be assigned a pseudonym and they will be notified of their right to withdraw from participation in the study at any stage of the research study.
- Participants’ identities will remain confidential and any identifying markers related to their schools or students will be excluded.
- There are no known risks to participation in this study. Participants can decline to answer any question and withdraw from the interview at any moment. The interview will also be conducted in a safe and nonjudgmental environment.
- Participants will have the opportunity to review the transcripts and to clarify or retract any statements before I conduct data analysis.
- All data (audio recordings) will be stored on my password protected computer/laptop/phone and will be destroyed after 5 years.

Participants were asked to sign a consent letter (see Appendix A) giving their consent to be interviewed as well as audio-recorded. This consent letter provided an overview of the study, addressed ethical implications, and specified expectations of participation (one 45-60 minute semi-structured interview). Participants were also given the option to see the interview questions (see Appendix B) before the interview.

### 3.6 Methodological Limitations and Strengths

Due to the ethical parameters of this study, I was unable to interview students who live in priority neighbourhoods and learn about their perspectives about discipline and structure in their classrooms. Furthermore, I was also unable to study a larger sample and gain a higher variety of data. I was also unable to study “naturally occurring data” such as observation of students while their teacher teaches (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013, XIII). However, the ethical parameters of the study did enable me to have “close contact” with participants through
interviews (Ritchie et al., 2013, p. 4). Being able to conduct in-depth interviews provided me with deep and valuable first-hand insights on teacher perspectives and experiences working with students from at-risk communities. In addition, the story of each teacher was unique and individual, thus providing my research study with rich and diverse data. A survey with teachers would have never provided this.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explained the methodology I have used in this research study. I first explained how I used a literature review and the semi-structured interview protocol to conduct a qualitative study, and how using the semi-structured interview protocol as my sole instrument of data collection allowed me to gain in-depth information about the challenges teachers working in at-risk communities face in managing student misbehaviors. I then described the specific criteria teachers have had to fulfill as participants in this study, and how I used a combination of purposeful sampling, convenience sampling, and extreme case sampling to find appropriate candidates who have been successfully positively managing students, while creating and maintaining a safe and positive classroom environment. I also discussed the methods I used to analyze the data I have found through my interviews with teachers as well as the ethical procedures that were implemented throughout this research to keep participants feeling safe and comfortable at all times. I also discussed methodological limitations such as larger sample size and lack of student perspectives on discipline and classroom environment. I also discuss the strengths that result from using this study’s research methodology which included gaining deep insights from teachers. In the following chapter, I present my findings from the data I have collected and the connections I have made with the literature that already exists.
Chapter 4: Findings

4.0 Introduction

As outlined in Chapter 1, children are exposed to community violence from a very young age in a few priority neighbourhoods in Toronto like Forest Park and Riverside. Because of the impact exposure to community violence can have on the behavior of young adolescents, middle school teachers face a significant challenge with classroom management and discipline. In this chapter, I report on and discuss findings that answer the main research question of this research project: “What positive disciplinary and classroom management strategies are teachers using to minimize and positively address student misbehavior and disruption within the classroom?” I also report on and discuss the findings for this research project’s subsidiary questions:

1. How do violent events in the neighbourhood affect students within the classroom?
2. How are teachers addressing the violence their students face in the classroom?
3. How do teachers prevent inappropriate behaviors from occurring?
4. How do teachers build rapport with their students?
5. What suggestions do successful teachers have for current and future teachers working in a priority neighbourhood?

To find answers to these questions, I interviewed three teachers: David, Greg, and Mary. All three are teachers who have valuable experience working in an area where gang and gun violence is prevalent. They have also demonstrated positive classroom management practices and genuine care for their students. David currently works at Riverside Middle School in
Riverside as a Grade 6 teacher, Greg had previously taught Grade 8 at Riverside Middle School, and Mary previously taught Grade 7 at Forest Park Middle School in Forest Park. Interviewee descriptions can be found in Chapter Three: Research Methodology. My findings are organized into 7 themes: aggression, impact of community violence on students, preventative measures in the classroom, using fair disciplinary strategies, providing emotional support, and positive teacher attitude.

4.1 Aggression

The literature shows that students exposed to poverty and violence can be aggressive and disruptive at school (Jensen, 2009; Maring, 2006; Perkins & Graham-Bermann, 2012; Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 1998). However, when asked about student aggression towards other students or themselves, participants gave varying responses.

David reported that he has never experienced any aggression from students at Riverside Middle School. He believes that his race (Black), sex, and stern but fair teaching style may be the reason. In addition, he did not speak about aggression directed towards other students.

Unlike David, Greg reported that he had witnessed student-to-student violence at Riverside Middle School. In addition, he has witnessed more student-to-student violence at Riverside than the school he currently works at in a non-priority neighbourhood where he teaches Grade 8. He also reported that he had never experienced physical aggression but experienced students yelling at him at Riverside Middle School. These incidences usually revolved around marks. As an example, Greg spoke at length about a very upset student who “… blew up in class one day. And he just said ‘Why do you always pick on me?’” Greg explained that the student did not recognize his efforts to encourage him to make more effort in school:

They see this adult, constantly asking them where his homework, is constantly
calling home, constantly you know, just badgering him that’s what they see. They didn’t see that I knew that he had this tremendous potential to be not like a scholar, I’m not talking about doctor, lawyers, just so much more than what he was giving. He just wasn’t giving enough.

