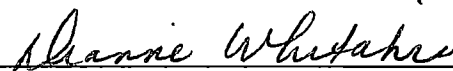
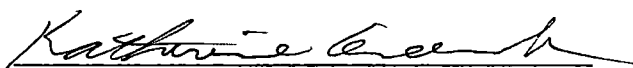


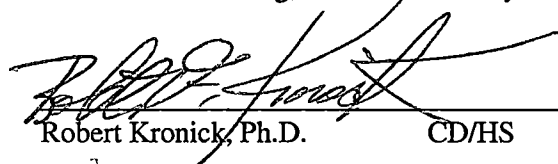
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Ronald Lawrence Wegesser Roberts entitled "A Phenomenological Investigation of Middle School Children's Experience of Getting into Trouble." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Education.


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Associated Vice Chancellor and
Dean of The Graduate School

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF
MIDDLE SCHOOL CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCE
OF GETTING INTO TROUBLE.

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Ronald Lawrence Wegesser Roberts
August 2000

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. To my parents who instilled within me the ability to think for myself, who taught me tenacity work, and the belief that I can accomplished whatever I put my mind and effort toward. Also, for the support and love they have given me. To my brother Shane with whom I many a time experienced trouble, and who I love dearly. To my Sister-in-law Roniesha who has been a wonderfully fresh addition to our family and source of encouragement. To my nieces, Harmonie (age 3) and Alyssa (age 22 months) who have provided me great joy and love in the short time we have known each other.

Thank you all for your love, support, tolerance, and encouragement while I have pursued this latest adventure in Tennessee.

Acknowledgements

Primarily I want to thank the young participants who shared their personal stories with me. Also special three women who received me into their school, introduced me to various students, and trusted me. Confidentiality prohibits me from using their names they know who they are. I express gratitude the principal for her continued support and assistance that paved my way. The school counselor, who took time out her busy schedule to introduce me to faculty, and to discuss the dynamics of the school on more than one occasion. And the community agent working with the school who helped me explore various avenues for locating potential participants.

There are many people who have directly and indirectly contributed to my experiences at the University of Tennessee, at Knoxville. I initially think of Dr. Jane Rysberg, at the University of California Chico, who gently and tenaciously prompted me to apply to graduate programs beyond the PPS program at University of California at Chico. Without her assistance I would likely never have applied, nor been accepted at the University of Tennessee Knoxville, and thus not obtaining a doctoral degree. She believed that I could achieve more than I was aware of myself.

The School Psychology program at the University of Tennessee Knoxville benefited me greatly from knowing the faculty and graduate students in the last five years. I have been given opportunities and guidance in my studies, while conducting research, support when presenting at local, national, and international conferences.

I am especially grateful to my Dissertation Committee. Dr. Dianne Whitaker for agreeing to be my chair and the faith in my abilities as a researcher. Also, for helping me understand what my research question really was, for reading through most of the transcripts and every revision, and providing feedback in a manner that great chair does. Dr. Katherine Greenburg for her continued support and creation of various opportunities, which have greatly influenced my perceptions of the world and its many cultures. Dr. Howard Pollio for helping me better understand the qualitative process, phenomenology, and for allowing me struggle to find my answers. Dr. Robert Kronick for his encouragement, and insight into areas I would have otherwise been unaware. Also, the unofficial fifth member, Dr. Nancy Tarsi for reading most of the transcripts with Dianne and me, the long distance telephone conversations which assisted in the initial generating the themes, and her encouragement.

There are a number of people whose questions, ideas, and suggestions have shaped my thoughts, and this dissertation. I am grateful to the qualitative research group in the College of Nursing for teaching and modeling the qualitative process, and for analyzing my bracketing interview and various transcripts. Dr. Jerome Morton for his experience, insight, and validation. Erica Singleton Ed.S. for her encouragement and questions which refined my ideas.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experience of trouble from the young adolescent's perspective. A phenomenological approach was used to investigate the adolescents' experience of trouble. The participants were asked, "Tell me about a time you got in trouble." The nine participants described the experience of trouble as containing three major themes grounded in an Other and Time. As the experience of trouble unravels the participants become aware of each theme in a specified sequence. These themes are brought in to awareness beginning with the presence of an Other, then an awareness of the Others power and finally a sense of no control when the Powerful Other "takes everything away." The Other is the most powerful influence in the adolescent's experience. If we desire to see changes in the adolescent and future society, then the Other will need to change the experience of trouble that leaves the adolescent better than they were found if at all possible.

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Chapter I

Introduction

School shootings are front-page phenomena. The Littleton, Colorado shootings horrified the nation and galvanized congress, schools, and parents to call for solutions to what appears to be increasing violence in the adolescent population. Violence first hit in the inner city school. Rural areas were next. Suburbia was a new phenomenon. Suddenly there seemed to be no safe place from students who chose to take out their hostility on others. Locating the genesis of these violent, irreversible acts has led people to investigate many hypotheses.

The sense of hysteria and paranoia is beginning to subside, although the finger pointing continues. Some blame the media and entertainment industries, suggesting that violent movies are a breeding ground for immoral acts. Parallels have been found between specific scenes in movies and the actions of some perpetrators. Research indicates that violence in movies and television is not cathartic as it was once believed, but rather may increase violence in those who view it (Cannon, 1994). Others have pointed the finger at video games, which are graphic in nature, and often show gratuitous violence. Outrageous acts of violence have also been attributed to music with violent content. Live music concerts have shared in the blame. Parents of these violent children have come into their share of the blame. Experts ask, "where were the parents?" "What were they doing while their youngsters stocked piled weapons and manufactured bombs?" Many of these parents allege that they were unaware of the severity of their children's distress. Schools also have not been held blameless. Schools acting as

surrogate parents are being held responsible for not intervening. Discipline and class management are topics of concern. Dress codes, see-through backpacks, metal detectors, police officers who walk the halls of the schools have all been suggested to help curb violent acts.

Our government representatives and officials have felt the pressure from the public to do something. Just recently, Congress's response was to pass a law allowing the Ten Commandments to be posted in schools. When there are no easy solutions, legislators often opt for cosmetic changes. It is unlikely that many believe seeing the Ten Commandments will stop the violence. It is therefore important that we put this current violence into perspective. More children die from fatal accidents in a year in urban areas than in all to 14 school shooting combined (Zuckerman & Duby, 1985). Violence is not new but the context has changed. Violence has moved from the areas around schools into the cafeterias and classrooms. Guns and bombs have replaced fists and knives. The reality is that most kids get in trouble for non-criminal acts. Although the shooting phenomena is worthy of study, it is more practical and useful in the long run to understand how and why kids get in to trouble. The word most often heard in response is discipline. We want kids to "have discipline" although our understanding of the term may be vague. We link discipline with appropriate behavior but what is appropriate is contextual. The discussion of discipline is often focused on techniques without any long-term outcomes clearly defined. Dialogue about discipline also occurs among adults. Those most affected by the discipline - the children - are rarely invited into the

discussion. This practice is much like a doctor making a diagnosis without asking the patient where it hurts. Children are disciplined yet their input is seldom sought.

"Trouble" is a general term that can be defined as either a noun or verb. When someone says they are troubled by something, or that something caused them trouble it is external; and seems to have a life of its own. Trouble can go about seeking someone to act upon. However, other times people find themselves in trouble, or they may be even be asking for trouble. As a noun, it's a state of being or the condition in which someone finds himself. As someone can be in a pool of water one can be in a heap of trouble. The word is derived from a Latin root meaning confusion and turmoil (American Heritage Dictionary, 1985). To the youngster in trouble these are appropriate words.

Trouble is also a two-sided coin. One side is discipline; the other side is deviance. Collectively this is the state of trouble. If one is deviant, but not disciplined, there is no trouble. The four-year-old who swipes a piece of candy and eats it before he is caught is not in trouble. Trouble comes when Mama sees the chocolate mustache and administers a punishment. Conversely, discipline is usually administered when someone has deviated from the norm. However, this norm is relative. Chewing gum at home will probably not get you in trouble (unless you take the last piece), whereas chewing gum in school may mean a trip to the office.

The purpose of this study was to look at the experience of trouble from the adolescent's perspective. Adolescence is a time of great and rapid change in the life span. While their bodies are undergoing what seem to be daily changes, they are also becoming aware of different ways of thinking. The cognitive maturation allows them to be aware of

new perspectives that at times compare or surpass that of an adult. As adolescents mature their ability to compare and contrast both concrete and abstract ideas about their social and moral world become more refined. As they begin to question themselves, their family, as well as the society as a whole. Most are developing their own a sense of independence while moving toward their own sense of identity.

Differing theories of deviance contain a shared primary feature of the relation between the majority and the minority of a society. When the norms of different segments of society conflict, the norms of the more powerful segment tend to be used as a reference point. The more powerful majority is able to define and maintain the definition of deviance for the society. In terms of adolescents, adult norms are more powerful and are used as the referent in determining deviance otherwise discussed as trouble.

I chose to use a phenomenological approach to look at adolescents' experience of trouble. Participants were asked the question "Tell me about a time you got in trouble." I chose this method for the following reasons. A more complex understanding may be revealed if information is obtained from the child's perspective without the restrictions of standardization. The phenomenological method, which was utilized in this study, allows for the finding of new or alternate categories (through thematic analysis) and does not limit the respondent to set answers. Each participant describes the experience, which includes both behavior and thoughts of which they were aware. The phenomenological approach allows for the interaction of behavior and cognition to be explained in a functional manner that standardized approaches are less likely to attain.

The nine participants described the experience trouble as containing three major themes that are grounded in an Other. As the experience of trouble unravels the participants become aware of each theme in a specified sequence. These themes are brought in to awareness beginning with the presence of an Other, then an awareness of the Others power and finally a sense of loss when the Powerful Other “takes everything away.”

Adolescents described their inability to anticipate trouble. Once in trouble they do not have control. The way to have control is through gaining power. Those who possess power can cause others to comply regardless if it is fair or not. If those with less power don't comply, the answer is to exert your power by diminishing their existence. Although this appears harsh, it parallels our society in many ways. It appears that the adolescents are no better prepared when they get out of trouble than when they were in it. The result is a cycle of trouble.

Mahatma Gandhi said that we must be the change we wish to see. If we desire to see changes in the adolescents and future society, then the Other will need to change the experience of trouble that leaves the adolescent better than they were found if at all possible. By providing guidance and teaching, in a manner that makes connections, change may occur.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

In asking middle school students about a time they get in trouble requires a review of literature in two specific areas. To begin, middle school students are those that are asked to describe an experience of getting into trouble. It is appropriate to better understand how the literature describes those who answer the question and describe their experience.

After better understanding many of the unique aspects of adolescent development, the experience of trouble needs to be discussed. Literature does not speak of trouble per se, however deviance is within the scope of trouble. One must deviate from in some fashion to get in trouble, as we will learn from both the literature and the participants themselves.

The review of adolescent development and deviance theory, while distinctive topics, becomes related when examined in context of the research question. Understanding the experience of getting in trouble from a middle school student's perspective is the purpose of this investigation.

Adolescence

Life is often described as a journey. Adolescence is the transitional time between childhood and adulthood. Adolescence is a unique time in the life cycle because developmental and societal elements strongly affect children at this time. Ways of knowing that were just years, and at times months ago, unattainable are now awakened. Adolescents, who operate at a child's level at one moment, are able to challenge an adult

with insight and perspective the next. The term adolescence is derived from the Latin meaning, "to grow" (American Heritage Dictionary, 1985). The definitive nature of adolescence is change. Understanding these changes helps to explain the dynamics of the typical adolescent and how it may relate to getting in trouble.

Although adolescence is thought by some to be a modern phenomena (Tyack, 1976) both Plato and Aristotle referred to a time in a person's life that begins after childhood and prior to adulthood. Most notable is the emergence of a matured reasoning ability and self-determination. In the Middle Ages children were considered miniature adults, and children and adolescents were not given a status apart from being an adult (Muss, 1989). Through the work of people such as a John Jacques Rousseau, in the 18th century, a belief that children differ from adults was strengthened. Rousseau thought that development was subject to distinct phases. Other individuals helped to provide a bridge between these early theories and the empirical work of scientists.

G. Stanley Hall (1844-1924) wrote a two volume book called simply Adolescence (1904). Historians regard him as the father of the scientific study of adolescence. Hall, strongly influenced by Charles Darwin introduced the idea that genetic and biological factors are influential in the development of adolescents. Like Rousseau, Hall described a four stage approach to pre-adult development: infancy, childhood, youth, and adolescence (Santrock, 1981). Hall described the time between 12 and 23 years of age as filled with storm and stress - a turbulent time charged with conflicts and mood swings. This view of adolescence, valid or not, is how many describe adolescents today.

Twenty years later Margaret Mead (1928) studied adolescents on the island of Samoa. Her conclusion was different than Hall's. Instead of biology being the basic determiner of adolescence, she concluded it was sociocultural. In Samoa, she observed a gradual and smooth transition from childhood to adulthood, unlike the stressful time for adolescents in a Western culture.

Other historians have proposed a sociohistorical context for adolescence. Historians have called the period between 1890-1920 the "age of adolescence." They believe that during this time frame the actual concept of adolescence was invented (Tyack 1976). It was recognized during this time that there was something different about this stage of development. Others, not the adolescents themselves, defined adolescence.

The Industrial revolution set off the "age of adolescence." Legislation that excluded youth from most employment and required them to attend secondary school was passed. Two changes occurred from this legislation: decreased employment and increased school attendance by youth. Further evidence of historical changes in our understanding of the concept of adolescence is recorded in the *Journal of Genetic Psychology* -- earlier called *Pedagogical Seminary*, the oldest continuing journal in developmental psychology (Santrock, 1981). Four historical periods were studied, the depressions of the 1890's and 1930's and both world wars. Scholars wrote of the psychological immaturity of the youth during each depression, stressing the need for increased education. This recommendation would obviously keep youth in school decreasing competition for employment. In contrast during each world war, scholars did not describe youth as immature, but rather highlighted their importance as draftees and factory workers. Adolescence has been

defined (and redefined) on the basis of society's needs and desires rather than from the viewpoint of the adolescents.

During most of the 20th-century, adults have portrayed adolescents as abnormal and deviant, rather than normal and non-deviant. These "troubled" stereotypes about adolescence are widespread and consistent with Hall's description of the turmoil plagued young person. The media often portrays adolescents as rebellious, conflicted, faddish, delinquent, and self-centered. We can look back to examples such as *Rebel Without a Cause* in the late '50s, or *Easy Rider* in the '60s. Images that are more contemporary are *The Breakfast Club* in the '80s, and *Boys in the Hood* in the early '90s. In the last few years, *Basketball Diaries* and *American Pie* have reinforced violent and impetuous stereotypes about adolescents.

Reports of school shootings, rapes, and arrests reinforce the widespread generalization about the types of trouble adolescent's get into. It is true that reports of criminal, violent and deviant acts are less numerous and severe in children's early years. Police reports indicate a sharp increase in incidents beginning in the middle and high schools years. The generalizations, however, are based on information about a limited, often highly visible, group of adolescents. The media's propensity to focus on the most sensational material means we hear more about troubled adolescents than "normal" adolescents.

Adolescence can be described according to different domains - - the biological, the cognitive, and the social. These domains are interdependent, that is, they work in concert with each other. At the same time, these domains can develop at different rates and in

different directions. Awareness of these domains allows a glimpse, or reminder, into issues and factors related to the “normal” adolescent. “Normalcy” is a complex construct especially for this stage of development.

Biological domain

For most children adolescence starts with a burst of physical changes that signal the end of childhood. From the beginning of childhood, until the beginning of adolescence, physical development is slow and steady for most youngsters. The changes experienced in childhood come in manageable increments, but adolescence begins with a surge of hormones (Papalia & Olds, 1995). Some cultures mark this physical transition with rites of passage, rituals, or ceremonies. These celebrations express tangibly as much as symbolically to the adolescent and the community the end of one stage of life and the start of another. Some Christian communities have communion classes and ceremonies. Jewish adolescents celebrate a bar mitzvah to mark the end of childhood. However, in United States it is far more common to have an absence of a clear or distinct rite of passage that indicates the beginning of adulthood (Santrock, 1981).

Often people incorrectly refer to this time of physical change as puberty. Technically, puberty is when the adolescent becomes able to sexually reproduce. Much change occurs before, beginning with pubescence and ending with maturation or adulthood. Pubescence is often marked by a rapid increase in height and weight referred to as a "growth spurt." This rapid growth spurt often leaves youngsters feeling awkward because they may have increased their height but not their weight (Kaplan, 1991). The trigger for this growth spurt is a flood of hormones. A complex interplay of hormones controls the growth

process and maturation. These hormones act on glands in the brain and gonads, as well as other endocrine glands. These hormones in turn trigger primary and secondary sex characteristics as well as bone, tissue, and organ growth (Kaplan, 1991). Unfortunately, not all parts of the body grow at the same rate. This unevenness is sometimes called asynchronous growth. At the onset of pubescence, the growth spurt, children are likely to be tall and thin. Hands may grow first thus appearing to dangle at the ends of their arms. Feet may grow so fast that the adolescent becomes uncoordinated and appears to trip over his own feet. Elongation of the face may make features appear exaggerated. Gradually muscle, bones, and fat cells come into balance and even out the appearance of proportion again (Schickedanz, Schickedanz, Forsyth, & Forsyth, 1998). Thus, "normal" in terms of biological development at this stage varies widely.

