WHEN STUDENTS MISBEHAVE: STUDENT DISCIPLINE FROM THE INSIGHT
APPROACH

by

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When Students Misbehave: Student Discipline from the Insight Approach

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at George Mason University

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my father, Jamie, who has let me journey with him toward a clearer and more refined understanding of ourselves.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

WHEN STUDENTS MISBEHAVE: STUDENT DISCIPLINE FROM THE INSIGHT APPROACH

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This study examines the applicability and utility of the Insight approach to conflict analysis and resolution in the school setting as a response to the persistent, contemporary problem of the school-to-prison pipeline, where kids who are punished for misbehavior through suspension and expulsion are overwhelmingly ending up in the juvenile justice system and without future prospects for success. Guided by the explanatory framework of the Insight approach, which attends specifically and intentionally to the interiority driving behavior, this research takes a new perspective on student misbehavior, hypothesizing that misbehavior is not only behavior that breaks the rules, but is also conflict behavior. Through an integrated case study and pilot project, this research builds on this hypothesis and examines whether specialized Insight skills can help school staff make targeted and precise disciplinary decisions that support students and change patterns of misbehavior, thereby enhancing the probability of positive student outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

       The dissertation you have in your hand is about the change that is possible when

we recognize conflict behavior. I do not intend to point out all the kinds of things we do

in conflict—like yell and fight and hide and deceive and run and panic. The list of what

we do would be too long and too dependent on who is acting to make any difference in

what we do about it. Plus, behaviors that appear to be conflict behaviors may not be

conflict behaviors at all. I could yell in exuberance, fight in an orchestrated duel, hide for

fun, deceive in poker, run to win, panic in the face of a tidal wave. Listing categorized

behaviors drops us down the rabbit hole—we could go on and on, but behavior is

contextual and its meaning is found in what motivates it, not simply in the manifestation

of the behavior itself. So this dissertation, while about conflict behavior, is not a list of

behaviors.

       The fact that we can list, though, is telling. It tells us that there is something

common and recurrent about conflict and the behaviors associated with it. Getting to

what is common about those behaviors is what moves us from Wonderland to the real

world. And in the real world, if we can have an explanatory understanding of what makes

conflict, then we can reliably do something about it. We can reliably disrupt its

destructive consequences and promote change. The Insight approach to conflict analysis

and resolution (the Insight approach) attempts this.[1] It recognizes that what is common to conflict behavior is the way in which we use our minds when we decide to use behaviors that tend to pull us further and further away from our goals and further and further apart from each other. Based on how we use our minds when we decide to use conflict behavior, the Insight approach hypothesizes what we can do to disrupt it.

This dissertation does two things. At its base, it explores the Insight approach hypothesis. It takes a critical lens on the assumptions and claims of the Insight approach with regard to conflict behavior, and for the first time puts it in conversation with broader literature about how we use our mind in conflict and what it takes to transform it. It examines the Insight approach in relation to cognitive theory, decision-making and curiosity. And, most crucially, it applies the Insight approach to a practical and contemporary problem.

The Insight approach, though, is like the hub of a wheel. It is an explanatory framework that holds together the common and recurrent method of what we do with our minds when we engage in and disengage from conflict. Therefore, the possible spokes that run from its center, which represent the gamut of conflicts along with their personal, social and institutional complexities and consequences, are innumerable. To adequately explore the Insight approach, I chose a spoke—the spoke of student discipline.

Why student discipline? To be frank, I first conceived of this research as an extension of my work on Insight Policing and the problem of retaliatory violence. Insight Policing is a communication skill-set I helped develop for police officers through the

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[1] Melchin and Picard, *Transforming Conflict through Insight*; Price, "Method in Peacemaking"; Price, "Explaining Human Conflict: Human Needs Theory and the Insight Approach."

Retaliatory Violence Insight Project (RVIP), a U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance funded program. In collaboration with the Memphis, TN and Lowell, MA police departments, our work identified that police efforts to intervene in retaliatory, violent crime, itself the consequence of violent tit-for-tat responses to interpersonal conflicts, must first recognize retaliatory crime as a symptom of a broader conflict over police legitimacy.[2] Along the lines of procedural justice thinkers, RVIP observed that if an officer could diffuse the initial conflict between himself and the citizen and restore rapport, he would be able to work on responding to the conflict driving retaliatory crime, thereby preventing the next strike. What RVIP found was that in order for officers to do that, they needed an adequate framework for understanding conflict; a practical framework that could be applied to guide communication and decision-making within an interaction to transform contention and encourage cooperation. The framework that RVIP offered was the Insight approach.

RVIP piloted Insight Policing in Memphis, TN and Lowell, MA, and has since trained officers in Montclair, NJ. It appears to be making a difference. Officers trained in Insight Policing have used its framework and communication techniques to identify conflict situations and defuse them. Officers have noticed that they are reacting less volatilely to disrespect and noncompliance than before the training. They have reported that their decision-making is more appropriate and precise in contentious encounters. And they are making fewer arrests and garnering more cooperation in contentious and

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[2] Price and Price, "Insight Policing and the Role of the Civilian in Police Accountability."

potentially dangerous moments like disorder calls, traffic stops and warrant pick-ups.[3]

This signals that using the framework of the Insight approach seems to lead to

procedurally just practices that improve outcomes in high conflict contexts.

Recognizing the promise of Insight Policing as an applied practice of the Insight

approach, I wanted this dissertation research to test those outcomes more rigorously. The

constraints of an independently conducted dissertation project led me to consider how I

could do that within a contained environment—one less unpredictable and complex than

a city. Schools are what occurred to me. Not only does retaliatory violence often afflict

youth of high school age, but research shows that retaliatory violence permeates school

and neighborhood boundaries.[4] I believed that I could study cases of retaliation within the

contained environment of a school to get a better understanding of what was actually

happening when Insight principles were applied to changing retaliatory dynamics.

What I found as I embarked on my research, however, was consistent with what

Levick and Feierman show: school structure tends to reduce violence among youth.[5]

Certainly there are school structures—including polices and practices—that some argue

exacerbate violence and yield troubling school climates.[6] There are also some schools in

which retaliation and violence are extraordinary problems. Those, however, are more of

the exception than the rule. And those troubled schools are difficult to penetrate being so

overwhelmed with managing crisis levels of violence and misbehavior. Like most

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[3] Price and Price, "The Retaliatory Violence Insight Project: A Final Report on Insight Policing, OMB No. 1121-0329."

[4] Willits, Broidy, and Denman, "Schools, Neighborhood Risk Factors, and Crime."

[5] Feierman, Levick, and Mody, "The School-to-Prison Pipeline ... and Back."

[6] Baker, "Are We Missing the Forest for the Trees?"; Hyman and Perone, "The Other Side of School Violence."

schools, the school with which I ultimately partnered did not have a problem with

retaliatory violence. There were fights—a small number—but fighting and violence were

not the biggest issues they faced. I did, however, discover powerful parallels between

school discipline and policing.

First, there is a clear parallel between the institutional legitimacy of police

officers and that of school authorities. The majority of behavioral infractions in schools

across the country, within Washington, D.C., and in my partner school, are not violent

behaviors but infractions of insubordination—consequences of conflict between students

and staff. This finding parallels what is anecdotally the most sanctioned behavior in law

enforcement: obstruction of justice—essentially refusal to comply with a police

directive—a crime resulting from conflict that presents itself within the interaction

between the police officer and the citizen, not the crime to which the officer is initially

called to respond.[7]

Second, just as policing rests on a fundamental philosophy of deterrence through

punishment, the culture of American school discipline is rooted in a history of

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[7] National arrest estimate data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) (http:
//www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=datool&surl=/arrests/index.cfm#) show that in 2012, 3,448,856 out of
12,198,491 arrests were made for "all other offenses," defined by BJS as "all violations of state or local
laws not specifically identified as Part I [violent and property] or Part II [nonviolent] offenses, except
traffic violations." This category contains the highest number arrests, followed by aggregated property
crime at 1,646,212 and drug abuse violations including possession and sale at 1,552,432. "All other
offenses" include arrests for failure to obey, failure to comply, resisting arrest, and others, depending on
jurisdiction—arrests that result from crimes that occur during a police encounter. In addition to "all other
offenses," officers report that they charge for disorderly conduct and assault on a police officer during
contentious encounters with citizens. These crimes are captured, though not disaggregated by parties
involved, in BSJ data. 2012 arrest numbers for disorderly conduct were 543,995 and for "other assaults,"
i.e. not aggravated, 2012 numbers were 1,199,476. While the data is not sufficiently detailed to determine
how many arrests were made based on insubordination to police officers, it suggests that data could support
what officers report anecdotally—that arrest is often used as a tool to secure compliance in contentious
citizen encounters.

punishment. Dating from the Victorian era, when public education was spreading across the U.S., teachers were responsible for both the moral and educational development of children, who were now spending time in schools rather than with their parents. Part of this responsibility was discipline. And at the time, corporal punishment was thought to be the best way to deter bad behavior and produce conformity to rules and social norms. Advances in child psychology in the 1960s and 1970s led to widespread disciplinary reforms in the 1980s, which saw many states banning corporal punishment altogether. What filled the vacuum left by corporal punishment was deterrence through exclusionary discipline. While different in form, the function was the same—to deter bad behavior and secure compliance.[8]

Additionally, schools have been struggling with the ramifications of the school-to-prison-pipeline, which has been attributed to school disciplinary practices, and the problem is pressing. This research therefore seeks to build on the discoveries of Insight Policing and apply them to the school context. Could administrators make more supportive disciplinary decisions that keep students out of the school-to-prison pipeline if they were attuned to the possibility that rule-breaking behavior might at the same time be conflict behavior? Could they use the framework and communication skills of the Insight approach to transform conflict behavior and develop targeted interventions that address a student's unique challenges? My hypothesis is that they could, and that the school environment is a ripe place to test-run an application of the Insight approach in a setting parallel to law enforcement, but distinct in many ways. What I did to test my hypotheses

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[8] Dupper and Dingus, "Corporal Punishment in U.S. Public Schools."

was to train staff at one D.C. Public Charter School and assess the utility of the Insight approach as they applied it to school discipline.

As research projects go, you begin with a master plan, but almost as soon as you start to implement the plan, the plan changes. So it was with my work trying to explore the possibility that the Insight approach could be useful in the context of student discipline. My initial idea was to integrate myself into a school as a volunteer counselor of sorts, where students who misbehaved would be randomly sent to me for an Insight conversation about what had happened and the valuing and deciding motivating the behavior. The question was: would an Insight conversation lead to more targeted and precise disciplinary decisions than interventions without an Insight lens? The idea was excellent in theory. And I was miraculously able to persuade one D.C. public high school to agree to implementing it. But when it came down to the details the partnership ended. There was parental consent, what my own relationship with the students might look like, school liability in the case that my hair-brained, yet-untested method would be harmful rather than helpful, and navigating the vast bureaucracy of D.C. public schools' central office. The principal at that D.C. school, however, gave me the idea that what would be useful for a school would be to train their behavior staff so that the behavior staff could use Insight skills in their own encounters with misbehaving students. This was the brilliant idea. Not only was it something that could be done—I had done a similar thing with RVIP—but the skills I would train had the potential to persist with those staff who learned them. My research question then became, "Is the Insight approach a useful

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framework and set of skills to help school behavior staff make targeted and precise

disciplinary decisions that support students and change patterns of misbehavior?"

I discussed potential partnerships with D.C. Public School's central office, the

principal and vice principal of another public high school in D.C., and with the central

office of Fairfax County, Virginia public schools.[9] I was unable to secure a partnership

through any of these channels. And then I met the vice principal of restorative justice of a

D.C. high school called James Monroe Public Charter High School.[10] Being a charter

school, Monroe had flexibility. There was no central office, no approvals beyond the

principal of the school, and I was able to work directly with the vice principal of

restorative justice, who managed the behavior staff. He helped me schedule interviews,

trainings and assessments. With Monroe, I embarked on a case study and pilot project

that applied the Insight approach to student discipline. It included qualitative pre-training

interviews, behavior staff training, skills assessments and qualitative post-training

evaluation interviews.

What follows in this dissertation is first, in Chapter 1, an exploration of the

current crisis in school discipline, the best practices there are for addressing it, and the

gap that the Insight approach might fill if it were applied as a complimentary resource.

Chapter 2 sets out the research methods I use to understand the case study of Monroe

High and presents a picture of the small public charter high school—a high school

committed to ending the school-to-prison pipeline, but finding itself struggling to

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[9] I had meetings and email exchanges with each of my potential partners, however approvals never came through for a variety of reasons unique to each site. I prepared a one-page description of the proposed project which I left with my contact at each site. This can be viewed in Appendix A.
[10] I have changed the name of my partner school and provided staff pseudonyms throughout this paper to maintain confidentiality and in accordance with IRB protocol.

abandon exclusionary discipline. Chapter 3 describes the foundational theory and assumptions of the Insight approach and puts it in dialogue for the first time with other ideas on cognition and decision-making. Building on this, Chapter 4 presents the framework and theory of change put forth by the Insight approach. This chapter demonstrates what the Insight approach contends by conflict behavior and the foundation for the skills it suggests have the power to transform it. Furthermore it argues that the Insight approach has the potential to help behavior staff make targeted and precise disciplinary decisions that would mitigate the use of exclusionary discipline. Chapter 5 describes the pilot program that I developed and implemented at Monroe, including a detailed look at what I taught to behavior staff and what I did to research the efficacy of the Insight approach as applied to student discipline. Chapters 6 and 7 lay out what I found. And Chapter 8 discusses the implications of this research and the directions it points to for the future.

CHAPTER ONE: A CRISIS IN STUDENT DISCIPLINE

Students misbehave in all kinds of ways—from not coming prepared to class, to being loud in the hallways, to violating dress codes, to disobeying directives, to substance use, to threats, to violence. Student discipline encompasses the policies schools enact and the actions teachers and administrators take to handle student misbehavior.

The hypothesis of this study is that student misbehavior is often conflict behavior, as defined by the Insight approach: a decision to defend against a valuing of threat. Based on that hypothesis it follows that if teachers and administrators are able to identify conflict behavior when students misbehave, they can become curious about more than whether or not a behavior breaks the rules. They can become curious about the threat that drives the behavior. From the perspective of the Insight approach, this curiosity should facilitate at least three things. First, it should facilitate insights in teachers and administrators, positioning them to understand what is motivating a student's behavior. Second, it should facilitate insights in students, who are given a chance to reflect on what is motivating their decisions to misbehave. Third, it should facilitate targeted and precise disciplinary measures that address conflict behavior directly, improving problematic behavior and mitigating schools' reliance on the blunt hammer of exclusionary discipline.

My research question, therefore is this: Is the Insight approach a useful framework and set of skills to help school staff make targeted and precise disciplinary

decisions that support students and change patterns of misbehavior? This is timely work, because currently America is facing a crisis in student discipline and educators are searching for ways to rectify it.

The Crisis in Student Discipline

Student discipline in the US is a big deal. It has been getting more and more popular attention as evidence mounts that strongly correlates student discipline with detrimental student outcomes and what has been called the "school-to-prison pipeline," where students are leaving school only to fall into the juvenile justice system.[11] Exclusionary student discipline—suspensions and expulsions used to punish kids by keeping them from the classroom—has been deemed the culprit.[12]

According to the UCLA Center on Civil Rights Remedies, 3.5 million public school students, or about 7% of students K-12,[13] were suspended out-of-school at least once during the 2011-2012 school year.[14] That figure is more than the total number of students enrolled in public schools as high school seniors, and certainly more than graduate each year.[15] Nearly half of those suspended (1.55 million, or 44%) have been suspended more than once,[16] and 95% of their suspensions were for misconduct related to

[11] Shollenberger, "Racial Disparities in School Suspension and Subsequent Outcomes: Evidence from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth."
[12] Balfanz, Byrnes, and Fox, "Sent Home and Put Off-Track."
[13] An estimated 49 million students are enrolled in K-12 public schools, Davis and Bauman, "School Enrollment in the United States: 2011."
[14] "Fast Facts: Back to School Statistics."
[15] Losen et al., "Are We Closing the School Discipline Gap?," 4.Are We Closing the School Discipline Gap, 4. 3.1 million students graduate from high school each year: "Public High School Graduation Rates."
[16] Losen et al., "Are We Closing the School Discipline Gap?"

insubordination, minor disruptions, or violations of school codes, not for violent or criminal behavior, or for behavior where sanction is mandated by the state.[17]

The data show that American schools are suspending too often and most of the time suspension is discretionary, which means that teachers and administrators are choosing suspension. Why would teachers and administrators choose suspension? There are a number of reasons: exclusion is an available and widely used tool, it is culturally anchored in a belief in punishment's efficacy, it can produce rapid suppression of bad behavior by removing problematic students from the classroom and reducing disruption, and being sent out of class or school is seen as a severe punishment that sends a strong message.[18] When a student is suspended or expelled they are being told that they have crossed a line and that their privilege to learn has been revoked. Suspensions and expulsions go on a student's record. They contribute to how a student is seen and understood. They hurt a student's chances for the future. No kid should want that. In fact, part of the draw to suspend and expel has to do with its strength as a deterrent.

Exclusionary Discipline and Zero Tolerance

Suspension and expulsion have a long history as disciplinary methods in the U.S., but their widespread use rose out of the late 1980s zero-tolerance polices in law enforcement that were enacted to curb a rising tide of drug and juvenile crime. Three-strikes laws, mandatory minimum sentencing and broken windows policing applied strict penalties and intensive enforcement to minor crimes in order to deter more serious

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[17] Boccanfuso and Kuhfeld, "Multiple Responses, Promoting Results: Evidence-Based Nonpunitive Alternatives to Zero-Tolerance," 3; Fabelo et al., "Breaking Schools' Rules," x.
[18] Maag, "Rewarded by Punishment."

crimes. The theory of deterrence embedded in these policies holds that the threat of swift, certain and severe punishments will keep people from offending.[19] Remarkably, the 1990s saw a steep drop in crime, a drop that some have attributed to deterrence policing policies.[20] As we know now, during that same time period America grew its prison population exponentially, incarcerating a disproportionate number of black Americans for nonviolent crimes, and ultimately compromising public perceptions of police legitimacy—the effects of which the nation is currently trying to sort out.[21] But the apparent effectiveness of zero-tolerance law enforcement policies during the 1990s influenced schools as they dealt with student misbehavior.

In 1994, the Gun-Free Schools Act moved zero-tolerance law enforcement policies squarely from the street to the schoolhouse. It required that school districts get tough-on-crime by tying federal education funding to whether or not states passed laws mandating the expulsion of students who brought a weapon to school. The Gun-Free Schools Act was the watershed moment for school-based zero-tolerance polices. What defined those policies were severe, predetermined punishments for sanctionable behaviors.[22] The idea spread that putting students out of school as punishment for bad behavior would not only eradicate that bad behavior, but would send a clear message to others that misbehaving would not be tolerated. By 1997, at least 79 percent of schools

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[19] See Jack P. Gibbs, *Crime, Punishment, and Deterrence* (New York: Elsevier Scientific Publishing Co., 1975). On the other hand, the crime-reducing effect of broken windows policing has been argued to be a result of higher arrest rates, and therefore incapacitation, of individuals involved in more serious crime. See Sampson, Winship, and Knight, "Translating Causal Claims."
[20] Braga et al., "Problem-Oriented Policing in Violent Crime Areas: A Randomized Controlled Experiment." For the debate on the causes of the 1990s crime drop, see also Eck and Maguire, "Have Changes in Policing Reduced Violent Crime? An Assessment of the Evidence."
[21] Greene, "Zero-Tolerance: A Case Study of Police Policies and Practices in New York City."
[22] Skiba and Knesting, "Zero Tolerance, Zero Evidence."

nationwide had implemented zero-tolerance policies to curb student misbehavior, in the

hope that those policies would ensure a safe and orderly learning environment for those

who were behaving well.[23]

The Effectiveness of Zero-Tolerance Punishment in Schools

What we are learning now is that the deterrent effect of suspension and expulsion

is not effective for all students, especially for students who have already been suspended

for behaving badly. Data show that students who are disciplined once through

exclusionary practices are more likely to be disciplined again.[24] A comprehensive study

of Texas school discipline demonstrated that "students who were involved in the school

disciplinary system averaged eight suspensions and/or expulsions during their middle or

high school years."[25] One would predict that if suspension were effective, it would only

take one suspension to curb disruptive behavior, however the prevalence of repeat

punishment indicates that there is something missing in exclusionary discipline. It does

not reliably work to deter or interrupt misbehavior as it was intended, and may even

promote it.

This is consistent with punishment studies in education as well as in behavioral

psychology and criminology.[26] Punishment has been shown to be only variably effective

at changing behavior. Atkins and colleagues conducted a study of middle school

students' disciplinary referrals. They found that discipline referrals increased during

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[23] Boccanfuso and Kuhfeld, "Multiple Responses, Promoting Results: Evidence-Based Nonpunitive Alternatives to Zero-Tolerance," 2.

[24] Boccanfuso and Kuhfeld, "Multiple Responses, Promoting Results: Evidence-Based Nonpunitive Alternatives to Zero-Tolerance."

[25] Fabelo et al., "Breaking Schools' Rules."

[26] See for example Cullen and Jonson, *Correctional Theory: Context and Consequences*.

winter and spring for 55% of students who were disciplined in the fall semester with suspension or detention. The remaining 45% of students who were punished during the fall semester were not punished again. For them, the punishment seemed to work. These findings show that in the education setting, punishment does not consistently extinguish inappropriate behaviors; in fact it works less than half the time.[27]

This is not a surprise when we look at classic studies in behavioral psychology. Skinner famously demonstrated with rats in a box more than half a century ago that punishment may weaken behavior for a time, but its effect does not necessarily persist. Furthermore, he found that punishment does not replace inappropriate behavior with behavior that is more desirable. It can activate aggression and instill irrational fears that are not only difficult to overcome, but may perpetuate deviance.[28]

In the criminological literature there seems to be agreement that deterrence is generally effective, from hot spots policing, which increases police presence in high crime areas, to focused deterrence strategies, which target crime-prone individuals, to leveraging fees and fines to encourage regulatory compliance.[29] Nagin, however, while arguing that deterrence is important and can be effective in crime prevention, shows a similar inconsistency in its general efficacy, noting that deterrence depends on the deterring policy itself, how it is implemented and how it is perceived.[30] In this he builds on Cook's recognition that deterrence is ultimately a perceptual phenomenon and

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[27] Atkins et al., "Suspensions and Detentions in an Urban, Low-Income School"; Maag, "Rewarded by Punishment."

[28] Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*. Watson, "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It."

[29] Telep and Weisburd, "What Is Known About the Effectiveness of Police Practices in Reducing Crime and Disorder?"; Polinsky and Shavell, "The Theory of Public Enforcement of Law."

[30] Nagin, "Criminal Deterrence Research at the Outset of the Twenty-First Century."

depends on subjective analyses of risk.[31] Bouffard and Piquero further expand on Cook's

observation in their empirical evaluation of Sherman's defiance theory.[32] They show that

deterrence through punishment is not just a matter of risk of punishment, but is linked to

social bondedness and feelings of fairness and shame. Interestingly, they found that

deterrence is least effective when offenders are poorly bonded, perceive the sanction to

be unfair and stigmatizing, and are ashamed because of it. This could help to explain why

students' misbehavior persists after being disciplined by exclusion. They feel put out and

left behind, weakening a sense of bondedness. Golann's field work exploring students'

experiences of a school with rigid, exclusionary disciplinary protocols revealed that

students who were often punished "developed a negative attitude toward the school and

their teachers, and their feelings of stress overshadowed any positive learning

experiences."[33]

Bouffard and Piquero's finding that deterrence works more often when offenders

are well bonded links to literature on procedural justice. Tom Tyler argues that "[w]hen

people are dealing with authorities or institutions, their evaluations of legitimacy are

primarily linked to assessments of the fairness of the authority's or the institution's

procedures."[34] In other words, when what authorities do is deemed to be fair, their

legitimacy is enhanced. When legitimacy is enhanced, studies show that individuals are

more likely to cooperate with authorities and comply with the law. This correlation of

procedural justice judgments to legitimacy, cooperation and compliance extends from

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[31] Cook, "Research in Criminal Deterrence."
[32] Bouffard and Piquero, "Defiance Theory and Life Course Explanations of Persistent Offending."
[33] Golann, "The Paradox of Success at a No-Excuses School," 109.
[34] Tyler, "Enhancing Police Legitimacy," 91.

non-offenders to victims to offenders themselves.[35] Individuals will accept and comply with outcomes that are not favorable to them when they perceive the process that determined the outcome to be fair.[36] This is quite remarkable and contradicts rational choice explanations of behavior.

Tyler finds that judgments of procedural justice are based on four key factors: participation and voice, neutrality and transparency, dignity and respect, and trust.[37] When authorities humanize and take a person into account, rather than blindly applying a rule or punishment, individuals are more likely to judge their authority as legitimate and consent to it.[38] Extending these observations to the inconsistent effects of exclusionary discipline would suggest that there may be perceptions of procedural injustice in student punishment, leading to further misbehavior.

While punishment has the capacity to deter and change behavior in some cases, that capacity is linked to procedural justice judgments, degrees of bondedness, and ultimately consent. These findings are important to bear in mind as we consider student discipline. The effect of punishment cannot be linked only to the sanction itself—the suspension or the expulsion, for example. Whether or not a sanction works as a deterrent or a strategy for improving behavior depends on how it is implemented, on the context, relationships, perceptions, feelings, and procedural justice judgments of the student

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[35] See for example: White, Mulvey, and Dario, "Arrestees' Perceptions of the Police Exploring Procedural Justice, Legitimacy, and Willingness to Cooperate With Police Across Offender Types"; Jackson et al., "Monopolizing Force?"; Sunshine and Tyler, "The Role of Procedural Justice and Legitimacy in Shaping Public Support for Policing."

[36] Ibid., 92.

[37] Tyler, "Enhancing Police Legitimacy," 94–95.

[38] The ideas of procedural justice and police legitimacy mirror Sharp's conception of power as based on consent. Sharp, *Power and Struggle*.

misbehaving and the administrators involved in handling the misbehavior. The efficacy of punishment is not simply a matter of consequence.

To date, I have found no empirical studies that show exclusionary discipline in schools to cause improved student behavior. Nonetheless, some administrators and educators continue to advocate for exclusionary discipline as both an important deterrent and a tool to keep disruption from their classrooms and improve student performance.[39] A number of charter schools, for example, have explicitly adopted "no-excuses" policies that parallel zero-tolerance as they have worked to close the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students. The idea is that academic success, particularly among traditionally disadvantaged populations, is dependent on highly rule-oriented and regulated structures, ones that include exclusionary discipline.[40] Many of these charters have had astounding academic results, however critics argue that the exclusionary practices they use "weed" out those students who do not conform to the strict environment or do not excel academically, leaving traditional public schools to absorb them and doing nothing to improve their behavior.[41]

Meanwhile, the research indicates that exclusionary discipline often reinforces negative behavior and pushes the majority of students who experience it away from academic success.[42] Costenbader and Markson surveyed 252 students who had been suspended during their school career. Sixty-nine percent felt that suspension did not help

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[39] Cullen et al., "What Can Be Done To Improve Struggling High Schools?"

[40] Goodman, "Charter Management Organizations and the Regulated Environment: Is It Worth the Price?," 89.

[41] Goodman, "Charter Management Organizations and the Regulated Environment: Is It Worth the Price?"

[42] Boccanfuso and Kuhfeld, "Multiple Responses, Promoting Results: Evidence-Based Nonpunitive Alternatives to Zero-Tolerance," 2.

them, 32% predicted that they would be suspended again and 55% were angry at the person who had suspended them.[43]

A 2014 analysis of the effects of missing school showed that missing 3 days of instructional time, the average length of out-of-school suspensions, leaves kids a full grade below on reading levels.[44] Students who have been suspended or expelled are less likely to graduate on time, twice as likely to drop out than students who have not been suspended or expelled, and more likely to make contact with the juvenile justice system.[45] Plus, high rates of suspension have been correlated to lower school-wide academic achievement and a lower sense of overall school safety, even when all other factors are held equal.[46]

There is clearly a crisis in student discipline. Too many kids are missing school—3.5 million students are suspended each year. Too many kids are dropping out—2.6 million 16-24 year-olds are neither in school nor have a high school diploma.[47] Too many kids are ending up in the juvenile justice system—1.5 million young people are arrested annually.[48] And these outcomes are disproportionately affecting young people of color and students with disabilities.[49]

As recently as January of 2014, the U.S. Department of Education called on public schools across the nation to "proactively redesign discipline policies and practices

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[43] Costenbader and Markson, "School Suspension."
[44] Ginsburg, Jordan, and Chang, "Absences Add Up: How School Attendance Influences Student Success."
[45] Fabelo et al., "Breaking Schools' Rules."
[46] Skiba, "The Failure of Zero Tolerance," 30.
[47] Stark, Noel, and McFarland, "Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States."
[48] Puzzanchera, "Juvenile Arrests 2011."
[49] Losen et al., "Are We Closing the School Discipline Gap?"

to more effectively foster supportive and safe school climates."[50] They concede that this call is highly complex—not only bureaucratically, as it requires schools to develop policy and train staff, but practically too. It requires that schools implement procedures that balance order, learning and safety in the classroom with a discipline protocol that supports students, prevents bad behavior and holds students accountable without excluding them. This is a major shift and a major task, but ultimately this is what schools want. They want to educate their students, support them in their growth and see them become successful adults. The question is: how?

Current Best Practices

The answer to how is complex and multi-faceted. There has yet to be developed a winning formula that will insure good behavior on the part of students and effective discipline on the part of schools. However much is being done to piece together best practices that address aspects of the problem and reduce exclusion. Most predominantly, educators are recommending, and schools are beginning to implement, positive behavioral interventions and supports, restorative justice, and social/ emotional learning to keep kids on track.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

Given both the unpredictability of punishment as an effective method of behavior change as well as the fact that punishment does not replace problematic behavior with desirable behavior, positive behavioral interventions and supports systems (PBIS), which

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[50] U.S. Department of Education, *Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline*, ii.

address these deficits, have gained traction. In 2015, 8% of all US public schools had

implemented PBIS and 16,000 school teams had been trained in it.[51]

PBIS promotes a broad implementation framework with practices informed by

behavioral psychology. It is influenced by that field's findings on the environmental

prompts for behavior, particularly positive and negative reinforcements. Rather than

punishment, PBIS advocates proactively teaching expected behaviors and using a system

of rewards to reinforce them. Schools develop school-wide behavior standards, such as

"be respectful, be responsible, and be safe," and integrate those standards into the school

environment and into each classroom. Students are praised and affirmed when they

behave according to a school's stated standards. When students do not carry out expected

behaviors and instead act out in problematic ways, PBIS maintains that the behavior has a

function, a function that needs to be assessed in order to appropriately intervene.

According to PBIS, behaviors can function either to acquire something or to avoid

something.[52] For example, Dillon might start telling jokes in class when the class is

presented with math work. A PBIS functional behavior assessment based on staff

observations of Dillon might analyze this as functional avoidance: Dillon acts out

because he does not want to do the math work. Acting out gets him sent out of class,

inadvertently reinforcing his bad behavior by fulfilling his desire to avoid it. Determining

this to be the function of Dillon's behavior, staff would convene to strategically help

Dillon with his difficulty in math and instruct him on how to deal with situations he

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[51] Vincent et al., "Effectiveness of Schoolwide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports in Reducing Racially Inequitable Disciplinary Exclusion."
[52] Horner and Sugai, "Implementation Blueprint and Self-Assessment: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports."

would prefer to avoid. In addition, PBIS would have Dillon set goals such as engage in math a certain number of times in a given week. When he meets these goals, he is rewarded with something as tangible as a $5 gift card. This way he is taught and incentivized to behave appropriately.

PBIS promotes teaching positive behavioral norms school-wide, arguing that students need to be taught how to behave appropriately if we are to expect them to behave appropriately. PBIS also uses reward-based interventions to reinforce positive behavior. It has been shown to lower exclusionary discipline rates, particularly in elementary schools when its systems are implemented school-wide.[53]

Restorative Justice

Restorative justice in schools, which grew out of restorative justice responses to crime, has also been gaining ground as a behavior intervention policy intended to reduce suspensions. It builds on PBIS in that in addition to the role rewards and punishments play in motivating behavior, it acknowledges that people are "motivated by a need for affirming social relationships."[54] Restorative justice begins to address the importance of bondedness in effective discipline. Based on three core principals: repairing harm, involving stakeholders and transforming community relationships, restorative justice asserts that misbehavior not only breaks the rules, but breaches the social contract of the school community. What restores a student to the community is the student taking responsibility for that breach, not punishment by exclusion. In order to be restored, a

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[53] Bradshaw, Mitchell, and Leaf, "Examining the Effects of Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports on Student Outcomes: Results From a Randomized Controlled Effectiveness Trial in Elementary Schools."

student must be present to the community and must participate in acknowledging the harm that has been caused, to whom, what needs and obligations have arisen, and who has the obligation to address the needs, repair the harm, and restore the broken relationships.[55]

Exclusionary discipline, therefore, is counterproductive to the restorative justice philosophy.[56] Restorative practices include restorative meetings, conferences, and circles, which can include very few or very many people, depending on the harm done. In these sessions facilitators ask restorative questions that get the student thinking directly about the incident and their harmful behavior. Typical questions include: What happened? What were you thinking at the time? Who was affected by what happened and how have they been harmed? What could you have done differently? What do you think needs to be done to make things right? And, what needs to happen to ensure this situation does not happen again? These questions are intended to encourage responsibility and empathy. The student who has broken the rules acknowledges the harm she has caused and agrees to take steps to repair it to preserve and strengthen community relationships.

Restorative justice has been widely and variously implemented, and it has made an impact on both school climate and rates of exclusion.[57] Researchers conclude that schools should adopt restorative justice principles school-wide as an integrated part of a school's ethos in order to achieve a positive effect. When they do, according to a Scottish study, schools find "a clear positive impact on relationships, seen in the views and actions

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[55] Armour, "Ed White Middle School Restorative Discipline Evaluation: Implementation and Impact, 2012/2013 Sixth Grade."
[56] See for example: Morrison, *Restoring Safe School Communities*; Schiff, "Dignity, Disparity and Desistance: Effective Restorative Justice Strategies to Plug the 'School-to-Prison' Pipeline."
[57] "Improving School Climate: Evidence from Schools Implementing Restorative Practices."

of staff and pupils and a reduction of playground incidents, discipline referrals, exclusion and need for external support."[58]

Social Emotional Learning

Where restorative justice focuses on repairing the relationships that misbehavior damages and PBIS focuses on how schools can teach and reinforce appropriate behaviors, social and emotional learning (SEL) focuses on augmenting a student's internal pro-social capacities for self-control. The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), a clearinghouse for SEL, identifies five interrelated cognitive skills that are essential for successfully managing daily challenges: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and decision-making.[59] Teaching students these skills is "protective" against risky and challenging behavior, because with these skills students are better able to understand and control their emotions, empathize with others and make responsible decisions. School-wide SEL programs have been shown to both improve school climates and affect rates of exclusionary discipline.[60]

SEL focuses on prevention through learning, rather than through direct intervention. Its programs and curricula lay the emotional and reflective groundwork for appropriate behavior for school and for life beyond the classroom. Some schools have extended the program from student learning to teacher learning, helping teachers, who

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[58] McCluskey et al., "Can Restorative Practices in Schools Make a Difference?," 415.
[59] Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, "Safe And Sound."
[60] Durlak et al., "The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning."

experience high levels of stress in the workplace, manage their stress in ways that enable them to interact with students productively.[61]

SEL, restorative justice and PBIS each recognize that there are social and emotional skills that must be fostered and supported if schools are going to build environments where students behave appropriately and where exclusionary discipline is only used as a last resort. Knowing how to behave and knowing what community expectations are, as PBIS stresses, are critical components to students behaving well. When misbehavior occurs, which is inevitable even in the most supportive learning environments, restorative justice helps to involve the student who misbehaved in correcting a situation that got out of hand. It facilitates apology, taking responsibility, and making amends. This is critical for fostering supportive, inclusive, strong relationships in schools. In order for positive behaviors to be chosen and for restorative processes to be participated in, students and teachers need fundamental social and emotional competencies. These skills lead to mutual respect, community connection, and belonging, which are key to fostering not only positive values and academic motivation, but also support the legitimacy of school authority.[62]

What's Missing?