Greg recalled that the student’s parents had been absent at a parent-teacher interview and he had brought his brother instead. He noted that the student’s mother did not speak English and he did not know where the father was. It is possible that the student was not used to having an adult consistently monitoring him. His father may have been busy working and could not attend and his mother may have been unable to involve herself in her son’s learning due to the language barrier.

While Mary also witnessed student-to-student violence like Greg, she had a much different response: she reported experiencing both physical and verbal aggression from students. She spoke about student aggression being common when she first began teaching in Riverside. She told a story about a student who forcibly removed her hand from the door when she tried to stop the student from leaving the classroom. Furthermore, unlike the other participants, Mary repeatedly spoke about anger, which she used synonymously with aggression when describing the behavior of a couple of students:

And they would come to school angry like angry, angry, angry and it had nothing to do with you…first thing in the mornin’ they would be so angry and school didn't even start yet right. The bell just went and they're already angry.

Mary notes that the severity and number of aggressive behaviors has decreased significantly since she began teaching in 2006, a year after what came to be known as the Summer of the Gun, when gun violence was significantly high in Toronto (Ross, Chowdhry, & White, 2016). This significant decrease can be correlated to the decrease in gang and gun violence in the
neighbourhood. Research shows that there is a direct correlation between the level of exposure to violence and the level of feelings of aggression, anxiety, and stress; when exposure to violence increases, the level of aggression also increases (Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 1998).

It is also worth noting that Greg and Mary pointed out that the existence of a behavior program for students with behavior management issues who were often in their own classrooms. This suggests that the existence of a behavior program may be the reason why dealing with aggression in their classrooms was not a very significant classroom management issue. The students with behavior challenges were in separate classrooms. Furthermore, while interviews with Greg and Mary suggest that community violence exposure is linked to aggression, there was no explicit connection between the two. This contrasts the findings of Maring (2006), Perkins and Graham-Bermann (2012), and Gorman-Smith and Tolan (1998).

4.2 Impact of Community Violence on Students

When asked about the impact of living in a community such as Riverside and Forest Park, the participants provided varying responses. Greg declined to comment, David spoke briefly about students being exposed to negative influences, and Mary spoke about emotional issues students brought to school. However, when asked about what students were like in the classroom following a violent incidence in the neighbourhood, the participants had a lot to say. Participant responses about the impact of the community violence is divided into two subthemes: emotional reactions and silence.

4.2.1 Emotional reactions

When asked about the impact of living in a community such as Riverside and Forest Park, the participants provided varying responses. Greg declined to comment, David spoke briefly about students being exposed to negative influences, and Mary spoke about emotional issues students brought to school. However, when asked about what students were like in the
classroom following a violent event in the neighbourhood, the participants had a lot to say about students’ emotional reactions.

Research shows that exposure to violence leads to high levels of stress and anxiety (Cooley-Strickland et al., 2009; Jensen, 2009; Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 1998). While participants did not use the word “stress” to describe the behavior of their students after a violent event occurred in the community such as a shooting, they used words such as “fear”, “sadness”, and “upset”.

David said that students were fearful after a shooting or police raid occurred in the neighbourhood particularly in the past when violence in the area was not as common as it is today. He went on to say:

I remember kids being much more nervous about anything or anyone that they felt did not belong in, in you know the proximity of our schoolyard. And being highly aware of anybody that was acting or conducting themselves [sic] in a manner that was unusual to them.

Not only were students afraid about what occurred in the neighbourhood, they were also afraid of strangers who passed through school property.

Mary also spoke about fear and a variety of other emotional reactions when describing student behavior after a young man students knew was killed; students “…were sad and they were scared. Some of them look scared and they look sad and look hopeless”. What both David and Mary said mirrors the findings of Bowen and Bowen (1999) who found that exposure to violent events in the neighbourhood led to students being fearful at school.

In contrast with David and similarly to Mary, Greg spoke about seeing sadness. When speaking about the murder of a Grade 9 student the kids knew, he said: “I don’t know the circumstances behind it, but that hit home for a lot of kids because he was so young…There was
lot of upset kids”. Students displayed their sadness at school when victims were people the students knew.

4.2.2 Silence

All three interviewees spoke about students talking about the violent events that occurred in the neighbourhood in class, but they also mentioned their students’ hesitation or unwillingness to talk about what they had seen or heard occur in the neighbourhood. Contrary to Ozer and Weinstein (2004) who found that students were silent because they felt teachers did not want to listen, all three participants attributed the silence as a characteristic of the students. David reported that students were open about what they had heard (gun shots for example) but most claimed they did not witness anything. He went on to say, “You know. I don’t know if them saying that they only heard something is part of a code of silence. Some of the kids though, I believe them, they say they only heard something and they did”. Similarly, both Greg and Mary reported students’ collective agreement to remain silent about what occurred in the neighbourhood.

