

DECONSTRUCTING EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE: A PARADIGM SHIFT TO
RESTORATIVE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

by

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A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

Submitted to the Faculty of Delaware State
University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Ed.D.
In Educational Leadership in the
Department of Education

DOVER, DELAWARE
May 2018

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DEDICATION

To my family, I am forever grateful for them being patient with me in my phenomenal journey to earn my Doctorate. Special thanks to my wife, Angela Watson-Golson, who provided enormous strength, courage, and unconditional love, and support when I was literally a lost soul. To my daughter Melany Angela Golson, who encouraged me to continue when I wanted to throw in the towel, thanks for the poem, See It Through. Also to my wife and daughter, loving appreciation for all of the much-needed technical support from the beginning of my journey to the end, with making the difficult simple, thank you.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this work to my parents, Theodosia M. Golson and James O. Golson Sr., who did not live to see me complete this task. I thank them for instilling in me the value and importance of education, a large dose of common sense, and the will to walk the extra mile, and the spirit of never quitting until the job is well done.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, thank you my heavenly Father for nourishing me with your love and support, without which I could not possibly be here today. I would also like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the community of family and friends, colleagues, and scholars for their contribution in helping complete my academic journey. I am profoundly indebted to each member of my dissertation committee. I would like to thank my co-chairs, Dr. Patricia Carlson and Dr. Richard Phillips who provided invaluable insights into how to enhance my dissertation. I am also greatly indebted to my other committee members, Dr. Nirmaljit Rathee and Dr. Michael Boone for your expertise and encouragement. Thank you Dr. Martin for being a man of your word and fulfilling your promises to the Education department. I deeply appreciate Mrs. Danielle Hicks for her positive attitude and for attention to detail in scheduling and keeping all the students and faculty on track.

I am grateful to Melvin and Victoria Johnson for placing me on the restorative practices path. A special acknowledgement to Jacqueline H. Hamilton my Mother-in-law, who besides lending me her talented editing eye, provided encouragement during every step of this journey. To Elaine Watson-Reed, my Sister-in-law and her husband Curtis, thanks for all of your kind words, they were truly inspiring. Jeanne and Oscar Correa, thank you for the numerous phone conversations. I enjoyed each one of them and you and Oscar always had many words of encouragement. Thank you Asim and Pat Shak for all your words of wisdom. Also, I wish to give a heart-felt thank you as well to my sister, Thelma Wilson-Golson and brothers Eugene T. Golson and Byron D. Golson for always offering words of inspiration all through my life. Thank you Brad, Sean, and Donna Wilson for being there for me. Thank you Melvin and Yvonne

Watson for all your words of support and encouragement. Thank you Smyrna School District for the tremendous support.

I am greatly indebted to Dr. Stephen Clifford Hailey for his unwavering support of my journey toward my goal. Over the process of this journey we have become friends and family. I would like to thank Dr. Jay Valorie Hailey for her unselfish spirit in allowing Steve to spend countless hours on the phone to answer my questions, and many more hours in study groups over the last seven years. It meant the world to me and we have truly become a dream team.

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ABSTRACT

Zero tolerance policies in K-12 public schools are employed to address a wide range of misbehaviors that vary broadly and impact the educational setting in many negative ways. Administrators and teachers have shown an increased dependence on the use of outside law enforcement, suspensions and expulsions as interventions for disciplinary issues in the classroom. Since the early 1990s, the national discourse on school discipline has been dominated by the philosophy of zero tolerance, originally developed as an approach to the war on drugs and judicial enforcement (Skiba & Rausch, 2006). Zero tolerance mandates the application of predetermined consequences, severe and punitive in nature, applied regardless of the gravity of behavior, mitigating circumstances or situational context. Such policies are widespread in schools across North America. The removal of students from the classroom setting for both major and minor disciplinary infractions creates significant emotional and academic risks to these students.

The purpose of this comparative case study analysis was to compare and contrast three related studies to examine the impact of restorative discipline practices as an alternative to punitive discipline approaches for administrators, staff and students who have participated in

restorative practices. The research examines three K-12 public school settings in North America showcasing the implementation of restorative practices to determine if restorative measures are a viable alternative to punitive discipline.

The primary research question asked what did these studies show was the effectiveness of restorative practices as an approach to discipline? Also, what aspects of the school climate changed as a result of the adoption of the restorative practices model? Finally, how did leadership implement the restorative practices and create the necessary conditions for ownership of the new restorative practices plan?

The research reveals that restorative practices encourage relationship building as well as a cohesive sense of community. The studies showed that that the school communities utilized restorative practices as an additional disciplinary approach and a way to address harm done to individuals and the community as well as a way to reintegrate and reconnect individuals into the school community. Data also confirmed that restorative practices are an effective method of disseminating positive behavioral learning and assisting each individual's recognition of their role in a situation and the responsibility of an individual's actions. The studies further validated that the district and school leadership performed a pivotal function as restorative change was initiated and sustained.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This comparative case study analysis examines the implementation of restorative practices in schools that are desperately seeking disciplinary reform in response to school violence and the detrimental effects of zero tolerance policies (Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006). In the field of public education, the need to create an environment more conducive for teaching and learning is very important, given the substantial amount of focus on performance in the past few years. Disruptions to the educational process affect all students and can lead to the loss of instructional time. Experts have discussed and debated ways to find the most effective method to address disciplinary infractions and continuously support the creation of a positive, caring environment. As teachers have begun to consciously devote more of their energy to the development of competence and effectiveness in subject areas within a socially and emotionally supportive learning environment, the use of restorative practice has received more attention (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005).