While schools and school districts are taking steps to improve school climates and change disciplinary practices through policies that restrict the use of suspension and expulsion and by implementing best practices like positive behavioral interventions and

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[61] Jones, Bouffard, and Weissbourd, "Educator's Social and Emotional Skills Vital to Learning."
[62] Elbertson, Brackett, and Weissberg, "School-Based Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Programming: Current Perspectives."

supports, restorative justice and social and emotional learning, challenges remain.

Lustick, for example, argues that in many schools restorative justice practices "reiterate

conventional discipline, particularly in contexts where zero tolerance policies still

dominate school culture."[63]

Shifting away from decades-long use of exclusionary discipline is a heavy lift. It

takes broad buy-in from staff, many of whom believe in the effectiveness of strict

punishments for misbehavior and rely on sending kids out to maintain order in their

classrooms. The data and experiences of many schools—including the case that I follow

in this study, Monroe High—show that getting student discipline right is an enormous

challenge.

As I show in Chapter 2, Monroe High implements positive behavioral

interventions and supports, social and emotional learning curriculums and restorative

justice disciplinary practices, and yet continues to struggle with instituting supportive

student discipline that is successful at changing patterns of misbehavior. During school

year 2013-2014, the suspension rate at Monroe High was 17%: meaning 57 students out

of 334 were suspended.[64] The expulsion rate was 1.8%, meaning 6 were expelled. What I

intend to make clear in this study is that within the current culture of exclusionary

discipline, it is hard not to suspend, even when an ethos of inclusion and the structures of

best practice are solidly in place.

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[63] Lustick, "Administering Discipline Differently," 11.
[64] District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education, "Monroe High (Pseudonym) Equity Report."

How can this be? My hypothesis is that what is missing from best practices in student discipline is explicit attention to decision-making, the often conflict-based decision-making, that patterns the misbehavior of students and the decisions administrators make to address it. Furthermore, I hypothesize that the Insight approach can facilitate that attention. This research would be the first discussion of student misbehavior, discipline and the school-to-prison pipeline from a conflict perspective.

While my formulation is intervention-oriented, it is in line with recommendations from researchers like Golann and Michail. Golann argues that efforts for successful student discipline must have "a more complex and accurate view of students' thoughts, behaviors and motivations, [in order to] empower educators to creatively pursue responses to challenging behavior that do not simply result in students' exclusion from the learning environment."[65] Michail concurs. What is important, she writes, is "a tailored [disciplinary] approach to each child's needs which avoids a construction of children that is stereotypical. The response should instead be informed by evidence where the child is the primary source of information about their experiences, difficulties, challenges."[66]

The Insight approach, I argue, has the potential to make this kind of student-centered approach to discipline possible. To test my hypotheses, I partnered with Monroe High.

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[65] Golann, "The Paradox of Success at a No-Excuses School," 3.
[66] Michail, "Understanding School Responses to Students' Challenging Behaviour," 168.

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CHAPTER TWO: A CASE

Monroe High is one D.C. public charter high school of 18 citywide and serves as a robust case study for pilot testing the efficacy of using the Insight approach in the context of school discipline. "The advantage of the case study," Flyvbjerg argues, "is that it can 'close-in' on real-life situations and test views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice."[67] Partnering with Monroe High allowed me to generate an intimate understanding of Monroe High itself. I was invited to engage directly with staff, to observe students, and to witness staff-student interactions. Through one-on-one pre-training interviews with staff, conducted with approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB),[68] I learned the school's philosophy and structures around academics and discipline, and I was able to explore the challenges Monroe High staff faced in terms of student discipline during the 2014-2015 school year.

My goal in interviewing Monroe staff before embarking on Insight training was to acquire a picture of Monroe in terms of culture, roles and student discipline. I wanted to establish a baseline and understand the challenges of both the school and the staff. I also wanted to find out whether or not the Insight approach or elements of it were already in action at Monroe, though perhaps under another name. With this picture and deeper understanding, I hoped to develop an Insight training tailored to Monroe's unique

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[67] Flyvbjerg, *Making Social Science Matter*, 82.
[68] IRB No. 664062-1

contexts and challenges. I interviewed 6 staff—Monroe High's principal, the vice

principal of restorative justice and the 4 staff who comprised the vice principal's behavior

team. While I used a semi-structured protocol to keep the interviews on track (see

Appendix B), three main principles guided my interviewing method.

First, I chose to use an elicitive approach to interviewing. To do this I drew on

Lederach's training model, which seeks implicit knowledge—interviewees' personal

rather than expert experience.[69] My aim was not to measure what Monroe staff knew

about student discipline, or even to compare what their attitudes were. Rather, my aim

was to understand each staff's experience of student discipline, how they made sense of

it, what they do regarding it, and why. This is an explicitly Insight-oriented lens in that its

attention is directed toward the staff's data of consciousness, eliciting the meaning and

valuing that motivate their actions.

Second, I used Gubrium and Holstein's active interviewing principles. According

to them, "... all interviews are interactional… they are all constructed *in situ*, as a product

of the talk between interview participants."[70] Because of this, my questions, while semi-

structured in terms of the kinds of information I was interested in learning, were not

scripted. They developed spontaneously in a way that followed the story of the

interviewee. "The active view eschews the image of the vessel waiting to be tapped in

favor of the notion that the subjects' interpretive capabilities must be activated,

stimulated, and cultivated."[71] My interviews were more conversations than oral surveys.

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[69] Lederach, *Preparing for Peace*, 44.
[70] Gubrium and Holstein, *Postmodern Interviewing*, 67.
[71] Ibid., 75.

They began with my open curiosity and grew from the content the staff revealed to me in the interview itself.

Third, the curiosity that guided my active interviews drew on Picard and Jull's Insight techniques of "deepening."[72] While the techniques are mainly used in mediation settings, the idea is that the data I sought, the data of consciousness—the knowing, valuing and deciding of the interviewees in terms of student discipline—is complex to understand. To understand it requires a penetrating curiosity. Deepening uses layered questions, questions that emerge from the answer to the question that was just asked, in order to get a full understanding of what the interviewee has said according to their own understanding.[73] It is a key skill in the Insight approach that puts the interviewee at the center of meaning-making. It requires a particularly open and other-focused positioning that Picard and Jull call "responsive intentionality," which favors following the interviewee's meaning rather than leading it.[74]

Using data from pre-training interviews as well as information gleaned from Monroe High handbooks, I was able to piece together a comprehensive picture of Monroe High in terms of its vision for student discipline, its behavior managing and disciplinary structures, and the challenges and setbacks staff faced as they worked to improve student behavior. This picture set the stage for the context and culture I was about to enter. It allowed me to design a pilot Insight training program relevant to the specific context of Monroe High.

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[72] Picard and Jull, "Learning through Deepening Conversations."
[73] Picard, *Practising Insight Mediation*.
[74] Picard and Jull, "Learning through Deepening Conversations"; Picard, *Practising Insight Mediation*.

Monroe High—A Portrait

Monroe High opened its doors in 2011-2012 with its first 9th grade class. It was the offshoot of an elementary and middle school charter program that began in 2004 during Washington, D.C.'s charter boom, an effort to provide D.C.'s children with quality education within a long failing system. In 2011 Monroe High had 122 students and 10 teachers. It rapidly grew, adding one grade per year, to 422 students in four grades by 2014. Monroe High graduated its first 9th grade class as seniors in the spring of 2015.

The demographic make-up of Monroe High is 99% students of color with 69% qualifying as economically disadvantaged, 23% with disabilities, and 16% with limited English language proficiency. Monroe High's mission is to ensure that every "student of every race, socioeconomic status, and home language will reach high levels of academic achievement and be prepared to succeed…"[75] To this end, Monroe High implements an extended school year with 1000 additional hours of out-of-school time academic programming. It employs a rigorous, expeditionary math and science focused curriculum that pushes students to excel academically. Every student is required to take two college level Advanced Placement classes, because regardless of how they do, the head of school believes that "exposing a student to the level of rigor that they're going to need to achieve, helps them achieve higher later when they're in college."[76] There is no social promotion at Monroe High either. Students must earn at least a C to pass a class, and if they fail to pass, they must take the class again to acquire enough credits to move to the next grade. Accordingly 2015's graduating class had 52 students, less than half of the 122

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[75] "Monroe High Handbook."
[76] Schwartz, "D.C. Charter School Uses Tough Love To Erase Achievement Gap."

who began four years earlier. Some left the school, but many stayed back to fulfill their requirements.

Monroe High's Vision for Student Discipline

In an academically challenging environment, Monroe High strives to encourage prosocial behavior and nurture community by cultivating student voice. Based on PBIS protocol, the values of Monroe High, plastered on every wall as a constant reminder to students and staff, are "Be Kind. Work Hard. Get Smart." In its first year, most of Monroe High's 9th grade students came from the school's feeder middle school and were accustomed to the values and expectations of Monroe High. However, as the school grew, new students came in who had not come up in the same culture. This presented a discipline challenge for Monroe High that continues to persist. Some students have a hard time assimilating naturally to the challenging but liberal environment at Monroe and consequently suspension numbers are high. "What we realized," reflected Ms. Peterson, the high school principal, "is while we had structures in place for the students who had grown up in the school, we didn't have all the structures in place for any type of student that could come in to the school. [Consequently], we had a really high suspension rate."

With the research accumulating that traditional, exclusionary discipline was failing students and contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline, Ms. Peterson sought change. In 2013, she brought in a new vice principal of restorative practices and in 2014 implemented a behavior intervention program for students with chronic behavior problems and students with disabilities.

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Her vision was to create "an inclusive culture where everyone feels like they're together and that they're welcome," because for her, culture is what cultivates positive behavior in the first place. It builds the foundation not only for success after school, but for survival. "Doing a lot of exclusion could create a very orderly and compliant school population," she continues.

> But it doesn't activate student voice in the way that I think it needs to. And I think it teaches students some very dangerous lessons about authority. And that's what we had to do some reflection on: what do we want kids to know and be able to do and what does it mean if they're never part of the conversation about harm that was done?

In this vein, restorative practices became the core of Monroe High's disciplinary approach. Ms. Peterson tells me that restorative practices "provide a space to find out what the problem is or what the puzzle is."

> [This] allows us a chance to see who students really are…[It gives] the student a chance to talk about what happened and to the have the student hear from all the stakeholders about how that impacted them. And then it gives the student a chance to repair the harm… I think after kids do harm, they want to fix it.

The social goal in all of this is to activate student voice in a way that encourages good behavior and minimizes discipline by emphasizing responsibility and accountability.

> But, "it's hard, right?" she tells me.

> Because we have a population that's 100%, except for Billy and Damien, students of color, and so we have to walk this line where we want you to have an active voice but we know when you deal with authority outside the building, if you have too much of an active voice, they'll kill you, right? So it's how do we teach you when to use your voice and when not to…or what rights do you have, right? And know when to use them, period. Not when not to use them because we don't want you to lose your

rights… We want students to be articulate and to say what they need…
It's like the police yells at [a student and she's like] 'I want to go off on
you, but I'm not. Then what I'll do, I'll call my lawyer and say, I taped
this conversation. I got the badge number. Now let's use this avenue to
bring that officer to justice.'

Her hope and her vision is that shifting away from exclusionary discipline toward

inclusionary, communicative, restorative discipline will teach students to be thoughtful

actors who can anticipate consequences and use their voice to their advantage rather than

to their disadvantage in a harsh and unequal world. To model that in the school

environment, says Ms. Peterson,

I want a school that's nonviolent, where students run circles without us. I
mean that's the goal—that we can have a student judiciary committee
that's led by all students and seniors or juniors will step in and say, 'So
Freshman, you messed up. How are you going to fix that?' And that's a
process that can run without adults being there.

For Jason Montague, the vice principal of restorative practices, the goal is the

same:

The goal is that [restorative practice] is, over time, going to change our
school culture into students being able to take responsibility on their own,
not needing adults to facilitate that process and to repair things. Mistakes
will still happen, harm will still be done, but people will be more willing
to take responsibility and repair without needing adults to be involved.

When this can happen, students will be ready to bring their interpersonal skills

into the world and thrive there.

During the 2014-2015 school year, putting the structures in place to meet those

goals and create a restorative school with an inclusionary culture was still a work in

progress. For the 2013-2014 school year, suspension was down from the previous year's

rate of 24% with 6 expulsions, but still quite high at 17.4%. Behaviors that were getting

most students into the disciplinary system were on par with problem behaviors that schools report nationally—disrespect and noncompliance, what some have termed "willful defiance."[77] Students were consistently not following directives, using vulgar language, leaving class, skipping class, and refusing to return to class. Ms. Peterson implemented a behavior intervention program headed by Dr. Chester Hammond to help students curb misbehavior. In the school's forth year, Chester remarked, "we've really just started this piece. So a lot of this we're, for real, developing right now." In other words, the vision was there, but challenges in student discipline were persistent and staff were trying to figure out the right structures to deal with them.

The Structure of Behavior Management and Discipline at Monroe High

While the behavior and disciplinary system of Monroe High during the 2014-2015 school year was admittedly iterative and open to assessment and adjustment, the foundations of the system included positive behavior interventions and supports for targeting behavior before it got out of hand, a tiered disciplinary system to give students graduated consequences and the chance to change, and restorative processes for taking responsibility and repairing harm.

Behavior Intervention at Monroe High

Student misbehavior nationwide has the highest incidence among students with disabilities—disabilities that include emotional and behavioral disorders like attention deficit hyperactive disorder and oppositional-defiant disorder. It is against federal law to suspend a student with disabilities for behavior that is linked to their disabilities.

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[77] Shah, "Discipline Policies Shift With Views on What Works."

However, Losen and colleagues "found that schools suspend students with disabilities at rates that are typically two to three times higher than for their non-disabled peers."[78] This is true at Monroe High, where approximately one-third of students with disabilities have been suspended each year. To get ahead of this trend, Monroe High intensified its behavior intervention program, recognizing, as Jason put it, for "our students with emotional disturbance, [suspension] is not going to help them. They're going to come back more angry, even if it's a clear, justifiable reason that they got suspended."

So Chester is assigned to every student with a behavior-related Individualized Education Program (IEP)—a legal document required for each student receiving special education services—as well as the school's "high flyers," those students who, according to Chester "are perpetually getting disciplinary referrals—all the time, every day, don't really follow any rules."

Jason estimates that about 80% of any given student population tends to conform to rules and meet behavioral expectations. About 10% exhibits behavior that needs support and redirection, and with that support and redirection can improve their behavior. The remaining 10% are the high flyers. In fall of 2014-2015 Monroe High had roughly 30 high flyers, half of which had IEPs. That number could grow if students became challenging, and it could shrink if students got their behavior under control.

To bring down discipline referrals and provide direct support to this group of students with particularly challenging behavior, Chester put into place two main

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[78] Losen et al., "Are We Closing the School Discipline Gap?," 6.

interventions—dedicated staff and an incentive structure, each bolstered by relationship

building and instruction.

The dedicated staff at Monroe High is comprised of two behavior

paraprofessionals, Tanya Lennon and Syl Jackson. Each has a caseload of 7 to 12

students with IEPs linked directly to behavior. They help students in their caseloads get

to class. They float to each student's class every period to check on them, make sure they

are on task, let them know they are there for them if they need them for support, but also

as a reminder that someone is holding them accountable. Chester put it this way:

> When [Tanya and Syl] go to the class, they're going to making sure the
> kid's in there and then also like physically being a reminder that 'you are
> involved in this program. You know me. You know you're going to see
> me every period and you know you're going to see me because I give you
> support. So if you need a break when I'm in there, let's go. If you need to
> talk about something, you know I'm coming. We can do that.' Also, if the
> teacher needs them, they're on call… Its immediate responsiveness with
> the same staff.

For Tanya when a student is having trouble in class, she is

> called to come and process with them, encourage them to utilize coping
> skills, and … get them back into the classroom, or, you know, if they don't
> want to go to class, you know, find an option for them to get their work
> done in an outside placement… to avoid them having to go to a
> disciplinary recovery room.

For Syl it is the same. "I go by each person's class who I'm working with to see if

they're in class or, you know, are they struggling?… If something is off, I'll try to

intervene before it gets out of hand."

To intervene the behavior staff "process" with the student, which involves

relationship building and behavioral instruction. Syl emphasized the importance of

relationship building when he told me, "most of these kids I knew from working in the middle school. So that has helped a lot, obviously, with them knowing me and me understanding where they're coming from, things I can say to them, things I can't say to them, body language, things of that nature." And Tanya described it as key to her intervention work. "The most important thing is having a positive rapport with the student and kind of knowing the student… It's constant relationship building." Building that rapport, she acknowledged,

> takes time. Knowing when to push and when not to push, you know, talking to them about things other than school, what's going on on the outside, you know: 'Who are you dating? Who are you talking to?' Seeing, noticing their connection with certain things, like a lot of my kids have a connection to music. So I talk to them about that… and I'll kind of get myself in the mix… so they know, 'Hey, Tanya's cool. She's hip. She knows some things.'

It's critical that she does have good relationships with her students because "sometimes they can take offense, you know, …with how you choose to keep it real or approach them."

"Keeping it real" means letting the students know what kinds of consequences their choices will have in the long run. And this is the instructional piece. All the behavior staff use it—and it comes from Principal Peterson at the top. "Behaviors are things that are taught," she tells me. "Just like mathematics. You have to give the chance to teach and learn."

Syl agrees. "You can't just say, 'go to class,' with so many students just because. It has to be, 'All right, you need to go to class because: duh-duh-duh-duh, duh-duh-duh-

duh,' like that. You need to relate it to something that could connect with them." When I asked him what he meant by that he told me,

> I try to be as honest as possible about the decisions [the students are] making now in terms of how they can affect them in the future… I basically try to explain to them like this is practice for the real world and they [should] take advantage of it as far as making sure that they make decisions that they need to make now, so that when they get out there in the real world, they don't fall short.

Similarly, Tanya says that "especially dealing with inner city kids, you have to let them know, 'Hey, like this could be your life or this could be your life… You really have to get it together because this is where you could end up.'" The behavior staff is upfront with students about how detrimental their behavior can be with the hopes that showing them the consequences of it will motivate them to stop acting out.

The behavior staff also teach coping skills—count to 10, go to a cool-down area, ask for support staff—to help students manage their emotions and ultimately change their behavior. If Syl or Tanya needs to take a student out of class to help them calm down or get them refocused for class, they first listen to the student. "Here at Monroe High, we really like to let the student express their feelings," says Tanya.

> I mean even if there's an issue with the teacher, we really encourage that the student has a voice in the situation because, you know, we feel that a lot of the times, the child feels that they're not being heard or understood… I allow the student to talk and tell me, 'Well, I felt this way when you…' or, you know, 'This is what's going on,' and then I give them coping skills. I don't tell them, 'Well, you were wrong for this,' or, 'You were wrong for that.' I tell them, 'Well, this is what you could've done differently and this is how you can approach it next time and here are two coping skills that you can use if this situation were to happen again with your teacher or were to happen again with a peer or were to happen again in class.'

Direct support, relationship building and instruction on positive behaviors and the consequences of negative ones are the principle modes of behavior intervention for students with IEPs and emotional and behavioral disabilities at Monroe High. For the other challenging students at Monroe, the behavior intervention program uses an incentive structure to motivate students to stay on task and behave. Each student identified as having behavior issues will get a behavior tracker that lists the behaviors he or she is struggling with, whether it is getting to class, staying on task, or complying with redirection. Chester sets behavior goals with each student, and teachers are supposed to track the student's behavior by imputing data each day. The idea is that if behavior improves and goals are met, the student gets reward points. "You don't have to be perfect," says Chester "You can still be getting kicked out of class. I don't want you to, but you can still be getting kicked out of class. But the point is you hit this particular goal that we're making to be accessible. We're not trying to make it something they can't get because we want them to get the benefit." Based on positive behavior theory, when the students see that they can meet the goal, and they get acknowledged and rewarded for their success, they should be motivated to continue to succeed.

Student Discipline at Monroe High

Monroe's behavior interventions do not always work. Students continue to misbehave. Tanya puts it this way,

> Sometimes, it doesn't work and sometimes it does. It's a daily process. Sometimes we all have to regroup and come up with, you know, different ways and different incentives. You know, the thing with kids these days is that there's nothing that they feel they can't have. So trying to find something that they really want that's going to help drive them to change

their behavior is hard. Sometimes, to us saying, "Well, if you can't do this then you won't get this," they will say, 'Well, I don't really care about that. I can get that anytime.' So we have to regroup, find something that they really do want.

When students' behavior does not improve, there is a discipline structure at Monroe. Monroe High follows the Responsive Classroom model, which promotes logical consequences for misbehavior. Logical consequences at Monroe include taking a break to calm down, loss of privileges, and restorative consequences.[79] If a student is in class and is being disruptive or disrespectful, the student first gets a warning. At this point she can take a break. After the warning, if she has not shifted her behavior, she gets "30 seconds," which means that she has to stay after class for 30 seconds to talk with her teacher. This is a loss of privilege. If the behavior continues, the 30 seconds becomes 1 minute. If it still does not stop, the student will get "refocus," which is a 20-minute after school detention. If the behavior persists or escalates after the refocus consequence, the student is sent out of class and into the "recovery room."

The recovery room is Monroe High's alternative to in-school suspension (ISS). ISS is a disciplinary model developed as an alternative to out-of-school suspension, where students are suspended from class but kept in a dedicated ISS room within the school environment. This model hoped to avoid the situation where students were left unsupervised and up to their own devices when suspended out of school. Being removed from class and missing important class time, even if time is spent in a classroom, has been shown to be just as detrimental to students as out-of-school suspension.[80] So instead

[79] "Monroe High Handbook," 47.
[80] Blomberg, "Effective Discipline for Misbehavior."

of punishing students in ISS, Monroe's recovery room is a place where students who have been acting out are supposed to be able to clam down, regroup and get ready for their next class. The recovery room is a place for reflection and instruction. According to Dominic Jones, the recovery room specialist at the time of my interviews, but who had left by the time the Insight training began, "The recovery room mostly receives [students] to prepare them for their next class." And like Tanya and Syl, Dominic instructs his students.

> I try to give some type of vocation, life application based on why they were sitting there. If several students have been sent there, I try to give a general life application based on the mood of the day, the behaviors or the recent behaviors that we're seeing or the constant behavior that we're seeing that students are sent there for.

Teachers will send students to the recovery room when they feel they have exhausted their options and need the student out of the class. Behavior staff will send students to the recovery room when their processing techniques have failed. "If they're just defiant," explains Tanya "If they don't want to [go back to class], and you know a lot of the time that happens, then I have no choice but to say, 'OK, well, you have to go to recovery.'"

The recovery room is not intended to hold students beyond their class period, although this does happen. And in truth, students are in and out of the recovery room all day. Ten students in the recovery room is a "full house," according to Chester, but

> at any given time, like 6 or 7 [will be] in the room at once. Yeah, throughout the day, at any given time, I walk by, it might be 6, 7. Four of them are probably actively oppositional, one of them is probably scared to death, …and they are all probably in there in perpetuity.

From Dominic's perspective, between the start of school in early August though early December, the recovery room had seen "21.5%" of students in the school, which calculates to 91 students. According to Monroe High discipline data, 74 students, or 17.5%, had been officially referred to the recovery room during that time period, one third of those more than once.

Generally refocus and the recovery room are in place to discipline tier 1—disruptive and insubordinate behaviors—and tier 2 behaviors—persistent disruption, insubordination, noncompliance, disrespect, inappropriate language, and behaviors that cause minor damage to school property. Once a student's behavior reaches the consequence of afterschool refocus, the student receives a disciplinary referral. When a student receives between 6 and 10 referrals for tier 1 and 2 behaviors, or engages in more significantly inappropriate tier 3 behaviors, like threats, profanity, uncontrollable outbursts, theft, intentional damage to property, among others, the school sets up a family meeting with the administration. This is when the restorative process kicks in.

Jason is in charge of the restorative process at Monroe High. The restorative process is an opportunity for students to repair any harm they have done and take responsibility for it. Jason explains,

> Say a kid curses out a teacher, often that's a suspendable thing in most schools, and what we will do first is try to understand what was going on, what was happening that led up to that and figure out, 'Is the student going to be willing to take responsibility for what they did and potentially work on repairing that with the teacher?' So if they are willing, and it seems like it's something that we can repair, then we'll keep them here. [We won't suspend them.] They may not go back to that class the next day until we're able to have a meeting to repair, but we'll try a restorative process on that.

In the restorative process the administration helps the student "think through what happened, what they could have done differently, and what they think they could do to repair it."

An interesting innovation on student discipline, the restorative approach as applied by Monroe High maintains that being consistent with process rather than consequence is most important. Every student gets a conversation and a chance to make things right before they are excluded from school. In order for this process to work, a student must take responsibility for her actions, which helps to determine an appropriate, inclusive consequence. In one example, a student slammed a classroom door so hard that it got stuck shut and the fire department had to come open it. After the student's restorative conference, she had to help clean the cafeteria for the rest of the semester, because her actions impacted the operations staff. Sometimes, in fights between students or conflicts between teachers and students, an acknowledgement and apology suffices. The consequence is determined in the restorative conference with the input of all those involved.

When the restorative process does not work, and students are unable to acknowledge the harm and take responsibility to repair it, suspension is the last resort. On rare occasions, though, because discipline is simply difficult, suspension is the first resort, especially when behaviors are serious. "We use suspension when we need to get our heads clear," says Ms. Peterson "We use it as a tool to figure out what the plan's going to be to restore the harm." Even if a student is violent, brings a weapon to school or is using drugs at school, behaviors that lead to automatic 10-day suspensions, rarely do

suspensions at Monroe High actually last all 10 days because within 5 days of a

suspension there is a restorative meeting.

Challenges to Intervention and Discipline at Monroe High

In spite of the thoughtful, student-centered approach to student discipline and

behavior intervention at Monroe High, which intricately weaves the best practices of

PBIS, SEL and restorative justice into the school day to support students and interrupt the

suspension-driven school-to-prison pipeline, challenges persist. In the first 4 months of

the 2014 school year, Monroe High had already given out 50 suspensions to 36 students.

Sitting in Jason's office he tells me,

It's an incredibly intense job. I was just talking with a student that was in
here, [and] he asked me what I thought about the power to be able to
suspend, and I said I hate that. If anything, that's generally what keeps me
up at night. Most of my work, before coming here was youth
development, working with youth in gangs, working in youth violence
prevention, working with kids that were having a lot of challenges. I
always had a negative perspective of schools, feeling like they just exclude
and send kids out, and now, here I am in the position where when that
happens, I'm the one that executes that and it's a very awful responsibility.
I wouldn't do this work if we weren't doing it through the lens of
restorative practices and really trying to involve students in that process
and trying to not suspend whenever possible, but that ends up happening a
decent amount.

The trouble, it seems, is that there is a paradox to suspension. Despite the research

that correlates it to detrimental outcomes, in some cases it seems to work. Jason

continues,

I don't believe in it. I don't believe that suspension is effective. I know the
research well of the effects of suspending, and likelihood of getting caught
up in the criminal justice system, and how it affects the pathway towards
graduation. But at the same time, I get a lot of pressure. I recognize that
certain behaviors really affect the whole school environment dramatically

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and sometimes students need some time. Sometimes we need some time, so that we can prepare ourselves for a better plan for them, so that hopefully they will come back ready to change certain things. That works well for some students. It doesn't work well for a lot of students. Often times, suspension for certain students will just create a downward spiral.

Jason recounted to me an example of how suspension could be effective. During the 2013-2014 school year, Monroe High had 7 fights in the first few months of school and had no conditions around suspension for violence. In 2014-2015, they changed course, Jason told me that he "kind of bent on [his] restorative position," telling the students that "if you get into a fight, you are immediately looking at long-term suspension." He has seen the results. During the same time period in the 2014-2015 school year, and with 100 more students, the school has seen only 4 fights. Ms. Peterson attributes the success of mandatory suspension to "being very clear with what that consequence is going to be." While for most misbehavior Monroe High strives to make sure that process is consistent, for violence they make sure that the consequence—suspension—is consistent, and they have seen a deterrent effect. Monroe also uses suspension as a tool "to get a family in that is not coming in and is not supporting us."

Suspension for Monroe High is a paradox. It is a double-edged sword. It can be superbly useful for deterring violence and coercing parents to be involved in the behavior management of their kids, but the adverse effects remain always on the administration's mind. Furthermore, changing habits is extraordinarily difficult, especially when restorative justice seems to have its own paradox.

The premise of restorative justice is that giving students a voice, a stake in the matter, and allowing them to take responsibility and repair harm will address the root cause of problematic behavior. But it is hard to put into practice, says Jason.

> It's definitely a hard balance, especially when people don't really understand the restorative practices. I think folks were bought into restorative practices when I came, but they didn't really understand it or that it takes time. I don't even know if I really understood it fully.

While restorative practice is supposed to be critical to improving school climate and reducing suspension, it brings risks. Three became apparent in my interviews: that it is misunderstood and therefore not taken seriously, that the process can be rushed, and that students refuse to take responsibility when they are certain they are right even when their behavior is against the rules. These risks break down the integrity of the restorative process and fall into Morrison et al.'s research showing that the key challenge to restorative justice in schools is the difficult task of culture change for both school staff and students.[81]

For example, some students think the restorative process is lax. "The perception is that it's soft," says Jason. Ms. Peterson has noticed that students "come here and it's like, 'Whoa, you're not going to suspend me? Wow this is dope. Sweet. Y'all are doing nothing." And when the perception is that there are few consistent consequences, Dominic says, "Kids are going to be kids. They're going to do what you allow them to do."

This gets in the way of positive behaviors. Chester relates that

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[81] Morrison, Blood, and Thorsborne, "Practicing Restorative Justice in School Communities."

the most grating [behavior] is just the being in the hallways and being non-responsive to directions. I feel like this school's not big enough for kids to skip class the way they skip class. They'd just be in the hallway, 'Oh, I'm supposed to be wherever.' Like, 'No, you're not. I know where you're supposed to be. Go to class.' But then there's no urgency on their part and I think that there's a lot of frustration from staff about how there's no urgency. Like nothing is going to happen and they know it.

While Ms. Peterson and Jason are striving to be consistent with process—allowing each student to have a conversation when behavior issues arise—not being consistent with consequences, according to Chester "sends a terrible message." What he sees is that "some kids need an imperative because they don't necessarily have that internal mechanism to do well."

When the restorative process does go forward, there is a challenge around the time that it takes for the process to run its course. The demands on school staff are extraordinary, from meeting learning objectives and achievement goals to managing behavior within a packed school day and academic year. Often the time that restorative processes require clashes with the structure of school. "I remember one restorative conference that I kind of rushed," Jason tells me.

And I didn't do the necessary prep with everybody there and the kids that had caused harm, I didn't prepare sufficiently, and we got to the restorative conference and I just assumed they were going to take responsibility and they didn't. They had conflicting stories and they were making stuff up. The family of the victim—they were like bullying this kid and took his snacks out of his pocket—were just furious. They ended up calling the police, and police showed up, and it was just a really ugly incident.

After contentious incidents of misbehavior, Jason tells me that students need time to cool down and time to prepare to go through the restorative process. This leaves the administration in a bind. What does the school do with misbehaving students in the mean

time? If they return to class as though nothing happened, it sends a message that there are

no consequences for misbehavior. If they rush the process, it can backfire. To the

administration's chagrin, suspension becomes the fall-back option.

The restorative process is also challenged when students do not think that they

should take responsibility for harm done. Jason had an experience the very morning of

our interview, where a student would not take responsibility for harming another student

because she was certain she was justified.

> I happened to be walking right behind [this student], which helps with the
> accountability. She was walking down the hall. She said, 'Excuse me,' to
> this young man. I thought he ignored her. She said he said, 'I'm not
> moving,' and she just shoves him very hard. And she was just adamant.
> She spent all day in the recovery room because she's one of those cases
> where the mother's not returning any of my calls. She's up to 15
> disciplinary referrals. The mother's been totally non-responsive and so we
> decided, and this is what we do sometimes, 'You're not going back to
> class until we see your mother, until she's in here.' I called the mother and
> let her know, left a message. She never answered any of my calls. So she
> spent all day in the recovery room. Yesterday, I spoke to her a number of
> times trying to get her ready to take responsibility, have a conversation
> and repair that, because it blew up. It almost turned into a fight after that
> and she was always like, you know, 'I said excuse me. If they don't move,
> that's what I'm going to do. That's what I do. That's what my mom said.
> He should've moved. He didn't.' And so I never really got her to taking
> responsibility.

In response Jason abandoned the restorative approach in favor of leveraging the

student's mother, who finally showed up.

> My approach was, with her mother here, 'So this is what your daughter
> and I talked about yesterday and I know that you have not taught her to...'
> You know, I kind of did the parenting for the mother in a way. That's kind
> of something we practice. I was like, 'I know that you have taught her to
> be more respectful than that,' and what's a mother going to do at that
> point? 'No, actually I did teach my daughter to be a jerk'? And she said,
> 'Oh, yeah, definitely. I don't support that behavior,' which I think she

probably did support her daughter before that, but it shifted it, and then the student was able to take responsibility and talk about what she could've done differently. She had not been able to do that all yesterday.

In the end, the restorative process can be really powerful when students are bought into it and take it seriously, but at other times the administration has to resort to deterrence-based strategies, like leveraging the one student's mother, to get students to the table. In other cases, the administration will hold the threat of suspension over a student if they refuse to take responsibility in the restorative process. Ms. Peterson put it this way, "if a child for some reason is not willing to acknowledge the pain or acknowledge the frustration, there are often roadblocks that prevent them from moving forward," in other words, the school is forced to resort to exclusionary discipline.

Janessa, for example, was suspended for fighting, for "disrespect towards [the administration], constant non-compliance, and just saying, 'I'm not going to do anything you're telling me to do,'" The plan is not to suspend for those things, Jason tells me,

> but I think with a student like Janessa, we're trying a lot of things. We're having her mother come in. We've had her mother observe and kind of shadow her in class and we've tried incentivizing her with being able to take away some negative referrals if she had certain behavior during the day. But she's saying no to all of it, you know, and like a few, 'I don't give a craps,' and, 'I hate yous.' Those are the hard ones, because I don't want to suspend her either, but when Ms. Peterson comes to me and says, 'Janessa needs some time. This is what she did,' it's like… I feel pressure that she wants a solution right in the moment. I've realized that what Ms. Peterson wants in those moments is a creative alternative, but again, restorative justice isn't a magic box. It's not: pull something out of a hat. It's a process, and so sometimes there are suspensions for that, when a student is just not responding to anything.

Why suspension continues to be given as a consequence despite every effort not to use it is complex. There are the paradoxes of discipline in which experience shows that

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suspension is a necessary tool for maintaining order, and that restorative processes are not adequate when examples must be set, time is short and students refuse to take responsibility. Additionally, change is hard. Zero-tolerance, deterrence-based disciplinary practices have been the norm for nearly three decades, and corporal punishment was a normative practice in schools before that. Getting supportive student discipline right will be a learning process. As Tanya puts it, "it's trial and error."