However, both Mary and Greg offered ideas why students were reluctant to share. Mary said it was a characteristic of the neighbourhood: “They don't necessarily share everything that they're thinking about because again this community is “share less”. I mean I guess they're taught that? Not to talk about what's going on in that sense”. Greg suggested students did not want to be “snitching” on others particularly when outsiders came into the classroom: students were especially unwilling to talk about what happened in the neighbourhood when Leave Out Violence (L.O.V.E), a community organization, came into the classroom to speak about community violence: “Very reluctant to share with L.O.V.E. Yeah, because they had that um…not snitching. They weren’t telling on anybody because being a snitch was huge right?”

While it is important to provide students with the space to discuss these incidences in class, it is
also important that teachers do not force students to do so nor be upset if students choose to remain silent. All three participants took these incidences seriously and were careful in how they discussed it in class (findings about how teachers discussed them are detailed in Section 4.5.2.

4.3 Preventative Measures in the Classroom

All three participants had varying strategies they used to prevent misbehaviors from occurring within their classrooms. Their strategies have been divided into two subthemes: instructional strategies and building positive relationships with students. More strategies can be found in Appendix C.

4.3.1 Instructional strategies and other preventative measures

One strategy all three participants repeatedly emphasized as a means of preventing inappropriate behavior was making lessons engaging. This was emphasized repeatedly by David. David reported that one of the reasons teachers were struggling with classroom management was because their lessons were not engaging. He warned:

If you have [boring] lessons, or you have lessons that you don’t deliver very well, you’re not gonna have a class that’s gonna want to do the task that you’ve set out. And you run the risk of kids purposely acting out in order to get out of doing it.

A strategy Mary used to make her lessons engaging was using cooperative learning and constantly “mix[ing] up the groups a lot so it creates that, you know, there's a change”. These strategies kept students on task and prevented them from engaging in inappropriate behavior such as refusing to complete work. This is synonymous with the observations of Sheets (1996), who found that disruptions and inappropriate behavior occurred when lessons were not engaging for students.

Additionally, like McCready and Soloway (2010), both David and Greg stressed the importance of creating lessons that are relevant to the students’ lives. Doing so can prevent
misbehaviors from occurring. Examples David gave were having students complete “cultural identity assignments” and using current events in EQAO questions while getting students prepared. An example Greg gave was selecting culturally relevant texts. He had used Arvella Whitmore’s *Trapped Between the Lash and Gun* and S.E Hinton’s *The Outsiders* for novel studies.

4.3.2 Building positive relationships with students

All three participants reported that building a positive relationship with students prevented misbehaviors from occurring. They also noted that this was the main reason why teachers in their schools were struggling with classroom management. Getting to know the students outside of the classroom is a strategy that all three participants used and highly emphasized like McCready and Soloway (2010), James and Taylor (2010), and Mosher (2008). Greg outlined what getting to know students meant:

Like understanding who they are as a person, knowing them inside and out, knowing that they like the Warriors as opposed to the Cavs, or knowing that you know they have an older brother who might be in jail. And you know that’s affecting how they are.

Mary used simple discussions with students about their weekends and their after-school plans. Similarly, David also spoke about having discussions with students about their interests such as a TV show, sport, or video games. He fondly recalled buying and playing a popular video game:

So I came in and I told the kids “Hey I bought the game. I’m terrible at it”. They’re looking at me like “You bought the game?” I’m there “Yeah, yeah, yeah. I bought the game, I can’t get past – “. Immediately, I had a hundred suggestions you know. A hundred strategies to try.
Getting to know students is an integral part of building rapport with students. In addition, doing so can have a positive impact on student behavior (McCready & Soloway, 2010; James & Taylor, 2010; Mosher, 2008).

4.4 Using Fair Disciplinary Strategies

All participants spoke at length about how they use discipline in their classrooms. Their strategies demonstrate how they were able to enforce discipline that was fair to all students. These strategies are divided into three subthemes: using tone of voice, consistency, parental involvement, and student voice.

4.4.1 Tone of voice

All three participants talked about using tone of voice when students were acting inappropriately. David, Greg, and Mary reported that hearing a change in tone was often sufficient for students to stop the inappropriate behavior. Both Greg and Mary specifically spoke about students being able to recognize they had crossed a line. Greg said, “I don’t yell. I don’t think I yelled a lot when I was [at Riverside Middle School] but I talked loud and I think the change in voice was ‘Oh! I’m over that line, I kinda better get back’”. Similarly, Mary said “So once my tone changes they know that they have done something wrong...[s]o the kid that is not trying to you know trying to basically get him or herself in trouble will stop at that point”. The fact that students automatically knew to stop what they were doing by simply hearing the change in tone of voice demonstrates the level of authority the participants had within the classroom. In addition, using the change in tone as a warning for students is a means of giving students a chance reform themselves.

4.4.2 Consistency

Similarly to Sheets (1996), Bracy (2011), and McNeal and Dunbar Jr. (2010), David,
Greg, and Mary all emphasized the importance of consistency in disciplining students to ensure fairness.

David repeatedly mentioned consistently following through on warnings. Being consistent has made students recognize that his warnings should be taken seriously. He elaborates: “…if you’re firm but fair like if you say ‘if somebody does this, this is what’s gonna happen’ and if the kid does it, you gotta make it happen…the kids know that if I say something it is so”. Clearly, not only is consistency fair, it also prevents misbehavior from occurring.