Restorative practices (RP) are both proactive and reactive, ranging from personal relationship and community-building activities to effective processes for dealing with disruptive student behavior and school violence (Wachtel, 2005). To be restorative means to believe that decisions are best made and conflicts are best resolved by those most directly involved in them. The RP movement seeks to develop good relationships and restore a sense of community in an increasingly disconnected world. These practices have been applied in the justice system, families, workplaces, neighborhoods, as well as in school (Wachtel, 2005).

Statement of the Problem

According to Boyes -Watson (2008), public education across the nation is waging war on youth, and most concerted on poor youth of color. Policies of zero tolerance and the youth justice system are modeled after the adult punitive system. These policies treat young people as if they were the cause of the problem. “As a result, we do not respond to troubled behavior with connection, support, listening, responsiveness, caring, compassion, or love. Instead, we increasingly rely on surveillance, detention, suspension, expulsion, and incarceration” (Boyes-Watson, 2008, p. 4).

Americans live in one of the wealthiest nations in the world, yet the number of children in poverty is increasing. America is becoming a country divided more by class than by race. The have-nots have outnumbered the haves (Pierce & Stapleton, 2003). Public schools in urban cities are especially challenged by the outside factors penetrating the very foundation of the school culture. Poverty, racism, classism, drugs, and crime all impact the educational system. Teachers and administrators across the nation increasingly utilize zero tolerance policies that rely on punitive approaches to discipline. Suspending students for misbehavior in the classroom has become the norm rather than the exception (Fries & DeMitchell, 2007).

The increase of school violence, along with the political and social pressure for administrators to maintain school order, consistently overshadows students’ rights, especially for students of color (Browne, Losen, & Wald, 2001). The current educational system utilizes due process rules. Students are often disciplined under strict punitive practices that seldom allow for interpretation of the facts or circumstances surrounding the offense (Reyes, 2006). The zero-tolerance policies rely on punitive approaches rather than restorative approaches to discipline.

Only recently have there been focused efforts to determine if there is sufficient research to support the broadly implemented zero tolerance policy. The American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force (2008) researched the zero tolerance policy, but was challenged to find any other studies that evaluated the policy or examined whether or not the procedure was effective. Since the 2008 task force report, there has been little data gathered on whether teacher supervision, classroom management expectations, suspension and expulsion rules, or established policies on bullying, crisis intervention and sexual harassment influence levels of school violence (Astor, Guerra, & Acker, 2010). The American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force (2008) concluded “Ultimately, an examination of the evidence shows that zero tolerance policies as implemented have failed to achieve the goals of an effective system of school discipline” (“American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force”, 2008, p. 14).

Without evidence from empirical studies, there are no data to imply why suspensions continue to be used as a primary strategy for discipline in many school districts. Therefore, policy leaders and school administrators must become informed and unite with teachers and concerned parents to preserve order and safety while improving educational systems and benefitting both public and individual student interests with a clearer understanding of data-driven policy decisions.

Background of the Problem

National initiatives to improve schools have tended to focus heavily on high-stakes testing, Common Core Curriculum, and Highly Qualified personnel. However, a growing consensus recognizes that the elements that make up a school culture, including peer relationships, students’ sense of safety and security and the disciplinary policies and

procedures play a crucial role in student behavioral and academic success. The aforementioned factors, along with positive behavior supports and the ability of the school staff to meet the students' needs are seen as especially important for low-performing and at-risk schools (Hirschfield, 2009).

School districts across the nation are focusing on the need to provide a safe and supportive learning environment for all students. There are different views and approaches about how best to reach this goal. One approach to school-wide discipline includes a “zero tolerance” philosophy, which can result in severe penalties being applied to a wide range of infractions, with little consideration for unique circumstances. This approach often focuses on removing a student from school with the intended result of curtailing the offending behavior for that student and serving as an example of deterrence for others (Nelson, 2008). The zero tolerance approach to discipline was once reserved for the most serious of offenses; however, recently students have been suspended and expelled for having butter knives and theater-prop swords in their possession. The federal Gun-Free Schools Act, enacted in 1994, was a catalyst for this era of severe punishment for minor offenses (Shah, 2013).

In school districts throughout the United States, minority students and students with disabilities are subject to a disproportionate rate of school disciplinary sanctions, including, but not limited to, office referrals, suspensions and expulsions (Krezmien, Leone, & Achilles, 2006; Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008). The intent of zero tolerance discipline interventions is to preserve order and safety by removing the students who violate the rules and disrupt the school learning environment. By removing these students, the idea is to deter other students from committing similar rule infractions. However, schools often rely too heavily on exclusion from the classroom as the primary discipline strategy and this practice often has a

disproportionate impact on Black, Latino, and American Indian students (Arcia, 2006).

Nevertheless, research shows that schools with higher rates of school suspensions and expulsions appear to have less satisfactory ratings of school climate, less satisfactory school governance structures, and spend an inordinate amount of time on disciplinary matters. Also, there is a negative relationship between the use of school suspension and expulsion and school-wide academic achievement, even when controlling for demographics such as socioeconomic status ("American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force", 2006). The use of school exclusion as a discipline practice may contribute to the racial gaps in academic achievement, thereby suggesting a need to address the racial discipline gap (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010).

In 1975, The Children's Defense Fund first raised the issue of racial disproportionality in school discipline to the nation's attention. African American students were overrepresented in school suspensions at a rate of two to three times higher than their enrollment rates in districts across the nation. National and state data showed consistent patterns of this same disproportionality in school discipline over the past 30 years with school suspensions (Mendez, Knoff, & Ferron, 2002), expulsion (Kewal-Ramani, Gilbertson, Fox, & Provasnik, 2007), and office discipline referrals (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002).