Staff are frank that much of the obstacle to successful behavior management has to do with them. Ms. Peterson tells me,

> I think what's interesting is that if you ask an adult, a teacher, 'Do you think that zero tolerance policy and all that leads to the school-to-prison pipeline? [The answer is] 'yes,' right? But then when it gets down to practice, because of their frustration, people go back to knowing what's most familiar, like this kid needs to be out of this building, this kid needs to be out of the school. So it's often that what I know is right and what's familiar are clashing in moments of high stress.

Chester recounts an incident where a student was suspended for being disrespectful to an administrator.

> He told [the administrator] to suck his dick. He'd been telling 20 people to suck his dick. Like this is not new. He's been doing this. We've been letting him stay. So now we kick him out because he said it to the wrong person? If we don't want him in the hall telling people to suck his dick, then we need to do something right now, today, about him being in the hallway, saying that, because he does it all the time. And I think that sort of thing is one of the things that I think is big. It's not like kids fighting, that stuff we can manage because it's them. But I think this stuff that's us is where we're failing.

How to be effective and supportive and consistent when managing challenging, disruptive behavior is extraordinarily difficult, especially when it becomes personal toward staff, those who are in charge.

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Tanya concurs,

> It's hard not to focus on the disrespect. Those are the hardest kids to deal with. The ones that are just disrespectful 100% of the time. It's hard dealing with it, and it's hard to get through to them, because at one point, you realize, well, what can I do? What interventions can I use? I'm kind of at the end of my rope. I don't know which way to go. But you have to continue, you know. You have to continue to do it and then they get that power. They get that power of knowing, 'Well, I can continue to be this way, because they don't know what to do with me,' or, you know, 'They don't know what to say.' That's the last thing that you want is for that child to feel like, you know, they have the power when there's expectations and there's rules and there's things that you need to set.

The structures, practices and challenges at Monroe High make it apparent that student discipline in real life is a lot messier and more complex than the literature makes it out to be. Implementing best practices is not enough and exclusionary discipline is not black and white. There are students who do not respond to restorative systems, incentives that do not always work and lessons about the consequences of behavior can fall on deaf ears. Punishment—whether it's a class period in the recovery room, an afterschool refocus, or a suspension—unreliably improves student behavior. Monroe High, like many other schools, strives to do the best for their students—to teach them and prepare them for the world they will face as adults. They fear the detrimental consequences of their disciplinary actions, but they feel constrained to regulate the school environment and make it a safe place where students can learn. To create a positive, supportive school climate that manages and redirects student misbehavior in an inclusive way seems to require an almost impossible balance.

From Portrait to Pilot

The picture of student discipline at Monroe High that emerged from my interviews demonstrated to me that while Monroe is a progressive school, armed with best practices and the best intentions, but faced with the paradoxes of both exclusionary and restorative discipline, they continue to struggle to implement student discipline that supports students and facilitates improved behavior. Monroe staff clearly care about their students, and they are curious about them in the sense that they want to know them and give them voice, but they are not intentionally curious about the decision-making that goes into student misbehavior. This is the focus of the Insight approach, and what I contend is missing from their disciplinary practice. Instead staff concentrate on what rewards might improve behavior, what they can teach to turn a student around, and how students can repair harm and restore community. Granted in challenging moments of misbehavior, when students are making bad choices and not following directions, it is not at all easy to be curious. It takes a rare person or one with years of experience to be spontaneously curious about another person in the midst of contention and stress. The Insight approach, though, by providing an explicit framework and skill set for curiosity that targets decision-making in conflict, makes it easier to be curious about decision-making in difficult situations.

The portrait that emerged for me of Monroe indicated that training in the Insight approach could be a new and complimentary skill set for them, one with the potential to help Monroe staff overcome some of their disciplinary challenges. Perhaps by using Insight skills they could discover what was leading Janessa to be so confrontational.

Perhaps they could understand more fully why the student pushed the boy in the hallway. Perhaps they could get a handle on what makes certain kids skip class or refuse to take responsibility. Understanding the decision-making patterning bad behavior could help Monroe behavior staff tailor their life lessons to the actual motivation for a student's actions, rather than to what they might assume the behavior to be about. It could help the administration make more targeted and precise disciplinary decisions as they respond to misbehavior. At the same time and using the same tools, administrators could pay attention to their own disciplinary decision-making. What led them to allow the boy to be profane in the hallway for so long? What was it about his profanity toward an administrator that made it seem like the right decision to suspend him?

Using what I learned about Monroe High, I created a pilot program for Monroe staff that would train them to use the Insight approach as they responded to student misbehavior. Pilot programs are small by design. They are proof-of-concept endeavors that demonstrate the feasibility of a model and clarify the components of a project that need to be enhanced, excluded, adjusted, and refined. They are important precursors to larger-scale studies.[82] Certainly had I the resources to implement Insight programs in schools across the city, my findings would be generalizable and more robust. However, as the Insight approach has never before been implemented in a school context, piloting it in one school and with the 5 key behavior staff identified by the school's vice principal as a case study sets the stage for a practical understanding of the Insight approach as applied to student discipline.

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[82] Teijlingen and Hundley, "The Importance of Pilot Studies."

In the next two chapters I describe the basis for why the Insight approach has the potential to be a transformative practice in student discipline. I explore the foundations of the Insight approach as a framework that explains how we use our minds to make decisions to act, particularly when we decide to act using conflict behavior. I also lay out the Insight approach's theory of change and the method of curiosity that helps elicit the data of consciousness that patterns trajectories of behavior.

CHAPTER THREE: FOUNDATIONS OF THE INSIGHT APPROACH

So what is the Insight approach and why might I think it could be useful for student discipline? First and foremost, the Insight approach is derived from the critical, reflexive philosophy and cognitional theory of Bernard Lonergan. Insight theory directs our attention to the fact of human consciousness: that we have minds, that we use them and that we can become aware of using them, even though on a daily basis we generally take that fact for granted.[83] The Insight approach takes a broad view of consciousness, using the term not to refer simply to awareness or the ability to remember, as some theorists do, but rather as Lonergan does to refer to the regular and recurrent mental operations which constitute our ability to be aware, intend objects and meanings, and ask and answer questions. While we are often quite unaware of our consciousness in the Insight sense, as long as we are awake and not mentally compromised we are always using it. When we become aware of using our minds, we are able to better understand ourselves and what we do. Similarly, when we have a heightened awareness of how we are using our minds, we are able to become curious about others in a way that helps us better understand them and what they do. This has important implications for how we go about handling student misbehavior.

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[83] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*.

While Insight theory is not inherently complex, after all it explains the concrete and empirically experienced workings of the minds we use everyday, it can be challenging to grasp because we are not accustomed to paying attention to our minds. Typically we are oriented by our senses to the world that is exterior to us. Insight theory invites us to attend to our interiority—to our inner cognitional performances that put meaning to what we experience and orient our decisions to act. In this chapter I will explicate Insight theory, specifically how it has been refined for the Insight approach by Jamie Price. I will also demonstrate the phenomenological foundations of Insight theory in the work of Bernard Lonergan, and its critical and empirical nature in relation to other scholars on the topic of the mind.

Insight Theory

The fact that we each have a mind that we use to think, interpret, understand, and choose what to do with is as common sense as the fact that we have two feet to walk on. Our minds are part of our selves. They are the mill wheels of our sense-making and orient our actions. Interestingly enough, though each of us has a mind and uses it everyday to know and to act—for better or worse—understanding the mind and how it works has been, from Plato to neuroscience, a perennial puzzle.

What Lonergan did with Insight theory was take a phenomenological tack on explaining the mind. What that means is that his basis for understanding how the mind works stems from careful attention to the experience of using it. I will expand on phenomenology explicitly in the next section, but for now it is important to point out that this orientation makes Insight theory not only empirical, but also both critical and

verifiable. Through an appeal to your own experience of using your mind—by asking

yourself "What am I doing when I am using my mind?"—you can verify, refine or reject

the veracity of Insight theory. For, according to Lonergan, paying attention to how we

use our minds is "a matter of heightening one's consciousness by objectifying it, and that

is something that each one, ultimately, has to do in himself and for himself."[84]

When we heighten our consciousness by objectifying it, what we attend to is not

the data of sense—those sights, sounds, textures, smells and tastes that are the objects of

natural science—but the data of consciousness—the questions and answers that move our

minds from coming to know such things, orienting them to our own experience and

choosing how to respond.[85]

Data of Sense	Data of Consciousness
• Information acquired through our senses that we use to understand our world: touch, taste, sound, smell, sight. • Data originates *outside* our selves • Object of inquiry is the outside world	• Information generated by asking and answering the questions that drive the operation of our consciousness. • Data originates *inside* our minds • Object of inquiry is the conscious subject

Figure 1: Data of Sense and Data of Consciousness

Lonergan, thankfully, helps us heighten our awareness of our consciousness by

sharing what he painstakingly identified in his masterpiece tome, *Insight*, as the recurring

pattern of operations of consciousness, the "general, empirical method" of how we use

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[84] Ibid., 14.
[85] Ibid., 9.

our minds.[86] Lonergan identifies four levels of conscious operation—experiencing, understanding, judging and deciding. Each level has sub-operations. However, the lynchpin of these levels is that they are unified and related through sequenced, cumulative operations in which we progressively come to know and decide to act: first we experience data, then we seek to understand it, then we judge whether or not our understanding is adequate and how it relates to ourselves, and finally, we decide what we are going to do about it, ultimately putting that decision into action.

Lonergan's explicit capturing of the operations of consciousness demonstrate that each choice, each action, each thing we do, is a function of a series of other things we do first with our minds. This is critical to conflict analysis and resolution, because largely the things we do are what put us into conflict with others. If we can recognize that actions are a function of our minds, then we can become curious about those actions and the data of consciousness that has patterned them. This is not only useful for analysis, but for intervention too.

Jamie Price has spent the last decade refining the four levels of Lonergan's general, empirical method for the Insight approach as a way of illustrating more clearly the patterned and functionally related method with which we operate our minds as we come to know and act in the world. From Lonergan's four levels of conscious operation, Price has derived seven operations:

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[86] Lonergan, *Insight*.
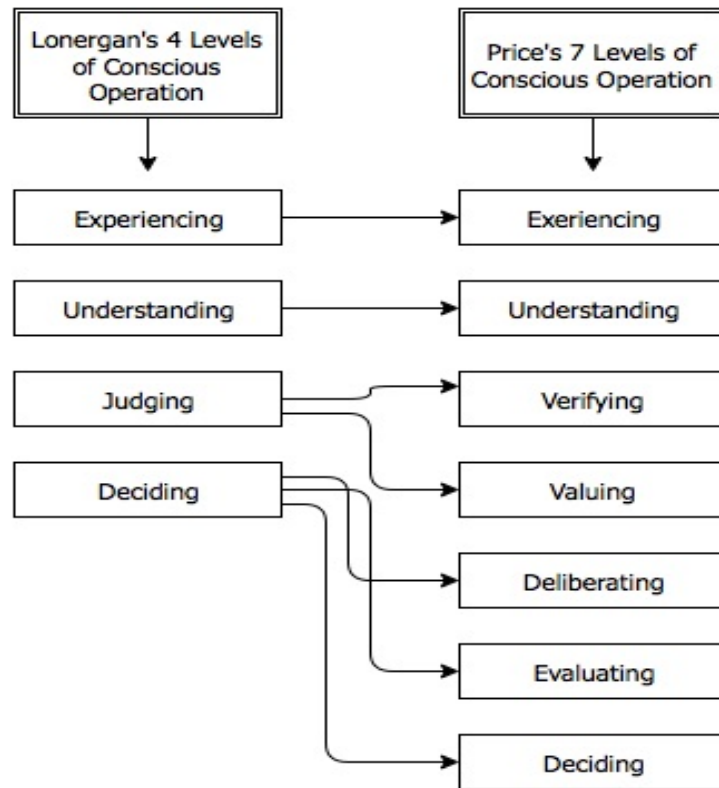
Figure 2: Lonergan and Price Levels of Conscious Operation

He illustrates this refinement as a looping figure "8" and calls it the "patterned

flow of human consciousness;" his students refer to it as "the loop."[87]

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[87] For the loop schematic see Price, "Explaining Human Conflict: Human Needs Theory and the Insight Approach," 118. On the "sublated" order of our operations of consciousness see: St. Amour, "Kierkagaard and Lonergan on the Prospect of Cognitional-Existential Integration."

EVALUATING

What should I (we) do?

What will I (we) do?

DELIBERATING

EXISTENTIAL LEVEL

What could I (we) do?

DECIDING

VALUING

So what?
[Of what significance is it to me (us)?]

ACTION

EXPERIENCING

VERIFYING

REFLECTIVE LEVEL

Is it so?

What is it?

UNDERSTANDING

KNOWING AND DOING
PATTERNED FLOW OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS
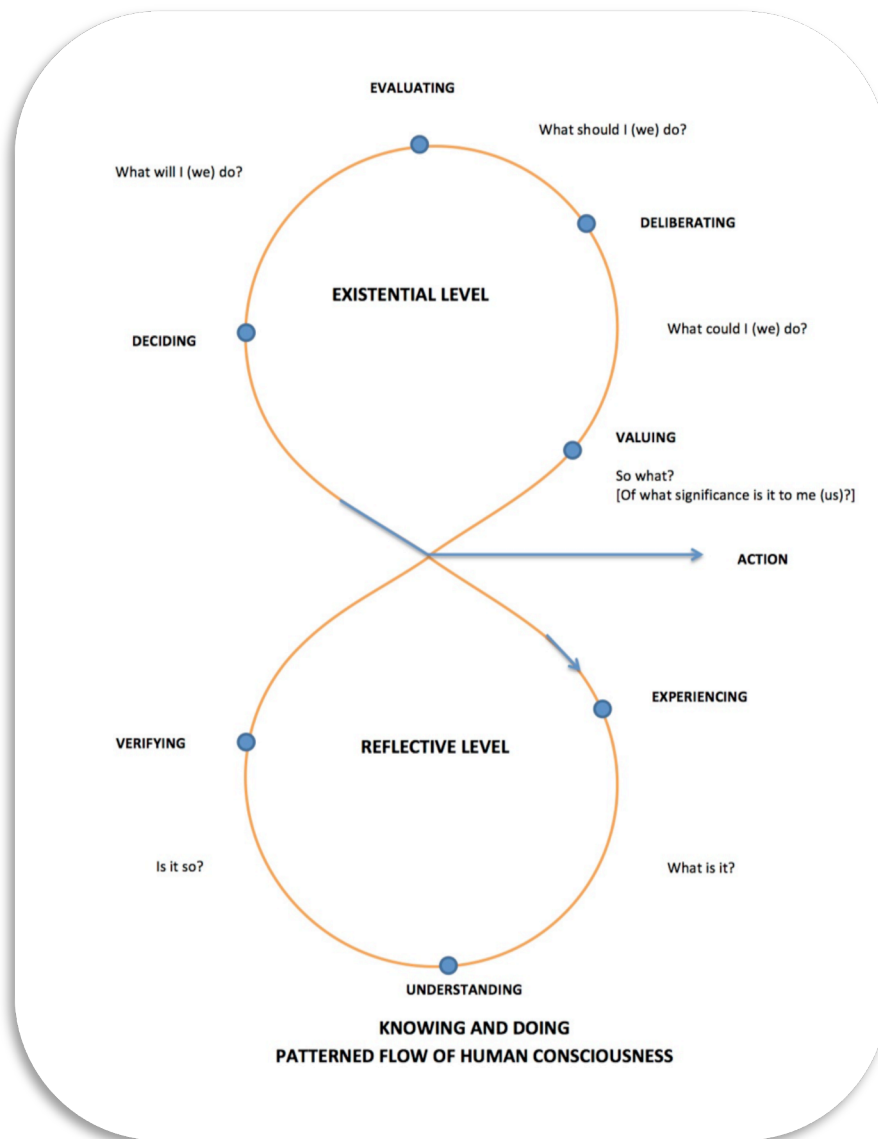
Figure 3: The Patterned Flow of Human Consciousness

As you can see, the loop is a number of blue dots and arrows on an orange figure 8 surrounded by words. At first glance, you may be asking yourself, "What is this diagram and what do these symbols mean?" You might be wondering, "How does this figure 8 work?" If you are, the Insight approach suggests that you are operating your

consciousness by asking yourself a question for understanding. Perhaps, though, you are

asking yourself whether or not you will take a closer look, in which case you are

operating your consciousness by asking a question of deliberating. The loop shows that

our minds move by asking and answering cumulative and progressive questions that take

us from "experiencing," depicted as the right-hand dot on the bottom loop, through

"deciding," depicted as the left-hand dot on the upper loop. One thing to keep in mind is

that our minds are moving through this sequence all the time, and extraordinarily quickly.

Price's schematic gives us a momentary snapshot. Follow me through the loop as I

explain what it represents.

Let us begin with Price's bottom loop. The bottom loop represents the "reflective"

level of consciousness, or the "knowing" loop. Here we use our minds to come to some

perceived certainty about what we know. We begin by "experiencing." Generally we

perceive raw data from the world around us—light, color, sound, smell, texture, taste—or

from the images of our own minds—inklings, hunches, premonitions, ideas. We then

seek to understand that data through the operation of "understanding." Here we ask

ourselves "What is it?"—What is it that I just experienced—and generate insights about

what the thing could be based on the links we make through our memories, our general

experience, and facts and concepts we have learned. For example, recall what you

thought when you first saw the diagram. You may have wondered what the lines meant,

what the words said, you may have wondered: Is that the figure 8 she mentioned? Is that

an infinity sign? How is that my mind? Those are all questions for understanding that fall

under a general category of inquiry that asks "What is it?" When you ask that kind of a question, you are performing the conscious operation: understanding.

As you are using your mind to understand by asking these questions, you are also generating insights that answer them. These insights for understanding are hypotheses, and in order to be sure we have it right, because having it right is essential to our decision-making, we verify. During the operation of "verifying," we ask ourselves the question, "Is it so?" Again, we generate insights by garnering the necessary evidence to determine the truth of what we think we have experienced.

Typically, advancing from experiencing to understanding to verifying is an extraordinarily quick process. In the routine of our daily lives we come to expect that we know what we are experiencing with out much thought. It is only when we are presented with challenges and new information that these operations slow down and become apparent because we have to work harder to perform them. If we determine that our insights for understanding are not adequate, we will go back to the drawing-board of understanding to come up with new hypotheses. If we determine that our insights are adequate, then we become sufficiently certain that we know that we have a true and proper understanding. The truth that we verify in our minds, however, is not necessarily an objective one. We may, and often do, misperceive, misunderstand, and appeal to insufficient evidence. However, we believe in our minds that we have understood correctly at this point, and we move on from there.

From the reflective loop on the bottom, where we have come to know with some degree of certainty, we move to the "existential" loop, or the "doing" loop, on the top,

where we formulate decisions to act. What moves us from the reflective loop to the existential loop is the operation of "valuing." Here we ask: "What does what I know matter to me?" Lonergan does not identify the operation of valuing as an independent operation as Price does, instead he links it to the operation of judgment (what the Insight approach has re-termed verifying) in which one judges, through feelings, the value of what one knows. He writes, "The transcendental notion of value is the capacity to ask that question: Is it worth while?" In asking that question, "you are not merely knowing what is so you are also taking a stance with regard to what ought to be... [This heads] one to the existential moment."[88] Our valuing is relayed to us affectively through feelings, and is narratively structured. By answering the question, "What does this matter to me?" we project out a possible and likely future based on what we think we know and how we feel about it.

Valuing is an extraordinarily important dimension of how we use our minds, because how we answer the question of how what we know of an experience matters to us patterns what we do about it. For example if you value what you are reading right now as interesting—it matters to you in terms of wanting to know more about it—you will probably decide to keep reading. If what you are reading is uninteresting—if it has no discernable significance to you—than you may decide that you have better ways to spend your time. As this sequence suggests, our valuing moves us spontaneously to the operation of "deliberating." When we are deliberating, we ask ourselves, "What can I

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[88] Lonergan, Crowe, and Doran, *Collected works of Bernard Lonergan*. Pp. 142, 144-145.

do?" We hypothesize options for responding to what we know and the future narrative our valuing presents us with.

In line with how we move in the reflective loop, in the existential loop we progress from deliberating, where we generate options for acting, to evaluating which is the best course to take. This operation is "evaluating." Here we ask ourselves: "What should I do?"—which option is best? So, even if you have valued what you are reading so far as uninteresting, and you have deliberated that you could either put it down or keep reading, you may feel compelled for professional reasons or otherwise to read on. In this way you are evaluating the best option—the one you should do. You may of course determine that the other option is best. In both cases you are evaluating your options and determining the best course considering your own personal circumstances. From evaluating comes the existential moment where we ask our selves "Will I do it?" and decide to act on our evaluated course. This, of course, manifests in observable behavior.

Price's loop illustrates how we use our minds to move from experiencing to knowing to deciding to act. It illustrates that we operate our consciousness by asking cumulative and progressive questions and generating insights to answer those questions. This makes it possible to pay attention to how our actions are functionally related to the way we use our minds. Price puts it this way: "once we differentiate the conscious act of deciding from the act decided upon, it becomes possible to attend explicitly to the fact that deciding (*What will I do?*) is a function of an inner performance of evaluating (*What should I do? What is best here?*), which is a function of an inner performance of deliberating (*What could I do?*) and which is a function of [the] conscious valuing of

[ones] concrete circumstances: their apprehension of […] value (*So what? How does this matter to me?*)"[89]

The sequence illustrated by the Insight approach is an important one, because it demonstrates the way we use our minds as cumulative and progressive. Each operation builds on the next—first we must experience data in order to understand it, in order to know it as we think it is, in order to feel a certain way about it, in order to act on it. However, the loop as a schematic is a simplified objectification of human consciousness. As such it is open to revisions and refinements by further appeals to one's own data of consciousness.

Despite its limitations, this cumulative and progressive sequence depicted by Price's loop is helpful. It facilitates a heightening of our awareness of our consciousness by directing our attention to what we are doing with our minds as we come to know and decide to act. When we can attend to that, we are able to wonder beyond what we observe as concrete behavior to how that behavior is rooted in the interiority of the individual who performed it. This is critical to understanding decision-making. Specifically, it presents us with a framework for discovering in a comprehensive and context specific way why a person (ourselves or another) has chosen a particular action. This not only facilitates an understanding for the discoverer, but facilitates reflexivity and self-understanding in the person performing the act. By understanding how we use our minds, we can become more critically self-aware, and by extension, aware of others on their own terms.

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[89] Price, "Explaining Human Conflict: Human Needs Theory and the Insight Approach," 119.

Intellectual Foundations of the Insight Approach

Price's loop accessibly depicts Lonergan's Insight theory and represents the foundational theory of the Insight approach. But where does it come from and what are its roots? As I mentioned previously, philosophers and scientists have been ruminating over the mind in terms of both thought and action for ages. It has been and continues to be a challenge to pin down. This is because, in the most fundamental sense, a quest to understand the mind is a quest to understand ourselves as human beings. In doing so we are caught in the waltz of using our minds to understand the minds that we are using. Lonergan's cognitional theory, and Price's refinement of it, objectifies the way we use our minds in a way that makes it possible to gain critical control over how we use them. Lonergan's objectification is phenomenological and it is a Twentieth Century answer to an Enlightenment struggle to comprehend the relationship between thought and action.

St. Amour aptly traces the western intellectual tradition to which Lonergan's cognitional theory responds.[90] It is a tradition struggling to settle the ultimate truth of human being and life. It asks: Does the truth of human being and life lie in an idealist objectivism anchored in rational thought and essential knowledge, as purported by thinkers such as Hegel? Or does truth lie in an existentialist subjectivism anchored in the concreteness of lived experience?[91] While clearly there is a vast array of philosophers contributing to this debate, Lonergan, for his part, brings a unique perspective to the conversation. While recognizing that differentiating objective truth from the concrete experience of the subject is essential for critical control over what it is to be human, truth

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[90] St. Amour, "Kierkagaard and Lonergan on the Prospect of Cognitional-Existential Integration."
[91] Ibid., 37.

for Lonergan is not one or the other; it is both—objective truth for Lonergan is what he calls "authentic subjectivity."[92] St. Amour explains how Lonergan philosophically manages both objectivity and subjectivity. He writes, "Lonergan fully affirms *both* objectivity and subjectivity, not by some balanced compromise, not by a blurring of distinctions, not by a speculative melding of thought and existence, but by promoting a self-appropriation that reveals how authentic subjectivity is the source of both cognitional objectivity and of moral and religious self-transcendence."[93] In other words, Lonergan finds objective truth, not in an idealist essence, but within a phenomenology of the subject—a heightened attention to ones own concrete, lived experience.[94] For Lonergan, this heightened attention yields more than an awareness and description of the experience itself. It yields an appropriation of general, empirical method—a self-appropriation of how we use our minds to come to know and decide to act.

As a phenomenology, Lonergan's work draws on Husserl's phenomenological practice of paying explicit and detailed attention to the lived experience of the subject through "intentional" acts of consciousness—not acts of consciousness that are on purpose, but act of consciousness which carry objects and are about things. For Husserl only in the intentional acts of subjects can an object be constituted. There is no such thing as an object "out there" in pure form to be witnessed and understood objectively, as materialists or idealists might have contended. Consciousness constitutes the object. In other words, an object exists in how it is apprehended or perceived by the subject. An

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[92] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 265.
[93] St. Amour, "Kierkagaard and Lonergan on the Prospect of Cognitional-Existential Integration," 43.
[94] Lonergan, *Phenomenology and* Logic, 226

apple is an apple to me as I see and experience and put meaning to the apple. An apple is an apple to you as you see and experience and put meaning to the apple. Without the subject, the apple is irrelevant. Husserl radically departs from an epistemology of the absolute and lays the ground for the emergence of existential thinking, a philosophy that concerns itself with truth as the concrete, practical, contingent, and ultimately relative experience of the existing subject.

Lonergan believes firmly in the centrality of the subject as Husserl conceives of it, and incorporates the notion that our cognitive acts are largely intentional—directed toward something. He is therefore sympathetic to existentialist thought. However, he laments that existentialist thought leads to relativism and excludes propositional truth. Not only does he find this exclusion to be error, but the error, he fears, leads to domination. As St. Amour writes, "To forgo a normative understanding of objective human knowing is to relinquish the basis for discriminating genuine interpretations and facts from mere ideology."[95] In other words, without propositional truth, without normativity, anything and everything goes, which gives people license to "obscure, exploit and dominate."[96]

To escape the ideological trap that catches both idealism and existentialism, Lonergan reclaims propositional truth, but rejects the idea that it can be found in innate ideas or *a priori* categories. For, "the pursuit of absolute necessity, absolute certitude," he writes, "is the pursuit of more than man can have, and consequently it is doomed to failure because it is overshooting the mark… Our knowledge is based on the knowledge

[95] St. Amour, "Kierkagaard and Lonergan on the Prospect of Cognitional-Existential Integration," 40.
[96] Ibid., 20.

of a contingent world, and our knowing is a contingent event."[97] Absolutes, Lonergan

recognizes, are impossible for people to grasp. What we can grasp and what we each can

recognize is that we are humans who try to grasp those things. We are humans who try to

make sense of the world. And most importantly, we are humans who act in the world and

as actors create both who we are and the world we inhabit. Because of this, Lonergan

suggests that propositional truth consists in "the innate powers, desires, and norms of the

human mind itself." Truth is in the actual and concrete functioning of our own minds:

"the invariants of human conscious intentionality."[98]

Truth as the operation of our conscious minds has important implications. On the

one hand, it sets the stage for being able to know ourselves. It gives us an opportunity for

reflexivity—for understanding how we come to know and decide to act. It also sets the

stage for understanding the world that we create—not as absolute and unchanging, but as

the ever changing and contingent contexts of lived experience.

On the other hand, truth as the operation of our conscious minds calls us to

challenge whether Lonergan's general, empirical method—the loop, as it were—is an

accurate heuristic for how we use our minds. Lonergan, as a phenomenologist, asserts

two important points to this end. First, his objectification of the conscious operations of

our minds as general, empirical method is just that: an objectification. It is not the thing

itself. By heightening his awareness of his conscious operations he, and by extension all

of us, are able to consciously intend our conscious operations. We can notice ourselves

experiencing our operations of experiencing, understanding, verifying, valuing,

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[97] Lonergan, Phenomenology and Logic, 262.
[98] McCarthy, "Pluralism, Invariance, and Conflict," 12.

deliberating, evaluating and deciding. "It is an awareness," Lonergan writes, "not of what is intended, but of the intending."[99] The pattern and unity that Lonergan discerns in consciously intending is the general, empirical method, which does not "express surprising novelties but simply prove[s] to be objectifications of the routines of our conscious living and doing… the native spontaneities and inevitabilities of our consciousness which assembles its own constituent parts and unites them in a rounded whole in a manner that we cannot set aside… "[100] As an objectification, however, not the thing itself, his articulation of conscious operation is open to revision and refinement, because nothing that a person can do or know is absolute. He writes, "Any theory, description, account of our conscious and intentional operations is bound to be incomplete and to admit further clarifications and extensions."[101] But, he continues, "all such clarifications and extensions are to be derived from the conscious and intentional operations themselves."[102]

This brings us to the second point, verification, falsification and revision of general, empirical method—and by extension the Insight approach—is possible by an appeal to ones own data of consciousness. An appeal to ones own data of consciousness is possible by paying direct and concerted attention to what you notice yourself doing as you use your mind. As McCarthy points out by doing this "the foundations of cognition

[99] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 15.
[100] Ibid., 18.
[101] Ibid., 19.
[102] Ibid.

[will] confront the reflectively inquiring mind with its own intentional sources and procedures."[103]

For example, you, at this very moment, are having the very real experience of reading this dissertation. Your experience is uniquely yours—what it means to you, how it matters, what questions it generates. Your experience is also thoroughly concrete. You are in fact putting your eyes to a page to decipher meaning. Furthermore, your experience is only possible by virtue of using your mind. It is possible to heighten your awareness of how you are using your mind as you read (or as you engage in any activity) and begin to experience yourself both reading and using your mind to do so. When you do this, you may recognize its patterned flow. You may notice when reading that your focus begins in deciphering the black marks on the page as letters that are linked together into words that are linked together into sentences that convey a meaning. You may notice yourself engaged in understanding, puzzling over, affirming and contesting the meaning that the words and sentences convey. You may notice that feelings accompany those meanings, and that deliberations about what to do, evaluations about what you should do, and decisions to act follow.

Paying attention to operating your mind reveals that while functionally linked, your operations of understanding and verifying are distinct from the content that is understood and verified. The operation of valuing is distinct from the words you use to express the feeling that it presents to you. The operations of deliberating, evaluating and deciding are distinct from the action that you take. Those operations and the insights and

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[103] McCarthy, "Pluralism, Invariance, and Conflict," 14.

questions that propel you from one to the next are your data of consciousness. They are the meaning and value of your experience and action.

To be sure, our focus is not generally on the operations we are performing with our mind as we are doing this. But it is possible to become aware of these operations and to notice in them a patterned flow of consciousness. That patterned flow is what Insight theory captures. It is what the loop depicts. And by becoming aware of and paying attention to our own operations of consciousness, the patterns and performances of our own mind, we position ourselves to critically verify what we are doing with it.

Lonergan would have us appeal, with a heightened awareness of our conscious operations, to our own data of consciousness in order to verify or falsify the objectification of it that he captures in general, empirical method. Still, though, as we challenge the accuracy of his heuristic it is both important and interesting to seek outside of ourselves and appeal to what others have discovered about the mind to see whether discoveries by other methods support the fundamental assumptions of Insight theory.

Other Methods and Insight's Fundamental Assumptions

There are some fundamental assumptions on which Insight theory rests. Among the most important are that we use our minds in a method that is a patterned sequence, that within that patterned sequence it is our operation, valuing, that moves us from knowing to deciding to act, and that our operation, deciding, produces actions that are a culmination of these mental functions.

In terms of sequence, some may wonder about the order in which Lonergan and Price present the sequence of cognitive operation. In some way it is logical that we would

move from experiencing to understanding to verifying to valuing to deliberating to evaluating to deciding to act. We often have the experience of wondering what something is, and then whether or not it is so. We grapple with what to do, and evaluate the best option. At the same time though, it may feel like we jump from experiencing seemingly raw data to acting without any cognitive functioning in between. Think of how you would leap into the air with excitement and disbelief at winning the lottery, or how your fist might fly into the face of the person insulting your mother as though it was detached from your body. Does all that thought really precede action? And does it always?

According to many who study the mind, it does. Sequential cognitive functioning is substantiated in both neuroscience and cognitive science. In neuroscience, we find that neurotransmitters are activated by stimuli and that neurons firing in one area of the brain lead to neurons firing in another part. It is not necessarily linear, but it is patterned and sequential. In one study Grent-'t-Jong and Woldorff discovered through neuroimaging that once our attention is grabbed by stimuli activating the frontal brain area, the parietal region is activated to hone in more closely on the stimuli to understand what the stimuli actually are.[104] That very basic capturing of brain activity correlates to the sequence of experiencing and understanding in Insight theory. We first experience, and then focus our attention on understanding what we are experiencing. Neuroscience has also shown, among a trove of intricate discoveries, that there are defined input and output neural

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[104] Grent-'t-Jong and Woldorff, "Timing and Sequence of Brain Activity in Top-Down Control of Visual-Spatial Attention," 122.

pathways from other brain regions, such as the amygdala, showing that cognitive activity and brain function are not random, but sequenced.[105]

Similarly, Kurzweil, an expert in artificial intelligence who draws deeply on neuroscience in his quest to reverse-engineer the mind, describes our brains as pattern receptors. As pattern receptors, we recognize, not all at once and not randomly, but sequentially. We learn patterns, build on them, and inform our recognition capacity with them. According to Kurzweil, first we experience the data, then we seek to associate it with a known pattern. This is followed by a verifying-type of operation where we make sure the pattern we think we see is actually what we are seeing. Kurzweil describes these patterns as the "language of thought."[106] And for him, "every thought we have triggers other thoughts," including emotional thoughts, which are necessarily triggered by non-emotional thoughts that have an inherent emotional potential.[107] These emotional thoughts, according to Kuzweil, then motivate goal-based thoughts, which presumably lead to actions that seek to achieve those goals.[108] Kurzweil ends his explication of the mind at pattern receptor and the information that pattern reception provides us. He does not go deeply into emotions beyond where they seem to be triggered in the brain and he does not go deeply into decision-making. But he does insist that thinking, as patterned, is sequential.

Information processing theory, advanced by Dodge, Crick and Huesmann in the 1980s and 1990s also recognizes a sequencing to cognitive operation. Building on a mid-

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[105] LeDoux, "Emotion Circuits in the Brain."
[106] Kurzweil, *How to Create a Mind*, 68.
[107] Ibid., 71.
[108] Ibid., 177.

century trend in cognitive science, information processing theory conceives the human mind as a computer—a computational system that literally processes information from both cognitions and the outside world. As Huesmann puts it, "the system processes *input* stimuli and cognitions and generates *outputs* that may be behaviors or cognitions."[109] In essence, the pattern that information processing theorists discern is similar to Insight theory. It suggests "that any individual faced with a social problem evaluates and interprets situational cues, searches memory for guides to behavior, evaluates and decides on the best behavior, and enacts that response."[110] There is a clear sequence from experiential input to interpretation, to clarification of goals, to response construction to decision.[111]

Even the moral psychologist, Haidt, identifies sequencing in cognitive operation. He emphasizes the role that emotions play as we move from making moral judgments about things to deciding to act on those judgments and further justifying our judgments and actions. He contends that emotion comes prior to reasoning about the emotions. But clearly, before emotion there is an apprehension of the object that initiates the emotional response. After the emotion, come a reaction and a reasoning that build the sequence of cognitive operation.[112]

The point that I want to make is not that neuroscience and Kurzweil and information processing theory and moral psychology are necessarily in agreement with

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[109] Huesmann, "The Role of Social Information Processing and Cognitive Schema in the Acquisition and Maintenance of Habitual Aggressive Behavior," 78.
[110] Ibid., 87.
[111] Crick and Dodge, "A Review and Reformulation of Social Information-Processing Mechanisms in Children's Social Adjustment," 76.
[112] Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*.

either Insight theory or their various observations and theories of the mind, in fact there is much that conflicts. But what is consistent is the pervasive observation that cognitive operation is sequential. Each of the divergent theories I mention, and undoubtedly more, recognize that there is a pattern and sequence to how we use our minds. As a complement to phenomenological verification, it would be a fascinating neurological experiment to precisely investigate the sequence put forth by the Insight approach.