Adding to the difficulty in defining normalcy is the fact that the rate of the onset of puberty varies widely although the sequence remains the same. Today the onset is earlier than in the past (Cobb, 1995; Tanner, 1990). Environmental factors such as increased nutrition and health, as well as a sedentary lifestyle are likely causes of this change. Although all industrialized nations have recorded similar changes, such changes are expected to stop at some point due to genetic and biological limits.

Many biological changes are occurring within the adolescent, some of which are observable. These changes have different cognitive effects and consequences for the adolescent and how they understand their experiences and world.

Cognitive domain

Thinking helps us to understand our world. The way in which an adolescent perceives the world and trouble is tied in part to his ability to compare and contrast ideas and concepts that may be either concrete or abstract in nature. The manner in which they organize their world is changing and becoming more complex and sophisticated. How this process occurs is controversial. There are competing theories regarding not only thinking but also learning.

Piaget's theory is the most well known and most widely discussed view of adolescent cognitive development (Santrock , 1981). Piaget stressed that adolescents are motivated to understand their world. This motivation is a biologically adaptive process of organization and adaptation. Piaget believed that individuals develop through four cognitive stages: sensory motor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational. Although not every child will reach formal operational thought at this age, beginning around age 11 adolescents enter Piaget's fourth stage. The major distinction of this stage is that logical principles are no longer limited to concrete examples. The ability to see the interrelatedness in abstract concepts begins to emerge. The transition to formal operational thought makes it possible for adolescents to master higher order reasoning. Formal operational thinking is abstract, and governed by propositions and formal logic. It involves both inductive and deductive reasoning (Atwater 1996).

Research has shown, however, that formal operational thinking is absent in a large proportion of the adolescent population. Even many adults cannot solve tasks at the formal operational level of thought (Stanovich, 1993). Those who do not function at the

formal operational thinking level tend to memorize isolated pieces of information without the ability to organize and integrate the information (Atwater, 1996). Thus, an adolescent can know facts and concepts without the ability to utilize them in solving a problem such as keeping out of trouble or transferring and applying them to a new situation.

Information processing is another prominent theoretical perspective. Its development came in part due to limitations perceived in Piagetian theory. The information-processing model uses the computer as a model for human thinking. Cognitive advances are therefore conceptualized to be continuous developments due to improvements in memory, attention, knowledge, and strategies for solving problems. Information-processing proponents suggest that if formal operational thinking was a general way of thinking virtually everyone would achieve it and individuals would apply it across situations (Siegher, 1983).

Vygotsky viewed human cognition as inherently social and language based. He rejected the individualistic view of the developing child in favor of a socially formed mind (Wertsch & Tulviste, 1992). In his theory, the child and the social environment collaborate to mold cognition in culturally adaptive ways, that also includes how they understand trouble. According to Vygotsky (1978) children are endowed with basic perceptual, attentional, and memory capacities they share with other animals. These undergo a natural course of development through simple and direct contact with the environment during the first few years. Once children become capable of mental representation, especially through language, their ability to participate in social dialogue

is enhanced. This results in basic mental capacities we transformed into uniquely human, higher cognitive processes.

Social Domain

Social development is a dynamic domain not wholly confined to the individual. It is a complex interplay of an individual's internal world with the external world consisting of others. Some norms and expectations are explicit whereas others are implicit, which the adolescent's expanding mind is attempting to understand. How an individual should live with others is the basis for morals, rules, and laws. Without interaction with the "other", a discussion of trouble could not take place.

Unfortunately for some, and fortunate for others, normalcy is also socially determined. American culture is bombarded with an image of the ideal body that influences adolescents' images of their bodies. What is portrayed in the media as standard is achievable only by a few. Some teens are prone to develop eating disorders in early adolescence to achieve a model-like body (Harris, 1994; Rucker & Cash, 1992; Scott-Johnson, Lee, & Thomas, 1996).

Varying rates of maturation have different social effects on boys and girls. Some studies indicate early maturing girls have higher social self-esteem (Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1991), whereas other studies indicate a sense of feeling out of place from being taller than peers and getting unwanted advances from boys (Simmons & Blyth, 1994). Compared to early maturing girls late maturing ones finish more years of school, and are less often engaged in troublesome behaviors such as smoking and drinking (Magnusson, Stattin, & Allen, 1985). Early maturing boys may have an advantage over

later maturing. Studies indicate they are more popular, stronger, and more likely to be leaders in school activities (Gross & Duke, 1980; Simmons & Blyth, 1987). A downside of early maturation, however, is less self-control, and higher inclinations to smoke, drink, and get into trouble with the law (Duncun, Ritter, Dornbusch, Gross, & Carlsmith, 1985; Sussman, et. al, 1985).

Risk-taking is common in adolescence and is thought to be related to feelings of invincibility or invulnerability. This feeling is often called an invincibility fable because of the belief that bad things, such as getting in trouble, only happen to others but not to "me" (Elkind, 1984). Teens may underestimate the risks associated with activities such as drinking alcohol, smoking, taking steroids, or drugs, or unprotected sex. Ironically, the media may be reinforcing the adolescent's desire to experiment and take risks through advertisements such as Nike's "life is short - just do it."

Homicides are second only to accidents as the cause of death among 15-24 year olds. Black males are at the highest risk for death by homicides. Spivak, Prothrow-Stith, & Hausman (1988) found they are six times more likely to be victims of homicide than non-blacks at the same age. Seventy percent of teen homicides and almost as many suicides are associated with the use of firearms. More than 3,000 American adolescents are killed in gun related homicides and suicides each year (Canaan 1993). Garbrarino (1996) found that exposure to violence decreases children's future orientation, decreases children's confidence that adults can be counted on to protect them, and develops a sense that the probability of violence is very high. The number of high school juniors who believe

adults can be trusted is half of what it was in 1975. There is a similar reduction in the percentage of adolescents who expect they will find meaning in life (Garbrarino 1996).

Sociomoral Reasoning

One dimension of social development is sociomoral reasoning. The term sociomoral is used because the development of morals necessarily entails social interaction. To act in a moral way a person must first understand how her actions affect the welfare of others, judge whether such actions are right or wrong, intend to act in accord with this judgment, and follow-through with this intention (Rest 1983). To act in a morally mature manner one is also required to be self-governing.

Adolescence is a time when sociomoral reasoning is developing in part in response to expanding cognitive abilities, such as being able to consider various perspectives at the same time and to reason on an abstract level. In an expansion of Piaget's work, Kolberg (1981, 1984), that demonstrated children and adolescents develop concepts of morality in unison with cognitive development and their ability of social perspective taking. By gathering responses from males, in response to various hypothetical moral dilemmas, Kolberg found the responses falling into different stages. Kolberg (1981, 1984) grouped his stages into three levels (pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional). Each level contains two stages comprising Kolberg's six-stage model of sociomoral reasoning. Although it is considered "normal" to exhibit stages two and three during the upper elementary and intermediate grades, and stage three and four during high school, there is much variation among individuals. These differences are due in part to cognitive ability and cumulative social experiences.

Although Kolberg (1981,1984) described six stages only the first four are relevant to adolescents. Most adults do not achieve the fifth or sixth stage of Kolberg's theory. According to the descriptive labels of Gibbs, Potter, and Goldstein (1995) most adolescents are out of stage one ("might makes right"), some are in stage two ("you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours"), many will be in stage three ("treat others as you would like to be treated"), with a few at stage four ("are you conforming to society").

A criticism of Kolberg's model came from Carol Gilligan, who questioned why girls as a group typically fell at the lower ends on his model than the boys. After conducting interviews with women facing a decision about abortion, Gilligan hypothesized that Kolberg's model did not represent a feminine perspective on sociomoral issues. According to Gilligan (1993) women make decisions based on relational aspects of nurturing and caring whereas men focus on individual fairness and justice. Gilligan suggested that the model, having been developed with male responses, had a bias that favored them. Later studies have shown little empirical evidence of a structural bias in favor of males (Gorman, Basinger, & Gregg 1996; Walker 1991). Nevertheless, males and females still may understand or approach a sociomoral issue differently due to social influences.

Achieving sociomoral maturity is not a simple matter. Acting in a morally responsible manner is influenced by multiple factors, both internal and external to the individual. James Rest (1983) concluded that the moral domain is comprised of four interacting components. The first component is an awareness of the possibility that a moral response is needed. The second component requires the determination of an

optimal moral course of action. Component three requires a choice, valued outcomes and a decision of the intended course of action. In the fourth component, an individual must act on what was intended. In order to function as a morally mature individual, all four components must be actively engaged (Rest 1983).

Researchers have developed three interrelated factors as to why a person may fail to act in accordance with his or her own convictions. First, Hoffman (1991) suggested that sometimes the person might not care enough to take appropriate action. Secondly, self-serving considerations may overpower the deliberate reasoning that preceded it. Good intentions may be undermined if a level of self-efficacy is not present. Finally, Bandura (1991) identified cognitive factors that may actually disengage moral control in specific contexts; diverting blame to the victim is one way to do this. Through diversion the individual can exonerate herself and excuse her actions feeling self-righteous in the process.

Identity

Eric Erickson (1968) a psychoanalytic stage theorist, believed that one of the most important tasks of adolescence was the developments of identity. Erickson proposed eight crises a person encounters during his life. In adolescence role identity vs. role confusion is the crisis to be confronted before the transition to adulthood is complete. Adolescents are looking for their place among peers and society at large, and are developing a sense of who they are, called ego identity. The development of an identity requires that a person combine various elements from the past with expectations for his future. It also requires the individual to consider and question the expectations of society,

his own values, and his abilities. In addition, the individual is required to make a flexible commitment to the societal dimensions of deviance, occupation, sexuality, religion, and politics. The adolescent who is confused about her identity is likely to lack a focus about who she is and where her place might be in society and among her peers. Achieving psychosocial identity in each of the societal domains is considered a major issue for adolescents.

Hauser and Bowlds (1990) outlined four profiles of adolescent ego development. These profiles begin in early adolescence and progress over many years. Adolescents who are dependent on their parents and lack an awareness of themselves and others characterize the pre-conformist profile. Their thinking consists mainly of dichotomies and they maintain relationships with others through manipulation and exploitation. This profile becomes problematic only when development is severely arrested, that is, when the stage lasts more than two years. The second conformist profile is identified by an intense concern with peer acceptance and conformity. This concern may lead the adolescent into stressful situations due to pressure to experiment with risky behaviors. The highest level profile is referred to as the post conformist and is identified by increasing autonomy. There is interest in building mutual relationship with others. Adolescents are able to progress through these profiles due to increasing cognitive abilities, which allows them to understand and tolerate diversity, complexity, and the incongruities they experience.

Adolescents are moving from being dependent upon parents and family to a sense of independence. This transition is marked by an effort to maintain ties with family

members while searching for appropriate levels of individualism and autonomy (Laursen & Collins 1994). During this time, especially in early adolescence, conflicts with parents escalate as the adolescent strives to achieve his own identity (Sternberg, 1993).

Deviance

Adolescents seek to achieve their own identity while negotiating social norms and rules. When an adolescent violates the societal constructs, this deviant act may lead to trouble. Trouble exists after one member deviates from the norm and another member attempts to enforce the norm or rule that is considered violated. Therefore, deviance can be considered a precursor to trouble, and quite closely related.

Deviance includes an incredibly wide range of behaviors. Researchers of deviance have attempted to formally capture a common meaning for the term. Although definitions differ in some respects, a common underlying theme is the notion that deviance involves norm or rule violations (Liska & Messner 1999). A slightly different approach suggests that deviance is best understood as a social construct; that is, it does not depend on the inner intrinsic or inherent properties of an act, but on what a certain social group makes of that act. This approach shifts attention from deviance as a pattern of behavior to deviance as a social construct or label that some people use to describe the behaviors of others. The study of deviance as a norm violation and as a social definition constitutes the social science of deviance (Liska & Messner, 1999).

When deviance is studied as a norm violation, both the social rules violated and the individual who violates them are studied. There are no specific rules of social behaviors that are subject to study, harmful behavior against rules of society as well as

innocuous behavior are legitimate areas of study. Norm violation studies can be divided into rate studies and individual norm violation studies. A norm violation is not necessarily a violation of law or a socially meaningful act (Liska & Messner 1999).

Deviance as a social definition centers on two questions: what is deviant and who is deviant? The former question refers to the emergence and development of social norms and social labels for describing norm violations and violators; the latter refers to the study of how such labels are used in specific cases and situations. The assumption is that norms change, and are simply a reference by which behavior can be judged as deviant or non-deviant. When the norms of the different segments of society conflict, the norms of the more powerful segment tend to be used as a reference point. In terms of adolescents, adult norms are more powerful and are used as the referent.

The study of deviance can also be viewed through biological, psychological, and social perspectives. As a biological imperative it is assumed that deviant behaviors are programmed into the basic structure at birth. Psychological perspectives of deviance focus on norm violations. Deviance is specific to the cognitive processes and the structures of an individual's psyche. Past social experiences effect current psychological characteristics that result in deviant behaviors. From a social perspective attention is given to social processes and structures to explain deviance. Norm violations therefore include the social structure, as well as, the social process (Liska & Messner 1999).

In summary, the main difference between the theories of deviance is in respect to the basic structures and processes that are given primacy. Many theories are actually hybrids such as the bio-psychological or social-psychological approach. The bio-

psychological focuses on norm violations and questions of social definition are typically ignored. The social approach addresses both norm violation and social definitions while emphasizing social structures and processes. However, they both may ignore individual variation in constitutional factors (Liska & Messner 1999).

All theories of deviance are based on certain assumptions. To the extent society is orderly, norms of behavior can be seen as clear, consistent, and stable or as unclear, inconsistent, and unstable. Second, there are assumptions regarding the link between the individual and society. Individuals may be viewed as passive thereby being acted upon by the social environment. Individuals may also be viewed as acting upon their social environments. Finally, the individual may select the environment in which to behave or misbehave. The experience of trouble for the adolescent may be represented best by one of the deviance theories within the current and past literature.

The structural/functional perspective

Structural/functional perspective means society is viewed as a system of interrelated parts. The assumption is that there is widespread consensus about core values and appropriate forms of behavior (Liska & Messner 1999). The historical foundation for the structural/functional theories of deviance begins with the French sociologist Emile Durkheim during the late 19th century. Durkheim proposed that the more people that are involved in similar activities the more they develop similar ideas, goals, and values. Consequently, the occupying of different social positions and status leads to different thoughts, ideas, interests, and values. He talked about a collective conscience that places limits on people's instinctual desires.

Merton's theory of "social structure and anomie" (1938, 1968) is one of the most influential efforts to formulate a general explanation of deviance based on Durkheim's insights. Merton believed that when societies' members were able to realize cultural goals using the culturally prescribed means the society was well organized. His position was that people receive satisfaction by conforming to the mandates of culture. Societies, however, are not always well organized; in fact, often the social structure as well as elements of culture may be inconsistent or incompatible with one another creating structural pressures for deviant behavior.

Within the United States, there are many fundamental inconsistencies in both culture and social structure. At the cultural level, support for goals such as, monetary successes is strongly encouraged. The culture also provides rules with guidelines about how this goal of success may be best pursued. That is, through education followed by securing a well-paid job and investing one's savings, monetary goals may be achieved. Much less importance is placed on using the proper means than on realizing the goal. Therefore, this aspect of American culture would be considered "anomic" since there is a disproportionate emphasis on goals in comparison to the means.

Imbalances at the structural level are also apparent between the cultural goals and the structured opportunities to achieve those goals. In the United States the cultural goal of monetary success is pervasive and may even be considered universal. Because the economic opportunities are limited, especially for minimum wage earning adolescents, only a few are able to achieve and satisfy these culturally induced aspirations. Most settle for being less than economically successful thereby creating a type of dysfunctional

social organization or “anomie”. According to Dirckheim and Merton, this “anomie” is conducive to high levels of deviance and trouble.

Merton (1938, 1968) introduced classifications describing how individuals adapt to social organizational conditions. The most common adaptation is conformity. The major characteristics of a conformist are that they continue to accept cultural goals and are steadfast in the “proper” means despite the organizational pressures for deviance. According to Merton, if conformity were not the most prevalent adaptation, society would not exist because there would be no social order (Merton 1968).