Furthermore, both Mary and Greg spoke about ensuring equality; all students received the same consequences and were expected to follow the rules. Greg said: “I didn’t treat anybody differently whether your boy, girl, Black, White, Somali, Caribbean, whatever….And my expectations were the same for everybody”. Similarly, Mary said “When I’m disciplinin’ these kids…I’m not saying this to Johnny and saying this to Mary. Right, so I have to be on the same page at the same time and I have to be consistent”. Being consistent in following through on warnings and giving consequences for all students ensured that they were being fair to all students. Furthermore, it creates a reformative environment instead of what Bracy (2011) calls a “punitive school climate”, which only increases misbehaviors (p. 367). It is interesting that all three were very firm when they spoke about consistency. Studies have shown that fair treatment in the application of discipline is a major concern of students (Bracy, 2011; McNeal and Dunbar Jr., 2010; Mosher, 2008).

4.4.3 Parental involvement

David and Mary emphasized parental involvement as an effective strategy in dealing with misbehaviors. Both called parents and reported that it resulted in a change in behavior and/or attitude. The role of parents in children’s lives has been found to influence behavior (Ceballo, Ramirez, Hearn & Maltese, 2003; Richters and Martinez, 1993). Furthermore, involving parents
while the student is present was the most effective strategy for both teachers. Sometimes, David and Mary actually handed the phone to the students. David explained:

I’ll call the parent and I’ll say your kid did – I’ve even gone as far as this: “Hold on, your son – or daughter – wants to tell you exactly what they did today. And if they don’t tell you the real deal, I’m right here to give you the truth”.

Similarly, Mary said: “…usually the parent will ask “Where are they?” and I’m like “Oh they're right here” and I'll give the phone to them so I’m there”.

Additionally, both participants mentioned making calls immediately during the school day or immediately after-school. Unlike David, Mary stressed the importance of speaking to parents as soon as possible: “You have to tell the story before they tell the story because their story will never be your story…”. Furthermore, Mary made those calls only when it was necessary; if a student was refusing to comply or was not “apologetic” that warranted a call home.

### 4.4.4 Student voice

Giving students the opportunity to explain was an important strategy both Greg and Mary used to ensure fairness and reduce misbehaviors from reoccurring. This is similar to what Sheets (1996), Mosher (2008), and Bracy (2011) found in their studies; students felt teachers who did not allow students to tell their side of the story abused their authority. Greg and Mary gave students the opportunity to explain by taking students to the side to ask the reason for their behavior. Greg pointed out the importance of doing so:

There’s always mitigating factors and you have to allow a student to have a voice. And then you can kind of see what’s going on. “Oh okay so you pushed that person because that person said this. Okay well let’s get that person now and find out what’s going on”. There’s always like a backstory.
Greg also pointed out that allowing students to have a voice enabled them to “make better decisions”.

Mary would have one-on-one conversations with students outside of the classroom to inquire about why a student was exhibiting inappropriate behavior even if it was directed at her. Depending on its severity, she explained: “[…] I’ll pull them outside and we'll have a discussion. ‘Are you having a bad day? What's going on? That was not - you know you should have never have done that’. The importance of student voice is synonymous with the literature on school discipline. Both Mosher (2008) and Bracy (2011) stressed the importance of student voice before the application of discipline. Furthermore, preventing student voice can result in feelings of frustration and helplessness (Sheets, 1996; Bracy, 2011).

4.5 Providing Emotional Support

Providing emotional support to students was another theme that emerged after conducting data analysis. The high need for providing emotional support was often due to the violent events that occurred in the neighbourhood. While the literature speaks about building positive relationships with students, there is few scholarship that study the effectiveness of teachers providing emotional support for students and even fewer that examine the effectiveness of discussing community violence within the classroom. Furthermore, the findings of this study demonstrate these teachers’ efforts to go above and beyond their duties as teachers. The findings have been divided into three subthemes: being a supportive figure in the classroom, addressing community violence in the classroom, and professional services at school.

4.5.1 Being a supportive figure in the classroom

Providing students with support is something that all three participants highly emphasized. Students needed to know that their teacher was there for them. Mary, David, and Greg established themselves as supportive figures in different ways. Mary always let her students
know that she was available if they needed someone to talk to especially after a violent event occurred in the neighbourhood. David always took what students told him seriously, especially when it revolved around bullying: “And they know I’m not just gonna listen and say you know ‘Well just go back to your seat’, no. I’m gonna act on it”. Greg established himself as a supportive figure by even going to students’ homes. He told a story about visiting the home of a student who had had a diabetic shock and had to be hospitalized. While participants emphasized that providing support to students promoted student well-being, they did not explicitly connect this strategy with preventing inappropriate behavior from occurring. However, because these teachers did not have significant misbehavior occurring in their classrooms, being a supportive figure may have played a role as Benhorin and McMahon (2008) and Brewster & Bowen (2004) found.