This brings us to a second pivotal assumption of Insight theory. Within the patterned sequence of conscious operation, Insight theory places a particular emphasis on the operation of valuing—where feelings indicate to us how we answer the question of what something matters to us. Valuing moves us from knowing to deciding to act. Through feelings, as we value, we weigh what we know and set the trajectory for both what we anticipate will happen and what we will do about it. It is possible to think about valuing as the performance of generating an emotional response to something. This emotional response, which LaDoux defines as "the process by which the brain determines or computes the value of a stimulus,"[113] is relayed to us as a "felt sense" that we can describe as a feeling.[114] This has been observed by other theorists concerned with the mind and with increased attention in the last decade.[115]

Lerner and colleagues recently put out a comprehensive review on the state of knowledge concerning emotion and decision-making in the cognitive sciences, concluding that "many psychological scientists now assume that emotions are, for better

[113] Quoted in Verweij et al., "Emotion, Rationality, and Decision-Making," 3.
[114] Price prefers the precision of "felt sense," because it correlates to one's subjective experience, to "feelings," which are objectified as exterior to, though descriptive of, our subjective experience.
[115] Lerner et al., "Emotion and Decision Making," 3.

or worse, the dominant driver of most meaningful decisions in life." [116] Where previously

what dominated decision-making discourse was a focus on rational choice, where

decisions are presumed to be made based on utility analysis rather than emotion, findings

from social science, cognitive science and neuroscience show that emotion is an essential

factor in decision-making. [117] Verweij and colleagues write, "emotions, and especially

social emotions (such as empathy, admiration, spite, and jealousy), are pivotal to social

decision-making (LeDoux, 1998; Panksepp, 1998)… Emotions do not necessarily

determine our social choices, and can even be deliberately reappraised (Ochsner et al.,

2002), but at a minimum they limit and bias our decisions. Neurologically impaired

patients, who display flat emotions, often find it hard to take personally beneficial, and

socially appropriate, decisions (Damasio, 2005)." [118]

Haidt, again in the realm of moral psychology, affirms that cognition cannot act

independently of emotion and concurs that emotions drive decision-making, especially

moral decision-making. We can feel intensely about something, even before we fully

understand what it is, and based on our feeling, act. Haidt describes a series of

experiments where he tests people's moral reactions to taboos. In one experiment he asks

subjects to take a sip of juice in which they have seen him dip a cockroach. Even though

he has assured his subjects that the cockroach has been completely sterilized, 63% of

participants refused to drink the juice into which the cockroach had been dipped. The

feeling of disgust, regardless of the actual sterility of the bug, led them to refuse. [119] Haidt

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[116] Lerner et al., "Emotion and Decision Making."
[117] Verweij et al., "Emotion, Rationality, and Decision-Making," 3.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, 44.

goes on to argue that we reason about and justify our actions after our emotions have already patterned our decision to act. This is important for Chapter 4 when we discuss the performance ranges of conscious operations, conflict behavior and the Insight hypothesis for changing conflict behavior. For now, what is interesting is the primal link between emotion and decision-making.

To drink the juice or not to drink the juice. In essence it all comes down to what we do. And what I am attempting to show is that from Insight theory to neuroscience, to cognitive and moral psychology, what we do is a function of using our minds. We use our minds in a patterned and predictable way. Before deciding not to drink the cockroach contaminated juice was the evaluation of which of the options deliberated—to drink the juice or not to drink the juice—was the best thing to do. Before deliberating there was a felt-sense—perhaps disgust, perhaps pride, perhaps thirst—a valuing that patterned the available options. And before valuing there was the apprehension of cockroached juice.

From the perspective of the Insight approach, this can be said for the decision to drink, and it can be said for all decisions to act. It can be said for the student who skips class to hang out in the bathroom, for the school staff member dragging the student back to class, for the student resisting and not cooperating, for the administrator suspending her. Insight theory explains how each decision we make is preceded by a series of sequential cognitive operations. Where neuroscience asks what is going on physically in the brain when we operate our minds, and cognitive and moral sciences ask what types of thoughts we have when we operate our minds, the Insight approach asks what are we doing when we are using our minds? When we have a framework for knowing the

method in which we use our minds, it becomes possible to break free from understanding by type, which as Lonergan argues, over shoots the mark, and begin to understand a person and her decision-making based on her own data of consciousness. What did she understand and verify? How did she value it? What did she deliberate and evaluate as the best thing to do? Insight theory makes it possible to discover, in context specific ways, how we come to decisions. This is critical when we are talking about decisions made in conflict, which is where I now turn.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONFLICT AND TRANSFORMATION ACCORDING TO THE INSIGHT APPROACH

The Insight approach equips us with a framework that links the actions we take in the world to the way we use our minds to decide to take those actions. This framework is an essential tool for discovering the personal and context specific meanings that pattern what we do. For example, writing this page right now rather than enjoying the weather with my son is the result of a decision to act based on an evaluation of the best thing to do, based on a deliberation of my options, based on a valuing of the circumstances that I believe I adequately understand. While this is something we rarely think to do, it is possible to discover what has led to my decision in this particular moment. I, or you, could inquire of my data of consciousness: What do I think I know, how I am valuing, what I have deliberated and what are the criteria with which I have evaluated and ultimately decided to write rather than play? Paying attention to this and inquiring about it would give us a robust understanding of my decision-making. For me, it would generate insights and self-awareness that would contribute to breadth in my subsequent decision-making. For you it would free you from your assumptions about my decision and give you an understanding of my decision on my own terms.

Similarly, when we are locked in a dynamic of conflict, we can use the Insight approach's framework to inquire into the data of consciousness that is patterning our conflict behavior. When we do this we are positioned to discover the personal and

context specific meanings that pattern the actions we take as we perpetuate, or transform, a dynamic of conflict. In this chapter, I will illustrate the technical way that the Insight approach understands conflict as linked to how we use our minds and its hypothesis that curiosity into the data of consciousness is key to conflict transformation.

The Insight Approach to Conflict

According to the Insight approach, conflict is most usefully considered in its concrete form: conflict behavior—the fighting, screaming, yelling, hitting, running avoiding, hiding, shrinking, groveling things we do to defend against threat.[120] Considering conflict in terms of the things we do is useful for three reasons.

First, the things we do and the way others interpret the things we do are what either escalate or interrupt cycles of conflict behavior. In describing the interactionist affiliations of the Insight approach, Sargent, Picard and Jull build on Mead, Neibuhr and Waldrop when they write, "We are responsive actors as well as purposive actors; our actions generate responses in others that have consequences for ourselves."[121] In other words we do things in response to what others do and often with a goal. Others then respond to our actions with their own goals in mind. The action-response dynamic constitutes an interaction. Picard and Jull build on that notion when they write that conflict interactions take "hold when our response to [an] experience of threat is to defend ourselves through *flight-or-fight* actions and when these defend responses are experienced by others as an attack [to which they respond defensively]."[122] Regardless of

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[120] Price, "Explaining Human Conflict: Human Needs Theory and the Insight Approach."
[121] Sargent, Picard, and Jull, "Rethinking Conflict," 345.
[122] Picard and Jull, "Learning through Deepening Conversations," 153.

whose action comes first, conflict interactions hinge on behavior, on what we do and on how we use our minds to choose to do what we do in response to the actions of others. As such, it is critical that we take seriously the actions—the conflict behaviors—that are at the heart of conflict.

Second, conflict behavior, while nearly endless in its variety, is for the most part observable. As observable, it is identifiable. When we can identify it, we can engage it. What identifies conflict behavior is its link to threat, an observation that builds on discoveries in conflict as far back as Maslow's.[123] Threat very often leads to stress-based behaviors—those behaviors characterized by fight, flight, freeze and fawn. Price and I define each of these types of behavior:

> 'Fight' covers the range of verbal and nonverbal actions that people employ when they decide to defend themselves against the perceived threat by being aggressive. 'Flee' covers the gamut of verbal and nonverbal actions that people employ when they decide to defend themselves against the perceived threat by trying to avoid or get away from it. 'Freeze' covers the scope of verbal and nonverbal actions that people employ when they decide to defend against the perceived threat by camouflaging or deflecting attention from themselves. 'Fawn' covers the span of verbal and nonverbal actions that people employ when they decide to defend themselves against the perceived threat by ingratiating themselves or currying favor.[124]

Conflict behavior can be identified by the stress-based behaviors associated with fight, flight, freeze and fawn. When we can identify behaviors in both ourselves and in others as such, we are given a clue that we, or they, may be responding to threat, and we are positioned to become curious about both the specific behavior and the specific threat patterning it.

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[123] Maslow, "Conflict, Frustration, and the Theory of Threat."
[124] Price and Price, "Insight Policing and the Role of the Civilian in Police Accountability," 4.

This brings us to the third reason that it is useful to consider conflict in its concrete, behavioral form. When we do so, we are able to link the behavior directly to the mind that made the decision to react defensively in the first place. As the Insight approach demonstrates that decisions are a function of the cumulative and progressive operations of our consciousness, recognizing behavior as a decision directs our attention to the interiority that patterns it. In other words, considering conflict behavior in its concrete form gives us a direct inlet to interiority. By paying attention to interiority as we analyze conflict behavior, specifically to the data and operations of consciousness, we activate a framework that guides a discovery of the meanings that are motivating behavior. We are positioned to elicit the roots of conflict behavior as experienced by the actors using it, thereby gaining critical control over the conflict we are seeking to understand.

Interiority of Conflict Behavior

In terms of interiority, what conflict behavior points us to are three key variables that are rooted in our operations of consciousness:

1) a valuing of threat (Vt)

2) a decision to defend (Dd)

3) and the institutional roles and tasks (Irt) that carry our valuing and deciding.[125]

A valuing of threat is when our answer to the question of valuing—What does this matter to me?—is threat. Threat in this context is more nuanced than simply a fear of

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[125] Price, "Explaining Human Conflict: Human Needs Theory and the Insight Approach." It should be noted that institutional roles and tasks are not the only carriers of consciousness, though they are key to conflict behavior. Carriers of consciousness orient how we use our minds—beginning with what we pay attention to. Other carriers could include personal identities, cultural narratives and norms, as well as habits and expectations.

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bodily harm, though it could include that. Rather, threat refers to a sense—presented to us affectively through a variety of feelings from fear to worry to loss to anxiety to embarrassment to betrayal to guilt—that something important is at stake. Price typologizes threat into three categories—personal, practical and social.[126] To illustrate these, let us take a hypothetical example from the school context.

During school year 2014-2015 a scathing insult in vogue at Monroe High was "thot." Thot is the acronym for "that ho over there." It was probably the worst thing a person could be called and more often than not being given that title would register in ones valuing as threat. If I had been called a thot, and registered the insult as a "personal" threat, I would feel that my sense of self was at stake in some way. There would be a gap between others' perception that I am a thot and my self-perception as someone with more integrity that that. The threat would be that personal disconnect.

I could also value being called a thot as a "practical" threat, where something external is at stake: my saftey, a loved one, an opportunity, a material good. I might think to myself, "If everyone thinks I'm a thot, Billy isn't going to ask me out and I'll never be prom queen." What is at stake for me is my relationship with Billy and my prospects of being prom queen—both practical threats.

And finally, I could value the insult as a "social" threat, where I perceive that social, communal or institutional structures are misaligned or compromised.[127] I might think, "I can't believe she is calling me a thot! That just perpetuates misogynist stereotypes and keeps women from realizing their full potential." The threat here is to the

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[126] Price, "Exercise 2.4: Moralizing Expressions and Curious Questions."
[127] Ibid.

way I believe social order ought to be—free from misogynist slurs and gender oppression. Often more than one of these types of threat is at play and to varying degrees. Having a descriptive handle on them is useful for discovering what precisely is felt to be at stake for someone.

Threat, regardless of type, is future oriented because our valuing is future oriented. When we value what we have come to know in our reflective loop as threatening, we project out a hypothetical future where something that greatly matters, whether it be personal, practical or social, could be compromised or lost. Generally this takes a narrative form—"if this threat, then that future." The Insight approach calls this a "dire-future" narrative. The dire-future narrative sets the parameters of our deliberating, where we ask ourselves what we can do about the threatening future we fear will come to pass.

The variable, decision to defend, emerges in order to protect against such dire-futures. When we value threat—that something is at stake for us—our urge is to protect against that threat. We decide to defend against the actualization of the dire-future we imagine, most typically with conflict behavior, those fight, flight, freeze and fawn behaviors alluded to earlier.

To be sure, our data of consciousness under threat and our dire future narratives are usually obscure to us in our minds. We feel the affect that indicates threat and react defensively. The threat compromises our ability for self-reflection or curiosity, an observation I will return to in more detail below.

For now, to further illustrate the decision to defend in conflict, let us build on the example where I have been called a thot. All I know is that I am livid about being called a thot—I have a felt-sense that it is wrong and needs to be corrected. I decide, without being terribly curious about myself, that the best thing to do is retaliate against the girl who called me the name. While she is in gym class, I take her pants out of her locker and cut them to pieces, thinking that her humiliation will remedy mine.

There is a relational pattern at play in this scenario. My valuing being called a thot is threatening, let's say to my dignity (Vt), and my decision to defend (Dd) against that threat to my dignity is violating the girl who violated me. This data of consciousness is carried by my relationship with the girl—what Price terms institutional roles and tasks— the third variable of conflict behavior. The institution is the high school context, our roles are as peers, and our tasks involve the academic, social and emotional learning that is required for teenagers in high school. Our peer, student relationship carries the way I value the insult and the decision I make to defend against it.

If I were a teacher in the same high school context, my role as an authority and a instructor, with a learned set of beliefs about the way authority should be used, would position me to value the insult in a different way—it may threaten my dignity, but perhaps it would threaten my best interests for the girl throwing the insult, knowing that name-calling is not a good choice in the adult world. My role would certainly lead me to deliberate different options for defending against the threat that I fear—I may give her a bad grade in the class, I may react with an office referral, I may decide to have a processing conversation with the girl myself. Whatever my behavior, it would be a result

of a decision to defend and a valuing of threat, carried by the relevant institutional roles and tasks.

Taking conflict behavior as the point of analysis in conflict allows us to penetrate its interiority. The variables of interiority that the Insight approach has discerned help us gain critical control over what a person is doing within a particular context when she uses her mind to engage in conflict behavior. This has the potential to yield a context specific understanding of conflict, enhancing the probability of changing the conflict dynamic.

Part of what is so important about understanding what we are doing with our minds when we engage in conflict behavior is that when we are threatened and defending, as I mentioned above, we tend not to use our minds very well. We jump to conclusions and are quick to react. Insight scholars and others, particularly cognitive psychologists, have observed that conflict, and threat in particular, catapults us into a state where we are consistently misapprehending and mistaken, and our decisions to act entrench the conflicts we are trying to solve rather than solve them. Cognitive science demonstrates through acute observation that under threat we become terrible thinkers, poised only to preserve ourselves.

Cognitive Performance under Threat

Physiological evidence shows that when the amygdala, which is the emotional center of the brain, perceives threat—something that happens even before our brain's visual center has a chance to fully process what is going on, let alone our critical thinking centers—it immediately triggers the hypothalamus to activate a stress-response (fight, flight, freeze or fawn) through our sympathetic nervous system. It does this by signaling

the release of epinephrine (also known as adrenaline) into our bloodstream. Epinephrine is responsible for all the sensations we feel under threat—the increased heart rate, the hotness from heightened blood flow, the rapid breathing, the sharpening of senses—all to facilitate the body's access to the energy it needs to survive. If the perception of threat is sustained in the amygdala and verified in other regions of the brain, a second phase of arousal is activated and cortisol is released to help keep the body on high alert.

While this response is essential for our survival in instances of imminent threat— if we are caught in a car fire, or under attack, or rescuing a person in danger—it shuts down critical thinking. Matto and colleagues explain that cortisol inhibits the relaxation of the amygdala preventing incoming information from flowing freely to the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain responsible for executive functions like critical thinking, reasoning, planning, problem solving, decision-making and impulse control.[128] In other words, when threat activates stress, our higher-order thinking shuts down and our cognitive performance plummets. Perry writes that "often we lose the ability to 'think' or even speak during an acute threat. We just react."[129] In situations of imminent threat, our stress response can save our lives. In situations of conflict, the response can be maladaptive.

Cognitive psychologists have identified a number of cognitively deficient trends that result from perceptions of threat and affect the quality of the information we consider as well as the quality of our decisions as we interact with others. Among these cognitive deficiencies is "tunnel vision." When we have tunnel vision, we focus exclusively on one

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[128] Holly C. Matto, Jessica Strolin-Goltzman, and Michelle Ballan, *Neuroscience for Social Work*, 163.
[129] Perry and Szalavitz, *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog*, 65.

central object. That object, for example what we believe to be threatening, or our goal to stop it, consumes our attention and we ignore neighboring information that might tell us about the adequacy of our thinking.[130]

Tunnel vision's intense focus amplifies another deficient cognitive trend called "selective perception." Selective perception is the result of attending only to data that confirms our beliefs or expectations—including expectations of threat—to the exclusion of data that disconfirms them.

Selective perception in turn entrenches another deficient cognitive trend, "confirmation bias," where we become certain that what we think is true, because of what we have selectively perceived and despite the inadequacy of our attention. These cognitive deficiencies, and this list is not exhaustive, bias the information we attend to. They suppress critical questions. They serve to verify threat in the brain and keep our cortisol levels high, thereby continuing to inhibit our ability to think critically and course correct. They keep us in the place of extreme certainty that Picard and Melchin hold to be responsible for hardened positions.[131]

The cognitive deficiencies that give us a flawed and biased certainty about our environment and the threat we fear create errors that extend to our interpretations of other people as well as to ourselves in relation to them—errors that personalize conflict. When we are threatened, we are most concerned with protecting ourselves, and so we succumb to "egocentrism," where we take ourselves to be the most important point of reference.[132]

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[130] Stagner, *The Dimensions of Human Conflict*, 56.
[131] Melchin and Picard, *Transforming Conflict through Insight*.
[132] Keith and Sedikides, "Self-Threat Magnifies the Self-Serving Bias"; Stein, "Building Politics into Psychology: The Misperception of Threat," 253.

When we do this, we discount the significance of others. From this egocentric perspective, we tend to explain behavior we find threatening, not in terms of how it is threatening to us, but in terms of the personal disposition of the person to whom we attribute it.[133] The person becomes the problem—the jerk or the cheat or the monster. There is logic to this given that actions are clearly, and visually, linked to people, and it is explicable given the superficial thinking we do when our brains are saturated in adrenaline and cortisol—we go straight toward or away from the source of the threat to be rid of it. The trouble is that it is biased, uncritical and often misplaced. Cognitive psychology calls this error "attribution bias."[134] We superficially conflate the actor and the threat and ascribe motivation and intent where it may not be. This shuts us off from curious or empathetic engagement with another and ends up dividing us.

As soon as we attribute the threat we fear to the disposition, motivation and intent of the person we believe is responsible, we fall prey to even further cognitive error: negative stereotypes called "enemy images."[135] With enemy images we negatively generalize about the qualities we perceive one person to have as true of others despite insufficient evidence—if that girl is a thot then all of her friends are thots too. And because we are social, we communicate what we interpret and believe. Meanings become shared, and they spread. We have a tendency to latch on to enemy images and other negative information that we learn from others for a number of reasons, not least because biologically we prioritize the bad over the good. This Kahnemann calls "negativity

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[133] Stagner, *The Dimensions of Human Conflict*, 47.
[134] Stein, "Building Politics into Psychology: The Misperception of Threat," 249–50.
[135] Stein, "Psychological Explanations of International Conflict."

dominance."[136] Our brains actually process indicators of threat faster than indicators of positivity—a remnant of our survivalist days—and we fall prey to the expectation that the threat, or negative interpretation of an event or person or group, is true. These cognitive biases are capable of escalating conflict beyond any initial threat, broadening it outward into a community of people.

Tajfel's work on in-group preference and Social Identity Theory supports this observation as he demonstrates that groups tend to organize themselves and others into categories of affiliation and opposition.[137] Affiliation groups that hold enemy images about opposition groups extend negative disposition and intention attributions to both the individuals that make up the group and the group itself, while at the same time deepening their own sense of solidarity with their in-group. What this tells us in terms of how we think is that the erroneous meanings we make under threat are easily reinforced within the social groups with whom we share those meanings. Bar-Tal calls such shared interpretive meanings "socio-psychological infrastructure," which is an apt metaphor for how strong and enduring such shared meanings can be.[138]

Incredibly, there is more. Cognitive error in conflict continues to proliferate when left unchecked. With biased meanings and beliefs we become caught in "self-fulfilling prophecy," where, as Stagner observes, "erroneous percepts sometimes 'create' the reality they had implied."[139] The fear that is imagined to be true becomes a reality as we

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[136] Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, 300.
[137] Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories*.
[138] Bar-Tal, "Sociopsychological Foundations of Intractable Conflicts," 1430.
[139] Stagner, *The Dimensions of Human Conflict*, 46.

try harder and harder to defend against it. The more a teacher expects a child to do poorly, the more likely he will.

We also see bias in conflict escalation. Shergill and colleagues demonstrate that our own perception of pain is more palpable than our perception of the pain we exert on others, particularly the pain we exert on others in retribution for pain inflicted on us.[140] Their study, which aimed to measure perception of pain received and pain inflicted, hooked up pairs of volunteers to a mechanical device that allowed each of them to exert pressure on the other volunteer's finger. The researcher began by exerting a fixed amount of pressure on the first volunteer's finger and then asked her to exert the exact same amount of pressure onto the other volunteer's finger. The second volunteer was then asked to exert the same amount of pressure back onto the first volunteer's finger. The two volunteers took turns applying equal amounts of pressure to each other's fingers while the researcher measured the actual amount of pressure they applied. Although the volunteers tried to respond to each other's pressures with equal force, they typically responded with 40 percent more force than they had just experienced. In our efforts to restore balance in contexts of conflict, this type of misperception fuels conflict even further. Defending against the threat of the other grows the threat each poses and increases the probability of escalating cycles of conflict behavior.

In conflict, our minds are often our worst enemies. They mire us in error out of a compulsion for self-preservation and lead us to make decisions that further endanger ourselves, what we care about, and our relationships. Beck, the father of cognitive-

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[140] Shergill et al., "Two Eyes for an Eye."

behavioral therapy, writes that cognitions in conflict are "frequently disproportionate or inappropriate to the particular circumstances that triggered them,"[141] and that "patients characteristically [accept] their exaggerated interpretation or misinterpretation at face value."[142] Kashdan calls this "fusion," where we view our thoughts as the literal truth instead of what they actually are—thoughts.[143] The Insight approach explains these cognitive deficiencies in conflict as a function of poor conscious performance.

The Ranges of Conscious Performance

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the Insight approach tells us that when we use our mind—from building rockets to escalating conflict—we are engaging in a performance.[144] Our operations of consciousness are things that we do. Just as we use our two feet to walk, we operate our consciousness to experience, understand, verify, value, deliberate, evaluate, and decide. Our operations of consciousness are not things that are done to us by our minds, and they are distinct from the things, the thoughts and decisions that we generate with our minds. They are things we do with our minds. As performances there is a range of quality with which we can perform them—we can perform them more or less well.

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[141] Beck, *Prisoners of Hate*, x.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Kashdan, *Curious?*, 199.
[144] The idea that we *perform* conscious operations is similar to performativity theories like Judith Butler's, which argues that we become who we are through our actions (Butler, *Bodies That Matter*.) For Lonergan the existential subject is not one who experiences only, but one who chooses, and by choosing both constitutes the world and becomes oneself (Lonergan and MacShane, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan Vol. 18, Vol. 18,* 240.). Lonergan's is distinct in that where Butler writes about performance as acts of *behavior* –acts that take place in the external, inter-subjective world of meaning—the Insight approach pays attention to the interior performance of decision-making that patterns external performance.

Table 1: Insight Looping Performance Ranges

Operation of Consciousness	Expanded Performance		Contracted Performance
Experiencing	Attentive	----------------	Inattentive
Understanding	Curious	----------------	Incurious
Verifying	Critical	----------------	Hasty
Valuing	Mindful	----------------	Reactive
Deliberating	Imaginative	----------------	Limited
Evaluating	Conscientious	-------------	Rash
Deciding	Constrained	----------------	Free

The Insight approach describes conscious performances as ranging from expanded to contracted for each operation. The reflective loop is where we use our minds by experiencing, understanding and verifying to come to know. When we perform the operation of experiencing, our attention to the relevant data can range from attentive to inattentive. When we are attentive, we are open to relevant data. We are attuned to our internal and external environment. When we are inattentive, we are narrow and closed off to relevant data. As we seek to understand the data we have attended to, our performance of understanding as we answer the question, "What is it?" can range from curious to incurious. Are we asking all of the relevant questions to determine what it is that we actually experienced? When we perform the operation of verifying, our performance as we answer the question, "Is it so?" can range from critical to hasty. Are we adequately gathering and weighing the evidence, or are we jumping to conclusions? When we have performed experiencing, understanding and verifying in a way that is expanded, what we have come to know is as close to true as we are able to get, and more importantly, we are open to further revising what we think we know when the experience of more data

warrants us to do so. When we are contracted, what we think we know is likely inadequate and biased by our inattentive, incurious and hasty performances, inhibiting in turn how we perform our subsequent operations.

Valuing follows verifying and is what we do with our minds when we answer the question, "How does what I know matter to me?" Valuing is communicated to us through feelings. We experience a feeling and it gives us the answer to the question of the importance and consequence of the thing we have come to know. When we perform the operation of valuing, our performance can range from mindful to reactive. As Haidt observes in his metaphor of the intuitive dog wagging its rational tail, rationalizing and explaining our feelings come after we have felt.[145] Feelings develop and we feel them. They cannot be controlled. Though once they arise, we can either react to them or we can become mindful of them. When we are mindful of our valuing, we pay attention to the feeling and seek to understand it. In effect, we spin it through our reflective loop. When we are reactive, we simply go with the feeling without further thought, thereby reinforcing the feeling. Being mindful positions us to process our feelings, learn to discern them, recognize when they are overwhelming or distorted or misplaced, and adjust. When we are reactive, our feelings "have" us, as Price would put it, often contracting our decision-making in the existential loop.

How we value what we have come to know sets the horizon of our deliberating. Coleman argues in his theory of purposive action that "[a]ctions are 'caused' by their

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[145] Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*.

(anticipated) consequences."[146] When we deliberate courses of action we are engaged in imagining the hypothetical futures our valuing proposes in which our actions will have an effect or a purpose. Our performance as we deliberate, therefore, as we answer the question, "What can I do?" can range from imaginative to limited. When we are imaginative we consider a wide range of possibilities for acting and anticipated outcomes, and when we are limited we are hemmed in by habit or haste or reactive valuing.

Once we have deliberated our options, we evaluate them. Which of our options will most adequately satisfy the purpose we are set out to achieve? This of course is a larger question than rational cost-benefit. It concerns who we want to be in the world and the kind of world we want to create. Our performance as we evaluate, therefore, as we answer the question, "What should I do?" can range from conscientious to rash. We can consider and weigh the possible consequences of what we wish to do, or we can simply rush to judgment. In general, our decisions are better when we evaluate conscientiously. As Paternoster and Pogarsky write in their consideration of "thoughtfully reflective decision-making," good decisions are "made on the basis of thoughtful consideration of alternatives," in effect, conscientious evaluating.[147]

When we decide, we answer the question, "Will I do it?" and move to action. This is the existential moment, and it is here in this culmination of conscious performance that Lonergan's phenomenological treatment of the subject stands out. For Lonergan the

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[146] Coleman, "Social Theory, Social Research, and a Theory of Action," 1312.

[147] Paternoster and Pogarsky, "Rational Choice, Agency and Thoughtfully Reflective Decision Making," 111. Paternoster and Pogarsky argue that thoughtfully reflective decision-making is a characteristic or trait, where the Insight approach conceptualizes it as expanded performance, available to all people.

existential subject is not one who experiences only, but one who chooses to act. By choosing we not only constitute the world but we become ourselves.[148] Our actions become concrete and measurable happenings in the world—experiences for both our own minds and the minds of others to operate on. Our performance for deciding can range from free to constrained. Are we free in our deciding to do what is in line with who we are, what we want to be and what we what to create in the world? Or are we constrained by contracted performance, and in that constraint do we act counter to our best selves?

It is important to reiterate that each performance is cumulative, when our performance of one operation is expansive, the others are more likely to be expansive as well. Conversely, when an operation is contracted—when I am incurious in my understanding, for example—it is more likely that my subsequent performances will contract as well. I will be hasty as I verify, reactive as I value, limited as I deliberate, rash as I evaluate, and therefore constrained as I decide.

Often, as part of our survival, and part of the success of it too, we do not perform our operations of consciousness as expansively or well as we could. We have short-cuts built into our brains, those Kurzweilian "pattern recognizers," that allow us to process extraordinary amounts of information and come to conclusions about it without much thought and certainly without having asked all of the relevant questions required for consistent and reliable accuracy. This automatic mental functioning is part of implicit cognition.[149] It is extraordinarily helpful in maximizing mental efficiency, however the fact that it is implicit means that much of what we know, believe and value, as well as our

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[148] Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*.
[149] Greenwald and Banaji, "Implicit Social Cognition."

habitual responses operate without our direct awareness. Generally this is okay. When we find that our implicit knowing has mistaken us, we are able to course correct. Unless, of course, we are under threat. When we are under threat, it becomes highly difficult to expand our conscious performance because we are so focused on protecting.

The hypothesis of the Insight approach is that when we are under threat, our performance of conscious operations contracts, leading us to make poor decisions based on largely erroneous information that perpetuate rather than mitigate conflict. Our performance, however, can be improved. We can expand our tunnels, change our minds, stop defending. We can choose constructive behavior rather than conflict behavior. And we do this when we become curious about ourselves and others.

Enhanced Conscious Performance through Directed Curiosity: A Theory of Change

> *"The investigator needs a well-stocked mind, else he will see but not perceive; but the mind needs to be well-stocked more with questions than with answers, else it will be closed and unable to learn."*[150]

The Insight approach rests on the basic notion that how we act in the world is a function of how we use our minds, which "are oriented massively and dynamically in a world mediated by meaning."[151] Most often in conflict, we use our minds less well. We are contracted, constrained by threat, and pulled down by error and bias. We resort to uncritical thinking, reactive valuing, limited deliberating, rash evaluating and constrained deciding aimed at defending ourselves against threat. The result is conflict behavior—the kind of behavior that ignites a conflict cycle characterized by the "defend-attack-defend"

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[150] Lonergan, *A Third Collection*, 17.
[151] Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 31.

pattern of relating that we have all experienced as we share our space in the world with others.[152]

To change this pattern of relating, which is linked to the quality of our conscious performance, it follows that we must improve the quality of our conscious performance. We must move from inattentive to attentive in our experiencing, from incurious to curious in our understanding, from hasty to critical in our verifying, from reactive to mindful in our valuing, from limited to imaginative in our deliberating, from rash to conscientious in our evaluating in order to be free and not constrained in our deciding. But how do we do that when we are so certain and so righteous and so gripped by threat?

The hypothesis of the Insight approach is that being curious about the data of consciousness driving a person's or ones own conflict behavior—the valuing of threat, and the decision to defend, and the performances accompanying those operations—opens the opportunity to "get insights," to become critically reflexive about not just what we think, but how we are making sense of a situation and how we are responding to it. This critical reflection leads to a re-evaluation of the data. Our tunnel vision expands. We begin paying attention to more than what confirms what we think we know. We challenge our views about others. This has the potential to change the apprehension of certainty around threat, inevitability around anticipated dire futures, and necessity around decisions to defend that have us locked in conflict. Consequently, new possibilities for acting emerge—possibilities that before having the insights would have been unimaginable—opening the opportunity for changing conflict dynamics.

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[152] Picard and Jull, "Learning through Deepening Conversations."

Insight interventions, therefore, involve using the Insight approach's analytical framework to curiously inquire into the data of consciousness and the conflict variables that emerge from them. This can happen independently if we are aware enough of what we do with our minds under threat, self-aware enough to recognize our own conflict behavior, and poised enough to become curious about ourselves. It can also happen as an intervention, where we become curious in a directed and targeted way about another person, or she of us.

For example, you could recognize my behavior when I cut up that "thot-caller's" clothes as conflict behavior based on its stress-based quality—fight. From there, as Price explains, "whenever you identify conflict behavior, you can assume that it rests on a felt sense of threat and a decision to defend against it."[153] You can assume that my behavior was motivated by a valuing of threat and a decision to defend. Notice that assuming conflict behavior to be the result of valuing and deciding is distinct from assuming the reasons for my action. Rather than assuming that you know why, the Insight framework positions you to become curious about why on my own terms—about how I used my mind as I decided to use conflict behavior.

Becoming curious about my deciding to defend might look like this: What made cutting up her clothes the best thing to do? Or, what were you hoping would happen by cutting up her clothes?

You could become curious about my valuing of threat by asking: What was so infuriating about being called that name? What were you worried about?

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[153] Price, "Exercise 3.3: Insight Theory of Change."

You would ask these questions not only so that you could understand my behavior on my own terms rather than on your assumptions, but so that through your curiosity, I too would become curious. Your questions would carry my consciousness and would allow me to pay explicit attention to my own conscious performances, something that I am unlikely to do in the grip of threat.

In effect, Insight questions aimed at the performance of operations of consciousness help make what is implicit to me explicit. They help me become reflexively aware of and curious about my performance of valuing and deciding, as well as the knowing that these operations are based on. This is the key. Because in order to change my conflict behavior, my decision to defend, my valuing of threat, and the cycle of conflict that my conflict behavior begets, I need to change my mind. I change my mind by improving my own conscious performance by becoming self-aware through critical reflexivity. This, according to the hypothesis of the Insight approach, yields the learning, reflection, and insights that Melchin and Picard witnessed transforming conflict dynamics in their early analysis of the interiority of conflict and conflict resolution.[154]

The Insight approach does not purport to know the answer to what a conflict is about before the work is done to discover on the terms of those involved in the conflict what is going on with them—regardless of whether the "them" is an individual person or a group of people operating in conflict on an institutional, social or cultural level. This keeps interventions targeted to the people and the context, and therefore precise to their

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[154] The Insight approach has been under development for just over a decade. What I have presented to you is the latest version, based on a long succession of phenomenological insights. As Price and Bartoli put it, the Insight approach is part of an emerging science of conflict resolution that is grounded not in logic, but in empirical experience (Price and Bartoli, "Spiritual Values and Conflict Resolution."). In this way, the Insight approach is both phenomenological and experimental.

challenges. There is an emic affiliation to this approach that relies on eliciting the thoughts and feelings of people according to their own conscious performance in order to facilitate change rather than categorizing what people do in order to address it according to prescriptive criteria.[155]

And the Insight approach goes beyond correcting thoughts, as many interventions try to do,[156] to improving performance in a way that is not didactic but emergent. The precision of the Insight approach's framework for what we are doing with our minds guides our curiosity and the discovery of the interiority of conflict behavior. As Kashdan urges, when we are curious, "our perspective changes, and we begin to recognize gaps— literal and figurative—that weren't apparent before."[157] We generate insights, we learn, we expand ourselves. This is essential to the Insight approach's theory of change. When we can become curious about the threat and defense patterning conflict behavior, we begin to expand our looping, generate insights and improve our conscious performance. William James said over a hundred years ago that curiosity is the impulse toward better cognition. It is key, because it opens us up to discovery.