Although Merton (1968) developed five classifications of adaptation, he devoted primary attention to the four deviant adaptations of innovation, ritualism, retreatism, and rebellion. Whereas conformists accept both the goals and means, the other four categories differ in the acceptance of the ends, means, or both. The individual whose adaptation is innovative accepts the normative goals while rejecting the normative means and is likely to use the most expedient means to success, which may be illegal. The ritualist will not violate any behavioral rules, but may become a deviant when he can’t achieve the goals. An example is the nine to five white-collar worker who follows the rule, yet deviates in that he will never achieve the goals of his American Dream. The adaptation of retreatism refers to the individual who rejects both the culturally approved goals as well as the socially acceptable means. The philosophy of this individual is to retreat or drop out into a world of mental illness, drug addiction, or alcoholism. Lastly, in the adaptation referred to as rebellion both the adherence and rejection of goals and means occurs. Rebellion is

similar to retreatism, although it differs because new goals and means are advocated; rebels do not drop out of society - they attempt to change it.

Cloward and Ohlin (1964) focused on Merton's work in their study of juvenile delinquency. Merton assumed that those who lacked legitimate means would automatically use illegitimate ones. Cloward and Ohlin suggested deviance requires more than motivation - it also requires the opportunities to learn and use the illegitimate means. They specifically focused on the category of innovation explaining that a juvenile who is to be successful by illegal means must have the opportunity to learn how to perform such behaviors without getting caught in order to be considered successful.

Since Cloward and Ohlin (1964) were primarily concerned with the adaptation of neighborhoods, they suggested that innovation might become a subcultural adaptation in neighborhoods that lack legitimate opportunities. The same neighborhoods may have a well-developed illegitimate opportunity structure where juveniles can interact with successful adult criminals or role models. These neighborhoods are considered conflict subcultures because they encourage violence, vandalism, as well as other forms of unrestrained behavior.

Agnew's (1992) general theory of strain calls attention to the importance of negative social relationships. Agnew suggested such negative relationships produced negative emotions especially anger and that crime and delinquency are common ways of expressing these emotions. He proposed three general sources of strain: failure to achieve positively valued goals; removal of positively valued life events; experience of negative or adverse events. These factors create a psychological predisposition for both

crime and delinquency. It is the nature of the coping strategies adopted by the individual that dictates whether or not crime and delinquency will actually occur.

The structural/functional perspective also proposes that norm violators may be viewed as any other persistent pattern of behavior in relation to how these individuals continue to assist in maintaining existing social order. The assumption here is that that a behavior is stable and persistent because it serves a specific function for the larger society. Durkheim argued that the only reason patterns of norm violations persist is because they must perform certain functions for the society.

Durkheim and Erickson (1966) highlighted three functions of deviance: (1) the identification of deviance serves an important purpose by affirming and reinforcing the cultural identity of social groups thereby increasing group cohesion; (2) the provision for opportunity for other members of the group to come together in order to clarify the situational aspects of general norms in the pursuit of a common goal, that is, bringing the deviant back into the fold; (3) showing group members what they share a common in strengthens social cohesion by highlighting the rewards of conformity.

The Ecological perspectives: social disorganization, control, and learning processes

Adolescents can get in trouble while attempting to achieve particular goals in some measure due to deviant socializations. Social activities with peers are inviting to adolescents in a developmental sense. Social ecology deals with the distribution of social activities across space and time. The two most basic issues are how this spatial-temporal distribution of activities facilitates or impedes the realization of collective goals, and how the distribution influences the social experiences to which people are exposed (Liska &

Messner 1999). The ecological theorists' primary focus is on the breakdown of social order when theorizing about deviants. They began to conceptualize deviant areas as differentially organized rather than socially disorganized. Sellin (1938) examined both the causes and types of cultural conflict as well as their specific relationship to crime and deviance. He suggested different groups in a pluralistic society have different incompatible cultural values and conduct norms. The pluralistic society accepts and integrates only one set of values that are called laws.

Shaw and McKay (1931) were two of the first theorists to argue that when social disorganization disrupts the conventional forces of social control, deviance can become a patterned, organized way of life. Once these patterns are established, the traditions are passed on from one generation to the next through both personal and group contact. Sutherland (1939) attempted to describe more fully the socialization process of deviant behavior and his theory of differential association incorporated the process of cultural transmission. Differential association theory articulated nine propositions of the social psychological process involved in deviant socialization. These propositions state that deviant behavior is an expression of definitions favorable to deviant behavior learned in association with others in intimate social relationships. It is not that deviance is the result of simple exposure, the critical factor is the ratio of deviant to non-deviant definitions.

Social control theories are the microlevel complement to differential organization theories. Social control theories specify the microprocesses in which conventional bonds lead to deviance. Theorists are specifically interested in how the weakening conventional social ties leads to the weakening of conventional controls that then lead to deviance.

Social control theories also focus on the role of motivation. An assumption of social control theory is that norm violations are in general attractive and exciting, not to mention profitable, such that nearly all people are motivated to violate the norms. From this perspective it is not necessary to explain the motivation of deviants so much as it is necessary to explain why everyone does *not* act on the motivation to be deviant or to violate norms. Social control theory tends to examine social forces, which control or inhibit individuals from acting on widely shared deviant motives.

Social control theorists highlight two important types of social control, internal and external. Internal controls distinguish those societal rules and norms that people internalize and believe to be their own. It is the self-righteousness and satisfaction people experience when they conform to rules that maintains their behavior; otherwise they experience guilt, self-reproach, and the self-condemnation for violating internalized norms. External controls are defined by punitive experiences and lost rewards for being identified as a norm violator, and those identified as deviants are unable to maintain an acceptable public identity. Deviants may lose employment, the respect of family members, and may even be punished through imprisonment or fines. The possibility of losing rewards or incurring punishments inhibits individual motivation to act in a deviant manner.

Hirschi (1969) incorporated many earlier aspects of control theory and formulation. He suggested that social control operates through a bond that develops between the individual and larger society. The bond comprises four elements: (1) belief- the extent conventional norms are internalized; (2) attachment- the sensitivity to the

opinions of others; (3) commitment – the extent that social rewards are tied to conformity; and (4) involvement - the time devoted to conventional activities.

In collaboration with Gottfredson, a re-formulation of Hirschi's earlier work on social control was proposed (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990). They presented a general theory of crime emphasizing the concept of self-control. The idea of self-control focused upon an individual's propensities to engage in deviance or criminal acts regardless of the circumstance. It was suggested that crimes are committed by those with low self-control, that is, those unable to delay gratification, lacking tenacity, adventuresome, impulsive, and self-centered. Deviance is attractive to those with low self-control because it provides what they want, when they want it. Ineffective parenting skills are considered the primary reason an individual manifests low self-control.

The rational choice/deterrence perspective

Adolescents may act on impulse without consideration of the consequence, but at other times they recognize their violation of a norm and are willing to accept the consequences. Rational choice/deterrence perspectives have their roots in a utilitarian social philosophy often referred to as the "classical" school. Proponents of this view adopt a view of human nature that emphasizes hedonism, rationalism, and free will. Human beings choose to behave in certain ways after rationally calculating the potential pleasures of behavior, as well as, the potential pain that might result from being punished for that behavior, essentially weighing the benefits and the predicted cost for their actions (Liska & Messner 1999). This model assumes behavior is the product of a rational assessment. It is through cognitive weighing of costs in relation to benefits, of both law-

abiding and law-violating alternatives, that deviance is chosen. Choice theorists consider many types of cost such as, legal, formal sanctions and painful emotions, as well as benefits that may be gained. The propensity of deviance is dependent upon the potential hedonistic principles relative to the law-abiding alternatives (Liska & Messner 1999).

Deterrence may be considered a special aspect of rational choice theory in that it focuses on the role of costs in the explanation of deviance. For this theory, the type of punishment is highlighted. The assumption is that punishment is a significant cost of crime; the administration of a higher level of punishment is associated with a lower level of crime (Liska & Messner 1999).

The labeling perspective

Adolescents are transitioning between childhood and adulthood. As children, they are not considered a powerful segment of the society. They are referred to as minors, as well as being an actual minority. The traditional norm-violation approach assumes normative stability and consensus, as this framework constitutes a reference point from which behavior is judged as deviant or non-deviant. When the norms of different segments of society are in conflict, the more powerful segments tend to be accepted as the reference point. The labeling perspective chooses to focus on the processes in which people are socialized into subcultures that are deviant when judged by the dominant culture (Liska & Messner 1999).

Lemert (1967) defined modern society as pluralistic. This means that different interest groups continue to compete and struggle for social power and dominance because norms and laws are temporary. Through this social process some group's norms become defined

and accepted as societies' norms and others are accepted as societies' laws. The consequence is that the other group's normative behaviors may become defined as deviant and the others then become law violators. Lemert suggested that the nature of society is fluid; at any time some standards prevail over others that can be judged only by the behavior of the group.

Central to Lemert's theory (1967) are concepts of primary and secondary deviance. Behavior that characterizes primary deviance violates a social norm while not affecting the individual's psychological structure or performance of social rules. Such as primary deviance is transitory and is caused by differing conditions such a social, cultural, psychological, and physiological. Secondary deviance is defined as a response to problems or conditions caused by the social reaction to primary deviance. It has prolonged effects on both psychological structures and the performance of social rules. By altering social relationships, the more conventional individual is reluctant to associate with an identified deviant. Therefore, with a reduction in opportunities for involvement in conventional social relationships, the chances are increased that publicly labeled deviance increases the probability of future deviance. In concert with symbolic interaction as those labeled deviance may come to see themselves as deviant and behave accordingly. Becker (1963) furthered stated that it is not the quality of the behavior by a person, rather the consequence of the successful application of labels. The definition of the deviance is similar to a social status and that the process that creates systematic deviance is comparable to a conventional career.

The constructionist perspective

The constructionist perspective has philosophical ties to phenomenology, and assumes that reality can only be experienced through a process of social interpretation. The focus is not on the object of world; instead it is on describing people's perceptions and interpretations of the world and the processes by which people "buildup," or construct, their worlds. The phenomenological perspective argues that we must come to know people's constructions in order to understand their behavior. It is only by capturing these constructions or at least remaining consistent with them can theories of action be explained (Liska & Messner 1999).

The conflict perspective

Contemporary conflict approaches are based on studies of deviance and crime originated in the work of two general theorists Karl Marx and Ralph Dahrendorf. Through his observations of 19th-century Europe, Marx argued that conflict between social classes was a basic social process. Marx argued that there were two major economic classes in capitalist societies and that their interests were diametrically opposed. In addition, Marx argued that the capitalistic system and economic relationships affected the political and religious institutions of the society. Capitalistic societies develop laws, religions, and sciences that protect interest of capitalists (Liska & Messner 1999). That is why Marx referred to Western religion as the "opiate" of the people.

Ralph Dahrendorf's work has been described as an adaptation of Marx to a modern-day industrial society. Marx emphasized ownership as the means of production;

Dahrendorf made the point that contemporary industrial society power is frequently divorced from ownership of the means of production but is based on institutional authority. In addition, he focused on the division between those who have and those who do not have authority and institutional structures. Economic structures are important but not pre-eminent. Lastly, he argued that authority relationships and one institution do not necessarily overlap with authority relations in another institution (Liska & Messner, 1999).

In Conclusion

Often described as a journey, adolescence is the transitional time between childhood and adulthood. It is a unique time of life because of the many developmental and societal elements are occurring at this time. Many biological changes are readily seen occurring at almost a daily basis. A typical adolescent is difficult to define because maturation occurs at differing rates. Complicating matters more; normalcy is also socially determined.

Cognitive changes are occurring which assist the adolescent in understanding the world. Their ability to compare and contrast both concrete and abstract thoughts and ideas are involved in thinking and learning. In addition is their attempt to understand the social and moral factors at play. As the adolescent is attempting to make sense of these competing and at times nebulous factors they are searching for a sense of identity for herself. They search for who they are in relation to the others in the world in which they are interacting in various ways.

While deviance contains a variety of behaviors, the research converges upon common underlying themes. That is, the violation of either norms or rules as determined by the society, or the reference group. The study of deviance is studied through biological, psychological, and social perspectives. One difference between the competing theories is with the basic structures and process perceived as dominant. Another basic difference is how the theories were developed. Some allowed "deviant" persons to explain the experience and circumstance, as they understood it. While for most, the investigator attempted to describe the experience and process from an outside perspective.

A central idea among the theories is that deviance is determined and maintained by the majority group other than the deviant. Without a norm to be compared to deviance could not exist. There is considerable power within the other which maintains the definition of normalcy. It is even plausible that without the deviant the norm would not exist. The deviant is necessary for the maintenance of normalcy.

The differing theories of deviance, which have been discussed, contain a shared primary feature. That is, when the norms of different segments of society conflict, the norms of the more powerful segment tend to be used as a reference point. The more powerful majority is able to define and maintain the definition of deviance for the society. In terms of adolescents, adult norms are more powerful and are used as the referent in determining deviance otherwise discussed as trouble.

The review of adolescent development and deviance theory, while distinctive topics are traditionally explored from biological, cognitive, and social perspectives. Although these

are different perspectives, they are investigated under a shared assumption. Typically each studies the topics from a peripheral perspective, meaning the adolescent and deviants are treated as objects under study. These perspectives of research are commonly reported through observations or questionnaires.

While much knowledge has been obtained through these traditional methods, they do not explain adolescence or deviance from the subject's perspective. In essence, what is the subject's perception of itself? The phenomenological perspective does not view the adolescent or a norm/rule violator as a subject, but as a participant experiencing a phenomena. The participant is considered an "informer" who furnishes an investigator with in-depth descriptions of the phenomena (experience) being examined (Polkinghorne, 1989).

The perspective of the participant is relatively rare when compared with the voluminous literature from the stage theory perspectives. For instance, the developmental stage theories look at adolescents from afar. These theorists can be likened to three researchers (biological, cognitive, social) watching the journey of adolescents from a hot air balloon. In this balloon, they study varied aspects of the adolescent's journey: the terrain, their speed, elements that have impact, and how close the adolescent is to the next stage. The adolescent does not perceive the experience in the same manner as those in the balloon. The adolescent is at ground level. For the adolescent the experience of the journey may be turbulent, or pleasant. The adolescent experiences the changing terrain, only as each hill or valley approaches. They are primarily aware of the interaction between the terrain and their perception, which is referred to as their experience.

Some adolescents have maps of the terrain. Maps, however, are only representations of the terrain and inaccurate at times. Each adolescent has a different map to assist them, but still does not have the perspective of those in the balloon. However, there are few systematic investigations of the experience known as adolescence. Unfortunately, there is little research regarding the normal adolescent who gets into trouble. Usually these studies are focused on extremely deviant groups who do not represent the more typical trouble.

Kennedy (1993) studied students who had been expelled, or received long term suspension from school. They were considered “pushed out” of their school. Prior to the event of being “pushed out” each adolescent felt school hatred and alienation with the school officials. Transcripts revealed themes that were considered major issues from the standpoint of the adolescent. These were (1) drug prevalence among students; (2) perceived teacher favoritism, and (3) gangs and peer group influence.

Marsh (1996) interviewed adolescents who were apprehended while carrying a gun to school. This investigation elicited aspects of the experience other methods are unlikely to achieve. The participants described fear as a strong emotion of the experience. They experienced fear in apprehension of actually bringing the gun to school, as well as feeling persecuted and being afraid of their persecutor(s). Anger emerged at various times while being apprehended and investigated. Other themes were the availability of guns and the accidental nature of bringing the gun to school.

Adolescence perceived by the adolescent is not understood in terms of stages, as it is for theorists. For the adolescent it is a current experience. The future may or may not

be clear, what is clear is the now of what is perceived, and the past. It is only with a sense of perspective could any semblance of stages be understood. The perspective typically occurs with some distance from the experience. For the adolescent distance may occur with the passage of time. The passage of time provides a perspective that allows adolescents to more readily see the experiences as a process, or stage of development.

Distancing from the current experience may occur in similar yet different ways. First, the adolescent is able to take the perspective from an imagined other. By taking on the perspective of an imagined other, distance from the experience can occur. Secondly, during the experience a real other, not imagined, is able to in essence scaffold the adolescents to the new perspective they could not reach on their own. When the other maintains an understanding of the adolescent, a perception of distance from the current experience may be obtained. Although this distanced perspective may be in the adolescents' zone of proximal development, to comprehend the perspective of this stage, they still must experience the process until that projected stage is reached.

Chapter III

Method

Introduction

During my junior year at Chico State University, I took a course called behavioral statistics and design. In this class, Dr. Herringer explained theories of statistical design. We were also required to take part in a lab, using data derived from our class as the basis of a research paper. We all filled out an adjective checklist and descriptive information about ourselves (current GPA, last semester's grade point average, age, etc). Armed with this information I found an article on attribution research. With the help of Dr. Herringer, we constructed an adjective "equation" that would produce the same types of variables the article used. As predicted in my hypothesis, students who gave the hypothesized attributions for success and failure performed better than those who did not. I found this process satisfying. Later I realized that this equation of success could also lead to failure.