In 2008, a national study surveying 74,000 10th graders found that approximately 50% of Black students reported that they had been suspended or expelled at least once, compared with about 20% of White students (Wallace et al., 2008). This survey also showed that, unlike other racial and ethnic groups, suspensions and expulsions of Black students increased from 1991 to 2005 (Wallace et al., 2008).

Data collected by the Education Department's Office for Civil Rights from the 2009-

2010 school year, encompassing 85% of public school students nationwide, showed that across all school districts, Black students were 3½ times more likely to be suspended or expelled than their White peers. In districts reporting expulsions, Hispanic and Black students represented 45% of enrollment, but 56% of students expelled ("U.S. Department of Education", 2009-2010).

Research shows that frequent suspensions significantly increase the risk of low academic achievement (Davis & Jordan, 1994). One of the most consistent findings of educational research is the strong correlation between time engaged in academic learning and student achievement (Greenwood, Horton, & Utley, 2002). This indicates that the current school disciplinary practices most widely used throughout the United States may be contributing to the lower academic performance among students often in the greatest need of improvement.

Punitive discipline practices may damage academic achievement in other ways, as well. Suspended students may become less invested in school rules and class work and less connected to school. Thus, these students may be less motivated to achieve academically. Students who are not connected to their school communities and who become less interested in school may be more inclined towards engaging in anti-social behavior, leading to academic failure and potential involvement in the juvenile justice system. Consistently, findings highlight the importance of students connecting to school to reduce the risk of delinquency (Hawkins, Smith, & Catalano, 2004). School suspensions have actually been found to increase the risk of antisocial behavior (Hemphill, Toumbourou, Herrenkohl, McMorris, & Catalano, 2006). Thus, disproportionate exclusionary practices of school discipline experienced by some racial and ethnic groups have important implications for these already at-risk student's academic outcomes.

The system failure to support at-risk students has created an urgency to find an alternative

to suspensions. For these students to flourish and learn, academic leaders must find ways of keeping students in school. This involves learning new strategies and committing to improving the educational structures within school districts, particularly urban school districts (Finn & Servoss, 2013). Some alternatives to out-of-school suspension (OSS) and expulsion that have been explored by district leaders have included in-school suspension (ISS) and Response to Intervention (RtI).

ISS originated in the 1970's as an alternative to out-of-school suspension that would require students to attend school while removing them from the classroom and still preserving the students discipline record and allowing the student to make up classwork. Thus, ISS would conceivably allow students to stay current on assignments and learning (Evans, 2011)

According to Evans (2011), data regarding the implementation and success of ISS practices in schools is minimal and does not support ISS as a viable alternative. Theriot and Dupper (2010) state that ISS programs produce the same exclusionary effects as OSS interventions.

The Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS), formerly known as RtI grew from efforts to advance identification practices in special education. The response to intervention method was presented within the 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). Although it was not presented as a part of the law, it was offered within regulatory notes as a process to help categorize students with particular learning disabilities. In principle, the policymakers and the Office of Special Programs (OSEP) wrote into those records a contention that asks school districts not to depend on what is called the discrepancy model for identification of specific learning disabilities and consider using interventions tried within RtI. In practice, most school districts use RtI to intervene prior to special education referral, but very few apply

the process to identify students. Usually they will try interventions in RtI and when they don't get a good outcome, refer for testing using the discrepancy model. The solitary category that permits districts to apply response to interventions for identification purposes is specific learning disabilities.

MTSS is a process of systematically documenting the performance of students as evidence of the need for additional services after making changes in classroom instruction. MTSS promises to change the way schools support students with learning and behavior problems by systematically delivering a range of interventions based on demonstrated levels of need. MTSS is defined as the practice of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals, and applying child response data to important educational decisions (Batsche et al., 2005). Based on a problem-solving model, the MTSS approach considers environmental factors as they might apply to an individual student's difficulty, and provides services/intervention as soon as the student demonstrates a need. Focused primarily on addressing academic problems, MTSS has emerged as a way to think about behavioral issues, disability identification and early intervention assistance for the "most vulnerable, academically unresponsive children" in schools and school districts (Fuchs & Deshler, 2007, p. 131).

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is based on a similar problem-solving model and aims to prevent inappropriate behavior through teaching and reinforcing appropriate behaviors (OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2007). PBIS is a process that is consistent with the core principles of MTSS. PBIS offers a range of interventions that are systematically applied to students based on their demonstrated level of need, and addresses the role of the environment as it applies to

development and improvement of behavior problems.

Grounded in applied behaviorism and relying on increased standardization and accountability measures, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) aims to take into account the whole school context of behavior management and its social and academic quality. It strives to create a cohesive, supportive, and positive social climate for all children by providing early identification and intervention and unifying general and special education resources. Across the United States, local educational agencies (LEAs) and state education departments encourage local schools to implement PBIS (OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, 2007).

In the United States, non-dominant youth from historically marginalized communities face enormous disparities in educational outcomes and opportunities (Anyon, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Gamoran, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2014). A major contributor to this problem is that these students, especially African American, Native American, and Latino, are disproportionately placed in special education programs for those identified as having emotional or behavioral disorders (EBD) and receive exclusionary school discipline more severely and frequently for less objective reasons such as insubordination, disrespect, and excessive noise (Children's Defense Fund, 1975; Skiba et al., 2008; the Office for Civil Rights, 2014).