There are a few points in this hypothesis that warrant exploration. The first is the function of curiosity. The second is the function of uncertainty. And the third is the function of insight.

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[155] Harris, "History and Significance of the EMIC/ETIC Distinction." On the elicitive nature of the Insight approach, see also Price, "Reconfiguring Traditional Prescriptive Approaches to Truth and Reconciliation Processes: Adapting the Elicitive-Centered Insight Approach for the United States."
[156] See for example Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Schema Therapy, Narrative approaches.
[157] Kashdan, *Curious?*, 20.

Curiosity

"Curiosity will conquer fear even more than bravery will."[158]

Most scholarship on curiosity focuses on the innate human drive to know and to understand. Golman and Lowenstein observe that "curiosity occurs when an individual becomes aware of a gap in his or her knowledge that could potentially be filled by information."[159] Kashdan studies the positive effects of being a curious person, someone who actively seeks to fill those gaps and pursues the unknown.[160] Under threat, as we have seen, it is extraordinarily difficult to seek anything new because letting go of certainty increases the perception of risk posed by an anticipated threat. Certainty and bias coalesce to create our defense system, making us feel protected, regardless of how mistaken we might be and how unaware we are of what is informing our certainty in the first place. The key from the perspective of the Insight approach is to make the information gaps apparent, through curiosity, in the face of threat-based certainty, particularly around the operative data of consciousness.

According to Kashdan's research, becoming curious, despite anxiety and threat, is "the engine of our evolving self."[161] He writes that "curiosity begets curiosity because the more we know, the more details that we attend to, the more we realize what there is to learn."[162] And clearly, when we are feeling threatened and our conscious performance contracts, there is a lot to learn. On the one hand, this opportunity for learning expands our thinking and improves our cognition by enhancing our awareness and allowing us to

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[158] Stephens, *The Crock of Gold*, 13.
[159] Golman and Loewenstein, "Curiosity, Information Gaps, and the Utility of Knowledge," 10.
[160] Kashdan, Rose, and Fincham, "Curiosity and Exploration."
[161] Kashdan, *Curious?*, 6.
[162] Ibid., 20.

be critical of what we think we know, how we value, and how adequate our decisions are. On the other hand, it increases uncertainty—which in conflict is something that provokes an additional layer of anxiety by lowering our ramparts, exposing ourselves to the threats we fear.

Uncertainty

There is scholarship on uncertainty too. Despite the fact that uncertainty can be uncomfortable and threatening, there are two extraordinarily important points to consider about it. First, certainty and uncertainty signify the degree of confidence with which someone believes they know something. Only under rare circumstances is certainty as accurate as we believe it to be. More often than not we are wrong about what we are certain of. A series of five studies by Fischhoff and colleagues on the accuracy of certainty perceptions found "people to be wrong too often when they were certain they were right."[163] Overconfidence in thinking that what we know is right is more the rule than the exception; therefore in order to have true certainty, it must be accompanied by the critical, curious questions that uncertainty generates. Lonergan puts it this way, "To exclude an insight is also to exclude the further questions that would arise from it and the complementary insights that would carry it towards a rounded and balanced viewpoint. To lack that fuller view results in behavior that generates misunderstanding both in ourselves and in others."[164]

The second point builds off this. Uncertainty, according to Butler and colleagues, is the wheelhouse of innovation. When we can overcome or absorb the anxieties that

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[163] Fischhoff, Slovic, and Lichtenstein, "Knowing with Certainty," 561.
[164] Lonergan, *Insight*, 191.

often accompany uncertainty, uncertainty can push us beyond imaginable limits.

Uncertainty is seen by many scholars to be the key component of successful

entrepreneurship.[165] "When something is uncertain," Kashdan writes. "There are multiple

possible outcomes for what can happen." The Insight approach explains this phenomenon

by recognizing that uncertainty leads to curiosity, which leads to questions that yield

insights. The insights that emerge from uncertainty have the power to transform the

damaging patterns of relating that characterize conflicts.

Insights

Insights in the Lonerganian sense, as we saw in Chapter 3, are answers to

questions, and according to him they "are a dime a dozen; only when you have a lot of

them can you get somewhere."[166] Not all insights are the earth-shattering ah-ha moments

that conclude an investigation and put all of our knowledge in comprehensible order.

Those are rare. In general, though, insights are not rare. They are hypotheses that answer

the questions of our consciousness—what is it, is it so, what does this matter to me, what

can I do, what should I do, will I do it? What is incredible about insights is that, as

Melchin and Picard put it, "once achieved, [they] reshape the way we experience… data

the next time around."[167] Insights shift horizons, "they involve a shift that is often so

complete…[that] before the insight, we cannot imagine what it was like to understand,

and after the insight, we find it difficult to remember what it was like not to

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[165] Butler, Doktor, and Lins, "Linking International Entrepreneurship to Uncertainty, Opportunity Discovery, and Cognition."
[166] Crowe and Vertin, *Developing The Lonergan Legacy*, 282.
[167] Melchin and Picard, *Transforming Conflict through Insight*, 58.

understand."[168] Generating insights is analogous to learning. We can forget facts, but rarely can we unlearn what we have learned, and learning truly does shape our horizons.

The curiosity of the Insight approach, which generates further curiosity, uncertainty and insights, is squarely oriented toward the empirical experience of the subject. We can be curious about a lot of things—what happened, who did it, what we could have done differently—but the unique orientation of curiosity in the Insight approach toward how a person is using her mind enhances its efficacy as a method for transforming conflict. It keeps curiosity focused on eliciting an understanding of a person on her own terms. How is *she* valuing and deciding in this moment? Van Kaam in 1969 and later Prilleltensky and Lobel in 1987 discovered that when a person has the feeling that she has been "really understood," she feels most prominently satisfied and relieved. These affective responses to being understood are the opposite of feeling threatened, leading to expanded rather than contracted conscious performance, thereby reducing the likelihood of conflict behavior. Procedural justice scholarship as we explored in Chapter 1 further confirms this. When people are treated in a way they feel is fair, legitimate and respects their voice, even in a contentious encounter involving an authority figure, they are more likely to have a positive reaction; one that leads to constructive behaviors rather than conflict behaviors.[169]

What I have shown in this chapter is the way the Insight approach frames our conscious operations as performances. When we use our minds in conflict, we use them in a way that is contracted. We are informed by bias, gripped by threat, and determined to

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[168] Ibid., 52.
[169] Tyler, *Why People Obey the Law*.

defend. We are certain, righteous and unreflexive to our detriment. To reverse this trend, the Insight approach suggests that we become curious about the conscious performances of valuing and deciding that pattern our behavior. When we become curious in this way, we ignite critically reflexivity. We generate insights into how we and others are using our minds, allowing ourselves and others to improve our performances and imagine possibilities for acting that enhance the probability of finding creative solutions to our troubles rather than destructive ones.

As such, the Insight approach has the potential to be a useful intervening skill-set when dealing with student misbehavior—behavior that often reflects stress-based conflict behaviors, from non-compliance to skipping class to fighting with peers.[170] My hypothesis is that using the Insight approach in the challenging context of student discipline has the potential to direct the attention of school staff to the decision-making operative when a student misbehaves. When staff can use the Insight approach to elicit that data of consciousness, they are positioned to make targeted and precise disciplinary decisions that support students rather than sending them down the school-to-prison pipeline. Chapter 5 details what I did at Monroe High to investigate this hypothesis.

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[170] For how the Insight approach has been useful in policing, see Price and Price, "Insight Policing and the Role of the Civilian in Police Accountability"; Price, "The Process and Partnerships Behind Insight Policing."

CHAPTER FIVE: THE INSIGHT APPROACH AT MONROE HIGH

In the fall of 2014, I partnered with Monroe Public Charter High School in Washington, D.C. to investigate whether the Insight approach would be useful for making targeted and precise disciplinary decisions that supported students and improved their behavior. I met the vice principal of restorative practices, Jason Montague, through a mutual friend and he explained to me the challenges and promises of student discipline at Monroe High, especially with regard to the restorative program they had implemented. I proposed to Jason that the Insight approach might be a complementary set of skills that staff could use to elicit from a student her conscious flow as she decided to misbehave, potentially leading to disciplinary decisions that helped to support her and change her behavior. Jason thought that as long as the principal approved the project, he and his staff, which consisted of 4 others—two behavior paraprofessionals, the recovery room specialist, and the behavior intervention coordinator—could benefit from Insight training and agreed to participate in the research study and pilot.[171] The only constraint was time. I had delivered Insight training in a policing context in 40 hours. But because of the packed school day and the staff's unyielding responsibilities toward students, Jason gave me 6 hours for his team. I had no choice but to work with his time fame. I developed a training based on the pre-training interviews I had with staff in December 2014, the

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[171] See Appendix C for project agreement.

findings of which were detailed in Chapter 2, and on a reconfiguration of the Insight skills training that I had co-developed for Insight Policing to fit the context of student discipline.

Insight Policing training was something that Jamie Price and I developed in 2013 for police officers. Because we were teaching adult professionals, not graduate students, we drew on theories and practices of authentic learning to present the theory and skills of the Insight approach in a way that would resonate with adult practitioners. Authentic learning is essentially an experiential "real-life" approach to teaching in contrast to an "academic" one.[172] Academic approaches focus on acquiring knowledge and understanding theory. A "real-life," authentic approach is a more contextual, problem solving approach that applies knowledge and theory to scenarios of real-world relevance. Drawing on developmental psychologist Jerome Bruner, Lombardi describes that: "there is a tremendous difference between learning *about* physics and learning *to be* a physicist. Isolated facts and formulae do not take on meaning and relevance until learners discover what these tools can *do* for them."[173] Price and I developed a variety of experiential activities that got officers using Insight skills on the kinds of problems they face everyday. I used the same authentic learning philosophy as I developed the Insight training for Monroe High and worked hard to create a skills-based Insight training that was relevant to the each staff member.

To create the training, I whittled down the 40 hour Insight Policing course, integrated some theoretical and practical developments that Price had taught in a Fall

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[172] Herrington, Reeves, and Oliver, *A Guide to Authentic E-Learning*, 44.
[173] Lombardi, "Authentic Learning for the 21st Century: An Overview," 2.

2014 graduate level course, and drew on my pre-training interviews to create student

discipline-specific exercises and role-plays that related directly to the experiences of

Monroe staff. I anticipated that it would be difficult to shrink a 40-hour course down to 6

hours. However, with only 5 students, the time I needed to allocate to each activity was

significantly less than with the 20 officers in our Insight Policing course. Price's

developments, including the "Q6" (see below), shaved time by capturing information in

an accessible, context based way. I also spent less time explaining through lecture and

more time engaging staff in authentic activities. This maximized time and allowed me to

include relevant concepts, skills, and activities in a much tighter time frame.

Initially I proposed completing the 6 training hours in three sessions over the

course of 2 weeks, with follow up and coaching to last the duration of spring semester.

However, Jason requested that the three sessions be spread out over 6 weeks, beginning

in January and ending in mid February. My concern with a 6-week extended time frame

was that the learning that happened in the early sessions would be lost with so much time

in between, especially since the sessions would begin with one 3-hour block and follow

with two 1.5-hour blocks. Jason, however, was clear that his proposal was the only way

he could manage to bring 5 staff together at one time, given the squeezed schedule of the

school day, the constant crisis response of the school environment, and each staff's

student responsibilities. I asked for afterhours training, but because of pay structures and

other logistical difficulties, that was not an option.

In the end, with staff members sick and an extraordinary number of snow days, the trainings, including one extra hour-long practice session, lasted until March 9, 2015, with a total of 7 hours over a total of 10 weeks.

Table 2: Training, Skills Assessment and Exit Interview Timeline

Date	Training Session	Length	Week No.
January 5, 2015	Session One	3 hours	1
January 16, 2015	Make-Up Session One for Elijah	3 hours	2
January 28, 2015	Session Two	1.5 hours	4
February 2, 2015	Make-Up Session Two for Tanya	1.5 hours	5
February 27, 2015	Session Three	1.5 hours	8
March 9, 2015	Practice Session	1 hour	10
March 19, 2015	Skills Assessment (3 staff)	40 minutes each	11
March 26, 2015	Skills Assessment (2 staff)	40 minutes each	12
June 11, 2015	Evaluation Interviews (3 staff)	40 minutes each	23
June 18, 2015	Evaluation Interviews (2 staff)	40 minutes each	24

Within two weeks of the last session, I held an individual skills assessment with each staff member. While the intention was to come together again as a group to share experiences and reinforce the skills after the skills assessments, we were not able to squeeze that in before the end of the school year, despite extensive coordinating efforts.

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Instead, I asked the staff to fill out a weekly survey to document their use of Insight skills, and the project ended with individual evaluation interviews and a large data file of all the year's disciplinary referrals. In the pages that follow I will detail what I taught the behavior staff at Monroe High, my reflections on the sessions and the research methods I used to assess both learning and impact.

Training Session One

In the first days of January 2015, I set up my board in one of Monroe's light filled classrooms. The training I had developed, specifically tailored to Monroe High from the information I gleaned in my pre-training interviews aimed to teach staff members to consider student misbehavior—particularly noncompliance, skipping class, disrespecting authority, profanity—as conflict behavior, and once they did, what they could do with it. My strategy was to have them begin by paying attention to how they use their minds according to the Insight approach and then to follow with the Insight approach's hypothesis on how we use our minds when we decide to use conflict behavior.

After introducing myself and the project and getting to know each of the staff members (except Elijah, the new recovery room specialist who had not yet started his contract), I handed out a student booklet for session one that staff could use to follow along (see Appendix D) and drew up on the board the "Q6", each question that drives our conscious operations. In Chapter 3, I outlined how the Insight loop illustrates the movement of our conscious minds—from experiencing data from the outside world or our own interiority through deciding to act (see page 61). That movement is driven by questions, and the Insight approach has termed those questions the "Q6" to help facilitate

our memory of them. Q1 is "What is it?" the question for understanding what we have experienced. Q2 is "Is it so?" the question for verifying the insights we have generated in our understanding. Q3 is "What does it matter to me?" the question for valuing what we have come to know through verifying. Q4 is "What can I do about it?" the question for deliberating what to do about what I know in terms of how it matters to me. Q5 is "What should I do about it?" the question for evaluating my options for acting. Q6 is "Will I do it?" the question for deciding whether to act in the world on the meanings we have made.[174] Asking these questions is how our minds operate according to the Insight approach, and my idea was to draw the staff's attention to the fact of our minds.

Table 3: Q6: The Questions that Drive our Operations of Consciousness

Driving Question	Operation Answering the Question
Q1: What is it?	Understanding
Q2: Is it so?	Verifying
Q3: What does this matter?	Valuing
Q4: What can I do?	Deliberating
Q5: What should I do?	Evaluating
Q6: Will I do it?	Deciding

When we pay attention to the questions that we ask, whether they pertain to ourselves, to others, to objects or events, we notice that the questions fall into one of these categories. Typically we pay attention to our wondering of the question and then to

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[174] Price, "Exercise 1.0: Insight Forum and the Q6."

the answer we come up with. However, as we have seen, it is also possible for us to pay attention to the conscious operation of asking the question. When we do this we differentiate what we use our minds on (the object we are asking about and its answer) from using our minds to ask the question. This is a critical piece of the Insight approach, because Insight skills involve directed inquiry into what we are doing with our minds as we use them, not inquiry into what we think or the objects we are intending with our minds.

Using the Q6, I introduced the Insight loop, pairing each Q with its corresponding operation. We then classified the questions the staff had at that early point in the session. "What is this training about"—Q1, question for understanding. "How will this help us?"—Q3, question for valuing, and so on.

While diagrams and letters are entirely conceptual, Insight theory is concrete. To bring the loop and the Q6 into the realm of experience, we engaged in an exercise that got us to notice the concrete movement of our minds. I asked the staff to think back 30 minutes and examine how their feelings—their valuing—influenced what they decided to do. This led to a discussion about each staff member's decisions as they came into the room and prepared for class, from taking out their pen to deliberating whether to break their new year's resolution and eat one of the Le Caprice chocolate croissants I had brought in. This was a well structured segue into the performance ranges of the operations of consciousness and how we can perform our conscious operations more or less well, correlating that performance to the quality of our decisions—how well we satisfy what we are hoping to achieve.

To apply these ideas to student behavior and to get staff to reflect further on their own valuing and decision-making, I passed out some scenarios I had developed, again based on the content of my interviews with them the month before. In one scenario a girl pushes a boy who gets in her way in the hall. In another, a student gets kicked out of class for not paying attention. In another a kid skips class. In another a student posts an insult on Facebook about another student, but will not consent to a restorative process to make it right. Each staff read a scenario out loud and I asked for reactions—specifically I asked a question of interiority—an Insight question: "What was your felt response to that scenario?" This question led into role-play, where each staff member responded to one scenario as they would were they confronted with it during the school day. Everyone had a turn and I asked them not, "How did you do?", but further Insight questions: "What led you to respond that way?", "What were you hoping would happen?" and "What made that the best response?" These Insight questions got the staff to start thinking in terms of their own operations of consciousness: "How did what I think and what I felt lead me to do what I did?"

Having devoted an hour and a half to practically differentiating the data of consciousness from the data of sense, we moved on to conflict behavior—defensive decisions aimed at mitigating threat. I introduced the types of conflict behavior: fight, flight, freeze and fawn. I introduced two variables of conflict behavior: valuing of threat and decision to defend as linked in a dire future narrative. I introduced the qualities associated with conflict looping: certainty and righteousness. And then we analyzed the

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scenarios we had just played as examples of conflict behavior, pulling out the decision points and hypothesizing the valuing and dire future narratives.

While hypothesizing is helpful in an exercise, it is unhelpful when dealing with real behaviors in the moment. To get at the valuing and deciding operative in conflict behavior one needs to be curious and ask. Asking is how information comes out that is squarely on the terms of the person deciding. So I asked each of the staff to recall a conflict behavior of their own and remember their valuing, deciding and dire future narrative. This personalized the material and got staff to pay attention to themselves in terms of their own valuing and decision-making.

That personal exercise concluded the first session. I asked the staff to keep a journal to remind them to pay attention to their minds as they used them in anticipation of building on what we had learned in the following session. It would be three and a half weeks before we met again to begin developing skills, but I had set the base line. I met with Elijah independently to catch him up before the second session.

Training Session Two

Session two was the first of two skills sessions. I called it "Get Curious. Free the Loop." My goal was to introduce the foundational skill of the Insight approach—curious questioning. The curious question is the question that frees the constrained looping of a person exhibiting conflict behavior. It is the question that engages the other on his own terms and gets his to generate insights. It is the question that has the potential to open students' ears to the messages the staff is giving them so they can do better. It is the question that delinks the threats locking people it conflict, and opens the possibility for

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behaving differently. So that staff could follow along, I handed out a session two student booklet (see Appendix E).

The Curious Question

A curious question is not just a redundant term for asking a question. It is a technical Insight term, developed by Price, that corresponds to a particular operation on the loop: understanding.[175] It is a Q1, seeking the answer to "What is it?" The "it" that the question is trying to discover is what another person is thinking and how they are using their mind to do so. Critically a curious question is other focused. This means that when a person formulates a genuinely curious question, it is not formulated with reference to the questioner's looping—their understanding, verifying, valuing, deliberating, evaluating or deciding—but to the other person's.

To ask a genuinely curious question, there are two cumulative micro skills that are prerequisite: "Noticing," which involves identifying where someone is on the loop based on their expressions and behavior, and "Verifying," which involves restating and reflecting what was noticed. These two micro skills set up the curious question targeted toward a person's looping.

Noticing, or identifying where someone is on the loop, is made quite easy when we can remember the Q6 and the operations that correspond to each Q. This is because what we say and do respond to the questions that drive the operations of consciousness. As such expressions and actions can be linked to conscious interiority. To practice this

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[175] Price, "Exercise 2.4: Moralizing Expressions and Curious Questions."

micro-skill, I presented the class with an exercise where I read ten statements out loud and asked the class to determine which operation of consciousness was at play.

I next presented the class with the kinds of questions one might ask after noticing where someone (or oneself, for that matter) is on the loop. If an operation on the reflective loop is identified—understanding or verifying—a curious question would target the person's knowing, specifically how their knowing has come about. Examples would be: "How do you know?" "What gives you that impression?" "What did you see or hear to make you think so?" "What makes you sure of that?"

If an operation of the existential loop is identified—valuing, deliberating, evaluating or deciding—a curious question would target a person's decision to act, including how something matters, what future is imagined, what they want to do about it, and what effect they imagine their actions will have.

Examples of questions for valuing, which is indicated through feelings and answer how something matters, would be: "What makes you feel that way?" "What difference does that make?" "How is that going to impact you?" "What are you hoping?" "What is at stake?" "What are you concerned about?" "What is important about that?"

Examples of questions for deliberating, evaluating and deciding would go something like this: "What will doing that change?" "What makes that the best thing to do?" "What are you trying to accomplish?" "What are you hoping will happen?" "How will that make things better?" "What difference is doing that going to make?" "Why is that what you need to do?"

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Because student misbehavior is often conflict behavior, once I presented the class with examples of curious questions, I asked them which operations they thought would be most readily apparent in a conflict situation. The answer, which they got right, is valuing, evaluating and deciding. These are key access points into a constricted, certain and righteous loop, because feelings are often expressed in conflict, and stress-based behaviors are often observable. Curious questions in a situation of conflict behavior are targeted towards these operations because the goal is to unpack them, to draw out the dire future narrative so that the student can start to verify the adequacy of the narrative on her own terms (rather than by being told she is wrong or on the wrong path), and to reexamine the threat and the way she chooses to respond. The simultaneous goal is for the staff member to elicit sufficient information about why a student is doing what she is doing. With this information the staff member is positioned to tailor his interventions to what is actually going on for that student. The hypothesis is that once insights have been generated, by having asked Insight questions of a student's interiority, and the threat has been reduced, the student's looping will flow more freely and the staff will begin to notice other operations of consciousness at play—namely understanding and verifying—indicating that the certainty and righteousness that is characteristic of how we use our minds under threat has begun to ease.

To test this out and practice it, I had each staff come up with three conflict statements a student might say and to write them down—"Leave me alone!" for example. I asked them to read the statements out loud to the group and have the group identify the

operations the statement was expressing. (*Leave me alone is an expression of evaluating—indicating the answer to what should be done.*)

Having a grasp on noticing, identifying what operation of consciousness is at play in a person's expression, the next piece I wanted the staff to learn was the micro-skill "verifying." The idea of this skill is to make sure that the questioner understands what the person being questioned has said on his or her own terms, not on the terms of the questioner. This is important because each of us operates in terms of our own understanding and decision-making. We are looping too, after all. Because of this, and because we do not regularly pay attention to our own looping, often we think we know with out asking. We think we know what is going on with a student or another person because we believe that we have experienced something similar, or we have seen it before a hundred times. While drawing connections and making assumptions can be useful in some instances, it is critical, from an Insight perspective, that in conflict situations these assumptions be left aside and that we engage directly and curiously with the person exhibiting conflict behavior. When we do so our questions have the increased probability of generating reflection and insights, rather than reinforcing or escalating threat and defense.

Part of verifying is reflecting, which is a basic communication skill in which one paraphrases or restates the feelings and meanings that she interprets being communicated by another person. In response the other person will either confirm or deny that what they intended was correctly interpreted. If a reflection misses the mark, there is always an indication and an opening for asking a question for better understanding. Understanding

someone fully on his or her own terms is powerful. As we saw in Chapter 4, when we are understood we relax and we feel more connected.

To help the staff build their reflecting skills, I included a list of feelings they could learn and begin to notice in their student booklet. I also gave them an easy fall back reflection when the exact feeling could not be mirrored: "I can tell that this is really important to you. Help me understand more." My intention was to practice reflecting with an exercise, but we did not have enough time. The exercise would have had each staff find a partner and ask a simple question like, "Tell me what your morning was like?" Notice that I did not suggest they ask "How was your morning?" because we are all accustomed to issuing the rather general response, "Good," an answer that does not yield much information and would require further questioning to unpack. Asking a "what" question generates more specific information right away. Once the first partner answered, the second would reflect the feeling communicated in the answer and they would switch.

While that would have been good practice for reflecting in a situation that was even keeled, we went straight into an exercise reflecting and curiously questioning conflict statements. In full group, I asked them to pull out the conflict statements they had written. In chain-stitch style, I had one person act their statement out and another verify and question, reminding them that their goal was to begin to elicit the dire future narrative. Once everyone had both acted out and verified and curiously questioned, we practiced again. This time I asked them to take another one of their statements and develop a more robust backstory that might compel such a statement. I paired them off

and asked them to act out their statements and in five minutes verify and question in order to find the dire future narrative. We debriefed that exercise to close the first skills session.

Training Session Three

Five weeks, because of snow and sickness and other types of crises, passed between training two and training three, so I spent the first 30 minutes of our 1.5-hour class reviewing with the staff. I asked what they remembered and if they had any opportunities to practice in order to reconstruct a review of the skills we had learned in training two. Then we went right into practice. We started practicing with a round robin, where I took the role of a student, Melissa, which I wrote this way:

> You are Melissa. You're a freshman. It's the first week of school and you and your friends decide to prank another friend by going to her class instead of your own. It doesn't take long for the teacher to catch on, and even though you try to convince her that it's your class, you get sent to the principal's office. You're going to try as hard as you can to get out of this one by deflecting. You don't really want to get in trouble, it was a harmless joke after all that's getting blown way out of proportion.

I sat in front of the staff, arms crossed, not saying anything, but emitting an air of defiance. I had asked that all the staff notice my conflict behavior and, starting at one end of the row of chairs, take turns verifying my valuing, deciding or evaluating, asking me a curious question, verifying once more and asking one further curious question before passing it on to the next staff member. This worked to model the skills within the group and bring attention to what works and why.

We continued practicing and building the skills as a group. In the booklet for session two, I had given homework that asked each of them to come up with their own

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role for a role play in which they would be a student whose conflict behavior broke the rules. The idea was to have robust roles for the practice exercises in session three. Unfortunately, due to the busy, stressful schedules of their work-days, the staff had not come up with their own roles. I had accounted for that possibility and asked them instead to pull out their conflict statements from session two, or think of a new one, and develop a context, backstory and dire future narrative right then in the classroom. Because these conflict statements originated from them, they were relevant and robust. We did a round robin for each of the staff's conflict statements, with the staff playing the role of the student they developed. I was able to coach the questions in this group setting and we were able to stop time during the exercise to think about where to go and why. This allowed us to build the skills required to know what to notice, what to question and how to curiously follow the student to her dire future narrative. The staff enjoyed practicing and by using the skills together, the learning was beginning to come together. We debriefed and decided that we would have one more practice session before wrapping up the training and moving on to skills assessments.

Training Session Four—final practice session

For the final practice session, thankfully just 4 days after session three, we had one hour. After a brief check in, we split into pairs for a short role-play exercise I call "Speed Questioning" (See Appendices F, G, H). Each staff member got a role, which I had written, and was asked to play it for 5 minutes with three different people. 5 minutes was a good start but too short. Instead of participating in 6 rounds of role-plays as both student and staff, each staff got through just three or four, depending on the rotation.

I handed out worksheets that they were to fill out after each round asking the student role player: "Did your partner find your dire future narrative? Y/N. Jot down your thoughts and impressions. (What questions worked, what questions didn't, at what points did you feel yourself shift and in which direction, insights, questions, sticking points?)" For the staff role player the worksheet asked, "Did you find your partner's dire future narrative? Y/N What was it? Jot down your thoughts and impressions. (What worked for you, what didn't, insights, questions, sticking points?)" These were helpful for the debrief, and got the staff to reflect on using their skills, which is an important part of critical thinking and skill acquisition.[176]

These four training sessions over ten weeks were intended to impart to Monroe behavior staff a thorough understanding of the Insight approach, including how we use our minds as we engage and disengage in conflict, and the practical skills needed to leverage the Insight approach to deescalate difficult encounters with students and target disciplinary decision-making in support of improved student behavior.

Skills Assessment

Within two weeks of the final practice session, I held individual 40-minute skills assessments for each staff member to gauge how well they appropriated the concepts of the Insight approach and their level of skill. The assessment consisted of three parts, an oral quiz, a role-play with me, and a debrief. The entire assessment was audio recorded with consent.

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[176] Dreifuerst, "The Essentials of Debriefing in Simulation Learning: A Concept Analysis."

The quiz asked 11 basic content questions pertaining to the Insight approach that I hoped they would know the answers to (see Appendix I). For the role plays (see Appendix J), I developed a tailored scenario for each staff member depending on the kinds of challenges they routinely faced from students. I played the student and the staff played themselves. We debriefed the role and talked about what worked, what did not work, and what led them to decide to go in a particular direction with their questions.

After the debrief, I asked for their input on a survey I had put together which was part of my post-training data collection. I used the cognitive question testing technique, a best practice in instrument development, to pretest my survey questions in order to determine whether what I was asking the staff meant the same thing to me as it did to them (see Appendix K for survey instrument).[177] In addition to pretesting the questions, I asked for their input on the reasonableness of the questions, the best time to send out the survey, and the likelihood that they would fill the surveys out on a weekly basis. The staff consensus was that they were reasonable questions, that Friday at 1pm was the best time to send it out, and that it would not be too onerous to complete.

As a parting gift, I gave each staff member a laminated wallet-sized card titled, "Get Curious with Insight," to use as a reminder and a cheat sheet going forward (see Appendix L).

The Survey

The weekly survey I developed was called the "Insight Student Interaction Survey" (Appendix K). My survey was designed to help me keep track of whether staff

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[177] Collins, "Pretesting Survey Instruments."

were using the skills in their interactions with students and how those interactions went. In the survey I asked what their role was, the total number of students they interacted with, the total number of behavior-managing interactions they had, the number of times they noticed conflict behavior in their behavior-managing interactions, and the number of times they used Insight skills when they noticed conflict behavior. I also asked them to rate from 1 (none of the time) to 5 (all of the time) how often using Insight skills helped them manage student behavior. I asked them to write down an example of when using Insight skills was helpful and an example of when using Insight skills was unhelpful. I also asked them to rate the accuracy of their answers to the survey, which is in line with maintaining the integrity of self-report data.

I sent these out each week for nine weeks through the end of May, although for two of those weeks, Monroe High was in Intersession, and students were not around.

Final Evaluation Interviews

At the end of the school year, during the final days of testing and school evaluations and summer planning, I held final evaluation interviews with each of the staff members to evaluate whether they had used the Insight approach while handling student discipline and assess the effect it had from the staff's perspective (see Appendix M for protocol). I detail these findings in Chapter 7.

In the next chapter I share what I found in terms of the staff's learning from the results of their skills assessments. Was seven hours sufficient to enhance their behavior managing practice with Insight skills? What did they learn and how well were they able

to execute their skills? The level of skill would bear on how I evaluated of the efficacy of

the Insight approach as applied to student discipline.

CHAPTER SIX: THE SKILLS ASSESSMENT

Given that the idea of this research project was to discover whether or not skills from the Insight approach, tailored to school discipline, would help school staff make targeted and precise disciplinary decisions that supported students rather than pushed them away and helped improve their behavior, I needed to make sure that what I had taught the staff at Monroe High had gotten through.

Two weeks after the final class, I arranged 40-minute skills assessments with Jason, Chester, Tanya, Syl and Elijah. The assessments were meant to check two key competencies: Insight theory—the technical terms that make up the Insight framework, and Insight skills—the practical application of the Insight framework to challenging interactions with students.

The assessments, approved by IRB, were audio recorded with consent, and began with an oral Insight content quiz (Appendix I). The function of a quiz is almost self-explanatory. It is a type of criteria-based assessment that assesses a student's retention of taught material.[178] For the quiz, I asked a series of questions to see if the staff could communicate technical Insight terms. I asked if they could articulate the meaning of conflict behavior and its types, if they could give an example of when student behavior might be conflict behavior, what interior variables comprise conflict behavior, the three

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[178] Sadler, "Interpretations of Criteria-Based Assessment and Grading in Higher Education."

key Insight skills I taught, and Insight's theory of change—how Insight skills were supposed to help staff respond to student behavior.

What I found was that each of the five staff I taught had a grasp of what Insight skills were supposed to accomplish. That asking questions and becoming curious about a student's valuing and decision-making helped staff get deeper into the problem. "[The skills] help us get at what's troubling the student, why they are acting out," Elijah explained. Each of the staff recognized that when they know the underlying problem, they are positioned to help with the problem in the most effective way possible. Chester remarked, "When we ask questions we can bring the dire future into awareness, get whatever the functional need is, and help them be more open to being helped, get to better pathways or whatever other end might be more appropriate."

While each of them grasped the big picture of Insight, only one of the five could recall the technical terms with any facility and without reminding. For example, I asked Syl, "So do you remember what the three key Insight skills are?"

Syl: Valuing. Is valuing one of them?

Me: That's not really —

Syl: Conflict behavior?

Elijah had a similar response when I asked the same question:

Elijah: Three key Insight skills?

And Chester too: I don't think I know.

The answer was noticing, verifying, and curious questioning.

The two main variables of conflict behavior—valuing of threat and decision to defend—were also difficult for the staff to recall, as was the term "dire future narrative." When I asked, "In what form does our valuing and deciding present itself to us in conflict," Chester strained his recall: "Hold on. I'm trying to get to their...shoot, I know what it is. It's like the disaster scenario but I forget the...no, don't tell. Please don't say it because I do know it. I'm trying to think of the letters that make the...OK, maybe I can't think of the name of it. It's the dire future narrative!"

Perhaps it was the way I phrased the question. But it turned out that being able to communicate the technical terms of the approach did not correlate to being able to use the skills in practice, which I discovered in the second part of the skills assessment—the role-play.

Role-plays have been long recognized as experiential learning tools that enhance higher-level learning, critical thinking and skill development. More recently they have come under the umbrella of authentic learning and assessment, an approach that we saw earlier is characterized by learning-by-doing.[179] According to Adams and Mabusela, "Authentic assessment is performance-based and requires students to exhibit the extent of their learning through a demonstration of mastery."[180] As this part of the assessment was designed to provide the opportunity for the staff to demonstrate their aptitude in Insight skills, role-play was the best fit.

For each role-play, I played a student and the staff played their real-life roles. The choice to participate in the assessment role-play myself was deliberate. Because Insight

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[179] Leaman and Flanagan, "Authentic Role-Playing as Situated Learning."
[180] Adams and Mabusela, "Assessing with Role Play: An Innovation in Assessment Practice," 365.

skills are designed to access the interiority of another person, it was important that I experience the ability of the staff to access my interiority in order to appropriately assess their skill level. I also needed to be in the position to reflect back to them where they were strong and where they needed to pay more attention. Did their question open me up? Did it shut me down? Did they elicit my threat and my decision to defend? Did I feel heard and understood in the interaction?

I developed two separate role-play scenarios, one designed for the behavior specialists and recovery room specialist, since their jobs are to respond to misbehavior as a student is misbehaving or to supervise a student immediately following misbehavior; and one for Jason and Chester, who tend to deal with students once they have already gotten in trouble with a behavior staff or teacher (though they do respond in the moment when they see students misbehave). They are also responsible for figuring out how the student can move forward after misbehaving.

Four of the staff participated in the role-play. Tanya came into the skills assessment breathless, having just used the skills successfully with a student who was walking off campus. Tanya recounted how she used her Insight skills, and to her astonishment they worked. She was able to calm the student down, get her back in the building and ready to go to her next class. I'll share that story later on. But because her telling of the story took up most of our assessment time, we were unable to practice the role-play. Her story, though, indicated to me that she not only understood Insight, what it hoped to help staff achieve with students, but that she could implement the skills effectively.