4.5.2 Addressing community violence in the classroom

All three participants mentioned that while students were usually reluctant to share what they had heard or seen, they were not completely silent. Research has shown that students do want to discuss the violent that occur in the neighbourhood (Ozer & Weinstein, 2004; Campbell & Schwarz, 1996). All three teachers allowed their students to talk about it but their approaches were different. Both David and Mary both had class discussions that they began but had different ways of conducting. David would have back-and-forth conversations with students about what happened. His intentions for doing so is providing students with a form of therapy: “Um, I don’t know if I mean I also have this idea of hopefully making it easier for them talking about it”.

Mary would begin by first reminding students that the violence that occurred in the neighbourhood did not “…define who you are and what you do with your life you know…[do not let it] make you give up, make you sad, make you depressed”.

44
In contrast, Greg allowed the students to initiate conversations about what occurred in the neighbourhood first. He also brought in members from Leave Out Violence (L.O.V.E), a community organization, who grew up in similar communities as the students to facilitate conversations about violent events as well as conduct activities with students. The purpose was to teach students how to “…share how they felt not through words but through pictures like photography, or through - we did lots of art, and we would create murals”. It was a form of therapy that also included playing games.

While all three participants used different strategies to discuss the community violence in their classrooms all three used it as a form of therapy, similar to participants in Maring’s (2006) study, who felt it helped “foster youth resilience” (p. 85). While there is extensive research on the effects of exposure to community violence, there is little research on solutions that are already in place that address them. These findings are a significant contribution.

4.5.3 Professional services at school

All three participants spoke about students dealing with problems at home. However, only Greg and Mary, whose views are similar to that of Ozer and Weinstein (2004) and Maring and Koblinsky (2013), spoke about the need to support students with professional services at school. Mary said that students came to school angry and “loaded with emotional issues”. Thus they acted out at school. Her observations are similar to that of Cooley-Strickland et al. (2009) who suggest that the disruptive and aggressive behavior of students is a result of difficulty controlling emotions. As such, Mary identified the need for a counselor: “[t]hey needed someone to go - a counselor or professional counselor to go sit and discuss things.” As a teacher, she felt unprepared and unqualified to try and help students deal with their anger and other emotions. However, Mary did not explicitly attribute the causes of these emotions to violence exposure.
Greg also spoke about the importance of having professional services to provide emotional support for students. However unlike Forest Park Middle School, Riverside Middle School did have professional services. The most important service at Riverside Middle School was the services offered by the child and youth worker. He recalls:

I remember kids would just be like “Mr. [Greg] I just – I need to see Ms. [Ruby]”. And I’d be like “Yeah no problem, go”. Because she was – her door was always open and she even had a lot of mediation sessions with students who had beef, like students who struggled to get along.”

For example, a Grade 8 student had gotten into a violent fight that led to police involvement and the child and youth worker was available at school to provide emotional support. Greg also reported the availability of programs such as L.O.V.E and after-school programs such as Boys To Men to help students discuss and cope with exposure to violence.

4.6 Positive teacher attitude

In addition to the best practices of the participants outlined in previous sections, having a positive attitude was another important theme that emerged in being a successful teacher in areas such as Riverside and Forest Park.

All three participants spoke about being open as an important attitude that teachers need to have. Greg said new teachers need to “…have an open mind and accept anything that comes your way…” while Mary echoed a similar advice: “Be prepared for the unexpected”. David also specifically spoke about having an open mind. Having an open mind is important particularly if a teacher has zero experience in neighbourhoods where community violence is present. However, David further said:

…you can’t come in with any preconceived thoughts, preconceived notions you can’t have that. In fact, in my mind you can’t come into any school like that….you know, you
can’t go in there thinking this area is full of Black folks and minorities and so on and so forth and oh you know it’s a ghetto school and blah blah blah. You can’t think that.

David specifically spoke at length about stereotypes teachers had about the students. He passionately talked about teachers who had actually made derogatory comments about students “…based on the assumption that a priority neighbourhood cannot produce children of high quality”. Teachers believed that students could not achieve academic excellence solely because of the neighbourhood they came from. David pointed out that teachers who held stereotypical views of students were those who were struggling with classroom management. His observation is similar to that of Bradley and Corwyn (2002) who also argue that teacher attitudes about students can influence the behavior and academic success of students. It can also result in negative relationships between students and teachers. Believing in your students is integral to positive relationships and academic success.

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed my findings about how middle school teachers working in (or have previously worked in) neighbourhoods where community violence is present are successfully and positively handling misbehaviors and disruptions in their classroom. I also discussed findings about student aggression, the effect exposure to violent events has on students, how teachers are addressing the violence that occurs in the neighbourhood, and advice for new teachers working in this type of area. I found that student aggression is present, but was not able to learn whether it was a direct result of neighbourhood characteristics. However, I did find that living in an area such as Riverside has resulted in anger and other emotional problems that need to be addressed through the use of professional services such as counseling. In addition, I found that teachers are preventing inappropriate behavior from occurring in a positive manner within their classrooms through lesson planning and kind and caring rapports with
students. Teachers were positively disciplining students simply using their tone of voice, involving their parents, and ensuring that rules and the punishments for violating them applied to all students. In addition, teachers also provided students with a chance to explain after they had done something wrong. Furthermore, I also found that teachers were providing emotional support to students by discussing the violence that occurs in the neighbourhood, as well as establishing themselves as kind and supportive figures. Furthermore, I also found that to be successful teaching in areas like Riverside or Forest Park, teachers cannot have any negative stereotypes about their students or the neighbourhoods they come from. Altogether, these themes demonstrate that teachers must be able to master basic classroom management and lesson planning skills as well as provide space for classroom discussions about the community. The strategies participants outlined (such as culturally relevant lessons) are those taught to teacher candidates in teacher preparation programs. What is unique to education in neighbourhoods where community violence is a problem then, is being prepared to provide students with emotional support as well ensuring that the school is a safe place for students from all forms of violence.
Chapter 5: Implications