The racial disproportionality in behavioral outcomes, which maintains the historical marginalization of non-dominant communities in educational systems, is a cyclical, adaptive, and multifaceted issue determined by interacting social systems including schools, families, school districts, and state educational agencies. Documented concerns regarding racial disproportionality have prompted policy changes. The 1997 and 2004 reauthorizations of the

special education law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), mandated that states and school districts track disproportionality, implement systemic efforts to eliminate disparities, and, where significant disproportionality is identified, earmark 15% of Federal special education funds for coordinated early intervention efforts. Among the initiated programmatic responses, PBIS, a three-tiered prevention model of behavioral support is one of the adaptations utilized in special education for addressing discipline issues and behavioral problems. PBIS is the only school-wide behavioral identification and intervention approach specifically mentioned in IDEA (2004). Therefore, PBIS has been implemented in more than 20,000 schools in the United States (Horner, 2015). While PBIS enjoys increasing policy-level support and popularity nationally and internationally, PBIS scholars have not been able to resolve three critical issues regarding its effective and sustainable implementation: (1) making PBIS culturally responsive to the vastly diverse social contexts of local schools, (2) facilitating authentic student/family/community involvement, and (3) addressing sustained racial disproportionality (Vincent, Randall, Cartledge, Tobin, & Swain-Bradway, 2011)

The first unresolved issue is cultural responsiveness. Developers of PBIS stress that it is not intended as a prepackaged program and that its implementation strategies need to be modified for contextual clarity. PBIS emphasizes the importance of procedures that are socially and culturally appropriate. The relative fit between intervention strategies and the values of families, teachers, school leaders, support personnel, and community agencies may affect the quality and fidelity of support efforts. (Sugai et al., 2000). However, the literature lacks robust data supporting systematic definitions, contextual suitability or cultural responsiveness in PBIS (Jones, Caravaca, Cizek, Horner, & Vincent, 2006; Sugai, O’Keeffe, & Fallon, 2012). As Vincent and Tobin (2011) suggest, mechanisms and strategies necessary for culturally responsive

implementation of PBIS continue to be ambiguous.

The second unresolved issue regarding implementation of PBIS is inclusive family and community involvement. Consistency and cooperation among educators, educational leaders, families, and community members is anticipated to produce and maintain safer, more effective school environments (Sugai & Horner, 2006). All stakeholders must ideally generate school-wide behavioral expectations and reinforcements for students. The resulting opportunities motivate everyone towards the same goal and purpose (Chen, Downing, & Peckman-Hardin, 2002; Sugai et al., 2010). However, in reality, students, families and community members, especially from non-dominant cultural and linguistic backgrounds, do not have significant opportunities to participate in the PBIS processes (Vincent & Tobin, 2011).

The third consistently identified issue is racial disproportionality. Multiple studies have found that PBIS implementation has been linked to a reduction in office discipline referrals (ODRs), reduction in discipline recidivism, and increased perception of school safety (Bradshaw Mitchell, O'Brennan, & Leaf, 2010; Vincent & Tobin, 2011). However, even after PBIS implementation, non-dominant student populations remain overrepresented as recipients of exclusionary disciplinary practices as well as EBD identification (Sugai, 2011; Vincent & Tobin, 2011).

Currently, local educators and educational leaders find themselves in an extreme dilemma. On the one hand, they must address immediate issues in their local districts related to racial disproportionality and authentic partnership with students, families, and community members. And on the other hand, district leaders are expected to implement PBIS with high fidelity while maintaining cultural responsiveness without systematic and locally meaningful guidance on cultural responsiveness from PBIS both scholars and designated technical assistance

centers, both deficient in information regarding the needs, strengths, and interests of local school communities. To date, the literature does not offer clear and tangible data or a methodological solution to the stated twofold predicament. Only theoretical arguments stressing the need for cultural responsiveness have been suggested (Sugai et al., 2012; Vincent et al., 2010).

Restorative practices have been recently evaluated in an educational perspective, observing that restorative practices serve as an approach to discipline that treats student misbehavior, or school violence, as harm committed against the interpersonal relationships within the school community. The restorative view is divergent from zero-tolerance policies, which remove students who have caused harm from the educational community. Restorative discipline seeks to involve these students in constructive conversations with others affected by negative behavior so that the perpetrators may repair relationships and learn from their mistakes. The practice is more educative than either OSS or ISS and more supportive for disenfranchised students than PBIS, as offenders sit participate with those they have harmed and work cooperatively to identify a plan for restitution. Reports from researchers, educators, students, and restorative practitioners suggest that the process helps young people develop understandings of accountability, empathy, and respect, while also building communication skills through the restorative process of dialogue and collaborative problem-solving (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005; Sumner et al., 2010; High HOPES, 2012).

Should restorative practices prove to be a successful strategy, school districts across the nation will learn and benefit from increased and ongoing research. Instituting a new strategy such as restorative practices means less reliance on suspensions, and it also means the adoption of a new form of discipline that demands a paradigm shift in the way the educational leaders think and approach misbehavior. Creating that change requires strong leadership. As students

become reconnected to their school communities and learn alternative strategies to resolving conflict, this should translate to both inside and outside the school setting. Combined with academic success, a more peaceful community would result from students who possess the tools to resolve their conflicts peacefully and from adults who have adopted a new paradigm to handling conflict. This would be of great service not only to the educational institutions, but to society as well.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this comparative case study analysis is to compare and contrast three related studies to examine the impact restorative discipline as an alternative to punitive discipline approaches for students who participated in restorative practices.