Of the four who participated in the role-play, three were successful at calming me down in my role as the student, helping me reflect on my own decision-making and opening up supportive solutions that I could get on board with. One was less successful, and it was the person who remembered nearly all of the conceptual terms.

Each of the three who were successful with the role-play scenario used all three key Insight skills—noticing, verifying, and curious questioning. Syl and Elijah, the behavior specialist and recovery room specialist, noticed my behavior, which with Syl was me leaving the building, and with Elijah was me huffing into the recovery room without looking at him. Chester noticed my valuing. This was interesting, because as each of them was asked to play the role as themselves, there were certain things they were accustomed to paying attention to.

The role I took with Elijah and Syl was a 17 year old student, teen-mom, skipping class. With Elijah, I had been caught and sent to the recovery room. Going into the role-play with him, I had in my mind that my conflict behavior was skipping class. But he noticed immediately that I didn't say anything to him. He said that was his first clue, "Because normally, when they come in, if they're not pissed, even when they walk by me in the hallway, anything, they'd be like, 'Hey, what's up Mr. Lessing.' You know, high five, slap five, and all that, but, you know, when they come in pissed off, I know something's up if they don't at least speak to me." So Elijah asked about that, right off:

Elijah: Hello, Megan. You usually speak to me. Well, what's going on?
Megan: I'm just pissed off. Why am I even here?

Elijah's question got me to say that I was mad, but it did not deescalate me immediately. What did deescalate me was that he did not react defensively to my defensiveness. In other words, he did not respond to my conflict behavior with his own conflict behavior. Instead he said:

> Elijah: I'm not sure. I didn't get radioed in, but I got an email that said you were skipping class.

> Here he verifies what he thinks he knows—that I skipped class, and gives me a chance to confirm, which I do. After which point he gets curious about *that* conflict behavior.

> Megan: Yeah, I wasn't going to class.

> Elijah: Well, why didn't you want to go to class?

> Megan: This is just bullshit. I just can't believe I'm here right now.

> Elijah: Well, why didn't you want to go to class? Is there something wrong?

> Megan: I didn't want to go to class because I'm not…because that stupid teacher is trying to give me a test.

Elijah is curious, and that curiosity compels me to answer him. Just by asking he gets that I am worried about a test. By the end of the exchange, where he continues to be curious and verify what he thinks he has understood, I become willing to figure out how I can sit down with the teacher to get help in the class.

With Syl, we used the same scenario except in the context of his role as behavior specialist, who makes sure kids are on task and where they are supposed to be. Syl catches me leaving the building. At first he asks me, "Megan, where are you going?" To which I respond, "I'm leaving!" Notice that his question does not deescalate me at all, but

rather reinforces my decision to go. However, rather than admonishing me to get back to class, Syl gets curious and asks me why I want to leave. I'm pretty elevated and defensive, so it takes him a few times for me to finally answer him. What gets me to answer is that his curiosity begins to come through:

Syl: What's wrong?

Megan: I just have to go.

Syl: Why do you have to go?

Megan: Well, fuck. It's fifth period and I'm not going to stick around.

Syl: What do you have fifth period?

Megan: Don't you know? Don't you have my schedule? You're always in my piece.

Syl: I don't know where you're at fifth period.

Megan: Math.

Syl: How are you doing in math?

While Syl comes across as curious, and entices me to answer his questions, it would have taken him less time and would have deescalated me more if he were to have asked a more pointed Insight question like, "What's wrong with fifth period"—noticing my valuing specifically and asking about it. And then when I come out with Math being my fifth period class, he could have asked something that gets at my decision to skip Math like, "What about Math makes you want to miss it?" rather than "How are you doing in math?" Those directed Insight questions would have gotten us right to the point, which was that I was trying to miss a test in a class that was overwhelmingly hard for me.

We did get there. The situation did not escalate, and I did not leave, which was Syl's primary goal as behavior specialist—keeping me in school.

For Chester and Jason, I used a different scenario, one where they pull me into their office because they witness the tail end of me cursing out the basketball coach. After seeing what I had done, Chester, the behavior intervention coordinator (and PhD in Psychology) noticed my valuing immediately—that I was upset, and he asked about it.

> Chester: So Megan, I saw a little bit of that. I could see you're really upset. Talk to me a little bit.

So I told him what had upset me, he verified what I said, and curiously questioned my valuing, trying to understand how I was making sense of what mattered to me.

> Chester: When [the coach] said that you're off the team, what did that mean for you? How did you…I see you took it bad but what does that mean for you?

This question was effective and got me to tell him all of the things that concerned me, that patterned my valuing—being off the team, having put in all this time at practice, feeling that it was not fair that I be off because I thought that I had done what I was supposed to do to have my absence excused. And he validated my feelings, which felt good.

> Chester: And all those feelings, it sounds like they suck.

Interestingly, from here Chester went from eliciting the robustness of my feelings to restorative questions— what I could have done differently—which reveals his role and habits within Monroe's restorative-based behavior program.

> Chester: I wonder if there's some way that this interaction that you had with him could be different, right? So I guess in my mind, maybe there's a

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way to talk with the coach, a way to get the coach to reconsider, a way to just explain yourself to the coach. I don't know, but maybe there is, but it looks like the way you guys interacted is not that way. What do you think could've happened differently than the way it went?

To which I responded

Megan: Well, I don't know if it could've gone any other way because he came up to me and said that I was off the team. I mean, I had an excused absence. I mean, I called the school and all of a sudden, out of the blue, I'm off?

Clearly, even though my valuing had been heard and I was less defensive than I was at the beginning, I still felt righteous in having spoken to the coach in the way that I had (cursing at him). Chester continued to probe my valuing and finally hit on my threat. While I did not want to be off the team, and that was important to me, the real issue was that I perceived the whole interaction to be completely and utterly unfair. There was no justice in me being kicked off the team when I had done what I was supposed to do, so there was no other option for me but to try to make that clear to the coach.

Chester: Huh, so maybe that's what we're talking about. Like you said, fairness and nobody gets it.

I confirm that.

Megan: Yeah.

Then Chester tries to understand fairness for me, and we go back and forth until he expresses that he gets it.

Chester: Yeah. That sucks. I think in terms of that interaction that you had with him, it sounds like a lot of that interaction came from this sense of unfairness.

To be heard on this, was liberating for me, and opened my ears and my mind to the possibility that the way I responded to the coach might not have been the best choice after all. It sparked self-reflection in me, particularly after Chester makes this suggestion:

> Chester: I think we have to figure out other ways though to handle things when they feel unfair.

To which I respond:

> Megan: Yeah.

And I wonder out loud:

> Megan: Well, what do I do?

Chester having curiously followed my valuing to discover my threat—that I was caught in a situation that was not fair—got me to recognize that the decision that I made to defend against that might have made my situation worse. Only now, after being heard in that way, am I able to recognize my own error. In the end, we decide that having a conversation with the coach, where I can take responsibility for cursing and explain what I thought was unfair would be the best option for making the situation better.

What did not come out on our role-play was an understanding of my conflict behavior itself, which was cursing out the coach. Chester recognized this when he reflected on the Insight skills he had used.

> I definitely, you know, did the curious questioning. I don't know that I got to, maybe because I assumed it, but I don't know that I asked a lot about why you cussed him out. Like why did you use that? It's one thing to be upset. I see why you're upset but I don't think I asked about like, 'So why cuss him out?' Because I think…I don't know. I just assumed I knew, which I probably shouldn't have. I probably should've asked like, you know, 'Why talk to him that way? What did that do for you? What did that mean?'

This was a critical insight in terms of skill development, because becoming curious about decision-making is essential to understanding what motivated the problematic behavior. With that information, it can be dealt with most appropriately. So, on this reflection, we resumed the role-play and I answered.

> Megan: Well, because he needed to know that he was wrong.

At which point, it clicked for Chester.

> Chester: Hmm. Got you and that would've definitely let me go into like, 'So it's important you be heard, but I think the way it went, you probably weren't heard. The wrong thing was heard and that might have influenced the way he continued to interact.' So I definitely would've…yeah. Yeah but I don't…man, that's interesting. It's interesting retrospectively because I don't know that I'd ever ask like why somebody's cussing somebody. Cause you know, you're mad, you know, but I don't… it's not that simple necessarily.

And this is a major point of Insight—it is so easy to loop along, as it were, assuming that what we think we know applies. Being curious is much more difficult, but it gets us to understand the complexities at play in the valuing and deciding of others, which matters greatly to the effectiveness of how we respond.

Jason, the vice principal of restorative practices, while conceptually proficient in the Insight approach, did less well in the role-play practice. Granted his position in the school is arguably the most difficult. It is his responsibility to discipline students who break the rules. His focus is on the rules, and his hope is to compel students to do the right thing by restoring the situation so he does not have to exclude them from school with suspensions. I could tell that this default role as disciplinarian was on during our role-play. Consider how it began.

Jason: OK. Wow, you seem really upset about this.

Megan: Hell, yeah.

Jason: Yeah, yeah.

Megan: Fucking dick.

Jason: Yes. So can you tell me what happened?

Jason, understandably, wants to know what happened. He would need some

background to understand the full picture, however, the Insight approach would have him

wondering what was so upsetting. A variation on the question "what happened" directed

explicitly at my valuing would be, "What was so upsetting?" Still escalated, I answer

Jason's question about what happened:

> Megan: Yeah, I go into basketball practice and he just kicks me off the
> team.
>
> Jason: Kicks you off the team. Wow.
>
> Megan: Hmm-hmm.
>
> Jason: That sounds really awful and I know that you really want to be on
> the team really bad. So why did he kick you off the team?

So here, Jason verifies—"kicks you off the team"—but does not get curious about

that. Instead, he assumes—"That sounds really awful and I know you really want to be on

the team…" Regardless of whether or not Jason is right, his assumptions get in the way

of getting curious about me on my own terms, and so he asks another content question:

"Why did he kick you off the team?" For me the answer to this is not the most important

piece of information, but I respond:

> Megan: He said I missed too many practices.

Jason: Hmm-hmm.

Megan: The only reason I missed the last practice was because my grandma broke her arm and I called you. I mean I called the school and I told you I wasn't going to be there.

Here I am, certain and righteous. I am justifying myself.

Jason: Hmm-hmm.

Megan: So this is really your fault.

Jason: Yeah. So you told me. Did you tell your coach?

Megan: No, I called the school. My grandma broke her arm. I had to take care of her. I wasn't in school. I called the school.

Jason: It sounds like a valid reason but what was the process supposed to be in place for the team if you missed practice? What's supposed to happen?

Jason is curious about what happened and what was supposed to happen, but not about *my* looping on it—my valuing of it and my subsequent decision to respond. And he demonstrates excellent verifying. He paraphrases my statements quite well, but I am left spinning on the content of the encounter, not able to express my valuing of it.

Megan: I don't know. I mean I'm there every practice I can make and…

Jason: Yeah, you come to every —

Megan: I don't know why he…it's like I don't know why he just kicked me off the team because my grandma broke her arm. I mean —

Jason: Right. You come to as many practices as you can. You're really kind of…you're trying to be dedicated.

Megan: Yeah.

Jason: But your grandmother broke her arm but…so you've missed —

Megan: So why did he kick me off the team? Because my grandma broke her arm.

Jason: Well, did you…you missed five practices?

Megan: Yeah.

Jason: But you feel like you had an excuse for those.

Megan: Yeah.

Jason: And so when he told you that you've missed too many practices, what did you say?

Here Jason had an opportunity, after verifying my understanding, to become curious about either my valuing or deciding. Instead of turning the conversation to what happened, which brings me back there and escalates me, he could have asked "what was it like for you when you felt like you should have been excused, but he kicked you off anyway?" This is a question targeted at my valuing and I would have been able to give an answer that revealed my valuing—"It was awful. It felt really unfair." At which point, Jason could have linked my valuing to my decision to defend by cursing out the coach. But he didn't. Instead, he asked what I said to the coach. So I told him. And we spent a long time on what happened, until finally he moved into what I could have done differently:

> Jason: You thought [your absences were] excused, I hear that. I hear that you thought they were excused and we've talked about that, that you were upset because you thought they were excused. You want to be on the team. That's all…we're all on the same page with that but it's like…so what do you do with that? What's another thing you could've done besides curse him out?

To which I respond:

> Megan: I have no idea.
>
> Jason: Hmm-hmm.

Megan: Just walked off?

Jason: Might not have been a bad idea.

Megan: And then what?

Jason: Well, then you got time to think about —

Megan: But it's not fair. I shouldn't be off the team. It's not fair.

Jason: Hmm-hmm. And that's fine, you know, you feel like it's not fair to be off the team. We've identified one other thing you could've done, walk off. That's, to me —

Megan: But I can't just roll over because it's not…I mean I can't just —

Jason: Would you have been…is that the end of it if you walked off? Is there another chance to —

Megan: Well, he says I'm off the team, I have to go, then that sounds like I'm off the team and I told him and I was saying, 'No way, I shouldn't be off the team because I have an excuse,' and he said he didn't care. He said, 'No.' He said, 'You're off,' and I said, 'Well, fuck you.'

Clearly, in the moment when the coach tells me I am off the team, there was no other option for me. I was defending. So Jason asking me what I could have done differently felt out of touch.

Megan: So if I walked off then that would've been just accepting, you know, what he said, and no.

Jason: So you feel like you would've been accepting what he said.

Megan: Yeah.

Jason: You don't think you could've arranged a time to talk to your coach at another time?

Megan: If he came to you and said, 'You can't practice. You're off the team,' and you just turn around and walked away, you don't think he would take that as you accepting what he said?

After this exchange about my decision, Jason did continue to verify.

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Jason: So you feel like you would've been accepting what he said.

This actually led to some movement for both of us. He discovered that this to me was not really an issue of being on the team—that was the larger issue—but about fairness. I had done everything I thought I was supposed to do, and yet, I am being punished. Where is the justice? And Jason got that:

Jason: It doesn't feel fair to you.

Bingo. Then, Jason gets a knock at the door, which interrupts our flow, and even though we are on to something, he gives up. "We're not getting anywhere, are we?"

The challenge in this role-play was that Jason did not use curious questions, so we were stuck in a back and forth, where he had a goal—getting me to recognize my wrong, and I had a goal—getting him to recognize that I felt as though I had been unjustly treated. Eliciting that from me and becoming curious about it would have put me in the mental space to see that I had been inappropriate with the coach and that there might be a way to remedy the situation through a restorative process.

Tanya, one of the behavior specialists, walked into her skills assessment beaming, saying "I just resolved a conflict, just now, using the Insight approach."

"What happened," I asked? She told me the story of seeing one of her students leaving school—it was late morning. At this point, school was far from over. Tanya recounted:

> One of my students, Ivana, was walking out of the building—leaving school. I went outside to get her back in, and she was upset and not having it. I asked her what was going on, where she was going. She was saying that she had to get home, that she was going home. She was saying that nobody listens to her here. And I said, 'Well, Ivana—I'm listening to you

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right now. I want to listen to you.' And she says, 'I have to go home.' So I said, 'Are you sure you want to go? I'm here now, and I want to hear what you have to say. What's going on?' 'Fine,' she said. 'My bus is in 3 minutes, you can walk me to my bus, but I'm getting on it.' 'Okay,' I say. 'I'll walk you there.' And I ask her, 'Why do you feel like you need to go home, though?' And she said, 'I'm just not getting the help I need.' 'You're not getting the help you need? Have you asked for help?' 'Yes, I've been asking and I'm not getting it, and now I just want to start fresh.' The 3rd quarter ends this week, 4th quarter starts Monday. So I said, 'Well look, I understand that. Let's talk about it inside, and try to figure it out. I'm cold. Another bus will come, and if you want to leave, that's your choice.' We talked more about grades and how Ivana was upset that she was failing. I told her, you know, that one point, from a 1.7 to a 1.8 would make a difference for her, so she should go to class. And that made reasonable sense to her and she decided to come in with me.

The first big win here is that Tanya got Ivana back inside. She did not go home, but decided instead to stay. And she did this by asking about Ivana's decision to leave and her valuing—her feeling about her performance in school. When they were back inside, the school social worker joined in their conversation, and because the social worker is somewhat superior in rank to Tanya, Tanya, ceded the conversation. That is until Ivana started escalating again, saying that she was leaving, that "you all are annoying me!"

Tanya continued, "I'm not sure what the social worker said, exactly, but it was triggering Ivana and she didn't know it. I could see what was happening, though, and intervened again. You could see who the rock star was as far as conflict resolution in that conversation!" Tanya had honed in on Ivana's valuing, noticing that she was becoming animated, verified it and asked about it, which brought Ivana back down and able to talk about what was making her want to leave. Tanya discovered that Ivana was getting help in her period C class, but that in period A she was not getting enough attention because a

girl named Jessica who had been out for a month or more was back and their teacher was spending extra time with her. And then that morning in period B, she was waiting around with her paper and pencil in her hand for help for 10 minutes and no one was helping, so she left. She felt abandoned and helpless; frustrated that she was trying, but no one was paying any attention to her.

The social worker jumped in at some point and said that they could not sit around talking about it all day, and that Ivana needed to make a decision about whether or not she was going to class. That is when the conversation ended. Tanya walked Ivana up to Physics and came down to me. Midway through our conversation, she went up to check on her. She was not in class, but she was at school, so that was a big deal and a huge win. Plus, the staff now had all this information about what was going on in Ivana's classes that they can use to help her, and to help make her feel like her 4th quarter would be worthwhile and not wasted.

Tanya remarked that she noticed when Ivana was escalating and coming down, and it occurred to her that she needed to figure out what was making her go up again— she noticed and focused there, asking what it was that was agitating her. She noticed the loop—valuing and evaluating and deciding. She said it was like an out of body experience using the Insight approach and seeing it working. "At first, I thought [the Insight approach] was crap," she told me.

> I thought that I would never have time to use it. It was too technical with the loop and all of that, but it really works. I got Ivana's dire future narrative and I asked her about it and it resolved her conflict. It really works. I saw myself looping. I saw her looping. I saw the social worker interacting with her and just making her mad, and I thought—that was me

before this training. That is exactly what I would be doing, and now I know what to pay attention to.

Even though Tanya did not role-play with me because we ran out of time, her story demonstrated to me that she was proficient in Insight skills. After all of these assessments, what was amazing to me, and what I was so grateful for was that even though Jason did not appropriate the skills well enough to successfully complete the role-play, the staff took the training and the skills seriously and tried to use them and apply them to help themselves and their students. In all they did quite well after only 7 hours of instruction and practice, spread out over a very long 10 weeks.

In addition to the staffs' level of proficiency, which for four of them was "proficient with practice," and for one of them was "needs work," three findings emerged from the skills assessment sessions.

First, the technical terms of the Insight approach are important for explaining the Insight framework, but having critical command over the framework does not require a firm grasp of the technical terms. You do not need to remember the term valuing to pay attention to the way that feelings pattern decisions. You do not need to remember that you are noticing when you are paying attention to conflict behavior, or verifying when you are checking out what you believe you have understood, or curiously questioning when you are asking Insight questions about a person's interiority. There is value to remembering the terms, but a big picture understanding of the pattern of consciousness as driving a person to act a certain way is sufficient for proficient practice of Insight skills.

Second, roles are important in implementing Insight skills. Who we are in a particular context, whether we are a behavior specialist or the vice principal, constrains

how we are able to use Insight skills, because of the responsibilities that accompany the given role. As we discussed in Chapter 4, Insight theory explains that our operations of consciousness are carried by institutional roles and tasks. Our roles and tasks are like our blinders—they determine the information that we attend to, that we look for, that we consider important. This was true for the staff at Monroe High. Tanya, Syl and Elijah were concerned with getting students ready to go back to class. Chester was concerned about students improving behavior and making better choices. Jason was concerned about disciplining students restoratively.

Third, the staff adapted the skills to their roles and their tasks. They were able to use Insight skills to fulfill their responsibilities. When Elijah used his Insight skills to get at why I was skipping Math, and discovered that it was overwhelmingly hard for me, he was able to tailor his teaching intervention, a tool he normally uses to help kids make better choices, to my particular concern. He said,

> Yeah, I know. I wanted to get out of high school too, but, you know, time doesn't wait for anyone. Time's going to still move the same, but while you're here, you need to use the best of your time and make sure you're studying, make sure if you need some help…everyone needs help on everything. No one's perfect. So you need to get the help when you need it and just communicate. When you communicate, it's better. You let someone know that you're having a problem and they can help you. If you don't tell anyone then it all falls back on you, not them."

He could have taught me a generic lesson about how when I am in the adult world, if I skip work, I will lose my job, but his advice was specific to my situation because he was curious about what my situation was. This shows a particular strength of the Insight approach. It is adaptable and can augment the effectiveness of one's regular tools by enhancing their precision.

The skills assessments also illuminated what could have been improved about the training. Since none of the staff were perfectly proficient in using Insight skills, more training and practice time would have been helpful. We tried to schedule a follow up session for staff to share their experiences of using Insight, which was requested by a number of the staff, but we could not fit it into the spring term. If we had had that session, not only would the staff have learned from each other and reinforced their skills by sharing, but I would have had the chance to debrief the skills assessments and work on specific areas for improvement.

Tanya also suggested that the training include trouble shooting--what to do if it does not seem to be working or when the staff is stuck? What techniques could be used to reset their curiosity when the student begins to escalate or they are not sure where to go next? This would be excellent material to cover in a follow up session or an advanced class.

Even without these extra sessions, the training had an effect. Elijah remarked,

> It's made a big difference because, you know, normally, I see a certain kid, I would probably associate previous things with them like they'll come in and I'd be like, 'Oh, I know you did this,' and, you know, that's not the right way to approach the situation. Yeah. So by asking those questions, it kind of helps smooth things over, calm them down. It keeps me calm too to go through the steps. Instead of going from zero to ten or assuming, I can use the steps to figure out the underlying problem with the student.

With the base-line of these skills assessments, I was able to evaluate the staff's reports on the impact of Insight skills 12 weeks later after the close of the 2014-2015 school year.

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CHAPTER SEVEN: IMPACT

In June 2015 at the close of Monroe High's school year I met again with the staff I had trained in the Insight approach. This time my goal was to assess, from their perspective, the impact that using Insight skills had in practice on managing student misbehavior and helping them make effective disciplinary decisions. In effect, this was a self-assessment on the impact of the Insight training for staff. Because my sample was small—5 staff—and we completed the training at the end of March, mid-way through the spring semester, a quantitative whole-school assessment of the training's impact would not have yielded any findings. In fact discipline referrals and suspensions were up in the spring of 2015 from fall 2014 totals. Instead, I took a qualitative approach. I followed a semi-structured interview protocol that asked 14 questions to get at five key areas (see Appendix M). First, I wanted to know if the staff members, 12 weeks after the final skills assessment, had retained what they had learned. Second, I wanted to know how useful Insight skills had been for them and whether or not they made a difference to their work. Third, I hoped to gather a few examples of when they had used the skills successfully. Fourth, I wanted to understand whether or not the staff modified the skills for the school context. And, fifth, I hoped to learn what about the training worked well, and what could be improved. These key areas fit into the larger dissertation goal of determining the applicability and utility of the Insight approach in the context of student discipline.

While the semi-structured interview protocol served as a guide for the information

I was seeking, I used the elicitive, active, deepening interview techniques I described

earlier—the same technique I used as the basis for my pre-training interviews. Because

this technique generates questions based on the respondent's answers to previous

questions, the questions did not progress in the order enumerated in the protocol. In fact,

interview transcripts show that I consistently asked, "In your own words, what is the

Insight approach and how is it supposed to be useful to you?" as my opening question,

but the answer to that question led to different places with each staff member, and

therefore to more spontaneous answering of the questions in the protocol depending on

where the conversation went. I did make sure to check off that the questions had been

addressed in the interview, even if they were not explicitly asked as laid out in the

protocol. While this technique lessened my ability to cross-analyze the interviews, cross-

analysis was not my goal. My goal was to get a thorough understanding of each staff

member's understanding and experience with the Insight approach in their daily work.

This positioned me to assess its usefulness as a tool for addressing student misbehavior

and discipline.

One-on-one interviews as my main method for assessing the utility of the Insight

approach to student discipline were useful in so far as I was able to elicit "thick"

qualitative descriptions of its application in the school context. Interviews are essential in

a case-study environment because they aim, as Warren puts it, "to understand the

meaning of respondents experiences and life worlds."[181] The experiences and life worlds

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[181] Warren, "Qualitative Interviewing," 83.

that I was examining were those in which staff used the Insight approach to handle

student misbehavior and make disciplinary decisions. Their personal evaluations of its

utility were what I was looking for.

      There is always the risk in interviews and other kinds of self-reports that the data

gathered may be limited by self-report bias. A staff member may succumb to social

desirability bias and want to paint their experiences of the Insight approach in a positive

light in order to please me—their teacher. A staff member might misremember their own

experiences of using the Insight approach due to the misinformation effect, where

subsequent experiences change ones memory of an event.[182] Other biases are possible

too. However, the kind of elicitive, active, deepening interviews that I conducted

minimized those biases by penetrating each staff member's data of consciousness and

seeking a robust understanding of the staff's personal experiences on their own terms. For

this particular study, self-report data was essential. It would have been impossible to

analyze the staff's experiences of both their learning and their views of the utility of the

Insight approach as applied to the context of student discipline without tapping into their

personal, lived experiences. Their self-reports are the most reliable source for that data,

and interviewing the most effective method for accessing it.[183]

      What I found from my interviews was that each staff member had retained the

broad strokes of what they had learned—that Insight skills were about exploring the

decision-making motivating a person's behavior. I also found that for the most part when

Insight skills were used, they worked. When they were applied to challenging situations

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[182] Stone et al., *The Science of Self-Report.*
[183] Ibid.

with students, staff members were able to understand the valuing and deciding motivating a student's behavior. The complexity of a student's decision emerged and subsequently broadened the range of options that staff could draw on to address it. In the next two sections, I will take you through the effectiveness of the Insight approach as reported by each of the five behavior staff.

I organize my findings by individual experience. I begin with the experiences of Elijah and Chester, who were able to consistently use the Insight approach in their daily work. And follow with the experiences of Tanya, Syl and Jason, who used it less often than then others. I present my findings in this way for the obvious reason that Elijah and Chester have more to say about how the Insight approach has impacted their work with students than the others, but also to emphasize that much of this is due to the importance of roles and proficiency in how the Insight approach is integrated and used in staff's student interactions.

Elijah and Chester

Elijah and Chester, who both earned "proficient with practice" in their skills assessments, were able to appropriate the Insight approach into the routine of their daily interactions with students most comprehensively. Not only did they retain an understanding of the Insight approach and see the value in it, but their roles as recovery room specialist in the case of Elijah and behavior intervention coordinator in the case of Chester, positioned them to use the Insight approach in their regular student interactions.

Elijah- *"They just respect me. They know I care"*

The Recovery Room at Monroe High is a windowless room at the end of a broad hall. Elijah's desk faces a gaggle of tables and chairs, where during any given period on any given day there will be 5 or more students sitting, completing a reflection, and hopefully preparing to move on to their next class. They might be there for behaviors like skipping class, disrupting class, disobeying or disrespecting authorities, fighting or being inappropriate with peers, among a variety of other infractions. As students come in, they check in with Elijah (Mr. Lessing to them) and hand in their phone. Elijah's job is to watch over the students and help them learn how to make better choices when it comes to behavior in school. Rarely are students sent to the Recovery Room because they have disobeyed or disrupted or are in conflict with Elijah. He receives them after those kinds of incidents with teachers, administrators and other students. This positions him, in his role, to be someone the students can trust. This is not to say that they automatically will.

Elijah joined the staff at Monroe High at the beginning of the spring 2015 semester after Dominic Jones left as recovery room specialist because of differences of opinion on how students should be disciplined. Elijah recounted to me, "when I first came…of course, this is a high school, when you first come, they're going to try you." But he learned Insight skills early on in his work at Monroe. After awhile, he said, "I think them figuring out that I actually care—and I do attribute some of that to the actual Insight approach—I pretty much have a great relationship with the kids."

Elijah has used the Insight Approach to try "to figure out underlying causes of a kid's behavior, why they are acting, what's the reason they are acting the way they are." And it has made a difference.

> It's made a difference in just trying to figure them out, asking the questions. Like when I see a kid three times a day, instead of jumping on him, I can just be like, 'So what's going on today?' or, you know, 'Why don't you want to be in class?' It just helps me figure out what's going on and then by the third time I see him and I've already asked some questions the first two times, the third time, maybe I can get into like some home stuff, some out of school stuff, kids picking on him, he doesn't want to be in class. So it just helps me. And the more I see him, the questions get deeper and deeper so I can understand what's going on.

For the students, Elijah has noticed that when he uses Insight skills to get curious, "the kids just get it off their chest, you know? It's a relief." Not only do the students benefit from Elijah's directed curiosity in terms of being able to calm down and manage their feelings, but it has strengthened Elijah's relationships with the students and enhanced their respect for him.

> I don't know. I just feel like I talk to them on a different level, like I mean I give them advice. I can also, you know, relate to them on what they go through probably at home, outside of school and stuff like that and I think they appreciate that.

And it has made an impact on compliance. Phones, for example, are a big point of contention at Monroe High. They are allowed in school, but not in the Recovery Room, and getting students to comply with that rule has traditionally been a recurring challenge. For Elijah though, "I mean when kids come here, I don't even have to ask for their phone anymore. They come in and hand me their phone. I mean it's just gotten to that point where, you know, they just respect me and they know that I care."

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His "caring" and ability to be curious about the students to the point where they tell him what is motivating their behavior helps his colleagues too.

> When [the students] get sent out of class, some of the behavior staff will come and check-in with them but before they check-in, I can take them and be like, 'Hey, you know, he keeps getting sent out today because the kids are picking on him or something happened at home.' So it helps us all. They don't come in and just jump on the kid, 'This is the third [time]!' you know… I can intervene, then they'll be a lot easier on the kid or, you know, not really jump on them as much. We don't have to go and make the kid even madder about what's going on, you know, frustrate them. Everybody's frustrated. So it's easier. Of course, it's easier.

Elijah, who did well on his skills assessment and was able to use Insight skills in his routine interactions with students, benefited from the Insight approach and saw positive effects on his students.

Chester-*"It changes the focus to what's more important"*

Chester, too, was able to appropriate the Insight skills and integrate them into his work with students. As behavior intervention coordinator, Chester's job is to work with the school's most behaviorally challenging students—those with Individualized Education Plans and the "high flyers," students who are constantly getting into trouble. His goal is to use his expertise as a psychologist to implement best practices in school behavior management, to help students improve their behavior so that they can succeed in school.

There were two striking benefits of using Insight skills that Chester related to me. The first was that Insight skills limited his tendency to assume what was motivating students to misbehave.

Being a psychologist, I think especially being accustomed to doing what I do, and [feeling] like I've seen this a bunch of times, you know, I kind of know what's going on, like I already know why you're doing what you're doing, and I don't really need to ask because I've seen that and I know what it is. But this, [the Insight Approach], sort of says, you could be wrong or you could only be looking at half or a part of what's going on. It could be a lot of different things going on. And so this, I think, helps me to really start looking more specifically at each case, what exactly is going on. Even if I was right, fine, but like I may not have been. I may have missed something.

For me, hearing this from Chester was like winning the million dollar ticket, because it is exactly what the Insight approach proposes—we do not know why anyone acts the way they do until we ask them and try to understand them on their terms rather than on our own terms, or on terms we expect because we think we have seen it before. Chester explained further that when he stopped assuming and got curious, "there was definitely some degree of surprise, because I assumed it was X and it wasn't or it just wasn't that simple. I think I assumed, in some situations, it was simpler or cleaner or more linear than it was. Instead, it's this real complex dynamic." And for Chester, understanding the complex dynamic

helps people to not be so stuck and engage in these defensive behaviors or argumentative behaviors or isolated behaviors, and maybe like attend to your relationship. And accordingly, I think the same will go for being more aware of your dire future narrative, like you're able to hopefully, with some structure or something, you're able to really engage what's at its core versus just what's in front of you. Like, 'I don't like the way you talk to me, so I'm going to deal with that,' as opposed to, 'I'm really kind of trying to avoid having to do this work because if I do the work, it's going to make me feel stupid. If I feel stupid, I'm going to feel…' You know, like it changes the focus to what's more important, which is the real underlying fear.

Grasping that underlying fear, that complex dynamic relaxes the "defensive," "argumentative," "isolated" behaviors that Chester encounters from students. It helps

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students engage and allows Chester to develop with the student the best intervention

possible.

The second benefit Chester got from using Insight skills was that they help him

manage his own frustration when moments with students became challenging.

> When I'm tired or frustrated with a particular student, it's easy to default
> to [the Insight approach] because then it's not a lot of work for me to be
> calm. It's like, 'You know what? There's an entire process.' Like,
> 'Alright, so why don't you tell me what would happen if you did what this
> teacher asked?' I can just go through that as opposed to like, 'What do you
> mean? You know better. This is ridiculous. Why are we doing this again?'
> Instead, I can just really go, 'So what would happen if you would've just
> done what they asked?' That would've been…you know, you would've
> went like that, or you'd have been soft or whatever, like, 'Oh, OK, so what
> would it mean if you were…' So we can then do that dance and I can calm
> down, honestly, and not be as frustrated.

What is particularly helpful about Insight skills for Chester is that they provide a

framework for targeting his curiosity. Chester can go back to the loop, he can get curious

about the structure of conflict at play and can manage his frustration by using Insight as a

tool. Using Insight skills, he continues, makes

> room for us to connect and talk that isn't bound by my frustration, or
> theirs for that matter. It helps me relate to them, helps them relate to me.
> And I think process-wise, it limits some of the active frustration in the
> moment, because we're literally working through a structure versus solely
> leaning on our relationship, which at any given moment could be taxed.

So in spite of the frustration, Chester can stay calm, be curious, flush out the

complex dynamics of a situation and make intervention decisions with students that target

their needs in a precise way, which is different from the way he would decide and the

frustration he would feel when he simply assumed he knew why a student was behaving

badly.

Three Student Examples

Flushing out what the complex dynamics of student behavior are has helped

Chester make more targeted and precise decisions about behavior interventions than he

would have had he continued to assume. For one student, Anthony, it played out this

way. Anthony, a ninth grader, is a lively, rambunctious kid. "Powerful" is how Chester

describes him, but limited academically, particularly with reading and language. Not only

does this frustrate Anthony, but it makes communication with him hard for staff. Chester

recounts,

> Anthony, now in ninth grade, has developed such an aversion to academia
> that his behaviors can just be really disruptive, like extraordinarily so, and
> then very non-compliant, very non-responsive to redirection. So anyway,
> Anthony would do things that really feel organically oppositional or really
> relationally based, like: This is about you being an asshole. This is about
> you showing that you are powerful, showing that you don't have to do
> what we say.

Anthony comes across as bad for the sake of being bad. That is difficult to deal

with, because to staff it feels personal. However when Chester started to use Insight skills

with Anthony, his understanding shifted.

> It seemed to be very relational, and I think in talking with him, using the
> Insight approach, I definitely was able to get him at times to say, 'Maybe,
> but it's also about, I really don't know what we're doing in this class. I
> don't like that feeling and on some level, I do feel powerful when I buck,
> so I do it because I don't feel so crappy and that's part of it too. So yeah,
> maybe I'm an asshole, but I'm also like really behind and I don't get it and
> I feel like no one helps me. I feel like this is going to be me anyway. I
> might as well start it now,' you know? But we got to that conversation that
> I don't think I would've gotten to just assuming, you know, 'You're just
> being an asshole.' It is just not that simple. He and I probably had 2 or 3
> interactions like that where we were able to relate it to the actual difficulty
> of the work and what it feels like for him to be overwhelmed in a room.

Chester told me about the time when Anthony expressed his anxiety in the classroom in a way that his teacher experienced as Anthony just being an "asshole," and it escalated into a serious conflict.