5.0 Introduction

This final chapter provides an overview of key findings presented in the previous chapter, a discussion on implications for the educational community regarding the wellbeing and safety of students, and the impact this study has had on me as a teacher researcher who has grown up in one of Toronto’s priority neighbourhoods. This chapter also provides some recommendations for professional teacher development, access to professional services, and the need for supportive intervention for teachers struggling with classroom management. Finally, I provide suggestions for further research regarding solutions to the impact of community violence exposure on behavior and building student resilience and ends with concluding comments.

5.1 Overview of Key Findings

The findings of this study revealed 7 key themes. One theme is aggression. Findings showed that aggression towards other students and even teachers was a significant problem but there was no explicit link to neighbourhood characteristics. The second theme is impact of community violence on students. Participants observed that community violence resulted in emotional problems for students such as fear, anger and sadness. Teachers felt unequipped and unprepared to deal with these issues and have pointed to the need for professional services, such as counseling for students. A third theme is preventative measures in the classroom. In order to prevent inappropriate behaviors in their own classrooms in a positive manner, participants used a variety of strategies including culturally relevant lessons and building strong rapports with students. A fourth theme was using fair disciplinary strategies. In order to positively and effectively deal with misbehaviors when they occurred in their classrooms, participants used different strategies such as the tone of their voices, parental involvement, providing students an opportunity to explain their side of the story, and applying rules and consequences that are
consistent to all students. A fifth theme is providing emotional support. As part of the emotional support, participants addressed violent events in the classroom using different strategies. Lastly, positive teacher attitude was another theme. Findings revealed the importance of having high expectations for students and the dangers of having negative stereotypes about students and their neighbourhoods.

5.2 Implications

5.2.1 Broad implications

After analyzing the data, two general implications emerged: the need for access to professional services at school and implications for teacher practice.

5.2.1.1 The need for access to professional services at school

While the findings of this research project have not shown that student aggression is caused by neighbourhood characteristics, I did find that it was a significant problem; two of the participants observed that there were higher levels of aggression and other emotional issues in Riverside and Forest Park than in other areas where community violence did not pose a risk to students. As a result, there is a high need for professional services within schools such as a counselor and/or child and youth worker to help students cope with anger and other emotions particularly when violent events occur within the neighbourhood. Violent events students are exposed to include the murders of people they know and police raids. The findings of this research project is synonymous with that of academic research that has called for the availability of professional services for students in schools located in areas such as Riverside and Forest Park. While students in all schools would benefit from having free access to professional services, it is especially needed in schools located in neighbourhoods where community violence is present.
5.2.1.2 Implications for teacher practice

The findings of this research project pose a number of significant implications for teacher practice. All strategies participants discussed such as culturally relevant lessons, having positive relationships with students, giving students a voice in the classroom, consistency in the application of discipline, and involving parents are important in any classroom regardless of neighbourhood characteristics. The findings of this study revealed two implications for teachers specifically working in areas such as Riverside and Forest Park: being willing and prepared to address what occurs in the neighbourhood with students and having a positive attitude. Despite the differences in strategies, all three participants interviewed for this research project addressed community violence when it occurred in their classrooms. Naturally, many students wanted to talk about events that had happened the night before. How can students be expected to focus on classwork when someone they had known was shot – whether fatally or not – the night before? Or their own home or the neighbour’s home was raided by police in the middle of the night? Thus, for this present study’s participants, giving students the space to talk about it served as a means of emotional support. Teachers will need to find appropriate ways that they can address it in their classrooms. A helpful resource for teachers, spoken about by one of the participants, is Leave Out Violence (LOVE) an organization that teaches and helps students to address the violence in their neighbourhoods through media arts.

Furthermore, teachers need to understand how integral their attitudes are towards students. All three participants had said that the colleagues who were struggling with classroom management were those who did not understand the students. Additionally, one participant had even spoken about the negative stereotypes held by a few colleagues. Participants’ observations match the conclusions of extensive research that shows teacher beliefs and attitudes have an
impact on student behavior and academic success. Knowing the environment students come from should lead to empathy and high expectations for all students, not judgment.

5.2.2 Narrow implications

The findings of this study have strengthened my resolve to create a safe, kind, and welcoming space for my students within the classroom. I also came to see the true value and importance of having an open mind and building positive rapports with my students even more. In addition, along with my childhood experiences in school and my experiences in practicum, I also learned the importance of showing respect first. In order to expect respect from my students, I need to show it first in the lessons I teach, the connection I build with them, in the manner I carry out consequences, and my attitude towards to students. Lastly, I did not realize the importance of addressing community violence within the classroom. My teachers had done so and I did not think about the value it had for me until I conducted this present study.