Research Questions

The primary research question is what do these studies show is the effectiveness of restorative practices as an approach to discipline? Related research questions will gather data to discover:

1. What aspects of the school climate changed as a result of the adoption of the restorative practices model?
2. What is the effect of restorative practices implementation on the suspension rate?
3. How did leadership implement the restorative practices and create the necessary conditions for ownership of the new restorative practices plan?

Significance of the Study

Since the 1990s, as schools face the repercussions of tough disciplinary sanctions with rising rates of suspensions and expulsions, some administrators have turned to the practices and principles of Restorative Discipline for addressing behavioral problems and interpersonal conflict (Karp & Breslin, 2001; Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006). Case Studies of

schools implementing Restorative Justice practices as a response to wrongdoing report steady declines in suspensions, expulsions and behavioral referrals (Cameron & Thorsborne, 2001; International Institute of Restorative Practices, 2009; Karp & Breslin, 2001; McCluskey et al., 2008; McCold, 2002; Riestenberg, 2004; Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006; Wachtel & Mirsky, 2008).

Limitations

The purpose of this study is to explore the use of restorative practices by K-12 school leaders as an alternative to exclusionary discipline policies. This research focused on the analysis of case studies utilizing restorative leadership in districts referenced by Mateer (2007), Reimer (2011) and Hamilton (2008). In case study analyses, findings and conclusions of the research are not intended to be generalizable to all district leadership in the United States, but rather this research analysis will seek to gain a greater understanding of the restorative practice as a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 1992).

Delimitations

This comparative case study analysis is limited to three case studies that focus on implementing restorative practices in schools as an alternative to punitive discipline practices. This comparative case study analysis is also limited to the qualitative data extrapolated from the three comparative studies. Additionally, the three case study authors do not consistently address discipline leadership directly. Therefore, it should be noted that disciplinary practices are established by regional or state departments of education, school boards and administered by the individual leadership team in a specific school. Consequently, it should be understood that research questions and discussions regarding discipline practices in educational settings ultimately refer to the strategic disciplinary leadership plan agreed upon.

Definition of Key Terms

Circles- A circle is a versatile restorative practice that can be used proactively, to develop relationships and build community or reactively, to respond to wrongdoing, conflicts and problems. Circles give people an opportunity to speak and listen to one another in an atmosphere of safety, decorum and equality. The circle process allows people to tell their stories and offer their own perspectives (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2010).

Exclusionary Discipline- Exclusionary discipline describes any type of school disciplinary action that removes or excludes a student from his or her usual educational setting. Two of the most common exclusionary discipline practices at schools include suspension and expulsion. Typically used to punish undesired behaviors, deter similar behavior by other students, and promote more appropriate behavior, studies have shown that such practices may result in adverse outcomes for the student and community including increasing student risk for involvement in the justice system ("Exclusionary Discipline", 2014).

Expulsion- involves the act of removing students from the learning environment and differs from suspension in that the removal due to expulsion may be permanent (Skiba & Knesting, 2001)

Paradigm Shift- a time when the usual and accepted way of doing or thinking about something changes completely ("Paradigm shift", 2017).

Restorative Discipline- a collaborative process used in the school setting to address the harm related to a wrongdoing. Restorative discipline identifies behavioral infractions, attends to the needs of those harmed by the wrongdoing and seeks to repair, restore and heal the harm when possible (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005).

Restorative Discipline Practices- models applications of restorative discipline within schools which may include any combination of the following: whole-school training in restorative techniques, reintegration following suspension, class meetings, Circles, conferencing and truancy mediation (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005).

Restorative Justice- a philosophy and body of practices utilized to address the harm associated with wrongdoing. This model seeks to address the needs and concerns of the victim, the obligations of the offender and the community's engagement and responsibility to the victim and offender (Zehr, 2002).

Suspension- The act of removing students from the learning environment for a specified period of time, usually delivered in response to an inappropriate behavior committed by a student (Morrison & Skiba, 2001).

School to Prison Pipeline- The School to Prison Pipeline is a nationwide system of local, state and federal education and public safety policies that pushes students out of school and into the criminal justice system. This system disproportionately targets youth of color and youth with disabilities. Inequities in areas such as school discipline, policing practices, high-stakes testing and the prison industry contribute to the pipeline ("Youth and Students Rights", 2015).

Social Cognitive Theory- is the emphasis on social influence and its emphasis on external and internal social reinforcement. SCT considers the unique way in which individuals acquire and maintain behavior, while also considering the social environment in which individuals perform the behavior. The theory takes into account a person's past experiences, which factor into whether behavioral action will occur. These past experiences influence reinforcements, expectations, and expectancies, all of which shape whether a person will engage in a specific behavior and the reasons why a person engages in that behavior (LaMorte, 2016).

Talking Piece- A talking piece, often an item of symbolic importance and is passed around to indicate whose turn it is to speak, a ritual that is intended to empower the speaker, prevent adversarial dialogue, and encourage active listening (Umbreit & Armour, 2011).

Victim-Offender Mediation- Victim-offender mediation is a practice available to victims who want to have a mediation meeting with the offender to discuss how the crime affected them and how the offender can repair the harm. Victim offender mediations are conducted by trained mediators who are sensitive to the needs of victims and their families (Braithwaite, 1999).

Web of Social Relationships- Society is viewed as a web of social relationships at several different levels. Society is formed by the relationships between individuals, communities, States, localities, and regions (Auguste Comte, 2017).