As I watched others I knew well, I tried to see how this theory worked in action. I could see how those that achieved in academics and exhibited socially accepted behaviors used "success" attributions, but I also began to realize how others used these same attributions to their detriment. People who fail and attribute that failure to lack of effort or ability often attempt to change their behavior. This process works well when the failure is in the area of academic success or socially accepted behavior. However, what if "failure" is in getting caught or getting in trouble and this failure is attributed to lack of effort or ability? Are people more likely to attempt this behavior again? If people can become successful by emulating the attributes of successful people, it is logical that a "deviant"

view of success (as held by our society), or apparent “failures”, can have the same impact. That is, the same attributions can explain the persistent deviance of the criminals and the delinquents. However, the article I read did not address this aspect of attribution research so I continued to ponder this issue.

During graduate school, I joined a research group that focused on attributions. The supervisor of our group was in the midst of developing an attribution scale for social and academic domains. This is where I thought I might find an answer to my question. Instead, I found that our objective was to develop a scale that could quantify and possibly categorize a student based on their response to Likert-like scaled items. I found the experience enlightening, but not necessarily helpful for answering my question.

One day we were debating whether a fourth grade child could understand a word in one of the items. After the group debated this for several minutes I interjected, “let’s find a fourth grade child and ask him.” Respectfully a few of the participants said they would then ask a child. However, I felt isolated and at that moment, I understood the concept that an “expert” is expected to know this information. Furthermore, the items we used to measure success reflected socially accepted responses. Nothing in our instrument could uncover the term “success” being used in deviate ways. I realized that both the terms and expectations we were infusing into our scales were socially and culturally biased.

I was troubled because including the “researched” as part of the process was viewed as out of place. The children we were studying were not part of the process. They were subjects – not participants. In experimental designs the assumption is that we can

objectively study the organism. We believed that if the design has internal validity, it is sound and we will discover a link to or better yet, a causal explanation of the variables in question. Although my research group was not involved in experimental research but correlational designs, they shared the same experimental hypotheses. By not allowing the kids, or should I say subjects, to help us we made the assumption that their input would be little use. Of course, they didn't have all of the information, but neither did we.

Primarily because of the participant issue, I began questioning the validity of this instrument, as well as others. What were we really measuring? What type of picture were they providing regarding the phenomena we were studying? Did they give a broad view or a narrow one? Was it a three-dimensional or a two-dimensional one? Was it a motion picture or just a snap shot? My answers to these questions made me uncomfortable with the type of research I had been doing.

Bias statements

Schools response to trouble

During the first three years of graduate school, school psychology students are given the opportunity to practice the techniques and principles they are learning in a real world setting. This course is called professional practice. I had not been in a middle school for a long time and I was surprised by how "bossy" the teachers seemed to be. They were almost uniformly authoritarian, and lacking in bilateral communication. I felt uncomfortable at first, but soon realized that many children seemed to need this direction. I also quickly found out that those who did not follow the rules were given a lot of direction – usually straight to the principal's office.

I also began to realize how reactive rather than proactive schools were. The response to most children's indiscretions was punishment. If the behavior was bad enough, the child might be suspended or even expelled. If the purpose of punishment is to teach a lesson, I could not see how suspension promoted learning. The emphasis was on the fact that a rule had been broken, not on why it was broken or what could be done to prevent the behavior in the future.

In my professional practice course, I was able to assist in and witness local educational interventions. What I found was that although some teachers were using principles and techniques that are supported by research, many more were not.

South African lessons

The third summer of graduate school I had an opportunity to travel to South Africa. The purpose of our trip was two-fold. Two professors and a group of students presented at an international conference and conducted research regarding changes perceived by South African educators. Prior to our trip we met repeatedly to discuss our research plans and methodology. I became aware of how biased and culturally loaded a question can be. Specifically, our assumptions of causality and linear temporality of "what" and "why" was always there whether or not we were aware of its presence. For example many African cultures do not use the concept of "why" to explain the world as we do.

The discussion of methodology soon led to discussions of the effect our research might have on the participants. From an African perspective, it is an expectation that when outsiders (Westerners) come to do research they take what they want and then leave. Because of the years of this type of exploitation many Africans have learned to tell

researchers what they want to hear. Although the Africans don't hear from them, the scientific communities receive the information about the researchers "African experience". Those that created the data neither hear of the results nor do they typically benefit from the research.

Once I had an understanding of past experiences some Africans have had with researchers I felt compelled to be different, as did the rest of our team. I felt compelled to respect the participant in a way I never had before. If they were to share of themselves I had an obligation to do more than collect data. I had a moral obligation to listen, observe, understand as well as I could their perspective, sharing the results with those that provided the data, as opposed to simply collecting data and writing up the results. I cognitively made the switch from "experimental subject" to "participant" in the research.

Articulating the basis of the question

I sat in the small office at the elementary school as they laughed and reminisced. The school psychologist and special education teacher were discussing some of their "favorite" students in relative privacy. Recalling past multidisciplinary teams, and re-living past events, they continued to laugh. Their situations were not funny, but the gallows humor occurred because they did not have answers to the disturbing problems. The school psychologist shook her head thinking of the more bizarre experiences they had shared. A fifth grade boy named "John" became a topic of discussion. "Boy he's a character, isn't he." "Yeah, he said he didn't see any point in school since he was going to prison anyway." "That's right, he has family in prison doesn't he?" The laughter continued. "Wouldn't it be great if he'd take an interest in doing well in school instead of

acting out.” “You mean like Brian?” “Yes, Brian is such a sweetie and tries so hard, I wish he’d rub off on John some how.”

That’s when I suggested that John might be succeeding in his own way. If prison is John’s goal, he appears to be making strides in that direction. Even with limited autonomy, he is an accomplished deviant despite the efforts of his teachers. Some might even call him “resilient.” However, professionals wouldn’t call him that because that term is reserved for children considered high risk who overcome “unsupportive, non-nurturing environments” to accomplish mainstream goals (Miller, G., Brehm, K., & Whitehouse, S., 1998). These goals include being successful in school and being “well-adjusted”. Most professionals will not consider John a resilient child when he overcomes the positive influences of these professionals to accomplish inmate status. But isn’t John resilient? He is overcoming his environment to accomplish a goal. Our problem is that his objectives and beliefs are deviant from the societal norm. Typically at some point we will try a special education or other program to “fix” John. However, before putting John through an alternative curriculum, we should look at our assumptions to see what John may be accomplishing. By looking at John’s perceptions of success and failure, instead of our own, we may see beyond our assumptions and understand why our interventions probably will not work.

Why this method?

I have chosen to use a phenomenological approach to looking at adolescents’ experience of trouble. Participants were asked the question “Tell me about a time you got in trouble.” I chose this method for the following reasons.

Many standardized assessment tools can be used to better understand children considered problematic within a school setting. Often in a questionnaire format, the children are asked questions that seek out specific information. The results (concluded answers) may be clear and quantifiable, but not necessarily accurate or helpful. A more complex understanding may be revealed if information is obtained from the child's perspective without the restrictions of standardization.

Standardized instruments collect data from a child's perspective, but are constrained by the scope of data they can collect. Many researchers use a forced choice format to classify a child's response into preset categories. Although useful to sort a child's response into a general category this design will only find information that is elicited by the pregenerated options the researcher has provided for the respondent. The phenomenological method, which was utilized in this study, allows for the finding of new or alternate categories (through thematic analysis) and does not limit the respondent to set answers.

In addition, many standardized instruments describe an aspect of behavior or cognition but do not indicate how these variables or categories interact with each other in a functional manner. Although useful, standardized questionnaires tend to describe a limited view of a phenomena such as getting in trouble. A phenomenological approach allows the interaction of behavior and cognition in a functional manner that standardized approaches are unable to attain.

The Philosophy of Phenomenalism

Within psychology there are two general ways in which to study people. One involves looking at the outward observable aspects of the person (behavior), and the other focuses upon their inward, unobservable inner world of experience (psyche). In psychology a philosophical dualism occurred when the observable and unobservable were separated. Called the Cartesian split, this dichotomy still exists (Halverson, 1981).

Phenomenalism is the philosophical view that the existence of an object is dependent upon it being perceived. Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) is generally regarded as the founder of existential philosophy. He believed it was important for philosophy to address the concrete existence of the individual person. He desired to make clear the fundamental themes that people regularly struggle with. Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) a German philosopher, is credited as the primary proponent of phenomenology. Husserl was more academic than Kierkegaard. He believed the study of phenomena should be met with a rigorous and unbiased study of things as they appear. Husserl reasoned one might reach an essential understanding of human consciousness and experience with such a method (Valle & Halling 1989).

Husserl suggested that the positivists in the social sciences were unable to adequately deal with basic human issues such as joy, despair, love, freedom and choice. Jean Paul-Sarte suggested the method developed by phenomenology "allows us to contract phenomenon as we actually live them out and experience them" (Valle & Halling 1989).

The study of concepts such as emotion can occur because phenomenology is grounded in different philosophical assumptions than natural scientific psychology. A major and perhaps most critical assumption is that people are not viewed as objects of nature. Phenomenologists speak of the total unbreakable unity or interrelationship of the individual and the world. Each individual and the world are said to co-constitute one another. In traditional psychology, people and the environment are seen as two separate and distinct entities (Halverson, 1981).

Co-constitutionality means that without one the other cannot exist; Removal of one will in effect negate the other's existence or meaning. It is through this tie with the world that the meaning of the persons, and others, existence emerges. Without a person to bring to light the meaning and significance, the world would not exist as it does.

This total interdependence is found in the notion of dialogue. People and their world are always in a dialogue with each other. This dialogical perspective views people as both active and passive. People are active because they are always acting in their world in a purposeful way, and passive since the world is always acting on them (Keen, 1975).

The existential phenomenological psychologist views people as being "condemned to choose". Each person is considered to possess "situated" freedom. That is the freedom and obligation of making choices within, and often times limited by, a given situation that the world has presented.

Phenomenological research is therefore descriptive. It differs from other qualitative approaches because its focus is on the participant's experienced meaning as opposed to descriptions of overt actions and behavior. It maintains a critical distinction between

what presents itself as part of a person's direct experience or awareness and a person's reflected experience. The locus of phenomenological research is a person's experience. Because all knowledge is ultimately grounded in human experience, the exclusive focus on this experience provides access to all that can be directly known.

Phenomenological based inquiries may be divided into two basic types - asking how objects are present, or asking how meaning presents itself as an experience. Regardless of the category the purpose is the same, that is, to produce clear systematic descriptions of the meaning that constitutes the activity of consciousness (Valle & Halling 1989).

Methods based on phenomenological principles function as general guidelines or outlines. The researcher is expected to develop plans of study especially suited to understanding the particular experiential phenomenon that is the focus of study. Typically the gathering of data is conducted through open-ended interviews. Working from long interview transcriptions the researcher searches out units of meaning, and tests the limits of these units through thought experiments. These experiments test to see where the limits of the unit meaning continue to hold together, and when there is no support. The product is a general description of the features and structures that represent all the interviews. (Ihde, 1986)

Valle & Halling (1989) describe the general format phenomenological investigations typically follow a three-step procedure. "The investigator must:

1. Gather a number of naive descriptions from people who are having or have had the experience under investigation.

2. Engage in a process of analyzing the descriptions so that the researcher comes to grasp the constituents of the common elements that make the experience what it is.
3. Produce a research report that gives an accurate, clear, and articulate description of an experience. The reader of the report should come away with the feeling that "I understand better what it was like for someone to experience that."

Participants

Purpose of phenomenological research is to describe the structure of experience, not to describe the characteristics of the group who have had the experience. The phenomenological concern is with the nature of the experience itself. In gathering information in this manner, the inquiries are limited to what the participant has described. For this reason only the initial statement or question is known prior to the interview. This is in contrast to a formal questionnaire or structured interview, in which the investigator knows exactly what information will be addressed prior to the interview.

The point of participant's selection is to obtain richly varied descriptions, not to achieve statistical generalization. The participant's transcripts are used in analyzing the possible elements and relationships that can be used in determining the essential structure of the phenomena. An error that phenomenological researchers can make in the participant selection is to choose people who will produce a narrow range of descriptions. The researcher needs to choose an array of individuals who provide a variety of specific experiences on the topic being explored (Valle & Halling 1989).

The purpose of my project was to investigate the experience of getting in trouble by middle-school-age children. To accomplish this, interviews were conducted with two

male and seven female adolescents in grades 6-8 (ages 12-14). These participants were self-selected. I spoke to over 80 students during a designated lunch period providing information regarding the opportunity to participate. I described participation as having three benefits: participants could tell an adult their perspective; a University of Tennessee sports poster pack would be provided after the interview; and participants would get out of class for 45 to 60 minutes. I assumed that the different motivational factors would appeal to a variety of students.

For this study nine participants shared their experiences of getting in trouble. The number of participants selected for studies varies widely. Konig's 1979 study had three participants while Kaam's 1969 study had 325. The number of participants needed is determined by the structures and elements found in the transcripts. Typically elements and relationships as well as structures begin to reoccur. Saturation results when new interviews become repetitive, that is, when the elements and relationships in those interviews add little or nothing (Valle & Halling 1989). In this study saturation was reached after nine interviews and the process was stopped.

The construction of phenomenological protocols requires the participant's awareness be redirected toward their own experience. Participants should be able to inform the researcher of their experience through descriptions of their actual experience with the phenomena (Ihde, 1986). However, one interview was not analyzed because the information I obtained from one participant's school indicted that she could not reliably relate her experiences.

Specific Risks and Protective Measures

There was minimal risk to the participants in this study. Topics discussed were those that have occurred in the past and in which the participant typically received some form of reprimand or punishment. Topics that were currently occurring, or projected illegal activities were not an option for discussion since it was not within the scope of the request "Tell me about a time you got in trouble." Confidentiality was maintained with respect to the data collected from participants, and the procedure was not likely to be disturbing or harmful. It was possible that a participant might have revealed disturbing information that could have further traumatized the individual or others. In such a case, the appropriate school personal (school psychologist, counselor) would have been notified, and the student referred for further counseling, if needed. Fortunately, this problem did not arise.

Benefits

There were no direct benefits to the participants in this study. However, they were able to describe their experiences of getting into trouble with an impartial adult, myself. This study was partially initiated to assist a Southeast middle school to better address problematic issues for these students by better understanding their perspective. I believed that the awareness, through systematic thematic analysis, would either confirm or add to the administration's currently held beliefs regarding the cognition of middle school students. A systematic thematic analysis might also help define the issues that future middle school students face. I hoped that this research would also benefit this middle

school, and other similar schools, in planning curriculum for students who get in trouble in school.

Interviews

The self-selected participants were called out of class to participate. Students met me in the main office and I escorted each participant to a private room adjacent to the cafeteria. After some general conversation I asked if they remembered anything about the study from the cafeteria. Most did not. Participants were then asked to describe in detail examples of their experience of getting in trouble. Additional questions were restricted to requests for clarification or elaboration of what the participant had already said.

Interviews were open-ended and unstructured, requiring enough time to explore the topic in depth, usually from a half-hour to an hour. The length of the interview was dependent on both the amount of self reflection the participant felt comfortable with and his/her experience of getting in trouble. I taped and transcribed the interviews.

The methods of a phenomenological study are to study the phenomena or experience from the perspective of the participant. Phenomenological interviews are not considered a stimulus response interaction such as survey interviewing. The phenomenological interview is considered a discourse for conversation as it involves interpersonal engagement. Participants are encouraged to share the details of their experience (Keen, 1975). All of these interviews were conducted in face-to-face. I asked a question or made a statement. At that time, the participant responded by describing an experience that came to mind. The incident or experience address family, peers and school incidents. I listened while the participant described the experience. Once the participant completed his/her

response, I asked about any aspect of the experience that was unclear. These follow up questions, or statements, were based strictly on what had been described as the experience (e.g., “You said ‘WE’ when you described this experience”; “How did you feel when that happened?”).

The follow up questions could not be created prior to the conversation, and were open ended so the participant was not directed or guided to answer in any particular manner. It was at the discretion of the participant whether they elaborated the response. My intent was to ask questions that clarified, yet did not lead the participant. The prime objective was to understand the experience from the perspective of the participant as fully as possible.

An interview seeks to describe and understand the meaning of the central themes of the experience being investigated. It is qualitative in aiming at obtaining nuanced descriptions that are precise and stringent in meaning and interpretation. It seeks descriptions of the experience itself without the participant’s interpretation or theoretical explanations. I took care to remain open to the presence of new and unexpected elements in the description and did not shape the questions as tests of ready-made categories or schemes of interpretation. Instead of general I focused on *specific* situations and action sequences that were instances of the theme under investigation so that the essence or structure of the theme would emerge and show itself. When the statements of an interviewee were ambiguous, I sought clarification.