5.3 Recommendations

The implications of this research project have led to recommendations for boards, schools, and teachers. These recommendations are divided into three categories: access to professional services, holding teachers accountable, and professional development for teachers. First, access to professional services is important because students are dealing with emotions that need to be addressed. Furthermore, teachers feel unequipped to deal with these problems effectively. School boards, such as the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) should continue to have professionals such as child and youth workers and psychologists in schools. However, their availability for students should be increased and students should be made aware of their availability particularly when violent events occur such as fatal shootings. Second, it is recommended that teachers be held accountable for their teaching practices. Schools should continuously improve the climate of the school because students should be able to learn in a safe
and positive environment. Thus, teachers must be held accountable and administration should intervene to provide struggling teachers with support and professional development training. Third, all findings seem to point to a recommendation for greater teacher professional development. The findings of this study showed that a significant volume of physical and verbal aggression is being directed at other students and even teachers. Furthermore, students are coming to school with emotional issues such as anger. Both pre-service and current teachers should have professional training on how they can deescalate and resolve conflicts within the classroom in a safe and positive manner. Pre-service and current teachers should also receive professional development teaching them strategies they can use to teach their students to control and manage their emotions. While students should have access to counselors, psychologists, or child and youth workers, their services are not always available and teachers are the professionals who they spend most of their time with during the school day.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

Several findings pose implications for further research. While the findings of this research project suggest that the aggressive behavior exhibited by students is linked to neighbourhood characteristics, research needs to be conducted confirming the link between aggression in schools and community violence exposure in Toronto's priority neighbourhoods. Further research must also be conducted to learn about the effectiveness of solutions in place, if any, within schools to help students reform and manage their behavior and emotions as a direct result of community violence exposure.

Furthermore, findings have shown that excellent teachers working in priority neighbourhoods such as Riverside and Forest Park are addressing violence in their classrooms. Further research is needed to learn whether it is therapeutic for students, if it helps strengthen resilience, and whether doing so has a long-term positive impact on students. Further research is
also needed to investigate whether there are differences in the resilience of students in classrooms where community violence is not addressed or talked about in comparison to the resilience of students in classrooms where it is addressed. Lastly, there needs to be research exploring the perceptions students have of the ways that their teachers address what happens in their neighbourhood. These are significant areas for further research.

5.5 Concluding Comments

The aim of this study was to learn about the positive disciplinary and classroom management strategies that teachers working in neighbourhoods where their students are exposed to community violence use in their classrooms. Another aim of this research project was to learn whether teachers address what occurs in the neighbourhood in their classrooms and the strategies they use to do so. Findings revealed that teachers must deal with a significant volume of aggression, anger, sadness, and other emotional issues. While there was no direct link between aggression and community violence exposure, there was a link between the presence of emotional issues and community violence. Furthermore, these emotional issues and even emotional reactions to violent events in the neighbourhood have led to the need for professional services for students. Additionally, teachers were addressing violent events that occur in the community such as shootings in their classrooms. Teachers were also using instructional strategies and positive relationships with students as preventative measures against misbehaviors in the classroom. Furthermore, they were also using a number of strategies to fairly and positively handle inappropriate misbehavior.

As a result of these findings, boards need to ensure there is increased availability of services from professionals such as psychologists and child and youth workers in these schools. Furthermore, teachers need to continuously reflect on their teaching practices and be prepared to address community violence in their classrooms. Recommendations include the professional
development for teachers in conflict resolution and helping students to control their emotions. It also includes an increase in professional services and holding teachers accountable for their teaching practices in a manner that is supportive.

Due to the limitations of this study and the gaps in existing literature, there needs to be further research exploring the ways that community violence exposure is directly impacting middle school students in a Canadian context as well as research exploring how community violence such as shootings are being addressed in classrooms and its long-term effects on students. Further research also includes student perspectives.

The findings of this study are significant because they help teachers currently working in schools situated in priority neighbourhoods and are struggling, to successfully deal with challenging behaviors and other issues within their classrooms in a manner that is positive and reforming. It reveals that addressing violent events that impact the community is a means of emotional support for students. Furthermore, these findings also challenge the stigma that all students who come from priority neighbourhoods are violent and naturally pose a classroom management challenge. The successes of this study’s participants, who come from different backgrounds, prove otherwise. With kindness and empathy, classroom management becomes a means of building safe and positive learning environments for all students especially those whose safety is placed at risk as a result of the communities they live in.
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Appendix A: Letter of Signed Consent

Dear _______________________________,

My name is Idil Said Mohamed and I am a student in the Master of Teaching program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). A component of this degree program involves conducting a small-scale qualitative research study. As a student who has grown up in one of Toronto’s priority neighbourhoods, I am interested in learning about how a small sample of teachers working in (or have worked in) these neighbourhoods are using classroom management and disciplinary strategies to positively reform and minimize misbehavior in the classroom without resorting to sending students to the office. I think that your valuable knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic. Your participation in this research will involve one interview that will last approximately 45-60 minutes, which will audio-recorded and then transcribed.