Zero-Tolerance- refers to “policies that punish all offenses severely, no matter how minor” (Skiba & Peterson, 1999, p. 372). These policies emerged from The-Gun-Free Schools Act (GFSA) that mandated that any student found in possession of a firearm on school campus must be expelled for at least one year. The law also stipulates that student violators shall be referred to the criminal juvenile justice system. States have extended their adoption of zero-tolerance policies to include violence, tobacco, alcohol, drugs and weapons other than firearms (Skiba & Peterson, 1999).

Summary

In summary, Chapter I explained the premise of the case study analysis focusing on scholarly research and literature regarding the implications of current zero-tolerance policies utilized in many schools and whether positive changes may be recognized in systems that have adopted restorative practices. Chapter II will address a comprehensive review of the literature.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to determine if restorative practices are a viable alternative to punitive discipline approaches. The current literature regarding discipline in schools across the nation often focuses on zero tolerance. The impact of zero tolerance, suspensions, expulsions and racial disparities are highlighted. Literature regarding current disciplinary leadership practices, strategies and their impact on school climate and individual students is very limited. Another area of the research will include comparing discipline approaches in several educational locations. Two primary discipline leadership strategies that continually surface are zero tolerance and restorative practices, a form of conflict resolution. While there is limited research available regarding the effectiveness of these practices, there exists recent emerging evidence of implementation of these two competing disciplinary leadership strategies in some educational settings (Sumner et al., 2010; Astor et al., 2010; Amstutz & Mullet, 2005; Cole 2013).

The investigation of restorative practices is the primary focus of this literature review. The concept of restorative practices in the educational arena derives from restorative justice in the criminal justice field. Currently, adequate availability of literature on restorative justice relating to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of restorative justice in the criminal justice system exists (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). While there is not nearly as much research in the educational realm, more literature is starting to emerge around the use of restorative practices in the educational setting. Restorative practices are used as an intervention to instill a sense of community and build relationships (Wachtel, 2005).

Punitive discipline only makes the students think of themselves, rather than the consequences of their behavior. Rapid escalation to punishment makes students angry instead of thoughtful (Braithwaite, 2007). Therefore, isolating students from the community through suspensions or expulsions is the worst way to handle discipline. In many schools, restorative practices are used as an intervention to instill a sense of community, build and maintain relationships (Braithwaite, 2007).

In 2013, the Vera Institute of Justice Center on Youth Justice requested that Jacob Kang-Brown, a senior research associate and several other researchers connected with the Institute developed a concise summary of educational discipline practices with a particular focus on zero tolerance policies to inform government and others searching for recommendations and best leadership options. The subsequent policy brief entitled “A Generation Later: What We’ve Learned about Zero Tolerance in Schools” was advanced utilizing a meta-analytical review of empirical research and data amassed by the Vera Institute. Three questions were posed by the research team including: 1) Do zero tolerance discipline policies affect students and the overall school climate? 2) Have these policies been a significant factor in sustaining a school-to-prison pipeline for students? and 3) If monetary and sociological costs are detrimental to the school and wider community, are there data-driven alternatives that are more effective (2013)?

One of the major findings of the research concluded that the culture of educational discipline and leadership has transformed overwhelmingly due to zero tolerance legislation and implementation in the past three decades (2013). Disciplinary systems today are much more formal and rigid, necessitating mandatory severe punishments applied generally, affecting all students. Instead of principals and other school administrators addressing misconduct on a case-by-case basis, reviewing the specific students involved, and including the repercussions for the

inclusive safety of the school community, many school district leaders are required to administer zero tolerance regulations that seriously curtail discretion in individual cases, unnecessarily involve law enforcement personnel, and obligate administrators to remove students from school until hearings and other formal proceedings are concluded (Kang-Brown et al., 2013). These policies also mandate out-of-school suspension or expulsion for first offense for many behaviors. The procedures were originally established for possession of a weapon or illegal drugs. However they are now often applied to acts such as using tobacco products on district property, bullying or fighting in school and even more minor deeds (Kang-Brown et al., 2013).

Skiba and Knesting (2001) posit that the procedural transformations began in the late 1980s and rapidly expanded, driven by rising rates of juvenile arrests for violent crimes and a climate in which young people were increasingly perceived as dangerous. United States legislators who first enacted tough-on-crime adult laws during the War on Drugs soon applied similar regulations to the school environment and passed the Gun-Free Schools Act in 1994.

Consequently, to qualify for federal education funds, states were required to pass compulsory policies encouraging all local school districts to expel any student found carrying a weapon to school for at least 180 days. As early as the 1996-1997 school year 79 percent of schools had adopted zero tolerance policies for violence, going beyond federal mandates (Skiba & Knesting, 2001).

Soon, zero tolerance policies proliferated and were expanded to encompass an extensive range of misconduct much less harmful than bringing a weapon to school, including possession of drugs, alcohol and any violation outside of school requiring a state attorney general report. To further enhance and indemnify the use of zero tolerance, the federal government and states began

to increase local funding for security guards and other school-based law enforcement officers and later to install electronic surveillance systems and metal detectors (Kang-Brown et al., 2013).

The theory underlying zero tolerance policies is that schools benefit when problem students are removed from the school setting. However, Kang-Brown et al. (2013) found no research demonstrating this effect. No studies show that an increase in out-of-school suspensions and expulsions reduce disruption in the classroom and school. Evidence supports the opposite. In general, rates of suspension and expulsion appear unrelated to overall school success for schools with similar characteristics, levels of funding, and student populations.

Although zero tolerance policies were created to respond to students caught with a weapon, only five percent of serious disciplinary actions nationally in recent years involve possession of a weapon. In some states the proportion is even lower. In Maryland, for example, less than two percent of suspensions and expulsions are related to carrying a weapon in school, and in Colorado, it is less than one percent. In contrast, nationally 43 percent of expulsions and out-of-school suspensions lasting a week or longer were for insubordination (Kang-Brown et al., 2013).