> He's been obnoxious in class with a particular teacher. She presented it to him as making her sad, and I think maybe used the word "sad." He took it as her being mad. He didn't really know what to do with it and was like…I mean they were like locked in a conflict for literally two weeks behind this one interaction.

Normally, Chester and his staff would have reprimanded Anthony and urged him to get back to class.

> We'd tell him, 'You need to be in class. We're not going to enable you avoiding this work. We're going to keep you in the proximity of the work.' Normally, I think our goal would be, 'Go, be in class. Fix it. It'll work out.'

But, instead, Chester used Insight skills to better understand the problem, and he realized that the normal mode of urging Anthony back to class "wasn't necessarily correct."

> Eventually, we were able to get that he kind of cared that he had hurt her feelings. He knew he took it too far, but he didn't really know how to back out of it. He didn't know how to fix it and then there were all these issues like, 'What if she hates me? Fine, she's going to hate me. I might as well push it. I don't want to feel hated.' You know, we were just able to get more out of him using it than I think we would have been able to before and I think he was able to see it a little more comprehensively.

And when Anthony was able to see the situation a little more comprehensively, so were Chester and his staff. Consequently, they were able to make more targeted and precise decisions around how to intervene and support Anthony.

> Yeah. So I think we probably had more restorative interactions with him and the teacher than we would have before. And we kept him out of the

room more than we would have before. [We did this because] he had said as much, 'I don't know what to do with [my reaction to this teacher's feelings about me]. I do know what to do with it, *but I don't know what to do with it*,' you know. So we were like, 'We don't want you to keep going, pouring gas on this fire that you don't want. Like you're saying, you don't want it, but you're saying you don't know what else to do. It's the end of the year. We got to figure out how to get you the information, but there's no point in us setting you up.' So, you know, we would keep him out more than we otherwise would have. We excluded him from her class more than we have before because he just wasn't ready and it was clear.

Chester and his team actually *chose* exclusion as the right decision for supporting Anthony, and they convened more restorative sessions between him and his teacher as a result. That way "he and his teacher could be alone to talk more, as opposed to him being in the class where he would default to showing off or picking a fight."

Anthony was clear, like this is about him and her and how they interacted—what he had said, how he responded, how she felt. There was nothing going on but like relationship stuff and he had to really be confronted with that. You know, get through the 'I don't cares' and 'so what' and acknowledge, 'Well, you do care and that's kind of why you're like constantly acting out now in class because you don't want her to be upset or you didn't like that you thought she was mad. You also misunderstood it so you got to deal with that. Some of this is for nothing because she wasn't ever mad. She was sad. Those are different emotions.' I think it was helpful for him to really explore the difference between people being mad at you and being sad because of you. Yeah, I think it was a growth moment in some ways for him, probably like small growth, but an important one.

Anthony was able to get back to class eventually. He didn't get back to class consistently, but he was able to get back to class and acknowledge on some level that he had taken it a little too far. So yes, it was a real improvement from the crisis place they were in. It wasn't a tenable place for them to be, you know, long term, but it definitely was an improvement from where it had escalated to. And I think it was a behavioral improvement for him because he really had to be challenged with emotional connection with an adult and how to manage it, and I don't think he's really had to do that.

Chester used Insight skills to unpack what he otherwise might have assumed was "simpler or cleaner or more linear than it was." As a result, he was able to elicit the complexity of Anthony's conflict behavior and make decisions that supported Anthony and helped him grow emotionally and behaviorally.

Similarly, Samuel, another student on Chester's caseload, changed course when Chester used Insight skills to process with him about his behavior and his choices. Samuel is 17 years old, and slated to repeat the ninth grade for the fourth time.

> So this was his third year in ninth grade and next year will be his fourth year in ninth grade, just like no credits at all, no classes, goes nowhere he's supposed to be. I shouldn't say 'nowhere.' Doesn't go consistently where he's supposed to be. But he can be very mature in conversation, you know, 'I'll do better. I'll plug in more,' and so on, but we have these conversations when he's not where he's supposed to be.

Chester described how he tried to penetrate Anthony's decision-making using Insight skills. He started by noticing Samuel's behavior of not being where he was supposed to be and asking about it:

> Like, 'What are you doing? What would it be like to be in class?' [To which Samuel responded,] 'You know, I just can't do it today. I don't feel like being in class.' Like, 'Man, but you're 17. We've had this conversation like how long? What's really going on?' And from there, he got really reactive, 'I'm tired of hearing about how old I am,' and this and that.

So Chester continued to use Insight skills to notice and get curious. He noticed Samuel's defensive reaction and asked:

> 'What does that mean to you that you're 17 and you're still not…what's that like?' So in those interactions when I use Insight, he's been able to deescalate from how upset he is about being confronted about where he's supposed to be and really explore the adult's concern and like why he keeps hearing about his age. Like, 'Well, why is that so frustrating?'

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'Because y'all acting like I'm not going to be anything or you act like I can't do better.' Like, 'Well, I don't think we're acting like you can't be anything. I think we are expressing concern, like what will you be at 18 in the 9th grade or 19 in the 10th grade? This is concern as opposed to conviction that you won't be anything. It's much more a concern: what will you be?' And so we were able to explore with him some of his fears about what he'll be and how buried those fears are.

And that made a difference:

It helped, then, to bolster not necessarily his commitment to doing better but his reactivity to our statements to him. It helped him to really explore like, 'We can't do anything but be concerned about you. Anything else is like not servicing you properly and we won't lie to you. This really is you. So I'm not doing much more than showing you a mirror, like, 'Hey, look at yourself.' Like this is where you are right now. This is where you should be. This is what you're doing,' and then we do that because we're concerned.' And I think his 'Where will I be? Who will I be?' won't change necessarily until his behavior does, but I think his reactivity to the conversations will be lessened because he knows now at least like where it comes from.

Samuel was able to get insights in his conversations with Chester and his whole understanding of the school staff's intentions changed. He was able to hear that they were not saying he was nothing or worthless, but that in fact, they care about him, they are concerned that he is not moving up in grades. With that, Chester was able to explain to Samuel that

'accordingly, we have to confront you. But the confronting isn't finger wagging for finger wagging's sake. The confronting is like finger wagging for productivity's sake, like to kick you into not being what you're scared of, like, we're scared of that. You're scared of that. Let's not do that.'

This direct clarification of where the school staff was coming from laid the groundwork for Chester to start helping Samuel make plans for what might be next for him.

I think he can do better next year, certainly, but I think statistically, what 18-year-old is going to, like for him, start in the ninth grade? He's got two credits, literally, maybe. So we would literally be talking about this kid having to be with 14-year-olds. He'd be 22 by the time he finished high school. He won't do it. He won't finish. He'll go somewhere. He'll get a GED. He'll do something else. So I wonder if maybe next year we can start setting him up to do that, like have maybe a successful first semester and then get him ready to go somewhere else. I also don't think he needs to be somewhere else now. I don't think it's a great idea to pull a kid with no high school skills out and send him somewhere else. Where will he go? And I don't know. I don't know what that looks like. We can prepare him to study or to figure it out. I hope we can get him to really develop the skills to study or prep or even if it's just like habits, right? Like if he goes somewhere that's a little more vocational or something like that, at least he's in the practice of being where he's supposed to be, doing what he's supposed to do, managing things appropriately and this year just wasn't it. Last year, certainly, one year before that wasn't. So hopefully next year we can start some of that.

Chester is hopeful because his relational baseline with Samuel shifted once he used Insight skills in his conversations with him. Samuel no longer feels the defensiveness he once felt, but rather understands the staff's concern for what it is—the hope and desire to help Samuel make the right choices to succeed given his age and lack of advancement in grades. Now, they can work together to formulate the right moves for Samuel, rather than pushing him out or letting him fail away from school without the skills he needs for the world outside.

Jeremy is another student who underwent a remarkable transformation after staff began to use Insight skills with him. Jeremy was getting into trouble almost constantly. Elijah would see him in the recovery room "2 or 3 times a day every day." According to Chester,

Jeremy was just so loud, so organically, you know, attention deficient. On days he's up, you can just see it. You literally can see in his eyes, like he don't have it. He can't sit still. He's rolling. It's just going to be a rough

day for him, you, everybody. And it's playful. He's not super nasty or obnoxious or anything like that. He just has no internal regulator.

That was the case until April, when Elijah told me, "he just got it together. He had a meeting. His mom had to come and all that, and ever since then, I mean he may come [to the recovery room] one time a day, just here and there, but it's not the same."

Jeremy was suspended at the end of March for using vulgar language with a staff member. The school arranged a restorative meeting, as is typical during a suspension, for him and his mother and all those involved. Chester specifically used Insight skills to see if he could find Jeremy's dire future in all of this. He asked him about how he imagined his behavior playing out. What he hoped to achieve. And what Chester found, and what he awakened Jeremy to by asking those questions was that he was operating almost exclusively in the short term.

> In those moments where we get to his dire future narrative like in a particular situation, he's often able to see 'I was moving too fast and I need to slow down. So my dire future narrative is really like a future of the next 20 minutes and how mad I am.' And so we've been able to get him to slow down and see, 'There's really no bad future for you, period. You're not really scared of anything, so accordingly, you shouldn't be doing the stuff you're doing.' We asked him, 'Jeremy, how do you think this plays out? Like you keep doing what you're doing, how does that story end?' And he happens to care about not being a 17-year-old ninth grader and we know he cares because we had these discussions. And we have been able to really get to him to see that these behaviors look like this for you, then that. For him, it has been, 'Whoa, I don't want that. I can't be that dude.'

Chester and the staff at Monroe, by becoming curious about Jeremy rather than aggravated by him, recognized that the intervention that would work for him was one that played on his desire to ultimately do well and not fall through the cracks. They were able

to direct their conversations with him to teach him about the consequences of acting

impulsively and missing out on school. Chester tells me,

> And he has been doing things in that direction, saying 'you're right. I shouldn't be doing that, like that was unnecessary. I took that too far. I was moving too fast.' But yeah, Jeremy moved up on our level system and he's in classes. I want to say Jeremy probably is going to pass everything. He may fail one class. And this is a kid who's just, first quarter, all over the place, like in class, out of class, getting into conflicts, negative behavior all the time. Just rolling. And that's not to say he's still not that same loud kid. His voice is deep. You can hear him coming, you know, like a mile away. He is still very much the lively person he started out as. I think he's just a lot more aware of how to contain it and I think a lot of that is because he's learned he's got to slow things down some. He moves too fast. He'll make bad decisions if he moves fast. He's got to slow down but I don't know if that would've happened without us really challenging him to look at the core of his behavior.

> So, now he goes to class more. Other people are like 'Jeremy, we're about to go do such and such.' Like we'd actually see this in class. And he's like, 'No, I'm good.' He does that more. I mean he's still vulnerable to making a bad decision, but nothing like before, and I think he looks a lot more like a regular student in there, you know, regular 15-year-old bad decisions, as opposed to every day, all the time bad decisions.

> Jeremy's turn around was possible because he got insights into his own decisions

when Chester and others got curious about it. Syl remarked that

> Insight definitely contributed to allowing me to tap into other resources to deal with Jeremy, because clearly, what I was doing or what was being done was not working in the beginning. So it's just doing the same thing over and over and like, you know, expecting different results. It wasn't happening. So it was time to…I mean he grew up. He started maturing, making different decisions, but we also had to find another avenue at which to go at him and I think Insight helped from that standpoint as far as processing information, him processing what he's done wrong or what he can do better.

> And Jeremy ultimately decided that misbehaving was not who or how he wanted

to be. Jeremy had 62 behavior referrals, not including tardies, on his record before March

31. After March 31, he had none. And he advanced to 10th grade, which no one thought possible.

One of the key observations in all of this is that every student is different. Their behaviors are different, their motivations are different, their needs are different. Insight skills have helped Chester and Elijah drop their assumptions and begin to figure out the complexity and nuance of student behavior. With this they position themselves to make better decisions that support their students and enhance their relationships. For both, using Insight skills helped them manage their fatigue and frustration when dealing with the bad choices of students. Insight has provided an answer to Chester's question from months earlier, "how can we figure out how to deal more productively with our own reactions to students' behavior?" By being curious about students in terms of their own understanding and decision-making.

Tanya, Syl and Jason

Tanya and Syl, who earned "proficient with practice" scores on their skills assessments, and Jason, who earned "needs work" on his, each reported an understanding and appreciation of the Insight approach, but used Insight skills less than Chester and Elijah, mostly due to the constraints and responsibilities of their roles and their comfort level with Insight skills.

Tanya- *"It's kind of like a mind trick"*

Tanya, who had used Insight skills so successfully with her student the day of her skills assessment, told me that she had been given other responsibilities toward the end of

the school year and had not been processing as much with the students. Still, though, she

found it useful for the times she did engage with them on issues of behavior or conflict.

> It allows the conflict that's going on to remain at a certain level where it doesn't go from a crisis as easy because you're constantly letting them talk, you know, and you spend most of your time in the beginning kind of repeating what they're saying. 'So you're upset. OK, so you say that you walked out of class,' and I don't know if it's kind of like a mind trick but it seems like the kids feel like, 'Oh, well, she's really letting me get my side out and she's really...' So it's kind of opening them up to talk a little bit more than what it would be if, you know, I approached them with like a different intervention or, "OK, are you supposed to walk out of class? You know that you're not supposed to walk out of class,' you know. It gives it a little bit more time for them I guess to also calm down with just, you know, the basic talking in the beginning of trying to figure out what exactly is the...I forget, the narrative.

While she could not think of any specific examples of when using Insight skills

had worked for her in the school environment, she did report that she continues to keep

the skills and the Insight framework in mind—sometimes when she is processing with

students the loop "pops into my head," she says. And it helps her get to the root of the

problem. When she can get to the root of the problem, she is better equipped to address it

with coping skills and education in her role as behavior specialist.

> It does help me figure out [the root] and then I take that and then I insert my coping skills and my education with them on, you know, how to deal with that.

> For example:

> So if I have a kid that's skipping every day, skipping every day, skipping every day, you know, I'll talk to them about, 'What's going on? Why are you skipping?' You know, and I wouldn't say, 'Why are you skipping?' because you don't say why but, you know, 'You're skipping class. Is there something, you know, in class that's affecting you to whereas you make that decision that you want to skip?' And they'll say, you know, 'My teacher doesn't know what she's talking about, you know. She's not doing

her job.' 'Why do you feel like she's not doing her job?" You know, so it's like…so that's when, you know, we'll get to…you know, it might be, "Well, I don't understand what she's talking about.' 'OK, so it's that you don't understand what she's talking about. So do you feel like you need more instructional time? Do you feel like you need more help from her? Would one on one time help you?' And then if that's the case then what I'll do is I'll set office hours up with that student and that teacher, you know.

Getting to the reason a student is skipping allows Tanya to draw on her resources to help students do better. Her job, as she puts it is "to calm you down, to process with you, figure out what's going on and then educate you on ways that you could've handled that differently or get you to the point where you're utilizing that education and coping skills before the situation happens." When she is in the position and role to use them, Insight skills have helped her figure out the best coping skill and the best intervention for addressing the problem.

Syl- *"I already know the reason"*

Syl also scored "proficient with practice" on his skills assessment, although he told me that he would have benefited from more Insight sessions "to get more practice, have more reps." By the end of the year, he felt less comfortable with the material than he had at the close of the training. While Syl found the Insight approach useful with Jeremy as an alternative way of breaking through to him, for the most part he, like Tanya, did not find opportunities to use it on a routine basis. Partly this is because he saw his role toward the end of the year as centered around enforcing general compliance—getting kids to class, clearing the halls, stopping horse play, not around one-on-one processing, which he identified as the kind of occasion that would be appropriate for Insight skills.

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I just think I've had very limited one-on-one situations, per se. So it's kind of like, well, I just haven't used it because I thought that it wouldn't be necessary or just not the appropriate time or depending on what I'm dealing with. I haven't had too many situations where I like sit a student down and we have to process. It's been more general behaviors and multiple behaviors in terms of different students.

Syl has not found well-suited opportunities to use Insight skills, yet he frequently runs into resistance as a general enforcer and finds himself dealing with the same behaviors and the same students over and over again. For example, a student might be unresponsive to his direction or outright defiant. In that case, he tells me that he asks questions like, "Why don't you want to go to class?" That would have been an Insight question, but then he quickly changes his story. "Well, no," he goes on.

I already know why they don't want to go to class. It's just been habitual for them not to go to a particular class. So I already know the reason. So I don't process, you know, with that, like I don't even take that time to process that because I already know the reason.

This is an interesting revelation. Unlike Chester and Elijah, who might draw on their Insight skills and abandon assumption, recognizing instead that unresponsiveness and defiance could be conflict behavior, Syl continues to assume. He chooses not to process with the students in these situations, because he feels as though he already knows why the students are doing what they're doing. "Teenage stuff" he calls it, which requires force to redirect—however successful or unsuccessful it may be.

Megan: So what do you do?

Syl: I mean I just kind of press them until they get to class basically, like stay on them until they get there.

Megan: So how do you do that? I mean what do you say?

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Syl: I mean it's more like a waiting game or like, "You have a couple of minutes to get to class or this is going to be the next consequence or option. Recovery Room or you can get to class," things of that nature.

So for Syl, the Insight approach has been "somewhat helpful, when I've used it, but more times than not, I think I kind of go back to, you know, what I've been comfortable with… Old habits." In general Syl does not see how Insight fits unless there is a clear opportunity for one-on-one processing. And his challenges with students persist.

Jason-*"We get robotic in this work"*

Jason demonstrated that he understands the Insight approach, sees its value, and has tried to use it on a regular basis, but has not been able to fully appropriate the skills. Granted, he earned a "needs work" on his skills assessment and is particularly overburdened in his role as vice principal. "We get robotic in this work," he remarked. And in an "old habit," "robotic" way, Jason and Syl fall back on assumptions, which make achieving their goals difficult. For example, Jason recounts,

> I had those conversations with students [to try to get at what is motivating a student to behave in a particular way]. They may either have been removed or a teacher brings them out and asks me to check-in with them. You know, I'm in the hall and so they ask me to check-in with them. The skipping, I haven't found a lot of [what motivates them]. Mostly, just, 'I don't want to be in there. I don't like the teacher,' is what I get. I mean I haven't heard anything that has encouraged me to dig deeper and it's…yeah, I guess my assumption oftentimes when I don't hear about, you know, anything much deeper is, you're just avoiding class and you're failing that class. We need you to be in there. And so absent any kind of, you know, deeper understanding of conflict behavior I guess, of like something else going on in that class, it's just that you got to be there. And I'm not saying I don't…I do ask, but I don't. I feel like I get the run around: 'I wasn't skipping,' or, 'I had to go get, you know, something from the front office,' or a lot of other — excuses.

Jason, as vice principal, feels constrained to assume in many cases because he is in charge of discipline—of getting kids to fall back in line once they have stepped out of line. What this highlights again is the extraordinary importance of a person's role in what he or she decides to do. Jason lamented that in his "programmed kind of problem solving mode of like, 'That's happened. This needs to happen,'" he does not have the time, "patience or tolerance" to get curious with students.

> I think when it's worked well is when I come upon a student who's clearly upset about something, you know, and I can kind of get my focus of, "OK, I'm going to enter this with the intention of doing some curious questioning and trying to get a sense of what's going on and where this can go.' When I'm intentional about it, I can do it better even when I don't have a lot of time. But I think more often, I'm in a more robotic kind of motion. I would say the balance is like 30-70, maybe closer to 40-60, something around in there of being able to do the curious questioning and kind of get below the surface.

Jason recognized that when he was able to be more intentional, he was able to elicit the valuing and deciding of a student and learn enough to make targeted decisions. For example, a student named Jasmine had been avoiding scheduling a conference she had been asked to have with her teacher for days. Rather than continuing to press her to schedule the conference, Jason asked her what was making her want to avoid it. It turned out that she was worried that her teacher would tell her mother things that were not true about her. Jason was able to understand her worry, and make sure that it was on the table at the conference so she could schedule and participate in the conference without worrying. After their conversation she went ahead and scheduled the conference without any further problems. Without the Insight conversation, Jasmine's avoiding the

conference because of her conflict with her teacher could easily have ballooned into a conflict with Jason and the administration over her avoidance.

Each of the 5 behavior staff that I taught in Insight skills experienced the skills as useful in their work with students, however the staff's roles and their level of proficiency played a significant part in the degree to which the skills impacted disciplinary decisions and student behavior. Interestingly, the key aspect of the Insight approach that Elijah, Chester and Tanya found opened them up to more effective interactions with students— being curious about the valuing and deciding operative in student decision-making rather than assuming they knew—was where Jason and Syl continued to have problems. Their assumptions about student decision-making tended to get in the way of effective discipline and behavior management.

The sample for this study is admittedly small, the training schedule imperfect, however the results are there. When staff used Insight skills to become curious about a student's decision-making as opposed to reprimanding behavior alone, change was possible. Staff found themselves positioned to respond in more targeted and supportive ways. They were able to lessen the conflicts that arose between themselves and students, because they were able to manage their own frustration, their own valuing of threat. These findings are critical in the current debate around student discipline, where a high rate of referrals are given for subjective infractions like "willful defiance"—disobeying or disrespecting authority, behaviors that are likely to indicate conflict behavior between

students and staff.[184] It is not a stretch to consider that Insight skills could go a long way in helping teachers, staff and administrators beyond Monroe manage students more easily, be more precise in their use of exclusionary discipline and more creative in making disciplinary decisions that support positive, productive behavior.

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[184] Kennedy-Lewis, Murphy, and Grosland, "Using Narrative Inquiry to Understand Persistently Disciplined Middle School Students."

CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The Insight approach is a method that attends specifically and intentionally to the interiority driving behavior, in particular the interiority driving conflict behavior. Based on the hypothesis that much of student misbehavior can be understood as both behavior that breaks the rules and as conflict behavior, this study examined the applicability and utility of the Insight approach in the school setting. This resonates within the current crisis in student discipline, where students are being pushed out and left behind by unsupportive disciplinary practices. Given the case study of Monroe High and the effects of the Insight pilot, the Insight approach as a framework and skill-set for understanding student behavior and making targeted and precise disciplinary decisions holds promise. This study also raises questions—both radial, about the wider implications of Insight in schools, and reflexive, about the study itself and its replicability. It also points us to question the focus of current research on student discipline and the school-to-prison pipeline.

Insight in Schools and the New Paradigm for Student Discipline

The specific impacts that were reported by Monroe High staff who used the Insight approach to address student behavior indicate the potential that integrating the Insight approach into schools could contribute to realizing the kinds of paradigmatic shifts in school environments that some experts argue are essential for student success.

Dupper, for example, argues for a new model for student discipline; one that emphasizes strong relationships and school connectedness, defined as "the belief by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals."[185] One of the key reasons Dupper argues for school connectedness is the concern that exclusionary punishment leads to detrimental student outcomes. School connectedness, he shows, has been "found to be associated with lower levels of misbehavior in school."[186] Therefore the more connected a student is, the less likely she is to misbehave, and the more likely she is to participate fully and positively her school's culture. This argument dovetails the observation that perceptions about the legitimacy of authorities contribute to both bondedness and compliance. And legitimacy, as Tyler points out, hinges greatly on the degree to which a person feels they are treated fairly.

Dupper believes that current best practices like tiered discipline structures, PBIS, SEL and restorative practices will affect this paradigm shift in student discipline.[187] However, Monroe High is an example that fails to hold. It strives for school connectedness, it implements best practices, but student behavior has not dramatically improved and exclusionary discipline rates continue to be high. Perhaps Monroe is an outlier. However, what this study shows is that student behavior does improve and discipline is more targeted to the needs of students when the decision-making of the student is intentionally attended to. When Monroe staff used Insight skills to become curious about students in terms of their own understanding and decision-making, the

[185] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors among Youth," 3.
[186] Dupper, *A New Model of School Discipline*, 27.
[187] Ibid., 26.

conversations they had opened possibilities for student discipline and behavior

management that were targeted and precise—that helped Jeremy realize that his behavior

was taking him down a path he did not want to travel, that helped Anthony wrestle with

the effects that his behavior has on other people, and that helped staff build a foundation

with Samuel that will prepare him for success outside of high school.

Some experts suggest that school connectedness and student success can be

achieved with student-centered approaches to discipline. Golann argues that efforts for

successful student discipline must have a "complex and accurate view of students'

thoughts, behaviors and motivations, [in order to] empower educators to creatively

pursue responses to challenging behavior that do not simply result in students' exclusion

from the learning environment."[188] Michail argues that what is critical to successful

student discipline is "a tailored approach to each child's needs which avoids a

construction of children that is stereotypical. The response should instead be informed by

evidence where the child is the primary source of information about their experiences,

difficulties, challenges."[189] As findings indicate, the Insight approach provides a

framework for these kinds of student-centered interventions.

The case of Monroe shows that Insight skills have the potential to improve school

connectedness and enhance best practices by enabling staff to regularly and intentionally

attend to the interiority of a student's decision-making as she misbehaves and to their

own interiority as they determine discipline. Insight in schools could impact both

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[188] Golann, "The Paradox of Success at a No-Excuses School," 3.
[189] Michail, "Understanding School Responses to Students' Challenging Behaviour," 168.

disciplinary decisions and student behavior. Further research, on the level of experimental design, would further substantiate such a claim.

Replication and Improvement

This study was a small-scale pilot. While small, it engaged the extensive task of setting the foundation for using the Insight approach in schools, for figuring out whether Insight skills could work in schools and how they could be implemented and assessed. The results are a significant, if preliminary, set of findings that will be useful for future endeavors. Given what has been done, though, the question remains as to how sound the foundation is? What should be changed to make it stronger and what should be kept to maintain its integrity? Were Insight to be implemented elsewhere, does this study leave thorough enough plans for future researchers to replicate it?

Everything I did to study Monroe High and implement Insight training there is captured in this report, down to the exercises I used and the order in which I taught the material. It could be replicated with fidelity. However, for strength and integrity, two key factors need to be in the forefront of any replication effort. First, assuring proficiency in Insight skills, and second, close attention to the context and roles operative in the school in which Insight skills are to be taught.

Proficiency is key to Insight outcomes, because the Insight approach is skills-based. It is a specific practice of attention to interiority and curious questioning. In order for Insight to be effective in schools, staff must be well trained. For staff to be well trained, any researcher replicating this study would need to be sufficiently trained in the Insight approach herself. Only then would she be able to reliably teach Insight skills to

others. The lesson plan and skills assessment in this study would lay the ground for that, however they are not enough. An Insight certification that standardizes Insight skills and metrics for assessment should be developed. A certification would not only be useful for researchers interested in implementing and studying Insight in schools, but for school staff as well, who could be trained and certified to teach Insight within their own schools, leveraging resources and improving buy-in.

In addition to skilled trainers, in order to increase the probability that trained staff are proficient enough to use their skills with students, future projects would benefit from more time. The training component of this study was undoubtedly constrained by time. Part of the reason it was hard for Jason and Syl to integrate Insight skills into their work with students on a regular basis was because of the short training time—just 7 hours disjointed by 10 weeks and the hustle of the school environment. Jason reflected, that I, as a researcher, was

> very flexible in working with our team and, you know, plugging in here and there. […. But] having a concrete, probably 2, 8-hour sessions where we're just, you know, really working it through, but in a school, how do you do that in a school setting? And so we made do with the time we had, but I think it was harder for it to stick for me. I do think you need more time with this to really grasp it and practice and to incorporate it.

A longer, perhaps 16 hour, more intensive training might improve staff proficiency. Additionally, Chester suggested that individualized, real-time coaching would strengthen the training. "I think a way that the training could be improved though," he told me,

> and this might be pie in the sky, like impossible, would be if you were actually able to be a fixture regularly, or not necessarily you but like one

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of your staff or something, able to be with us a lot, often, see the kids we're talking about and you interact with them too. You know what I mean? Like being, I think, plugged in in that way and then be able to, in the moment, say like, 'Well, Chester, you could've played this this way. This would've been more like what I'm talking about,' or, 'Jason, you could've done this and this would've been more what I'm talking about,' or like, 'Y'all might want to institute XYZ program or a process. That might be more Insight oriented.' I think that sort of thing could be practically helpful for us because I do think we're like just so in it all the time that this approach could be more than a tool. It could be like its own full on tool shed.

Coaching is in line with authentic learning paradigms that advocate learning by doing and could be an added component in future projects in a way that might sustain learning and enhance proficiency.

In addition to proficiency, the importance of school context and institutional roles bears on replication. A subsequent study or implementation project would need to adhere to the unique context of the school in which Insight is implemented. To that end, pre-training interviews, using an elicitive, active, deepening technique similar to how I conducted interviews at Monroe would be essential. They provided me a detailed portrait of the school, served to erase my own biases and assumptions, elicited the specific systems in place at Monroe, and elucidated the kinds of challenges with which staff and students struggle. They also provided me material for role-play exercises. Devising role-plays that fit into the specific roles and responsibilities of staff, as I did, made learning authentic and the skills directly relatable and applicable. Ideally each school would have role-plays that match staffs' lived experiences.

Post-training interviews with Monroe staff support the idea that roles matter. In Chapter 4 we discussed how institutional roles and tasks—who we are within a particular

context—pattern how we pay attention to what is going on, how we value certain things, what we conceive to do about them and what we ultimately decide to do about them. Elijah and Chester, as recovery room specialist and behavior intervention coordinator, though part of the disciplinary team, were more likely to engage with students *after* they had done something wrong. Their roles not only positioned them to process one-on-one with students, but obviated the time constraints that other staff had to contend with while enforcing the rules in the moment—challenges that both Jason and Syl expressed overshadowed their ability to employ Insight skills regularly and effectively. Who the person is, and their function in the school, shapes how they understand and respond to students. It shapes how they use Insight skills and how smoothly they can integrate the skills into their daily routines. In hindsight, with more time, I could have paid even more attention to roles, coming up with clear strategies for using Insight skills in the variety of contexts that staff face—for example in the moment of enforcing the rules, in one-on-one processing scenarios, in the recovery room after a student has already been referred, in behavioral intervention sessions, and in restorative conferences to allocate discipline and help students learn about and take responsibility. An idea for further empirical research would be to evaluate the effectiveness of using Insight skills across roles by teaching role-specific Insight skills—skills designed for vice principals or behavior intervention staff or recovery room specialists or teachers from various schools. This kind of a project would not only enhance the research community's understanding, but would likely improve the training and make Chester's suggestion for a "full on tool shed" possible.

Improvements

While future projects that put Insight in schools should pay particular attention to proficiency, school context and staff roles as this study did, future projects could improve upon the current study by implementing Insight school-wide and including students in a deliberate way.

Researchers and the U.S. Department of Education recommend that discipline and behavior intervention plans be implemented school-wide in order to streamline discipline and maintain equity.[190] Monroe staff agree. They suggested to me that were the training to be offered again, it should be offered to teachers as well as behavior staff. Teachers are often the first to respond to misbehavior, especially when it occurs in the classroom. From Elijah, the recovery room specialist's, perspective, "It would be good for the teachers if they have Insight training. Definitely, because like I said, at the sight of just one thing, they're just like, 'Get out!' you know." Here Elijah recognizes that teachers also exhibit conflict behavior when they are challenged by student behavior and miss opportunities to support students when they react by sending students out. Both Syl and Tanya suggested that if teachers were to get Insight training it would put them on the same page as the behavior staff and help them work together more smoothly.

Interviews with staff made it clear that if Insight skills were taught school-wide, they would be easier to implement. If staff, teachers and administrators were all using the Insight framework and skill set, they would have a common language and professional network, two things that could improve proficiency and broaden the buy-in for change in

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[190] U.S. Department of Education, *Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline*.

disciplinary culture. A school-wide implementation project would also make quantitatively assessing the Insight approach possible and would open the possibility of an assessment that included student reactions.

This study and any future implementation of Insight in schools would be greatly enhanced by student voice and participation. On the evaluative side, hearing from students how and whether Insight-based engagement made a difference in their experience of behavior management and discipline would shed a brighter light on what does or does not work for them. Elijah suggested that using mature, high-level students in the training to play the roles of misbehaving students in skills exercises would be helpful, as it could create realistic staff-student scenarios for practicing Insight skills. Finally, taking a page from SEL that advocates training both school staff and students in pro-social skills, a school-wide program that included training students to recognize and pay attention to the interiority of conflict behavior could help reduce bad behavior and spur success.

The Question of the Progressive School

The results of this study, including the strengths and weaknesses that I discuss are all based on the Insight experience at Monroe High. The fact that Monroe is undoubtedly a progressive school that strives to stay on the crest of best practices in order to support students in the best ways possible brings up a further relevant question: Would Insight in schools affect improvement in a challenging school environment—one where violence is high, achievement is low, and exclusionary discipline is the norm? The answer to this question would ultimately have to be found by evaluating the Insight approach in a

challenging school. However, I would hypothesize an effect. Monroe's case indicates that Insight skills facilitate listening, reduce conflict and help staff attend to students on their own terms. These effects make context specific solutions to student's problems possible but they are not intrinsically linked to a school's degree of challenge. If Insight were implemented and adequately trained within the specific context of a challenging school, I would predict that it would have an effect on student discipline and behavior.

However, one could imagine that a challenging school might present a cultural obstacle to successful use of the Insight approach. Raush and Skiba show that schools with higher suspension rates tend to be led by principals who believe that excluding students is the best form of student discipline. [191] Consequently, teachers are also more likely to prefer exclusionary discipline or feel compelled to use it to deter and punish bad behavior. Shifting away from habitual reliance on exclusionary discipline, taking a risk on a new approach like the Insight approach requires staff buy-in. The hitch is that despite the data, many of those who work in schools believe in the effectiveness of strict punishments for misbehavior and rely on sending kids out to maintain order in their classrooms. Jason, Monroe's vice principal, lamented that shifting the culture of Monroe to embrace restorative practices was an uphill battle. Similarly Monroe's principal, Ms. Peterson, shared that even when teachers seemed to believe that zero-tolerance was bad for kids, their actions betrayed otherwise. Even in a progressive school, changing habits is hard. In a less progressive school, how useful the Insight approach would be may boil

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[191] Skiba and Rausch, "Zero Tolerance, Suspension, and Expulsion: Questions of Equity and Effectivenes."

down to whether or not the culture can support it. Testing Insight in a difficult school with an exclusionary culture would be an avenue for further research.

From Suspension to Suspending

Findings from this study suggest that attending to the decision-making of a student misbehaving opens avenues for supportive discipline and improved behavior. These findings complicate the assertion that exclusionary discipline is the culprit when it comes to detrimental student outcomes. Research has spent a lot of time correlating suspension to serious student risks—repeat suspension, low grades, dropping out of school, involvement in the juvenile justice system. And the correlation is there. It is undeniable. But the leap is that poor outcomes can be stopped when exclusion is off the table. As the conversation around the school-to-prison pipeline has amplified, school districts around the country have started prohibiting suspensions for minor misbehaviors and "willful defiance." To be sure, data will emerge about the effect of these prohibitions. But again, Monroe's experience serves as a rich example. Exclusion, in its various forms as a disciplinary device, is more complicated than "to exclude or not to exclude?" For Anthony at Monroe, he needed time away from class to stall the escalating conflict with his teacher and to learn to understand his emotions. For him and much to the surprise of Jason and Chester, careful attention and curiosity toward what was motivating his behavior toward her led to exclusion. And it was the right choice—he emerged better off.

A veteran D.C. public school principal explained to me, "When we start the conversation with, 'Is suspension good or bad? Is expulsion good or bad?' Useless. It's useless. I mean you have to have a broader, mutually understood baseline for why are we

here." The paradox over suspension as extraordinarily useful in some instances and hideously damaging in others raises the question as to whether or not suspension itself is the most adequate focus as educators work to break open the school-to-prison pipeline. As the veteran principal declared—the question needs a wider scope that can carry the complexities involved in student misbehavior and student discipline. Perhaps the exclusionary device—suspension or expulsion—is not responsible for the school-to-prison pipeline as has been suggested, but the decision to exclude. With its explicit focus on eliciting the interiority of decision-making, the Insight approach holds the potential to help figure that out.