Analysis

How results were analyzed

The aim of phenomenological inquiry is to reveal and unravel the structures, logic, and interrelationships that occur in the phenomenon under inspection. Its purpose is to derive from the collection of protocols, with their naive descriptions to specific examples of the experience under consideration, a description of the *essential* features of that experience. The researcher must glean from the examples and accurate essential description of their contents and coherence the elements of a unified experience (Ihde, 1986; Valle & Halling 1989).

I, along with faculty and student groups, analyzed the transcripts. A phenomenology group, led by Howard Pollio, Ph.D. from the Psychology Department and Sandra Thomas, Ph.D., from the College of Nursing assisted in the analysis of two transcripts. This group meets once a week under faculty supervision in order to assist fellow researchers in thematic analysis and the methods of phenomenological research. Those participating are required to sign a confidentiality form regarding information discussed. Those analyzing the transcripts looked for themes, recurring content, and an overall essential structure in response to the original question. Six transcripts were analyzed with my advisor and another professor from the phenomenology research group. Each of the nine transcripts were read by researchers other than myself.

The essential structure is made up of the elements or “constitutes” that are necessary for an experience to present itself as what it is. The finding is called a "general structural description" or "synthetic description." Experience will appear as differentiated and

structured. This research is the search for those processes of consciousness that appear in awareness and meaning. The examination of levels of structures that constitute psychological meanings in particular contexts or situations will also occur.

As Husserl suggested a reduction attempts to disclose a structure that unites the invariant elements of an experience into a whole. By explication, implicit awareness of complex phenomenon becomes explicit, formulated knowledge of its components. The search for essential structures involves identifying the constitutes of themes that appear in the descriptions (Valle & Halling 1989).

Since the protocols could not be analyzed simultaneously, they were broken down into manageable units, and a process of sequential steps assisted in the development of general structural descriptions. The most difficult aspect of the data-analysis process to explain is the transformation of the meaning units. Transformations are necessary because the original descriptions given by subjects are usually naive regarding psychological structures and use blended references. The transformation goes through the everyday linguistic expressions to the reality they describe, and then it re-describes this reflection in the language appropriate to phenomenological based psychology.

Phenomenological psychologists generally use the language of “commonsense” enlightened by phenomenological perspective for their re-descriptions. Going through is accomplished by two thought processes: reflection and imaginative variation. Reflection involves a careful and sensitive reading of an expression to answer the questions, what is being described in the unit meaning, and what is absolutely essential to understand the psychological dynamic operating. The point of free imagination variation is to stretch the

proposed transformation to the edges until it no longer describes the experience underlying the participants' description (Valle & Halling 1989).

A test of the correctness of a meaning transformation is one that can work backward from the transformed expression to the original naive expression. Transformations must be publicly verifiable so that the other researchers will agree that the transformed expression is contained in the original expression (Valle & Halling 1989).

Synthesis

Synthesis involves tying together and integrating the list of transformed to meaning units into a consistent and systematic general description of the psychological structure of the experience under investigation. It requires an eidetic (extraordinarily detailed) scene of the whole. When the whole is grasped, the elements are understood. The procedure calls for the researcher to read through the transcripts for described meanings and then to formulate what might be a general description of the structure underlying the variations in the meanings. The proposed formulation is then compared to the transformed meanings again to see if it is supported. The procedure of zigzagging between the transformed meanings and a repose general description goes to several rounds, the formulation becoming more refined each time until the meaning clearly supports the final general description (Ihde, 1986; Valle & Halling, 1989).

Limitations of this study

Any investigation poses limitations due to the scope of the question or method. The scope of the question is the experience of trouble. This prohibits valid inference of anything other than the participants' perceptions. The scope is solely the participant's

perception of an experience, and no means confirm their accuracy. And the method does not allow valid causal relations to be made. While plausible inferences could be made, further research must be done to confirm the casual inferences.

Chapter IV

Results

The experience of trouble is...

Narrative Characteristics

Participants described the moments leading up to trouble, the experience of trouble, and their thoughts about trouble after the experience. A temporal trajectory is seen in each narrative, in which personal descriptions of a changing focus turn frequently from “the Other” to “the Self”. All participants told approximately the same temporally organized narrative of their experience of getting in trouble. The experience was so intensely personal that the consequence to others and feelings of anger and loss did not strongly influence thoughts or actions for the future. Participants reported that the experience is set in motion with a bodily awareness of a feeling or a reaction. They described acting without forethought upon temptations and urges. For some participants boredom was the catalyst of a temporal experience of “presentness” that lasted *until* trouble was realized. After trouble was realized, the participants’ described their experiences in terms of consequences that were usually relationally focused.

The resulting focus was predominately described as a relational context with an extremely powerful other, in which the self felt minimized or reduced. Participants watched, tracked, and modeled the powerful other person without necessarily perceiving clear or consistent standards of behavior from them. The desire to be heard and understood by the Other was often frustrating to participants. Frequently, instead of

discussing the situation in a meaningful way, participants reported perceiving the other person as droning on without paying attention to their experience.

A secondary focus in the narratives was of the self. Although participants represented themselves as having individuated feelings, attributes, and roles, most expectations and attributes were repeatedly described in reference to other person. The least evident focus in the participants' experience was that of world. World is factual, at times fatal, and recognized as having a connectedness to the present experience. Yet, how the current experience was connected to the world was often nebulous and uncertain. Repeatedly participants' descriptions of the world included a focus on a prominent Other and the notion of time in which the ground took place.

The Scope of Trouble

Understanding the larger context of the "before" and "after" aspects of trouble assists in perceiving more precisely the notion of the participants' experience of trouble. Each participant described becoming aware of trouble all at once. It is at this point that the experience of trouble begins -- when they realized they were "in" trouble. The present study attempted to investigate the properties (themes) that became figural as they described the experience of being in trouble.

Trouble is experienced in the context of an other person who "pops up" and unexpectedly catches the participant. The Other, typically female, is perceived as having "more power" relative to the participant. This surprising, suddenly startling, seizure leads to the question asked by most, "What's going to happen to me?." The outcome of being caught results in the Other "taking everything away." It makes the participants "mad"

when the resulting consequences of loss are accomplished “without listening” to them, which they considered “unfair.”

A before and after perspective was evident in each participant’s description of their experience of trouble. These moments prior to trouble were described as reactive and as “not thinking.” These moments were figural, or brought into awareness, by their relation to the temporal ground within the overall experience. Wendi described a momentary awareness of others before she experienced trouble: “See if I don’t fight her then everybody [will] think I’m scared of her. But if I do fight her, I know I’ll get in trouble. But . . . well, it just happened. She hit me, and then [I] just clicked. I just went off. I just . . . I don’t know why.”

Joe describes the lack of clear cognition and getting wrapped up in the moment when he said: “he kept calling me fat and stuff. I just got mad [because] when we was playing he threw a rock at me. I chased him then I pretended that I was going to hit him [but] I thought I’d just knock him out, [so] then I just started choking him. I wasn’t even thinking I was just reacting. I wasn’t even thinking about the consequences or nothing.”

Even when participants considered their actions might lead to trouble, the lack of personal control was evident. Prior awareness of potential trouble is unable to control Kary’s action as she explains: “I pretty much know when I’m going to get in trouble, but sometimes I just don’t mean to say stuff, it just comes out you know. And I can’t always stop when I get annoyed, but I pretty much know when I’m going to get in trouble. I just don’t think before I act. So that’s what happens to me a lot of the times when I get in trouble.”

Almost without exception, participants described being in a reactive non-thinking state prior to “getting in trouble.” It was common for them not to understand how they got in trouble. When I asked Kamisha how she knows she will fight before taking action she replied, “I don't know. If somebody hit me, I'm going to hit them back.”

The aspect of “not thinking” was described prior to a fight in which Wendi was involved as well. Wendi went further than simply discussing “not thinking”; she notes how the actual experience of trouble begins with the presence of an Other. She makes clear her first knowledge of being in trouble came “after we stopped fighting. Because everybody was yelling, all the teachers . . . all the mentors were yelling. Well actually, I knew if I fought her, before I fought her that I would get in trouble. But then, I just stopped thinking, and we fought.”

Kary explains how difficult it is to control her actions, “I really feel bad after I generally do this stuff. But it's . . . you know . . . I'm trying to stop and actually think before do[ing] stuff, react to something. But it's really hard to do sometimes you know. Wendi and Kary articulate that although an inner awareness may exist, it is no match for the external triggers that pull them into what is the experience of trouble.

Theme of Aware / Unaware: “It pops up.” The awareness of being in trouble.

Each participant described being in a non-thinking moment prior to her experience of trouble. This reduced awareness helps to explain the “startling” emergence of the Other. This Other has an effect upon the participant that is both surprising, as if catching them off guard, and halting. Angie described how such unawareness relates to

the unexpected emergence of the Other. She said trouble "It's just like it pop up. It just happens. Just like . . . it just happens." I asked her to give an example of when it "just happened", she went on to say, "I don't remember doing nothing wrong. I was just walking. And I stepped in house. And she started babbling about something, and then I got in trouble for it. I don't even know what I did. I just got in trouble. I followed up by asking, "you don't even know?" She continued, "huh huh. And I still don't know to this day. I hate when it pops up like that."

Joe described when his friend threw a bottle into a bush near a woman's home. He explained that although he told him to do it he was simply joking. "I thought he wasn't going to throw it at first. I just was joking. I said . . . I meant to say Psych, I was joking. And he just threw it. And by the time I had a chance to say, he threw it already. And all the sudden it go boom. And I said man what you do? He said throw it. I was trying to joke with you. And then the lady came out. I said I was joking with him and I didn't know he was going to throw it, and he just threw it." Joe provides the initial and an essential element in his description trouble. He mentioned "the lady" who is seen as the Other.

All participants described the experience of trouble only in the presence of a powerful Other. The appearance of the Other is essential for a experience of trouble to exist. This becomes apparent when the Other informs them that they are now "in trouble." I asked Joe, "How did you know you were in trouble?" Joe very directly explained this aspect of trouble to me, "she told me my butt is in trouble." I asked Reggie the same question and he concurred by saying, "they [mama and step daddy] tell you." Wendi told of a time when she forgot to wash the dishes. She explained, "I was tired. I

was asleep. Because I just got back from dance class. I be real sleepy. And she calls and [tells me] makes sure you wash the dishes. And I went back in my room and then dozed right off. I didn't think about nobody and just fell right to sleep. And when she came the door, she is yelling, [she said] I thought I told you to wash those dishes. I then asked Wendi, "so, how did you know you were in trouble?" Wendi said that she knew the moment "when she came in hollering. She came in yelling."

The aspect of the Other's presence being necessary for trouble to exist is strengthened by participants' descriptions of times they could have gotten in trouble but didn't. When Joe was asked about such a time, he related a story about breaking his neighbors' front step. "Oh yeah . . . and the steps was cement. So it was loose. So we was just checking out to seeing who could pick it up. Then my arms got hurt. I had to put it down. And it broke. And we didn't know what do. We just . . . because she wasn't home. We just ran. We ran [in] the house, well, in my house. And we waited for a little bit. And then when she got home we just try to pretend like we were doing things. And we came outside. She asked what happened. I said 'I don't know,' probably someone of these kids came out and just threw it. And she said next time you tell them that not do it again. I said okay. She didn't know what happened or not. And she don't know what happened to this day." I responded, "What difference does that make? "She didn't find out who did it...[I felt] happy because I didn't get in trouble. She don't know what happened and she won't have to worry about it if she don't know who did it."

Marci also spoke of an incident where she could have gotten in trouble but didn't. "They turned around, stop[ped] the car, open[ed] the[ir] door and gave us the finger.

[Laughing] then [they] went down [the road], then left. It was really funny. She continued, "we didn't get in trouble at all. My parents were there so I didn't really care." "(We were) laughing like crazy. Because at church [it] is a lot more fun because it's not as structured. And you can't really get in trouble at church, . . . not really. Unless, you can get in trouble by your parents but my parents weren't there so." In the absence of the Other trouble does not exist.

Theme of Powerless / Powerful: "She has more power." My lack of power relative to the Other.

Wendi told about writing on the walls with crayons when she was very young. Her description begins by depicting again, the necessity of the Other's presence. After the Other is present, Wendi is aware of her lack of personal power. After expressing her anger, she is reminded of her lack of power in relation to her mother.

"Well, I thought [it] was pretty. So I went [and] . . . drew like actually I didn't know how to draw. Because I just scribbled all over the wall. And when my mama came in . . . when my mother came in. I was just sitting there like, what did I do? And she said, why did you write on my wall. She said, aagghh! And she said, why did you write on my wall. And [she was] yelling. She beat me. She was mad. She had to get the wall all painted over. I flipped her the bird, and she saw me. And she beat me again. Well she didn't beat me. She whipped me again. I was mad, but . . . I knew. I knew it was wrong but I thought it was pretty. I thought she would like it, so I just wrote on the wall.

Later in the interview Wendi related another occurrence. “(B)ecause she chewed me out for not washing the dishes. And I knew if she saw me, then I would be in trouble. Real big, big, big trouble. She would probably stomp the mud hole in me. It's a figure of speech [which means] like, she would beat me to death. You know, almost kill me.”

It is apparent that Wendi is aware of her relative lack of power and of the great power of the Other. Although metaphoric, she understands that her mother could “take her out” of the world the same way she brought her in to it. She understands that for there to be “no trouble” the absence of the Other is essential. A behavior’s relationship to trouble is not absolute but rather depends upon the presence or absence of the more powerful Other.

All participants alluded to their lack of power in relation to the emergent, and typically female, Other. The second theme of powerless / powerful was articulated most clearly by Marci when she let another girl copy her work. The point at which she realized she was in trouble was, “when my teacher called me over to her desk and I saw the right-up slip. And it was filled out. And she asked me to sign it. And I didn't really want to sign it. But if you don't sign it, you do get suspended for not signing it. Which I think is wrong. Because if I hadn't known . . . ah, [what if] she had just taken the paper or something . . . and I didn't know about it? She could have called me over to her desk and written me up and I wouldn't have had any choice to sign it or not sign it. Even if I didn't even know about it. Which that would have just . . . she would have said yes you did and gone on because she has more power. Because . . . if I don't sign it, [and] she puts refused

to sign. And that automatically gets the principal's attention. And you get punished for that.”

The experience is quick and unexpected, and the participant is lacking the power to change it. The participant could be likened to a fish describing being netted, or a rabbit being snared. Reggie was “trying to have some fun” because he “was bored.” “I was at the boys and girls club and there's a little hole by the pool over by the gate. Me and my friends would jump down there, and we got caught by the man who cleans the pool. He called Miss Sharon's office. And Miss Sharon called our parents, we got in trouble.”

Sub-themes

The theme of powerless/powerful is described in terms of three related the sub-themes: unknown/known, unheard/heard, and unfair/fair. These three sub-themes make us aware that the participants a) are asking what going to happen next, b) are unable to provide input before consequences are administered, and c) because of their lack of input ascribe a sense of unfairness to the Other.

Sub- theme: Unknown /Known

The sub-theme of unknown/known is brought into awareness when the powerful Other gets the participant's attention. Their uncertainty of the immediate future was expressed repeatedly using nearly identical phrases of “what going to happen to me?” Reggie explained what he was thinking about when he got in trouble for talking at school. He said, “wasn't thinking about them, I was worrying about myself. What's going to happen to me?” When asked what he was worried about he expressed, “getting in trouble [from] my mom.” When Kamisha was in court, she perseverated on “I'm ready to go

home. That's all I was thinking about. What they going to do to me?" And all that stuff." Wendy said she was scared when she got in trouble at school. "I didn't know what would happen . . ." "I might get suspended for the year and have to miss pass(ing to the next grade) or something"

Frequently, although the participants knew they were going to be in trouble, the consequence that would follow was not clear. Joe was one of those students. "(I knew) my butt is in trouble. I knew I was in trouble but I didn't know what would happen." Amanda said, "if you cuss a teacher out your going to get in trouble." When asked, "what kind of trouble?" She responded with "I don't know."

Sub-theme: Unheard/Heard

Darika explained that during the experience of getting in trouble she feels she is not heard, and that the Other does not want to hear what she has to contribute, although in some cases she feels she knows more.

No, she don't want to listen. It's like she'd trying to say I be smart or [that] I don't want to listen, when I give my input . . . she tries to say that I [think that I] know it all. But as far the, as far as streetwise I know more than she does. I am the one out on the street now. And it's like my generation. But when I be trying to get my input she trys to get mad and say don't have no reason to be talking to you, you ain't going to listen, or something like that. And I be getting mad because the stuff that she's say is mainly the things that I say but in a different way because I do it . . . what I say is what I see on the streets. That's . . . I know the streets. I don't know a like the back of my hand but I know it more than the stuff she knows

because I'm out in the streets. Then I be out there and she always at home or something. I just be trying to tell her what I know is from the streets or what I've been taught. And what you pick up once you out on the streets . . . I mean, it's easy to understand streetwise because like more direct or you know where to go or were not to go or what colors to wear or what colors not to wear. Like in a particular neighborhood. And I just telling her, she's say that I'm smart, and [that I'm] trying to be smart or something stuff like that. So that's one reason I can't really talked my mama. She don't want to listen to me. But like in otherwise she probably do know more than me. As far is the streets I know more than her. So she'd be getting mad and I just say okay mama. Okay. Okay. Then I try to leave.