Violence is prevalent in many schools. However, harsh punitive practices have been shown to have a negative impact on certain populations of students (Kang-Brown et al., 2013). Violence exists, to some extent, in nearly all North American schools. Violence includes physical harm inflicted between two or more people, verbal intimidation, and threats. Violence can also be indirect, implicit in social and institutional structures; this is referred to as systemic violence. For example, zero-tolerance policies or punitive discipline procedures and the social media streaming of students' violent acts are examples of systemic violence that may hurt individuals through the implicit messages sent (Adams, 2000; Bickmore, 2008; Noguera, 1995). Also, and disturbingly, what data clearly demonstrate are that zero-tolerance policies

disproportionately target students of color, without evidence that these youth are misbehaving in any more serious manner than their peers (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008).

According to the Kang-Brown et al. (2013) research conducted on the subject of zero tolerance, out-of-school suspension can severely disrupt a student's academic progress in ways that have lasting negative consequences. For similar students attending similar schools, a single suspension or expulsion doubles the risk that a student will repeat a grade. Being retained a grade, especially while in middle or high school, is one of the strongest predictors of dropping out. In one national longitudinal study, youth with a prior suspension were 68 percent more likely to drop out of school.

The long-term effects of failing to complete high school are well documented. Individuals without a high school education have much less earning power and are more likely to be unemployed. For example, in 2012, national median earnings among workers with a high school diploma were \$815 per week, while those without a high school degree earned just \$471 per week. Also, unemployment rates were roughly doubled to percent to 12.4 percent among people who had not completed high school (Kang-Brown et al., 2013).

The Kang-Brown et al. (2013) research findings and other collected data on zero tolerance suggest that such leadership and discipline policies have no real benefit and significant adverse effects. Recent growing consensus suggests that the most effective schools reinforce positive behavior and respond to behavioral problems on a case-by-case basis in ways that address the individual circumstances and support a positive school climate. State departments of education and municipal school districts are moving away from zero-tolerance policies. In 2012, legislators in Colorado revised the state law governing school discipline to encourage school

districts to rely less on suspension and expulsion and also mandated and funded compulsory restorative practices training for police officers that serve as school resource officers (SROs).

In 2010, the Boston public school system revised its code of discipline, renaming it a code of conduct, and also implemented restorative justice practices as alternatives to suspension and expulsion. As a result, the number of students suspended or expelled dropped from 743 to 120 in just two years (Kang-Brown et al., 2013).

The Kang-Brown et al. (2013) research concluded that Zero tolerance does not make schools more orderly or safe. Policies that push students out of school can have lifelong negative effects, severely limiting a young person's future potential. There is also a growing body of knowledge that education administrators and school principals should utilize restorative justice practices to inspire and guide local disciplinary reform efforts, and researchers can continue to provide evidentiary disciplinary alternatives.

A rigorous and detailed study of students in Texas published in 2011 by the Council of State Governments and the Public Policy Research Institute at Texas A&M University authored by Fabelo et al. demonstrated how the culture of zero tolerance became so pervasive in that state that harsh punishments were utilized even when they were not required. The researchers tracked every student who entered seventh grade in 2000, 2001, and 2002 for six years. They found that more than half (60 percent) were suspended or expelled at some point in middle or high school. Moreover, the majority of those suspensions and expulsions appeared to be for offenses that did not involve behaviors falling within the parameters of the state of Texas' zero-tolerance mandate. The violations were simple indiscretions of the schools' codes of conduct, such as using tobacco or acting out in ways that teachers designated as disruptive. School administrators chose to use

harsher punishments even when they had the discretion to choose lesser penalties (Fabelo et al., 2011).

Out-of-school suspension was also strongly associated with subsequent involvement in the juvenile justice system, often referred to as the school-to-prison pipeline. The most conclusive evidence of this pathway comes from the Fabelo et al. (2011) longitudinal Texas study uncovering that a single suspension or expulsion for a discretionary offense that did not include a weapon tripled a student's likelihood of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system in the following academic year.

Texas led the U.S. in school suspension rates during the 2008-2009 school year (Newell et al., 2013). In a review of high school disciplinary practices in the Bryan Independent School District, data disclosed that African American students received discipline referrals at a rate more than four times that of students of any other color (Hewitt et al., 2013). Similarly, in the Chicago Public School System during the 2008-2009 school year, African American male secondary students accounted for 48 percent of district-wide suspensions and 57 percent of expulsions, despite the fact that African American students represented only 23 percent of the district's total student population. The trend compounded in the 2009-2010 school year, verified by supporting data that show that African American males were five times more likely to be suspended than their white classmates (High HOPES, 2012).

The ramifications of the data-informed biases demonstrate a severe and enduring legacy of negative response to students of color and these same students experience disciplinary removal rates at three times the rate of their white peers. Students of color are also three times more likely to become involved with the juvenile justice system (Hirschfield, 2009), and students who appear in court are four times more likely to drop out of school. In 2009, Hirschfield of

Rutgers University authored an article entitled “Another way out: The impact of juvenile arrests on high school dropout”. The article documented data taken from a sample of 4,844 Chicago secondary students using a multilevel multivariate logistic model. The study data supported that students first arrested in 9th or 10th grade were six to eight times more likely than non-arrested youth to drop out of high school and 3.5 times more liable to drop out while in 9th or 10th grade. Although selection bias was a concern, the study used a comparison between arrested 9th graders and those who avoided arrest until 10th grade. Ninth graders arrested were also compared to their non-arrested peers.