Future research would need to ask what we would we find if we were to reformulate the question of the connection between exclusion and detrimental student outcomes to wonder about the effects of the decision to exclude rather than the disciplinary device itself? We would have to develop a way to capture or measure the interiority of the staff or administrator making the disciplinary decision. Was the decision to exclude constrained by the institution? Was it constrained by the valuing and deciding of the decision-maker? Was it an instance of an administrator being "hot"—exhibiting her own conflict behavior in response to a challenging student? Was the decision free? Was it based on curious questions and an understanding of the student on her own terms? These research questions probe the interiority of behavior, and could bolster the broader conversation around the school-to-prison pipeline and the contribution of disciplinary practices to it.

AFTERWORD

The year of this study and of Monroe High's first graduating class was a hopeful one. Students that had been with the school since the beginning were at last moving on to college, bringing their Monroe education and voice out into the world. However, for the board that oversaw Monroe, there was a problem. Not enough kids were graduating. Kids were not succeeding at the rates they had anticipated. Order and discipline was too much of a challenge. Consequently, the board asked Ms. Peterson to pack up her vision and move on. In her place, and with an eye toward achievement, a new principal was selected for the 2015-2016 school year. This principal came with an ideology framed by the charter school version of zero-tolerance, something called "no-excuses." No-excuses advocates rigid structures and clear consequences with the aim of regimenting students into success. It is a philosophy of "control and compliance," and it is an educational method that runs counter to the student-centered, restorative culture that Monroe had been fostering.

I had the opportunity to interview Jason and Chester at the end of May 2016 to see how the year had gone with the new structures in place and whether or not there had been room for Insight, or if the skills had fallen by the wayside.

What I learned was fascinating. The new structures, which employed strict disciplinary consequences for any kind of rule breaking—from hanging out in the

hallway to cursing out a teacher to not engaging in classroom work—did reduce the skipping and hanging out and small-time misbehaviors that had frustrated Monroe staff the year before. But the consensus among Jason and Chester was that while there might be benefits to those rigid structures academically, though anecdotally they agreed that fifty percent of students were failing at least two classes, and while there may have been more compliance, it was the wrong approach to discipline. The consequences for misbehavior were so prescribed that they left no room for nuance or context, and least of all, discretion. A student would get a full day suspension for cursing, regardless of whether it was, "Damn, I got a D," or a vulgar insult slung at a teacher. The idea at the new Monroe, according to Jason and Chester, is that "in the real world, no one is going to listen to you, and we're here to help you learn that."

This contributed to a general sense of unfairness that permeated the entire school, where from Chester's perspective, people—both staff and students—felt like prison inmates. As a consequence, aggression in the school was high. According to Jason and Chester, violence had surged 40-60 percent over the previous year. Without the restorative structures, without the scaffolding of relationship and connection between the students, staff and the school, students felt alienated from their environment. They were disconnected.

To be sure, many of the staff rejected the no-excuses method—by not registering misbehavior into the demerit database, by listening to kids and what they were going through, by maintaining relationships—but doing so was a risk. Certainly there was no time given for building relationships or being curious, especially in the manner of Insight.

In fact engaging in restorative discipline rather than no-excuses discipline got Jason put on a "development plan," where he was on the verge of being fired at any moment for having demonstrated a "lack of professional judgment" by not falling in line with the no-excuses protocol. So listening to kids and being curious about them was forced underground. It was a clandestine activity to be performed when staff personally deemed it most necessary. But in truth, there was little time for it, it was not talked about, it came with risks, and any decisions counter to the institutional flow had to be rigorously justified.

One effect of the clandestine counter-culture that emerged that valued student-centered education and discipline as opposed to no-excuses was that relationships at Monroe between staff and students became "siloed" as Chester put it. Kids latched onto a handful of staff who they felt would listen to them and who they could trust, because they felt that they could not trust the school as a whole. There were two consequences to this. First, the siloed relationships solidified the disconnection between student and school, where a student was left with no reason to care about Monroe, only about the staff member he felt understood him. Second, according to Chester, the siloed relationships "undermine the whole system." A worse cycle emerges where by rejecting the school and those staff who are bought into no-excuses, kids position themselves to act out aggressively towards those staff. The probability then rises that they slip, lash out, misbehave against the institution and get swept into a system that punishes harshly and where relationships are powerless to protect them.

Regardless of their diminished utility and centrality within the new school structure, relationships continued to be essential. Staff like Jason and Chester genuinely care about the students and reject the idea that the world does not listen. In listening to the students both Jason and Chester drew on their Insight skills of directed curiosity and concerted attention to students on their own terms.

Jason, who was still occupying the difficult role of head of discipline, was sure that discipline with an Insight-based curiosity was better for the students than arbitrary consequences. He used his skills to get curious and not assume when behaviors were serious, when he felt he could eek out time to engage a student on her own terms. But for apparently minor misbehaviors, which he encountered throughout the day, he felt that getting curious was not only risky for him, but disingenuous to the students. He knew that no matter what, he was constrained to discipline particular behaviors with predetermined consequences. With little power to alter the consequence or use discretion in his decision-making, it was safer to just mete it out rather than risk misleading a student by eliciting her valuing and deciding and then being unable to take it into consideration, thereby disconnecting her further.

Chester's Insight skills stuck with him too. He found that the benefits they offered him in the previous school year persisted. He purposefully asked Insight questions rather than assuming he knew what was going on with a student. He used Insight skills to refocus his own frustration toward getting curious. The skills helped him maintain his calm and make better decisions. For students, especially his students that struggled behaviorally, he noticed that his curiosity helped them generate insights and become

more self-aware. Chester noticed that "being heard helps develop their voice." Hearing them by being curious and asking questions about them got students to "get out of their own heads" and generate an awareness about why they are doing what they are doing. So often they move so fast that their behavior is all blurry reaction. There is no critical reflexivity. But fostering that reflexivity by asking questions of interiority as the Insight approach suggests helped Chester's students understand themselves. It helped Chester and his staff teach and direct their students to choose better. "Insight does good things for the students" Chester told me. It is about listening, building relationships and care.

While the benefits of Insight would have been much more widely spread had the institution been bought in, had getting curious not been relegated behind closed doors, had time been given over to the process, Insight stuck and it helped, even in the most constrained institutional setting.

The Insight Approach and Student Discipline
A proposal for a joint project of the Insight Conflict Resolution Program and
James Monroe High Charter School

What Is the Insight Approach?

- The Insight approach to conflict analysis and resolution offers a framework and skills for understanding and transforming conflict behavior that could support current disciplinary and restorative justice practices at Monroe High.

The Premise

- Student misbehavior is often conflict behavior. It can be at the same time behavior that breaks the rules and behavior that is motivated by a decision to defend against a perceived threat.

- When school staff are able to use the Insight approach to identify conflict behavior as it manifests in misbehavior, a range of questions open up that allows staff to become curious about the threat and defense that is motivating the behavior.

- When staff ask curious questions about a student's sense of threat and decision to defend, tension deescalates, the student is given an opportunity to wonder on her own terms about the decision she has made, and staff are able to elicit information they can use to devise targeted and supportive disciplinary strategies that hold students accountable and help interrupt cycles of misbehavior.

The Project

- Train staff on the front lines of student misbehavior in the framework and skills of the Insight approach.

- Evaluate how the Insight approach works in the context of student discipline through data collection and interviews.

The Goals

- To give staff Insight conflict resolution skills that they can use to manage and transform misbehavior as it arises and make targeted and precise disciplinary decisions.

- To contribute to a school environment where students feel heard and supported.

- To assess the impact of using the Insight approach to mitigate and transform student misbehavior.

APPENDIX B: PRE-TRAINING INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Responding to Misbehavior: Interview Protocol
Approved by IRB. No. 664062-1

Preliminary interviews will be semi structured and will be conducted with school staff and administrators who may or may not participate in the Insight training.

1) Tell me about student discipline at your school.
2) What is your school's approach to student discipline? What is your role?
3) What challenges do you experience with student discipline?
4) What seems to work?
5) What are your hopes?

APPENDIX C: MONROE PROJECT AGREEMENT

Insight Training for Student Discipline Project Outline
James Monroe Public Charter High School
October 27, 2014

I. Pre-training Interviews
Pre-training interviews will help me understand the context at Monroe High and tailor the training accordingly.

- Interviews with student discipline staff
- Approximately 40 minutes each
- To be completed at least 1 week prior to training

II. Training
Training will be in how to use the Insight approach in the context of student discipline. Staff will learn to
- Identify when misbehavior is conflict behavior
- Use Insight questioning skills to elicit the meanings motivating conflict behavior
- Skills-based training should be 6-8 hours. It can be broken into shorter sessions. Main topics would include:
    - Operations of Consciousness—differentiating what's on our minds from how we use our minds to decide to act
    - Conflict Pattern—conflict behavior as a function of a valuing threat and a decision to defend
    - Insight Questioning Skills—eliciting the meanings that drive conflict behavior through curious questioning
    - Skills Practice and Skills Verification

Training should be followed by a series of sessions that reinforce skills and assess staff's experience using the Insight approach.

III. Data Collection
Data collection would contribute to evaluating the Insight approach as applied to student discipline. It would involve three types of data:

- *School data on student discipline—e.g. number of incidences, disciplinary response and outcome*
- *Insight "log," which would consist of 3 or 4 yes/no question boxes to be added to standard incident reports*
- *Interview data with staff trained in Insight approach*

IV. Institutional Review Board
Since this project is a research project in addition to being a practical training project, it will be reviewed by the George Mason University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure the protection and confidentiality of all participants (staff).

Student Misbehavior
and
The Insight Approach

Session One

**Student Behavior
and
The Insight Approach**

Session One

James Monroe PCS
January 5- January 16, 2015
Megan Price, GMU

The Insight Approach to Conflict Analysis and Resolution pays specific attention to the way we use our minds, to the way we *operate* our consciousness. By paying attention to this operation and wondering about it, the meanings that we make of our own experiences and how they influence the decisions we make emerge. This data is critical to unpacking conflict dynamics, and to changing them.

Operations of Consciousness—differentiating what's on our minds from how we use our minds to decide to act

Conscious Pattern of Conflict Behavior—conflict behavior as a function of a valuing of threat and a decision to defend

----Loop Image----

PERFORMANCE RANGES

- Our performance of **experiencing** can range from
  attentive to inattentive

- Our performance of **understanding** can range from
  curious to incurious

- Our performance of **verifying** can range from
  critical to hasty

- Our performance of **valuing** can range from
  mindful to reactive

- Our performance of **deliberating** can range from
  imaginative to limited

- Our performance of **evaluating** can range from
  conscientious to rash

- Our performance of **deciding** can range from
  free to constrained

CONFLICT BEHAVIOR

Conflict Behavior is concrete, observable action that is usually identifiable as:

Flight	**Freeze**
Flee	**Fawn**

Key Components of Conflict Behavior (**Bc**):

Valuing of Threat (**Vt**). When we spontaneously ask, "what does this matter to me?," a feeling arises that tells us something is at stake.

Dire Future Narrative (**Ndf**). Our valuing of threat projects out an imagined story of how the future will look, a future that is unwelcome.

Decision to Defend (**Dd**). We are compelled to respond to our dire future narrative by trying to prevent it from coming to pass.

Institutional Roles and Tasks (**Irt**). As in all of our actions, our decisions are carried by our roles, responsibilities roles and relationships within a given context.

Insight finds it helpful to look at conflict behavior at a functional equation, because changing one variable changes the rest, but don't worry if math's not your thing!

$$Bc \approx \frac{[Vt\ Dd]Ndf}{I(rt)}$$

CONFLICT BEHAVIOR

Conflict Behavior Zaps Curiosity

When we are valuing threat and are focused on defending, we are no longer curious—either about what we think is going on (reflective loop) or about what the right thing to do it is (existential loop).

We are **Certain** and **Righteous**.

Our looping tightens and our performance plummets. We are inattentive to new relevant data, we are incurious, we are hasty, we are reactive, we are limited, we are rash and therefore we are constrained to defend.

Theory of Change

Change hinges on directed curiosity into the way we are using our minds to engage in conflict behavior, in other words into the data of consciousness. When we become

curious about the data of consciousness, certainty and righteousness diminish. We generate insights that improve our conscious performance and open previously unimaginable possibilities for valuing and deciding to act that reduce threat and change conflict dynamics.

INSIGHT CONFLICT BEHAVIOR QUESTIONNAIRE

The Conflict Behavior Questionnaire takes you through a series of questions that you can answer to reflect on your own looping during a conflict encounter.

Bring to mind a specific incident where you responded with conflict behavior—fight, flee, freeze, fawn.

Part I: What happened?

1. What is the name of the person with whom you were in conflict?

[NB: This question narrows the focus of your reflections and to makes it concrete]

2. What is your relationship with X

[NB: This question provides basic clarification of the institutional or structural context of your conflict]

3. What did X do? [X's behavior]

[NB: Behavior is concrete. What did X do to trigger your engagement in the conflict?]

Part II. Valuing

4. What was your felt response to X's behavior?

INSIGHT CONFLICT BEHAVIOR QUESTIONNAIRE CONT.

5. What was it about X's behavior that you found [troubling]?

[Note: If, for example, "Richard refused to go to class" and your felt response was frustration, the question here is: "What was it about Richard's refusal to go to class that you found frustrating?"]

6. Would you say that you experienced X's behavior primarily as a threat to your sense of yourself or as a practical threat to something important to you?

7. If you experienced X's behavior as a threat to your sense of yourself, what did it say about you? Who or what did it make you in the eyes of X?

8. How do you normally see yourself in this regard?

9. What is the significance of the discrepancy between your normal sense of self and your sense of yourself as you experienced it in light of X's behavior?

INSIGHT CONFLICT BEHAVIOR QUESTIONNAIRE CONT.

10. If you experienced X's behavior as a practical threat to something important to you, what were you concerned was going to happen?

11. What were you hoping would happen?

12. What is the significance of the discrepancy between what you wanted to happen and what you were concerned was going to happen as a result of X's behavior?

Part III. Evaluating and Deciding

13. What did you do in response to X's behavior?

[NB: Again, behavior is concrete. The behavior in question is whatever you decided to do in response to X's behavior]

14. What were you hoping to accomplish?

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Student Behavior
and
The Insight Approach

Session Two

Insight Skills
Cover page

_c **Student Behavior**
and
The Insight Approach

Session Two

James Monroe PCS
January 16- February 13, 2015
Megan Price, GMU

The Insight Approach to Conflict Analysis and Resolution pays specific attention to the way we use our minds, to the way we *operate* our consciousness. By paying attention to this operation and wondering about it, the meanings that we make of our own experiences and how they influence the decisions we make emerge. This data is critical to unpacking conflict dynamics, and to changing them.

Insight Skills

- Curious Questions

- Identifying Operations of Consciousness in Expressions
- Verifying

The Curious Question

Asking Curious Questions is the most important Insight Skill. It will allow you to elicit the meanings and motivations that pattern conflict behavior, so you can help change it.

A Curious Question

1) Is a question for understanding (Q1)

2) Is asked to understand both what another person is thinking and how they are using their mind to do so.

3) Seeks to understand the other person on his or her own terms.

4) Is formulated with reference to the other person' understanding, verifying, valuing, deliberating, evaluating or deciding, not ones own.

Curious Questioning

How do we get curious about statements on their own terms and in a way that generates self-reflection?

Use the loop as your guide.

The bottom loop is the *Reflective Loop*—where we come to know. When we hear statements that carry knowing, we ask questions about how that knowledge has come about. Here are some examples:

Understanding, Verifying
How do you know?
What gives you that impression?
What did you see?
What did you hear?
What makes you sure of that?

<u>Curious Questioning</u>

The top loop is the *Existential Loop*—where we decide to act. We act based on how we value what we think we know, and valuing projects out a future that we respond to. It's future oriented.

Questions for the existential loop are about how things matter, what future is imagined, what we want to do about it, and what effect our actions will have. Here are some examples:

<u>Valuing</u>
What makes you feel that way?
What do you think is going to happen?
What difference will that make?
How is that going to impact you?
What are you hoping?
What's at stake?
What are you concerned about?
What's important about that?

<u>Deliberating, Evaluating, Deciding</u>
What will doing that change?
What makes that the best thing to do?
What are you trying to accomplish?
What are you hoping will happen?
How will that make things better?
What difference will doing that make?
Why is that what you need to do?

<u>Verifying</u>
<u>the foundation for effective Curious Questions</u>

Because we are always looping, it is important to verify that we have accurately understood before we ask a question about it.

When we verify our understanding, we're engaged in the operation of verifying.

We verify through **Reflecting**, a basic communication skill, in which you paraphrase or restate the feelings and meanings that you interpret from the other person.

In response the other person will either confirm or deny that you got it right. If you missed, verify again until you get it right. This ensures that you stay with your student on her own terms and that she knows you're hearing her.

Example:

Student: "This is bullshit!"
You: "I get it. You don't think this is right."

Feeling Words

Feelings tell us how we're valuing. Being able to pin point our emotions helps us understand our valuing so that we can value mindfully rather than reactively.

abandoned	abused	accepted
afraid	angry	annoyed
anxious	appreciated	apprehensive
ashamed	attacked	blamed
betrayed	bored	bothered
cautious	cared for	challenged
cold	comfortable	concerned
confident	curious	deceived
depressed	disappointed	displeased
disgruntled	disgusted	dissatisfied
distressed	disturbed	eager
ecstatic	embarrassed	envious
excited	excluded	exhausted
frightened	frustrated	glad
guilty	happy	helpless
horrified	hot	honored
humiliated	hurt	idiotic
ill-treated	impatient	included
indifferent	indignant	irritated
insulted	interested	irked
jealous	joyful	let-down
lonely	loved	manipulated

miserable	misunderstood	negative
neglected	nervous	offended

optimistic	ostracized	outraged
pained	perplexed	powerful
powerless	provoked	put-down
puzzled	rejected	relieved
sad	resentful	respected
responsible	restless	satisfied
scorned	sheepish	secure
shocked	sceptical	slighted
stressed	supported	surprised
suspicious	sympathetic	thoughtful
trapped	troubled	undecided
undervalued	uneasy	unnerved
unsure	upset	wonderful
worried		

Your Dire Future Narrative

Statement:

What happened to make you say that?

How are you valuing—what's your felt response?

What does that felt response tell you? In other words, what's at stake (your dire future), either practically or personally

How are you hoping that saying what you said will to prevent your dire future?

Notes on your partner's Dire Future Narrative

What's the threat?

What's at stake?

How is s/he hoping to prevent it?

Exercise 1—From Incurious to Curious Questions

Transform the following questions from incurious to curious and note the operation of consciousness they are targeting.

1. Did you have fun in the snow last week?

2. Do you really think he would say that?

3. Is it possible for you to be on time?

4. Have you thought about finishing your assignments?

5. Aren't you so excited that we can finally go to Cuba?

Exercise 2—Noticing Curious Questions

As you go about your day, notice – and then write down – **six** examples of questions that are put to you – or that you encounter in some way – that are not in fact explicitly curious questions because they are formulated in some way with reference to the knowing, valuing, deliberating, or deciding of the person asking the question. Again, the source of the questions does not matter. They might be put to you at work, on the street, at home, by a friend, or by a stranger. You might identify them on television, in

print media, in conversation, at the theatre, online, or in yourself. Just be sure to draw from a variety of sources.

Again, not every question should be or needs to be a curious question. And there are some questions that should be curious but aren't. The goal of this exercise is for you develop skill in identifying and explaining the difference.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

Your Very Own Role

Break the rules in a way that you determine would get you in trouble. Come up with how breaking the rules was a decision to defend and express it through either a conflict statement or behavior or a combination. You will act it out in front of the class.

Develop a rich backstory of what happened, your valuing, and your dire future narrative that led you to make your decision to defend.

You'll play the role next class and your classmates will use their skills to elicit your dire future narrative to help you move forward.

Journal

Write at least 3 entries following the prompts below.

1) Continue to pay attention to your looping, differentiating what you're thinking from what you're doing with your mind. Are you understanding, verifying, valuing, deliberating, evaluating or deciding. Where are you on the performance range? Are you curious or incurious, critical or hasty, mindful or reactive, and so on. Write about the experience of paying attention to your mind and how you value it.

2) Write about an instance when you've used conflict behavior. What did you do? What happened? How were you valuing the situation? What was your dire future narrative? What was at stake for you? Was it practical or personal or both? What impact did what you did have?

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3) Write about trying out your Insight Skills—Identifying operations of consciousness, Verifying, and Curious Questioning. What happened? How did/ are you valuing it?

APPENDIX F: ROLES

1. <u>Shawna</u>

    It's transition. You're on your way from Lit to Math. You got a D on your last assignment and your teacher asked you to come a few minutes early to talk about making it up. You're rushing to make it there. The halls are crowded, and Jackson—who is always messing with you—steps right in your path. You're furious. You react by pushing Jackson out of your way.

    Just your luck, a teacher spots you and pulls you aside. You are livid. You're worried that you're missing your opportunity to talk to your teacher about making up your assignment, and you're worried that not making it there is going to give her the impression that you don't care about making it up. You DO care and you want to do well. You're hating how this is going right now. Every second you waste standing in the hall feels like another mile between you and your opportunity to do better.

    <u>Shawna Staff</u>

    You're doing transition and you see Shawna charging down the hall like she has somewhere to be. Jackson, always a joker, steps in her path and you see her push him out of the way. You pull her aside.

    Staff begins interaction

2. <u>Elijah</u>

    You've been sent out of class again, this time for having your earphones in. You're pretty upset about it and it shows on your face.

    You know it's against the rules to wear headphones, but you were doing your work. Listening to music *helps* you focus, especially with all the chatter that happens in class and distracts you. The teacher didn't even acknowledge that you were working, he just sent you out! You've been trying hard in this class, and the teacher hasn't even noticed. You don't think you deserve having to go to the recovery room. Really, you were doing more right than you were doing wrong and you wish someone would just see that.

When someone asks you what happened, you're on the defensive. You tell them you were sent out of class and that it was bullshit. This whole school is bullshit, and all their stupid rules are bullshit, so what's new?

<u>Elijah Staff</u>

Elijah is looking pretty upset. You ask him about it.

Elijah looks upset, Staff begins interaction

3. <u>Amar</u>

You had a rough night last night and you woke up to your mom drunk on the living room floor, leaving you to take care of your baby sister. You're at school because you didn't want to be home, but that doesn't mean you want to be here either. You thought you pulled one over on the teacher who hounded you to the classroom door, but here s/he is coming up on you again.

You do NOT want to go to class. You feel like you just need to process your morning, to decompress. You're afraid that if you go to class you won't have the energy to participate and you'll get in trouble. You don't want to make a scene in class and make things worse. Your day is already crumby. You need time.

You cross your arms and give the teacher a look of defiance. If s/he tries to make you go to class, you'll refuse with everything you've got.

<u>Amar Staff</u>

Amar was really challenging this morning, but you managed to walk him to class. When you spot him in the hallway mid-way through the period you're surprised. You take a deep breath and do what you can to get him in his seat.

Staff begins interaction

4. <u>Jasmine</u>

Yes, you posted that picture of Janine on facebook with the caption, "Fat Ho." And you're proud of it. It was the right this to do. The school doesn't think so. You're in the principal's office because they want you to apologize. The thing is: she deserved it. She

spread rumors all over school about you and your ex-boyfriend Henry. If you let her get away with spreading all those lies, what kind of person would that make you? You need to show everyone that you can stand up to her and humiliate her back. If you apologize, you're going to look weak. If you look weak, people take advantage of you. Anyway, why doesn't she have to apologize to you for what she did? How f-ed up is that. You don't see how they're going to convince you to give in.

Jasmine Staff

You're talking to Jasmine this morning because she put a picture up of another girl up on Facebook with a derogatory caption. Everyone is talking about it. She admits she did it, but she refuses to be accountable and will not apologize or make things right.

Staff begins interaction

5. Nicolas

You're upset and you're waiting in the problem solving center for Mr. Malec to talk about having been sent out of class. You're mad at your teacher for putting you out. After all, you weren't the only one disrupting the class. If she knew how to keep control, you wouldn't be here!

Another staff member walks in and wants to know what you're doing there. You really don't want to talk about it. First of all, you're worried that if you open your mouth it will just get you deeper into trouble. You'll save it for Mr. Malec. You decide the best thing to do is not engage. You deflect the staff's questions and lie by responding: "Everything is just perfect." You'll say it as many times as you need to to get them off your back.

Nicolas Staff

You walk into the problem solving center, and there sits Nicolas. Nicolas is one of those kids who just can't seem to get it together enough to do what he needs to do. When you see him, you ask him what's going on.

Staff begins interaction

6. Charlie

You're skipping 5th period today because it's a waste of time and you'd rather be hanging out with your friends who have the period free. When you see the behavior specialist, you know she's coming for you. You were just talking about how she's always

on your case and that if you saw her you'd tell her off. You have no choice but to do it. If you don't, your friends will think you're a punk. When she comes up to you, you get real fresh.

Charlie Staff

Charlie is in the hallway with a couple of friends, but you know he's supposed to be in class. You walk up to the group to tell Charlie he needs to get to class.

Staff begins interaction

7.   Melissa

You're a freshman. It's the first week of school and you and your friends decide to prank another friend by going to her class instead of your own. It doesn't take long for the teacher to catch on, and even though you try to convince her that it's your class, you get sent to the principal's office. You're going to try as hard as you can to get out of this one by deflecting. You don't really want to get in trouble, it was a harmless joke after all that's getting blown way out of proportion.

Melissa Staff

It's the first week of class. You're the principal. You've brought Melissa, a freshman, and 5 other freshmen into your office. You had to pull them out of Ms. Marshall's class, which they had crashed instead of going to the classes they are assigned to. This is not the kind of behavior you were hoping for to start off the year. And of course Ms. Marshall is new and untested. These kids are trying to mess with her, and you can't take it. You can't afford to lose a teacher right now because of these students' disrespect. You are mad, and trying to get to the bottom of it.

APPENDIX G: SPEED QUESTIONING WORKSHEET 1

Speed Questioning

Round 1: Did you find your partner's dire future narrative?   Y / N

What was it?

Jot down your thoughts and impressions. (What worked for you, what didn't, insights, questions, sticking points?)

Round 2: Did your partner find your dire future narrative?   Y / N

Jot down your thoughts and impressions. (What questions worked, what questions didn't, at what points did you feel yourself shift and in which direction, insights, questions, sticking points?

Round 3: Did you find your partner's dire future narrative?   Y / N

What was it?

Jot down your thoughts and impressions. (What worked for you, what didn't, insights, questions, sticking points?)

Round 4: Did your partner find your dire future narrative?   Y / N

Jot down your thoughts and impressions. (What questions worked, what questions didn't, at what points did you feel yourself shift and in which direction, insights, questions, sticking points?)

Round 5: Did you find your partner's dire future narrative?   Y / N

What was it?

Jot down your thoughts and impressions. (What worked for you, what didn't, insights, questions, sticking points?)

Round 6: Did your partner find your dire future narrative?   Y / N

Jot down your thoughts and impressions. (What questions worked, what questions didn't, at what points did you feel yourself shift and in which direction, insights, questions, sticking points?)

APPENDIX H: SPEED QUESTIONING WORKSHEET 2

Speed Questioning

Round 1: Did your partner find your dire future narrative?   Y / N

Jot down your thoughts and impressions. (What questions worked, what questions didn't, at what points did you feel yourself shift and in which direction, insights, questions, sticking points?)

Round 2: Did you find your partner's dire future narrative?   Y / N

What was it?

Jot down your thoughts and impressions. (What worked for you, what didn't, insights, questions, sticking points?)

Round 3: Did your partner find your dire future narrative?   Y / N

Jot down your thoughts and impressions. (What questions worked, what questions didn't, at what points did you feel yourself shift and in which direction, insights, questions, sticking points?)

Round 4: Did you find your partner's dire future narrative?   Y / N

What was it?

Jot down your thoughts and impressions. (What worked for you, what didn't, insights, questions, sticking points?)

Round 5: Did your partner find your dire future narrative?   Y / N

Jot down your thoughts and impressions. (What questions worked, what questions didn't, at what points did you feel yourself shift and in which direction, insights, questions, sticking points?)

Round 6: Did you find your partner's dire future narrative?   Y / N

What was it?

Jot down your thoughts and impressions. (What worked for you, what didn't, insights, questions, sticking points?)

APPENDIX I: INSIGHT CONTENT QUIZ

<u>INSIGHT CONTENT QUIZ</u>

1) What do we mean by conflict behavior?

2) What kind of conflict behavior might you see from a student?

3) Would you be able to identify when a student's rule breaking is also conflict behavior? Can you give me a personal example—something that you've experienced?

4) What—in Insight terms and when we think about our minds and how we use them—the loop up there—is going on when we decide to use conflict behavior to respond to a situation?
> A valuing of threat and decision to defend against it

5) How does a valuing of threat and decision to defend present itself?
> As a dire future narrative

6) What helps change conflict behavior?
> Curiosity that facilitates insight into ones dire future narrative

7) What are the three key Insight skills?
> Noticing, Verifying, Curiously Questioning.

8) What do you notice in Noticing?
> Conflict behavior, the operation at play—Valuing and Deciding

9) What do you verify in Verifying and why?
> That you understand the other person on her own terms, not yours

10) What is the goal of asking curious questions?
> To elicit the dire future narrative

11) How are Insight skills supposed to help you respond to student behavior?
> Eliciting the DFN will help the student reflect on her behavior and us make targeted and precise decisions for how to respond.

APPENDIX J: SKILLS ASSESSMENT ROLES

<u>Jason</u>

Megan is in your office because she cussed out the basketball coach. You're not sure what happened, only that she missed practice 5 times, which is the threshold for loosing your spot on the team. She is visibly angry. You use Insight skills to figure out how to deal with her.

<u>Chester</u>

You just witnessed Megan cursing out the basketball coach. It was a big blow up with a lot of loud, bad words flying. The last thing you heard was coach firmly telling her that she's off the team. And then you saw Megan stomping away, her finger in the air. You catch up with Megan, because that kind of behavior can't happen in the halls, and definitely can't happen with a teacher. You use Insight skills to try to get a handle on it.

<u>Megan</u>

You just heard from the basketball coach that you're off the team, because you missed practice. You don't think it's fair. You missed to take care of your grandmother who broke her arm. You called the school and told them you had to be out. He wasn't hearing that, and it was like he had it out for you from the beginning. He was just looking for an excuse to cut you from the team. You tried to explain yourself, and when he didn't hear you or change his mind, you cursed him out. You said some really mean things, some you don't even remember. And now you're off the team, and sitting in the principal's office. You are so mad, you're having a hard time controlling it.

You want to be on the team, because you love playing the game. You're friends are on the team, and it's part of who you are.

You can't believe that he won't give you a break because of your grandma. It's not like you weren't taking the team seriously.

You feel like no one ever gives you a break, and it's overwhelming. No one understands you and it pisses you off.

Megan with Behavior Specialists

Yeah you have a rough time in school. You have a rough time in general. It's hard to get to school some times and get the work done—you've got your kid to take care of, after all. Everyone thinks you're a problem, and no one gets you, and no one gives you the help you need—not like you have time. There's a test in Math today, and you haven't studied. Hell, you've missed that class too many times this semester and are totally lost. You're worried that if you go you're going to have to look at a test and not know a single answer. You'll fail, and be feel shitty about yourself. Why would you want to suffer that? Best thing to do is ditch it so you don't have to face it. You decide to skip, and there Tanya/Syl is in the hall. You're caught.

You're defensive when s/he asks you where you're supposed to be and tell them it's none of their business and to f-off.

Megan in Recovery Room

When you get to the recovery room, you're mad. You're mad because you feel alone and like the world is against you. The last thing you need is another referral, but at least you're not in math class. When Alonzo asks what happened, you say, what do you care, you're just like the rest of them. All of this is bullshit. I just can't wait till I'm 18 and get out of this hell-hole.

I'm valuing Elijah as bad, and I don't want to engage with him because I just feel like no one cares or can do anything about my situation anyway. I want to graduate, but there are just too many roadblocks, and this guy's one of them.

APPENDIX K: STUDENT INTERACTION SURVEY

Edit this form

Insight Student Interaction Survey
* Required

What is your role? *
Choose your job title

What is the total number of STUDENTS you interacted with this week (June 1- June 5) to intervene in or manage behavior? *
Enter number in box

What is the total number of behavior-managing INTERACTIONS you had with those students this week (June 1- June 5)? *
Enter number in box

Out of the total number of behavior-managing interactions you had with students, in how many did you notice Conflict Behavior (aggressiveness, defensiveness, evasiveness, noncompliance)? *
Enter number in box

Out of the interactions in which you noticed Conflict Behavior, how many times did you use Insight skills (noticing, verifying, and curiously questioning to find the student's dire future narrative the threat driving their behavior)? *
Enter number in box

When you used Insight skills, how often did using Insight skills help you manage student behavior? *

1) none of the time, 2) a few times, 3) half of the time, 4) most of the time, 5) all of the time

None on the time   1   2   3   4   5   All of the time

Write down an example of when you used Insight skills with a student this week and they helped. *
What happened?

Write down an example of when you used Insight skills with a student this week and they didn't help. *
What happened?

How accurate are your answers? *
1) exact answers, 2) within one or two, 3) within three or four, 4) within five or six, 5) wild guesses

Exact answers   1   2   3   4   5   Wild guesses

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APPENDIX L: GET CURIOUS WITH INSIGHT CARD

GET CURIOUS WITH INSIGHT

NOTICE WHAT'S IMPORTANT AND ASK ABOUT IT

TRY TO UNDERSTAND THE STUDENT ON HIS/HER OWN TERMS

USE OPEN QUESTIONS

WHAT'S THE THREAT?

WHAT'S S/HE DEFENDING AGAINST?

WHY'S THAT DECISION THE RIGHT ONE?

WHAT'S S/HE HOPING WILL HAPPEN?

APPENDIX M: FINAL EVALUATION INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Final Evaluation Interview Protocol
June 2015

1) In your own words, what is the Insight approach and how is it supposed to be useful to you?

2) Have you been able to recognize student misbehaviors as conflict behavior?

3) Has it been useful? How has your training in the Insight approach made a difference to how you've dealt with student behavior?

4) What are some examples?

5) Do you feel like you've been able to deescalate situations using the framework of Insight approach?

6) Do you feel like you've been able to get to the root of why a student might be misbehaving?

7) Have you been surprised by what you've found when you use it?

8) Do you feel like using the Insight approach has helped the student reflect on his or her behavior?

9) Do you feel like using the Insight approach has helped you make targeted and supportive disciplinary decisions?

10) Do you feel like using the Insight approach has contributed to improved student behavior?

11) What do you think contributes to Insight skills helping the situation or not helping the situation?

12) Have you modified the approach or the questions in anyway that makes them more useful to you and the school context?

13) Can you comment a bit on the training itself? What worked? What was missing? What could have improved it?

14) Would you want to become more proficient in Insight skills?

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BIOGRAPHY

Megan Price has been working with the Insight approach since 2007 and holds a Graduate Certificate in Insight Mediation from Carleton University, Ottawa. She has conducted extensive research on the application of the Insight approach to deeply-rooted social conflict, and collaborates on its development as an applied practice that builds legitimacy and produces targeted, precise and supportive decisions in contexts of enforcement and discipline. Ms. Price has worked in neighborhood and community development in both the public and private sectors and directs both the Insight Conflict Resolution Program at George Mason's School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution and the Center for Applied Insight Conflict Resolution. She earned her Master's in Reconciliation Studies from Trinity College, Dublin and completed undergraduate work at Reed College in Portland, Oregon. She lives in her hometown, Washington, D.C., with her husband and two young children.