Darika states that she leaves "Because she don't listen to me. There ain't no point, there ain't no point in us sitting there and trying to tell her what I know or trying to talk to her because she don't listen."

Most participants clearly expressed a similar voicelessness in relation to the Other. Darika is angry because she has no input, no voice. She wants her mother to listen to what she has seen and been taught. However, Darika sees no point in continuing without bilateral communication. Wendi also spoke of having no voice when she was sent to the principal. Her lack of voice as well as the power of the Other is apparent as she explained, "When my teacher put me in ISS she said I skipped, skipped lunch. I mean . . . she said I ah probably skipped her class because I came in late for lunch. But I really didn't because the principal didn't dismiss our table until they were already gone. And um, the other, the assistant principal wouldn't listen to me. So he wrote me up and I had

to go to ISS. And um let's see . . . let me think. It was just last week I think. No we tried to get in the class she kept . . . She locked us out. And she made us go find a pass. And we asked the principal, he wrote us up.

When participants got in trouble they might even admit that they did something wrong. Culpability, however, was described as an issue separate from having input. Marci explained, "I understand why the other girl got written up because she copied. Who knows . . . she could have taken it from me. (The teacher) didn't even ask me if I had let her, she just wrote me up. So, I thought that was ridiculous. I think that . . . they should ask questions to find out what went on because if I had just said okay I . . . they didn't know if I knew about it or not. If I had no clue then how could they write me up, for not having a clue what was going on? Which I did have a clue but if I hadn't, they wouldn't have known about it."

Participants continued to describe that when the presence of the Other is exerted communication is not bi-directional. They describe the other person as making assumptions about the situation without asking them. The participants know the Other is not all knowing or all seeing but it seems that the Other is unaware that participants know this.

Angie explained, "it was like the teacher wasn't even in the hallway. He was in his classroom. And he just heard the word hoe and came up there. And I was the only one left out there because I was at my locker. And then he tried to write me up and stuff. And I kept telling him I did not say that, I wasn't even out there talking to them. And he still wrote me up and then I had ISS for that. And then I brought my mom up here

and then that little conference between him and the principal I still couldn't say nothing. But they told me to come up there; I still couldn't get my point across. So to this day, they think I called a girl a hoe and I didn't.

The lack of voice is made more apparent as Angie summarizes how she believes teachers actually listen to students.

"It's like, they act like they listening to you. But they in their own little world. And they one minded. They don't [listen] . . . because they already have their mind made up once they ask you the question. They just want to say they heard your side of the story but they really wasn't listening. They don't listen to us. Is just like we there. They give us the work. And that's all. And they going about their business and as soon as they hear one of us get in trouble or something, or do something or not supposed to, then that's when they be trying to write us up and stuff. So-called discipline."

Angie expresses how important this voice can be for the participants; "They don't let you tell your side of the story. It's just that one person say something, you did it. You don't get to tell . . . it's wrong. Because they should let, both parties tell their side of the story. And they just . . . went like one or . . . if it's between the student and a teacher, they let the teacher tell their side and a student is just in trouble. And that's it. The student can't say nothing. And if they do, they get a more trouble. And that's wrong. That is so wrong. Because the children should get their say so our something. Get their side across . . . their point across. And, that's all I really have to say."

Sub-theme: Unfair/Fair

Because the Other is not perceived as communicating in any real sense with the participants the situation is perceived as unfair. Marci explains this in reference to letting a girl copy her work.

“Well she [the teacher] didn't even say . . . well did you let her? And then I would have said yes, and yeah I could understand that, but she didn't even ask if I had let her. For all she knew . . . the girl could have taken it from me. And [it was plausible for] me not even [to have] known about it. Because they [teacher] didn't even ask anything like that. I thought that was unfair. Because I can understand getting a zero on it but I don't want that in my permanent record as cheating just because I did that. I let someone copy my paper, how awful. I mean I understand it's wrong and everything. But I just thought that was a little unfair.” Thus there are two issues - - the rightness or wrongness of the act and the fairness or unfairness of the encounter. Unfairness is also perceived when the Other administers consequences without allowing the participant to have a voice.

Kary explained, “like two kids have been talking. And the first one talks to the second. And they [the first] asked the second one to respond, and the second one will respond right when the teacher looks up. And she'll have the second one have detention and not the first, because she didn't see the first talking. So, she thinks it didn't happen. She'll say, oh well. I didn't see them talking so you know I can't just say they did because you say so. And I think that that shouldn't be like that. It's not fair for the first one, I mean not for the second but unfair for the first. Because they're

the ones who initially started the conversation. And even though the second one shouldn't have been responding, the first one should have gotten in trouble too, as well as the second one. Because they had just as much a part of it as the second one did."

Often participants described getting in trouble as a result of a direct confrontation such as Kamisha shared: "I walked up to her and, I said did you write me up. She said yeah. And so I . . . said if . . . you wrote me up you need to write everybody else up because I wasn't the only one that was singing."

Yet other times the participants are punished when they did not do anything improper. Amanda explained this concept of unfairness, "I don't think that that's fair for if one person talks everybody gets started over because I don't think that's a fair thing." Kary talked about how experiences like Kamisha's unfold. "The thing that really bugs me about teachers is that sometimes if you're in this big group and the group has been talking, and you haven't, she'll give detention to everyone in the group. Even if you weren't talking." "I'm not generally; I'm not in that situation, but I know some kids in my math class who are. I just think the teachers being unfair. And, but she has to put up with a lot because all these kids they won't . . . you know just, they just talk on and on and class. And sometimes in the group most of the kids that like to talk will be in that group and she'll just assume since everybody likes to talk in a group that they've all been talking. So, that's when she just gives them all warnings, or whatever. But I don't think I've ever been a part of that situation yet."

Unfairness comes also from participants not understanding the reason behind their experiencing trouble. They make attempts to understand but usually do not see why they are “in trouble” As Joe explained, “you can’t get suspended for talking but people [other kids will] be fighting and stuff they suspend them but, I wasn’t fighting or nothing. I was just talking. Teacher caught me. I was suspended for a couple days. It didn’t [seem fair]. It just. . I don’t know why you can’t talk.”

The commonalty of the subtheme of unfairness is plainly put by Kary as she describes how her parents can be unfair. “It makes me really mad . . . And I just think they are being really unfair. That they don’t see it from my point of view.”

Theme of No control/ Control: They “take everything away.” The consequence of the Other catching me.

The third theme of trouble is experienced as control, when a powerful Other steps in to administer consequences that are experienced as a sense of no control. Although the terms, Free and Unfree were not specifically used, this seemed to be what all of the participants were talking about.

Kamisha shared the outcome with the powerful Other as, “she was like, she said, don’t ask me to go nowhere forever.” The awareness of all participants is summed in the words “I can’t.” This is what Kamisha meant by “nowhere forever.” She continued, “I can’t go nowhere. I can’t talk on the phone. They don’t ask me to do nothing. I can’t do nothing.”

Sometimes accompanying the loss of privileges is the administration of a “whopping”. Darika explained,

So she got on me. Then I got a woopin' my sister got a woopin'. Then she grounded me for like three months. And I was mad you know because I was little kid [and I] want[ed] to go outside. I couldn't see my cousins; I couldn't see my friends. I had to stay at home, be in my room by myself. I was mad. I didn't have no TV, no telephone, nothing to do. She took all my pencils and paper away. And you know we have homework in the school. In the school, they say . . . she told them I couldn't do nothing except for my work. I can't talk to people so I have to sit in a little corner by myself and I was mad about that.

Wendi shared both her awareness of the Other's power and her description of the consequences of in-school suspension.

It's boring. You can't talk. You teachers always got to overload you with work. They give you more than your supposed to have. And um . . . and we can't . . . go to lunch like everyone else. You have to send one person to go get your lunches. They always come with like, a banana, cold baloney sandwich with no mayonnaise, no cheese, just bread and baloney. And plain milk. I thought I was about to die. I didn't eat for two days. You just sit there really. And finish your work. And just sit there. You got to . . . you can't . . . look around. You face the wall. You look at the wall. And you have to have 25 stars before you get out. And if you like call for anything without asking, then you have to start all the way over. And you have to stay in there longer. You get five stars a day. I think, what you can't help it if you call. But . . . how can you ask to call? It really doesn't make sense to me.

Joe's experience was similar, "not getting to play, not getting to watch TV, not getting to play your Play Station, not get in to do nothing just staying in your room.

Angie describes how her liberty was taken, "usually she'll take everything away. And I'll just be sitting in my room doing my homework or something." Darika shares when she thought she would get in trouble, "well when I thought I was in trouble. I was like Oh God, Oh God. I'm too old to be gettin' whoopin's and stuff. Oh God, I'll be in trouble. I can't do nothin' this weekend I have plans, this canceled."

The general theme of loss of being Free or becoming Unfree was repeated in every transcript. Although most consequences are less than momentous to the participant's future life, some thoughts of future loss are considered. Marci was concerned that evidence of her cheating might lessen her chances to get into a private high school and good college. A few participants equated possible loss of life with the experience of getting in trouble. Joe explained how he had seen this occur, "They be like [doin' somthin'] they do something stupid and get shot in the head." Although Marci and Joe come from different perspectives and experience trouble in very different ways, both consider it leading to loss of freedom either by reduction of options or life itself.

Joe's shared an experience of trouble links the three themes together. We can see how he becomes aware of each one as he shares; "The little kid's mother told my mom. And um, she was sitting outside and she took my bat, she chased me around with it, and she um just hit me in my leg with it. A couple of times. Because it had a hole in the top of the bat. And she hit me what that part. And she just told me to just go to my room. And I just stayed there, and then I got put on punishment. I couldn't watch TV, I couldn't go outside.

I just had to stay in my room. The only time I could leave was if I was going to school.

And then when I came home, I'd come in and go straight to my room. Can't watch TV or nothing."

Chapter V

Discussion

The transition from childhood to adulthood is a dynamic one not confined within the individual. There is a complex interplay of the individual's personal world with that of many other's understanding of the world. Without interaction with an other person, a discussion of trouble cannot take place. This study indicates that the experience of trouble incorporates two major themes that are grounded in an Other, and time. As the experience of trouble unfolds the participants became aware of each theme in a specified sequence. The first awareness is the presence of the Other, then an awareness of the Other's power and finally a sense of loss when the Powerful Other "takes everything away."

In the experience, the surprise and unexpected nature of the Other's presence is most apparent. There is a deficiency of foresight in seeing the consequences by the participants. Even in the few instances when the consequences were considered they didn't have any significant impact on the participant's actions. The participants described being pulled into trouble, being tempted by an urge, or reacting on impulse. While engulfed by this moment they lose awareness of consequences of which they previously may have had some awareness. It is not until the Other "pops up" that the experience of "getting into trouble" begins.

The experience for these adolescents is that they are trying to have fun, they are killing boredom, or else going along assuming they are doing the right thing. Without warning, their actions are halted by a startling emergence of the Other. The locus of this experience is external to the participants. Many participants spoke of problematic

experiences that did not lead to trouble. This occurs when a powerful Other is unaware of the participant's actions.

Most often, the other person of power is a mother or another significant female in their lives. Few attributed what is termed an internal locus to the urges and temptations that got them into trouble. Although some participants demonstrated a higher internal locus of control than others did, their level of self-efficacy was still not enough to prevent trouble (Hoffman, 1991, Bandura, 1991).

Atwater's (1996) study would suggest that because not all adolescents function at the formal operational thinking level, many memorize isolated pieces of information without the ability to organize and integrate the information. An adolescent may know facts and concepts without the ability to utilize them in solving a problem or transferring and applying them to a new situation. Therefore it is not surprising from a developmental perspective that the Other's presence is unpredictable to the adolescent.

Their feeling that trouble just "pops up" could also be predicted. Elkind spoke of the invincibility fable. Basically this states that what happens to others will not happen to me because I am invincible. In this case, these adolescents may believe that trouble will not pop-up for them as it does for others. When trouble does emerge, they become startled because it wasn't supposed to happen to them.

Regardless of the reason for the unexpected nature of trouble, one aspect is clear. The participants repeatedly spoke of acting without thought. Action without thought is a reflex as many described "not thinking just reacting." As defined, a reflex is an involuntary action of the nervous system in response to some stimulus (American

Heritage Dictionary, 1985). A reflex can occur when someone innately reacts or is trained to react to a stimulus. An innate reflex is observed when a baby suckles, or when the eye blinks when hit with a puff of air. Trained reflexes may also occur, simply as over learned patterns of behavior, as has been demonstrated through classical conditioning. Examples of over learned actions are pushing in the clutch before shifting to the next gear, or tying shoes.

For these adolescents, is the inappropriate behavior innate, or is it learned? The answer to this question is more easily posed than answered. The basic issue is whether these adolescents are getting into trouble because of their adolescent nature or because they have not learned strategies to prevent trouble.

Some have suggested a third alternative, that of the malicious adolescent, who purposefully dives headfirst into trouble. In this case the adolescent performs an action that he knows will attract the presence of an Other. Although this may be a legitimate scenario to consider, the only incidences of the adolescents possibly anticipating trouble in the transcripts were when they acted out of boredom, or were noncompliant to the Other. In these instances the adolescents did not portray themselves as malicious, but rather lacking in strategies to meet their needs. Even when the adolescent has strategies for relieving boredom they may not have the means to do so. For example, will their strategy for combating boredom be satisfying and be considered appropriate by the Other? The "malicious" adolescent may simply be one who does not possess a complete or complex enough strategy to avoid getting into trouble.

How does the Other perceive the adolescent's behavior? Depending on the assumptions made by the emerging Other the adolescent's behavior may be seen as a lack of morality or lack of appropriate learning. Differing assumptions result in differing responsibilities for the Other. If it is assumed that the behavior is due to an innate evil or quality of adolescents, the Other's responsibility is lessened because changing the behavior is beyond the control of the present Other and the adolescent as well. However, if the present Other assumes the adolescent's actions are due to a lack of appropriate learning or an incomplete understanding, the Other may take a larger responsibility to teach the adolescent.

Another basic question is how the first theme of presence/absence and the second theme of powerless/powerful are connected. Deviance theories postulate that some norms and expectations are explicit whereas others are implicit. One task of the adolescent's expanding mind is to learn the morals, rules, and laws of how an individual should live with others. The deviance theories previously discussed have one aspect in common. That is, when the norms of different segments of society conflict, the norms of the more powerful segment are used as the reference point. In terms of adolescents, adult norms are more powerful and are used as the referent.

The participants second major theme addresses the issue of power. Specifically, participants were aware of their lack of power in relation to the power of the Other. As events unfolded no longer were they simply conscious of an Other, but rather conscious of a more powerful Other. The figural issue of being powerless was expressed through

the three sub themes regarding power. These sub-themes became apparent and were brought into awareness sequentially after the Other's presence.

The first sub-theme of unknown/known was expressed in the form of a question the majority of the participants asked themselves after they became aware of the Other. "What's going to happen to me?" The adolescent believes that his fate is being decided by the whims the powerful Other. The adolescent is not in control. Again, the locus is external to the participant; the locus is with the powerful other.

There are many reasons why the participant might ask such a question. Participants may be uncertain of the outcome if the more powerful Other has been inconsistent. Uncertainty can also occur if the context of the trouble is unfamiliar. Regardless of the reason, it is apparent that the participant knows there will now be consequences, but what these are is unknown. This vague sense of the consequences contributes to the participants getting into trouble. Vague, unpredictable, and unreliable consequences are not consistent with an environment that contributes to learning. A better deterrent for trouble would be clear and concise consequences that are both known and understood by the adolescent.

The second sub-theme of power is understood in terms of the participant's awareness of being unheard by the powerful Other. Consistently the participants expressed that the powerful Other did not listen nor permit their input regarding the issue at hand. Even when input was allowed the powerful Other did not listen or attempt to understand the adolescent's perspective. One participant articulated that although teachers went through the motions that they were listening, they didn't really hear what

the participant was trying to say. Indeed those teachers pretended to listen simply to give the illusion that they have listened. None of the participants indicated that they had a sense of being heard or understood by the powerful Other. At times the students considered their input valuable because the powerful Other had misinterpreted the situation or had been given false information.

The only time a participant described an incident where they were able to express themselves to a powerful Other and the powerful Other listened was when they had permission (borrowed power) from a more powerful Other. This incident occurred when a teacher stopped Marci in the hall. Marci was confident in talking to the teacher because she had the permission of the most powerful Other in the school, the principal.