I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient for you, outside of school time. The contents of this interview will be used for my research project, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates. I may also present my research findings via conference presentations and/or through publication. You will be assigned a pseudonym to maintain your anonymity and I will not use your name or any other content that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information will remain confidential. Any information that identifies your school or students will also be excluded. The interview data will be stored on my password-protected computer and the only person who will have access to the research data will be my course instructor. You are free to change your mind about your participation at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may also choose to decline to answer any specific question during the interview. I will destroy the audio recording after the paper has been presented and/or published, which may take up to a maximum of five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks to participation, and I will share a copy of the transcript with you shortly after the interview to ensure accuracy.

Please sign the attached consent form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. I am very thankful for your participation!
Sincerely,

Idil Said Mohamed

Email: idil.mohamed@mail.utoronto.ca

Course Instructor’s Name: Dr. Rose Fine-Meyer

Contact Info: rose.fine.meyer@utoronto.ca

Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Idil Said Mohamed and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described. I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature: ________________________________________

Name: (printed) _______________________________________________

Date: __________________________
Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study, and for making time to be interviewed today. The purpose of this research study is to learn how a small sample of teachers working, or have worked, in Toronto’s priority neighbourhoods are using positive classroom management and disciplinary strategies to positively reform and minimize misbehavior in the classroom without resorting to sending students to the office.

This interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes, and I will ask you a series of questions. This interview will be divided into four sections: (1) Background information, (2) Perspectives and experiences working in an at-risk community, (3) Classroom practices managing behavior, and (4) Supports/Challenges

I want to remind you that you may refrain from answering any question, and you have the right to withdraw your participation from the study at any time. As I explained in the consent letter, this interview will be audio-recorded. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Background Information

1. Why did you decide to become a teacher?
2. How many years have you been working in a priority neighborhood?
3. (If teacher is currently working in an at-risk community) How many years have you worked at this school?
4. What was your experience like first coming into a school located in an at-risk community?
5. Have you worked in schools in non-priority neighbourboods?

Perspectives and Experiences as a Teacher in an At-risk Community

1. (If applicable) what was your experience like working in schools in non-priority neighbourhoods in comparison to schools in priority neighborhoods?
2. What do you think is the impact of living in a low-income area where community violence is present on students?
3. Do you ever fear for your safety? Why or why not?
4. What are students like after a violent incident occurs in the neighbourhood? How does that make you feel?
5. Have you seen teachers in this school struggle with managing students? If so, why do you think they were they struggling?
6. (If teaching in 2004) What were the behavior and attitudes of students twelve years ago compared to students today?
7. How do you learn about the violent incidences that occurs in the neighborhood?
8. Do you address what happens in the neighbourhood within the classroom? If so, how do you address it?
9. (if participant does address incidences in the community) What is the effect of addressing what happens in the community on students?

**Classroom Practices Managing Behavior**

1. When do you find students misbehaving in the classroom during the school day?
2. What are ways you minimize misbehaviors?
3. How many of your students are usually disruptive? What are they like in other classrooms in the school?
4. How do you deal with disruptions in the class?
5. What strategies do you use to build rapport with your students? What is its effect on students?
6. How do you handle students who act aggressively towards other students? Or even you?
7. What disciplinary measures do you use to deal with misbehavior?
8. How do you ensure your disciplinary measures are fair to students?
9. Do you think lessons that you teach affect behavior? Why or why not?
10. How did you come to develop your current teaching style?

**Supports/Challenges/Next Steps**

1. What support and resources are/were available to you as a professional working in an at-risk community?
2. Are there any challenges that you faced as a teacher working in an at-risk community?
3. How do you think teacher candidates can be prepared to work in areas impacted by community violence?
4. What advice would you give any teacher starting to work in this kind of area?

Thank you for your participation in this research study.
Appendix C: Other Teaching Strategies

Table 1: Other instructional strategies participants utilized to prevent misbehaviors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preventative Measures in the Classroom</th>
<th>Seating Arrangements (Greg and Mary)</th>
<th>Silent reading for 20-30 minutes immediately after lunch (Greg)</th>
<th>Not allowing students to come into the school or classroom unless they are “ready” (David)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using visuals (Mary)</td>
<td>Hands-on activities (David and Mary)</td>
<td>Using current world events (David)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correcting students answers by asking questions that help students realize they are incorrect (Mary)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Other strategies participants used to build rapport with students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building Rapport with Students</th>
<th>Have a sense of humor (Greg and Mary)</th>
<th>Ask students what is happening if they appear to be having a bad day (Greg and Mary)</th>
<th>Be kind and understanding (David, Greg, Mary)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listen to what students have to say (David, Greg, Mary)</td>
<td>Show students you care (Greg and Mary)</td>
<td>Tell students about your own life (Mary)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to student ideas for a lesson (David)</td>
<td>Ask questions about their culture (David)</td>
<td>High expectations for all students (David, Greg, and Mary)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate the expectations that students are expected to exhibit such as mutual respect (Mary and Greg)</td>
<td>Establish authority by being fair but firm and consistent (David, Mary, and Greg)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>