The third sub theme of power concerns the unfairness of the Other. Unfairness is inseparable from the second sub theme of being unheard, because being unheard is the source of the unfairness. The participants described unfairness and their lack of input as a source of their anger. The anger arose because the powerful Other didn't listen to them.

All the strategies being modeled for them are the result of a power play. The adults are seen as sources of power not as sources of guidance to avoid trouble. This is unfortunate because what is being modeled is that "might makes right." Problem solving behavior is not being learned. This behavior is then passed down as older sibling/models imitate this behavior toward younger siblings and eventually with their own children.

The main point of the second major theme is in regard to power is that these adolescents regard trouble as an injustice being done to them because they lack power. Usually the teacher or parent never knows that the adolescent perceives an injustice.

Paulo Freire (1997) studied the experiences of participants who had encountered a misuse of power and oppression by a powerful Other. He suggested that the more powerful Other's idea of tranquility is when the less powerful fits into the world the oppressors have created unquestioningly. This theory seems to be supported by these participants' experiences and perceptions of trouble. Some participants described incidents where speaking out or questioning the powerful Other, caused trouble and the administration of punishment. According to Freire, no oppressive order can permit the oppressed to question the system or its leadership. This oppression is most often accomplished by simply disregarding the perceptions of the powerless.

In Pedagogy of the oppressed (1997), Freire asked poignant questions. "Who are better than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an oppressive society? Who suffer the effects of oppression more than the oppressed?" Ironically, as the oppressed strive for liberation they tend to become oppressors of those with even less power. This is consistent with Bandura's theories of modeling. Many participants described using the same methods on others that had been used on them. Modeling the powerful Other happens (and only can happen) when the less powerful has more power in relation to another, such as a younger sibling. In terms of sociomoral reasoning theory what is being developed in the adolescents is that power is used to force others into compliance.

What is communicated to the child is that power relates to being treated fairly. The child sees the institution as having the power. Whoever has the power prevails whether the outcome is just or not. This focus on the Other's power and the subsequent

modeling of these uses of power allows for a reframing of issues that have gained attention in the press. The school shootings involve many complex issues. However, in terms of power, a gun or a bomb can equalize power and off set the power structure. Why do some students use guns and bombs? Power seems to be a likely answer.

Every participant spoke of his or her awareness of becoming Unfree and constrained subsequent to the perceived deviance. The experience of trouble ends with the administered punishment of becoming Unfree. The resulting loss of liberty appears to be a consistently administered consequence from the powerful Other. For most of these adolescents the perception of unfairness occurs not because of the consequence itself but because the other has not allowed them to provide input before the consequences are doled out. The adolescents are acutely aware of what it is they cannot do. Never did the participants speak of what they could do in regard to trouble.

The reductive consequence for deviance is not problematic in and of itself. However, no participant spoke of any other involvement from the powerful Other. In every narrative is the powerless having privileges, belongings, and relationships diminished or taken in some fashion. For what purpose is the powerful Other “taking everything away?” The message most of the adolescents received was don’t do that again, although this may not be the message intended by the powerful Other. Never is a social rule or rationale given or described as understood in relation to the consequences. In fact what the adolescents are learning from the experience of trouble is if I don’t do that, then I won’t get in trouble. So, the solution is to not do something. Rarely did they speak of what they could do, or generalize to similar situations.

As a logical and rational result of this reductive thinking, the adolescents spoke of strategies for not getting into trouble. They essentially presented varying forms of reducing themselves. Many spoke of keeping to themselves. One girl said she didn't get in trouble with her friends because she didn't have any. When this is the strategy for keeping out of trouble what is the message they have received from the corrective procedures utilized by the other? With a litany of "don'ts", adolescents are at a disadvantage when forming strategies. These adolescents found strategies that diminished or lessened their world as a solution to keeping out of trouble.

Another solution is to not question, or confront the Other. The message they receive is clear- - the other won't listen and the consequences are worse if you are non-compliant. The result is that the adolescents understand that if they are meek, become quiet, or cower in the Other's presence they avoid trouble. Their solution is to avoid being noticed by the other. Their beliefs and social-moral perspectives are not altered for their betterment when they get in trouble. Instead of explanations of the social implications of causing trouble, they speak of avoidance and passive actions. Wendi knows that flipping her mother off is going to get her in trouble only if she is seen. So she goes to her room and behind a closed door and does it. Her anger and disconnection are unchanged. Marci speaks of saying she is sick to "screw" the choir teacher. These passive-aggressive acts occur because these adolescents did not have other strategies for expressing them selves in the presence of a powerful Other.

The issue for the powerful Other is a moral and ethical one. Because they are perceived as having more power, there is the ethical issue of treatment toward those with

less power. Is the powerful Other actively attempting to benefit the adolescents in a positive manner? Does the powerful Other believe adolescents have the right to make decisions and act on them in an independent manner? Is the powerful Other actively attempting to avoid causing harm to the adolescents? Does the powerful Other believe the adolescents should be treated fairly; equals treating others as equals and the unequal being treated in a way most beneficial to their well being? Does the powerful Other maintain a commitment to keep promises, truth, and loyalty toward the adolescents?

Recommendations for the Other

On a practical level, the messages the adolescents described are that they can't anticipate trouble. Once in trouble they do not have control. The way to have control is through gaining power. Those who possess power can force others to comply. Fairness from the adolescent's perspective is not an issue. If those with less power don't comply, power is exerted by diminishing the other's existence. Although this scenario appears harsh, it parallels our society in many ways.

If these are messages the Other is attempting to teach the adolescent then the Other has succeeded. If this is not the message intended then changes need to be made in interactions with adolescents. It appears that the adolescents are no better prepared when they get out of trouble than when they were in it. The result is a cycle of trouble. For the adolescent the Other pops up, the Other's presence then leads to the awareness of powerlessness, which leads to the consequence of loss. There is both the before and after aspects of trouble. If trouble were seen as a cycle then change at any point would break the cycle.

The Other

The Self

Time

The World

One location the cycle can be interrupted is through self-regulation. The participants each describe reacting without thinking. This indicates a lack of impulse control. Teaching adolescent strategies which focus on them stopping and thinking before they act is a proactive approach. Even when a student does get in trouble similar strategies can be utilized to prevent a future occurrence. Impulse control will assist in their delay of gratification, which will benefit in other areas in addition to limiting the occurrence of trouble. Frequent reminders and reinforcement for thinking before acting will assist in students gaining skills of self-regulation.

Participants describe the other person as having a large role in determining the experience of trouble. Making the perception of self bigger in the experience can occur if the other adolescents are treated fairly. The other person must listen to the adolescent to feel they are being treated fairly. Often the participants indicated that although they understood they have done something wrong, it was unfair that they were not heard. The participants indicated that they know when they are patronized and simply allowed to explain; yet the other still does not hear them. Active listening, and attempt to actually understand will not necessarily lead to a different consequence, but the acceptance and lack of ill will may change. Also at times the powerful other may realize they made a mistake, and the consequence should be amended or eliminated. Occasionally, the

powerful other will need to apologize for making a mistake. The other must display the types of behavior they wish to see in the adolescents in which they interact.

Mahatma Gandhi said that we must be the change we wish to see. If we desire to see changes in adolescents and our future society, then the Other will need to change the experience of trouble so that it leaves the adolescent stronger rather than weaker. By providing guidance and teaching in a manner that makes connections, change may occur. Treating the less powerful fairly by allowing them to have a voice indicates respect. We must provide a way for the adolescent to see the connections of the social order. When adolescents disagree it would benefit them as well as the Other to listen. We dehumanize the adolescent when we assume that the adolescent is unknowing and unworthy of being heard.

The narratives the adolescents shared with me are contemporary. They shared their understanding of the world, time, and the powerful Other with me. The information derived can assist the powerful Others to both understand the perspective of the adolescent and to examine themselves. What is the purpose of trouble? How will they use their power and influence? The powerful Other has both ethical and practical issues to consider. As George Washington Carver is quoted as saying, "How far you go in life depends on you being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in life you will have been all of these."

In A School for Healing (1999) Kennedy and Morton discuss specific areas in which schools can make changes that value the students while strengthening their

prosocial behavior. Initially the philosophy of the school must reflect the valuing of each student as important. The motivation of each student is seen as positive, not malicious. The connection between what the school says it does and what it actually does must become increasingly consistent. When students make mistakes, the school needs to find positive ways to correct the real or imagined injustices in a healing manner. The entire school needs to change the focus from punishment to the positive aspects of what is present. If the staff lack the skills needed to assist the students, the student's lives will not change. Therefore a plan to maintain the emotional health of the staff must exist.

Gartrell, (1994), in Guidance Approach to Discipline, suggests that the Other tends to blur the distinctions between guidance and punishment when attempting to discipline. Unless the "logical consequences" are handled so that it is logical from the child's perspective the child tends to see the act of discipline as punishment. He proposes a guidance approach that takes the positive view of human nature.

As children are learning skills and concepts, they make mistakes. In the classroom, cognitive mistakes are accepted as part of the learning experience. Correction is given at the child's developmental level in the form of helpful directions or explanations. Best practice does not suggest we punish, or take away things from a child who calls a horse a "doggie." Due to the higher emotional costs, the Other may have difficulty in reacting to mistakes in behavior. Teachers are recommended to teach children how to solve their problem rather than punish them for mistaken behavior.

These approaches focus on teaching as a principle focus rather than punishing. Beneficial forms of discipline typically involve three components: Known rules which

focus on behavior, known and existing consequences for behaviors (both positive and guiding), and the assurance that the consequences of behaviors are consistently reinforced (both positive and guiding). The rules or norms are negotiated so that the adult involves input from the adolescent. The norms are used as a means to benefits both the adolescent and the greater society. Typically when discussed before or after the situation of “trouble” or mistaken behavior, the adult and adolescent can come to a reasonable agreement regarding the purpose for a rule and the resulting consequences, both positive and guiding.

Suggestions for Further Research

It might be anticipated that by asking one question we come away with more questions than answers. While gaining new knowledge about the initial question the process of investigation causes an awareness of new perspectives and more unanswered questions. As a result of such an investigation I became aware of that which I don’t know. A reasonable question to investigate is the experience of the powerful Other. Although the experience of trouble is now better understood from the experiences described by these adolescents, the experience of the Other in regard to the adolescent is still open. Does the Other see herself or himself as “popping up,” more powerful, and taking everything away? What is the experience of being a powerful other? What is the purpose of “taking everything away?” Is there a commonality among the powerful and the powerless?

Further research should investigate groups that are more homogeneous. These participants were from the general student’s population. It would be useful to have an

understanding how the students who rarely get in to trouble compared to those who frequently have gotten in trouble. How will the experiences compare? Is there something that could be learned and possibly taught to those chronically in trouble?

An additional aspect is to locate schools where the detention, suspension, and expulsion rates are low and make comparison to schools that have higher rates of detention, suspensions, or expulsions. How is power utilized in these different schools? How do the best of the best view students? What strategies do they utilize? Also, how do the students view these various others?

In general, future research, involving the subject of trouble, needs to better understand what is beneficial to the adolescent and the society in which they live, and what is not. These types of investigations will assist in substantiating principles that will work in various situations. No specific method will likely work across all situations. By investigating trouble from various perspectives a better understanding will emerge. Until it is understood from various approaches and methodologies underlying principles will not emerge. Derived principles will assist in guidance across situations.

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Appendices

Appendix A

FORM B

IRB # _____

Date Received in OR _____

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects

I. IDENTIFICATION OF PROJECT

A. Principal Investigator

Ronald L.W. Roberts
1301 Laurel Ave, Apt 28A
Knoxville, TN 37916
423/ 524-7510 (H), 423/ 974-8145 (W)
Email ronie@utkux.cas.utk.edu

Faculty Advisor

Dianne Whitaker, Ph.D.
College of Education
438 Claxton Addition
Knoxville TN, 37996-3400
423/ 974-8145
Email whitaker@utkux.cas.utk.edu

Department/Unit

Psychoeducational Studies Unit

- B. Project Classification:** Dissertation
C. Title of Project: A phenomenological investigation of at-risk middle school children's experience of getting in trouble.
D. Starting Date: Upon IRB Approval
D. Estimated Completion Date: May 30, 1999
F. External Funding (if any) Not applicable

II. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Many standardized assessment tools may be used to better understand children who are problematic within a school setting. Often in a questionnaire format, the questions seek out specific information. Their answers may be clear and quantifiable, but not necessarily accurate or helpful. A more complex understanding may be revealed if information is obtained from the child's perspective without standardized restrictions.

Many standardized instruments will collect data from a child's perspective, but are constrained to the scope of data they can collect. Many, through correlational design, will use a forced choice format to classify a child's response into present categories. While useful to sort a child's response into a general category this design will only find information that is elicited by pregenerated options for the respondent to choose. The phenomenological method, which this study will utilize, allows for the finding of new or alternate categories (found through thematic analysis) and will not limit the respondent in the manner they are able to answer. In addition, many standardized instruments describe an aspect of behavior or cognition but do not indicate how these variables or categories interact with each other in a functional manner. While useful, the utility of many standardized questionnaires will describe a limited scope of the phenomena of getting in trouble upon which this study is seeking data. The scope of data, though limited to a specific experience, will allow (through thematic analysis) the interaction of behavior and cognition in a functional manner that standardized approaches will be unable to attain.

With a larger picture of the child's experience, preventive measures can be taken, as well as traditional reactive measures. The purpose of this project is to investigate the experience of getting in trouble by an "at-risk" middle school population. To accomplish this objective, interviews will be conducted with 8-12 male and female children in grades 6-8 (ages 12-14). These selected participants will have been repeatedly suspended and/or been deemed at risk by an administrator at Vine Middle School, as well as recommended for, and been accepted into the school's Fresh Start Program. Participation in the study will occur prior to participation in the Fresh Start Program.

III. DESCRIPTION AND SOURCE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Male and female children in grades 6-8 (ages 12-14) who have been chosen to participate in the Fresh Start Program at Vine Middle School will be invited to participate in the current study. The Fresh Start program is designed for students who have been repeatedly suspended and/or have been deemed at risk by an administrator at Vine Middle School. The parents(s), as well as the student, must agree that the student will enter the Fresh Start program. The program separates the designated student from the school body (similar to in-school suspension). Students are involved in a token economy system that focuses on behavior, and in studies that maintain

scholastic skills. When a student behaves according to the rules, points are awarded. Once students have earned 25 consecutive points, they are allowed to return to their regular class schedule. At this point they are given a "fresh start." The teachers and administrators are instructed to ignore the student's previous problematic behaviors in order to give them a fresh start. Students can complete the program within five days with full compliance, but most will take 10 days or more to successfully complete the program. Participation in this study will occur prior to participation in the Fresh Start program.

Participants of this study will be recruited from the pool of participants selected for the Fresh Start Program. After the parent(s)/guardian(s) have consented to their child's enrollment in the Fresh Start program they will be provided information regarding this study. The administrator will also invite them to participate in the phenomenological study. The administrator, who is present at the meeting, will explain to the parent(s)/guardian(s) that participation in this study is not required, and will not have any bearing upon their child's participation in the Fresh Start program.

The Fresh Start program currently has a waiting list for enrollment. Participants of this study will be interviewed prior to their first day of the Fresh Start program. This is to collect information before the Fresh Start program is able to influence them, similar to a pre-test.

IV. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

1. A Vine Middle School administrator (principal, or assistant principal) will contact the parent(s)/guardian(s) of children who may benefit from the Fresh Start program. The parents and student are given an invitation for the student to participate in the Fresh Start Program. Most students will have a history of suspensions and other school related offences. Participants for this study will then be recruited from this Fresh Start population. The administrator will also invite students of the Fresh Start Program to participate in the phenomenological study. The administrator will, in most cases, explain to both the parents and the children the scope of the study and the procedure that it will entail. The principal investigator will not have knowledge of who is a candidate until after the administrator has discussed the possibility of the child participating in Fresh Start. For the sake of convenience to the parents, it will be most efficient to have documentation for this study completed at the same time, should they desire to allow their child to participate.

The administrator will be prepared by the principal investigator as to the procedure for recruiting participants for this study. The administrator will: 1) make explicit that the participation in this study is separate from and will have not direct bearing on the child's participation in the fresh start program; 2) have the parents read the consent form, or it will be read to the parents if needed and

questions will be addressed at this time; 3) retain the consent/assent form(s) until the principal investigator is able to retrieve them in person (1-2 school days).

2. The methods of a phenomenological study are to study the phenomena or experience from the perspective of the participant. The investigator will ask a question or make a statement. At this time the participant is to respond by describing an experience which comes to mind. The investigator will listen, and possibly take notes, while the participant describes the experience. Once the participant completes his/her response the investigator may ask about an aspect of the experience that is unclear. These follow up questions, or statements, are based strictly on what has been described as the experience (e.g., "You said "WE" when you described this experience"; "How did you feel when that happened?"). The follow up questions cannot be created prior to the conversation, and are open ended so the participant is not directed or guided to answer in any particular manner. It is at the discretion of the participant whether they shall elaborate for clarification. The intent of the investigator is to ask questions that clarify, yet do not lead the participant. The prime objective is to understand the experience from the perspective of the participant as fully as possible.

In gathering information in this manner, the inquiries are limited to what the participant has described. For this reason only the initial statement or question is known prior to the interview. This is contrasted with a formal questionnaire or structured interview, which the investigator knows exactly what information will be addressed prior to the interview.

In this study the participant is asked to respond to "Tell me about a time you got in trouble." The 8- 12 participants who are in middle school (ages 12-14) will respond with experiences in which they have received a reprimand or punishment. The incident or experience will likely be addressing family, peers or school incidents. The participant is not asked about activities that they *should* have been punished for but an experience in which they *have* received reprimand or punishment. Illegal activities if described, will have been addressed by parent, school, or law enforcement *prior* to the interview. If a participant in the study begins to describe an illegal activity, the tape recorder will be turned off. Issues of physical abuse, if reported, will be reported as mandated by law. The participant will be informed of this procedure prior to the interview.

This conversation (approximately 60 minutes in length) will be audio taped. The interview will be during a time when it will not interfere with the student's academic program.

3. The principal investigator will transcribe the audio taped conversations. The principal investigator will keep audiotapes in a secured filing cabinet, at 438 Claxton Addition, in the College of Education until the tapes are transcribed. The

participants' names will be changed to a fictitious name when transcribed. The only persons who have a key to this cabinet are the department secretary (April Phillips), the faculty advisor (Dianne Whitaker), and the principal investigator (Ronald Roberts). The principal investigator will erase tapes once transcribed. The principal investigator will be the only person who can match the transcripts with the participants, because he will be conducting the interviews.

4. The principal investigator, as well as the faculty advisors, will then analyze transcripts. A phenomenology group, led by Howard Pollio, Ph.D. from the Psychology Department and Sandra Thomas, Ph.D., from the College of Nursing will assist in the analysis of a limited number of transcripts (as group schedule permits). This group meets once a week under faculty supervision in order to assist fellow researchers in thematic analysis and the methods of phenomenological research. Those participating are required to sign a confidentiality form regarding information discussed. Those analyzing the transcripts will look for themes or recurring content in response to the original question.
5. After the themes have been identified, a thematic script will be presented to administrators of Fresh Start. This thematic script will be provided to the administrators for their records. These results will be used to help better focus the curriculum for the next academic year.

V. SPECIFIC RISKS AND PROTECTION MEASURES

There is minimal risk to the participants in this study. Topics discussed are those that have occurred in the past and in which the participant has already received some form of reprimand or punishment. Topics that are currently occurring, or projected illegal activities will not be an option of discussion since it is not within the scope of the request "Tell me about a time you got in trouble." Children are not encouraged to reveal activities for which they have **not** gotten in trouble. In the case of suspected abuse of the child, as mandated by law, a report will be made with child protective services, as well as notification to the principal of Vine Middle School.

Confidentiality will be maintained with respect to the data collected from participants, and the procedure is not likely to be disturbing or harmful. It is possible that a participant will reveal disturbing information that may further traumatize the individual. In such a case, the appropriate school personnel (school psychologist, counselor) will be notified, as well as a referral for further counseling, if needed. Data may be presented in future publications, papers, or conference presentations. In such presentations the information will describe the participants and the school setting in a manner that it will not identify Vine Middle School (i.e., a middle school in East Tennessee). Other descriptive information will be presented in the form of percentages (suspension, expulsion, racial, etc) in order to provide the reader a clear understanding of the type of school setting in which the research was conducted.

Transcripts will not contain any identifying information, except gender, age, and grade. During analysis, advisors and assistants to the principal investigator will sign a confidentiality form.

VI. BENEFITS

There are no direct benefits to the participants in this study. However, they will be able to describe their experiences of getting into trouble with an impartial adult, the principal investigator. This study will directly assist the Fresh Start program of Vine Middle School to better address problematic issues for these students (e.g., blaming others for own actions) by better understanding the perspective of participants prior to their first day of attendance. The awareness, through systematic thematic analysis, will either confirm or add to the administrations currently held beliefs regarding the cognitions of the Fresh Start participants. A systematic thematic analysis will help to define the issues that future participants may be facing prior to the first day of participation in the Fresh Start program. The Fresh Start administrators will have a better understanding of curriculum areas that may need more attention or focus during the next year. This research will also benefit Fresh Start, and other similar programs, in planning curriculum for students who get in trouble in school.

VII. METHODS FOR OBTAINING "INFORMED CONSENT" FROM PARTICIPANTS

After parent(s)/guardian(s) have consented to their child's enrollment in the Fresh Start program, they will be provided information regarding this study. The administrator, who is present at the meeting, will explain to the parent(s)/guardian(s) that participation in this study is not required and will not have any bearing upon their child's participation in the Fresh Start program.

During the scheduled parent-teacher conference an administrator of Vine Middle School will provide the parent(s)/guardian(s) who agree to enroll their child in the Fresh Start Program with complete participant consent forms. The administrator will be informed of the method and scope prepared by the principal investigator

Parent(s)/guardian(s) who agree to enroll their child in the Fresh Start Program will complete parent/guardian Informed Consent Forms at the parent-teacher conference. During or after the parent-teacher conference, the parent will be given an explanation of the Fresh Start Program as well as how the student may benefit from the experience. In addition, this study will be explained, as well as the benefits and risks to the student. The parent and child will then complete the appropriate forms by which they agree to participate. The participant will complete the Children's Informed Assent Form at the parent-teacher conference or prior to the taped interview. All consent and assent forms will be kept in a locked file cabinet at Vine Middle School until the principal investigator is able to collect them.

VIII. QUALIFICATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATOR(S) TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Dianne Whitaker is an Assistant Professor in the College of Education at the University of Tennessee, Psychoeducational Studies Unit. She is a nationally certified school psychologist with over 20 years of experience in school psychology and mental health.

Ron Roberts is a fourth year graduate student in the school psychology doctoral program at The University of Tennessee. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from University of California, at Chico, in 1994. He has worked with children in various settings for over 10 years.

IX. FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT TO BE USED IN THE RESEARCH

The facility to be used is Vine Middle School. A private room will be used for the interviews. The equipment to be used is a tape recorder.

W. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PRINCIPAL/CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S)

By compliance with the policies established by the Institutional Review Board of The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, the principal investigator(s) subscribe to the principles stated in "The Belmont Report" and standards of professional ethics in all research, development, and related activities involving human subjects under the Auspices of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The principal investigator(s) further agree that:

- a. Approval will be obtained from the Institutional Review Board prior to instituting any change in this research project.
- b. Development of any unexpected risks will be immediately reported to the Compliances Section.
- c. An annual review and progress report (Form R) will be completed and submitted when requested by the Institutional Review Board.
- d. Signed informed consent documents will be kept for the duration of the project and for at least three years thereafter at a location approved by the Institutional Review Board.

Signed consent/assent forms and the original data on disk will be kept in locked cabinet at The College of Education, Psychoeducational Studies Unit, 438 Claxton Addition, for the duration of the project. At the conclusion of the project signed consent/forms and the data on disk will be stored in a locked cabinet at The College of Education, Psychoeducational Studies Unit, 438 Claxton Addition, for the remainder of the three-year requirement.

XI. SIGNATURES

ALL SIGNATURES MUST BE ORIGINAL. The Principal Investigator should keep the original copy of the Form B and submit a copy with original signatures for review. Type the name of each individual above the appropriate signature line. Add signature lines for all Co-Principal Investigators, collaborating and student investigators, faculty advisor(s), department head of the Principal Investigator, and the Chair of the Departmental Review Committee. The following information should be typed verbatim, with added categories where needed:

Principal Investigator _____ Ronald L.W. Roberts _____
Signature _____ Date _____

Faculty Advisor _____ Dianne Whitaker, Ph.D. _____
Signature _____ Date _____

XII. DEPARTMENT REVIEW AND APPROVAL

The application described above has been reviewed by the IRB departmental review committee and has been approved. The DRC further recommends that this application be reviewed as:

☒ Expedited Review—Category (ies): 11. Videotaping, filming, or audiotaping

OR

☐ Full IRB Review

Chair, DRC _____ Robert L. Williams, Ph.D. _____
Signature _____ Date _____

Department Head _____ R. Steve McCallum, Ph.D. _____
Signature _____ Date _____

Protocol sent to Compliance Section for final approval on (Date) _____

Approved: Compliance Section
Office of Research
404 Andy Holt Tower

Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix B
Parent Informed Consent Form
Research Study

I, _____, as the parent / legal guardian of _____, agree to the participation of my child in this research study.

I understand that participation in this research study is strictly voluntary, and I may withdraw at any time with no penalty. I understand the total time involved to participate in the study is about 60 minutes. Those conducting the research do not know of any way this interview could hurt my child, and there are no direct benefits for participation in this study. I understand my child will be given the request "Tell me about a time you got in trouble." This request is attempting to discover my child's experience of "getting into trouble," as he/she understands the request. What my child uses as an example is not the focus of the research.

The information from this study will remain private unless child abuse is suspected. The information gathered during this research project may be shared professionally, but will include a made-up name to insure the privacy of my child. The information gained may be used as part of this and/or future educational articles for the next 5 years. I have been given the chance to ask questions about this research study. My child's participation is voluntary without undue influence.

This consent form will be stored for three years past the completion of the study at a University of Tennessee location. If I have any questions about this study, I may contact the following:

Ronald L.W. Roberts, College of Education, Psychoeducational Studies, University of Tennessee,
Knoxville, (423) 974-8145

Dr. Dianne Whitaker, College of Education, Psychoeducational Studies, University of Tennessee,
Knoxville, (423) 974-8145

I have read the above information. I understand that participation is voluntary. I agree to have my child participate in this study. I will receive a copy of this form.

Child's name (print) _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Legal guardian's name (print) _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix C

Children's Informed Assent Form

Research Study

To be read to the participant and signed by the participant prior to study, and after the Signed Consent has been signed by the participant's parent/legal guardian.

Your parents signed permission for you to be a part of this research study. The information in this study will be used as part of a research study. If you have any questions as I explain the study, please feel free to ask them.

This study involves my asking about an experience in your life. The request is "Tell me about a time you got in trouble." Once I ask you about this experience, it is important that you answer it as you best remember that experience. I will tape record our conversation. The information on the tape will not be shared with anyone unless your name/identity has been changed so you will not be recognized. Our conversation about your experience will take approximately 60 minutes. Do you have any questions?

At this time I want to know if you want to be a part of this study. Your participation is voluntary, and that means that you do not have to be a part of it if you do not want to. If you decide at anytime that you do not want to continue in the study, then you may stop without any penalty and no one will be upset with you.

I will type out our conversation. You will be given a made up name. You will not be identified by our conversation by anyone because you will be given a made-up name. This information will be shared with a research group, with my advisor and with my assistant. These individuals will have access to our conversation, although accompanied by a made-up name. This will ensure sure that all of your information is private, and that no one besides myself will know what you said, unless abuse is suspected. I will use the information from this study to look at your experience as you remember it.

I don't know of any way this interview could hurt you, and there are no direct benefits of participation in this study. The information may be used in a research article(s) at a later time.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact the following:

Ronald L.W. Roberts, College of Education, Psychoeducational Studies, University of Tennessee,
Knoxville, (423) 974-8145

Dr. Dianne Whitaker, College of Education, Psychoeducational Studies, University of Tennessee,
Knoxville, (423) 974-8145

If you would like to be in this study, please sign here. You will receive a copy of this form.

Child's name (print) _____ Date _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix D

Qualitative Research Group Confidentiality Form

A phenomenological investigation of the experience of at-risk middle school children getting in trouble.

As a member of the Qualitative Research Group in the department of Psychology under the direction of Dr. Howard Pollio or in the College of nursing under the direction of Dr. Sandra Thomas at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee, I agree to guarantee confidentiality to subjects who participated in the study entitled "A phenomenological investigation of the experience of at-risk middle school children's getting in trouble." I will not publicly divulge information that I learned.

1. Signature _____ Date _____
2. Signature _____ Date _____
3. Signature _____ Date _____
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Appendix E

1. Name and mailing address of the researcher(s)

Principal Investigator

Ronald L.W. Roberts
1301 Laurel Ave, Apt 28A
College of Education
Knoxville, TN 37916
423/ 524-7510 (H), 423/ 974-8145 (W)
Email ronie@utkux.cas.utk.edu

Faculty Advisor

Dianne Whitaker, Ph.D.
438 Claxton Addition
Knoxville TN, 37996-3400
423/ 974-8145 (W)
Email whitaker@utkux.cas.utk.edu

2. Telephone number where the researcher(s) can be reached in the daytime. (See #1)

3. Position of the principal researcher Graduate student (fourth year doctoral student)

4. Name and title of the principal researcher's major professor. Dianne Whitaker, Professor of Psychoeducational Studies

5. Title of Project: A phenomenological investigation of at-risk middle school children's experience of getting in trouble.

6. Description of proposed study:

- Purpose:
To study in a phenomenological manner the experience of "at risk" students experience of "getting in trouble."
- Targeted population:
Eight to twelve male and female children in grades 6-8 (ages 12-14) at X Middle School.
- Data collection procedures:
Open-ended interview
- Estimated time required by Knox County participant:
Interview will take no longer than 60 minute.
- Projected value of study to Knox County
There are no direct benefits to the participants in this study. This study will directly assist the X program of X Middle School to better address problematic issues for these students (e.g., blaming others for own actions) by better understanding the perspective of participants prior to their first day of attendance. . A systematic thematic analysis will help to define the issues that future participants may be facing prior to the first day of participation in the X program. The X administrators will have a better understanding of curriculum areas that may need more attention or focus during the next year.

7. Copy of question: "Tell me about a time you got into trouble."

8. Copies of parent permission statements: (See attached)

9. Approximate proposed times for beginning and ending the study. Times for Knox County participants – 2-3 weeks, beginning in April 1999. Over all completion of study estimated to be May 30, 1999.

Appendix F

NEXT WEEK ONLY

Your child has the chance to take part in a unique opportunity. By signing the attached form, you will give permission for your child to participate in a research study. The study will be conducted by Ronald Roberts, a Doctoral Student at the University of Tennessee. He has received permission from the University, Knox county schools, as well as the principal of Vine Middle School. For participating, **your child will receive a VOL Fan pack.** The Fan pack has posters of the UT Men's and Lady Vols sports teams.

Ron Roberts wants to better understand the child's perspective of "getting into trouble." All children get in to trouble at times, whether for not cleaning their room or not paying attention. Most times, it is a rather small incident. By better understanding their experience of "getting into trouble" it may help Vine Middle School as well as other schools in Knox Co. to better understand the students perspective. Most times researchers, as well as many adults, never ask the children about experiences that affect them. Often the children are not given an opportunity to speak their mind about these issues. Ron Roberts will ask participants to tell about an experience where they got into trouble, as they best remember it. After they share their story he will ask them to explain aspects that are unclear, so he can understand as much as possible. An example would be if your child said "it was unfair", he would not know what *they* meant by "unfair." He would likely ask, "What do *you* mean by unfair?" Or, "What seemed unfair to *you*?" So that children are able to speak freely, the content of what the individual child shares will remain confidential. Results will be available in the Fall.

He will be conducting interviews **for no more than 15 students** at Vine Middle School **NEXT WEEK ONLY.** Please act quickly so your child can have the opportunity to participate, and receive the official VOL fan pack.

Vita

Ronald Lawrence Wegesser Roberts was born and raised in the small Northern California town of Ukiah. After graduating from the local high school, he pursued various interests: travel in Australia, certification as EMT, passing the state exams for Roofing contractors, and participation in youth groups. In 1994, he graduated from the University of California at Chico with a Baccalaureate majoring in Psychology, and minors in Child Development and Family Relations.

In 1995, he began attendance at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. During this time, he obtained assistantships that allowed opportunities to teach and assist the local school psychology consortium. He was elected as a school psychology student Co-representative for his program of study, and a nominee for the Tennessee Association of School Psychologists, William J. Ballard Award, for excellence in graduate work attended. He participated various research groups, which focused on COGNET, Attribution research, Creativity, and South African educators' experience with change. He presented at many local, national, and international conferences, worked as a crisis intervention specialist, taught as an adjunct instructor through the evening school, and assisted faculty in teaching and various workshops.

Upon completion of his Internship with the Tennessee Internship Consortium in Professional Psychology (at the Monroe County School system) he plans to pursue employment either in South Africa (where he conducted research) as a teacher trainer, Industry/Business (Toy Company, Disney, Nickelodeon) where he can help develop fun and educational toys or programs, or as a school psychologist in a school system.