The Hirschfield (2009) research posed two questions. Firstly, are student arrests a significant indicator of student dropout rates in the inner city? The second query asked if the relationship revealed the impact of arrest on dropping out or other possible unrelated and unobserved individual characteristics (p.369).

Hirschfield (2009) found that dropping out during 9th grade or later followed possible effects such as subsequent serious arrests and other problems including caregiving and living arrangements, family issues and financial liabilities which confounded the effects of arrest. Also, possible pre-secondary arrests may seemingly impact the data regarding early high school arrests. However, Hirschfield concluded that having an arrest profile weakened participation in school and decreased the capacity to educate and graduate this vulnerable at-risk student population.

The Hirschfield (2009) study also reinforces data that social and economic divisions highlighting that 43 percent of black and 48 percent Latino males graduate compared with 77 percent of white males. Also, dropout rates are severe in inner cities communities where

concentrations of race, class and family logistics create a convergence of multiple disadvantages (Stinchcomb et al., 2006; Leigh-Brown, 2013).

Youth who drop out or make contact with the justice system are then significantly more likely to be incarcerated as an adult, thus making African American students the primary victims of what researchers and community activists have labeled the school-to-prison pipeline (Sumner et al., 2010; Losen & Martinez, 2013; Stinchcomb et al., 2006; Leigh- Brown, 2013). The long-term negative effects of zero-tolerance policies on African American male students underpins the prediction that, if current incarceration trends persist, 1 out of every 3 African American males will be imprisoned during his lifetime (The Sentencing Project, 2013).

The U.S. Department of Justice, during the 2014 school year, ordered school districts to respond to student misbehavior in fair, non-discriminatory, and effective ways. Black students are suspended and expelled at a rate three times greater than White students, while Black and Latino students account for 70 percent of police referrals (Sumner et al., 2010; Stinchcomb et al., 2006; Leigh-Brown, 2013). Also, students with disabilities are twice as likely to be suspended than their non-disabled peers, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer and or questioning individuals/identities (LGBTQ) students are 1.4 times more likely to face suspension than their straight peers. In Ohio, a Black child with an emotional disability was 17 times more likely to be suspended than a White, non-disabled peer. Combine these at-risk factors and a pattern emerges that suggests that these children might as well stay home. Black children represent 18 percent of pre-school students, but account for 48 percent of pre-school suspensions. These are very sobering statistics for students who are four years of age ("Issue brief", 2012).

The Kirwin Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity endeavors to offer innovative, compelling and strategic research to both the academic and broader communities. Founded in 2003, the Kirwan Institute is a research and policy center based at Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. The mission is to expand an understanding of the causes of racial and ethnic disparities in society and to propose solutions through direct research and policy recommendations. The Kirwan Institute brings together a diverse and inventive cadre of scholars and researchers from various disciplines, whose goal is to draw attention to the history, present conditions, and the future predictions of racially and ethnically marginalized individuals and communities and the causes of marginalization.

According to recent research performed by Cheryl Staats of the Kirwin Institute in 2014, educational leaders acknowledge that education as a pathway to opportunity and success still persists as a mantra shared with students by education administrators and policy makers. Consequently, retention of students to completion of graduation is a key to this opportunity profile. It is not surprising then that a significant topic addressed by Kirwin research is the area of school discipline, its approaches and impact on student success (Staats, 2014).

Earlier in 2014, Lhamon and Samuels of the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights released a report on school discipline and school climate acknowledging the uneven application of school discipline in which students of color are disproportionately impacted by adverse disciplinary actions. Data from their report substantiated that African American students with no disabilities are subject to suspension or expulsion from school at a rate three times greater than White students without disabilities (Lhamon & Samuels, 2014). Many disparities were highlighted by research cited in the 2014 report, documenting a troubling trend in many locations in the U.S. and various school contexts, affirming that students of color do not “act

out” in class more frequently than their White peers. However, Black and Hispanic students are more likely to be sent to the principal’s office for subjective offenses, including class disruption, and they are more likely to be sent there by White teachers (Lhamon & Samuels, 2014).

The Staats (2014) research data and further information presented in the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights report has lead to the formation of a theory called implicit bias. Implicit bias is a belief unconsciously acted on and influencing perceptions, behaviors and decision-making regarding the persons for whom the bias is held. The theory helps explain social inequalities persistent in our society carried on by even those individuals attempting to end racial prejudice (2014). Staats (2014) further posits that implicit bias is a major factor in racialized disparities in K-12 discipline data. Many infractions students are disciplined for include a subjective component. School personnel including leadership and district administrators interpret whether discipline is merited for an infraction and then the severity of the consequences. Implicit bias research suggests that the ambiguity of a situation allows implicit bias to play a key role in the decision-making process. Data also show that there is a predominantly White teacher workforce, creating a cultural mismatch with an increasingly diverse student population that contributes to discipline disparities. Also, pervasive societal associations around Blackness such as danger or aggression may taint teachers and administrators’ perceptions of students of color and affect the discipline these students receive.

The reality gleaned from the study data also supported that White students are more likely to be suspended for objective offenses, like drug possession. The Kirwan Institute cites “cultural deficit thinking” as a misconception that leads educators to “harbor negative assumptions about the ability, aspirations, and work ethic of poor students of color. The conceptualization is based on the assumption that these students and their families do not value

education” (Staats, 2014, p.13). Racially disparaging perceptions create a stereotype that students of color are disrespectful and disruptive, which zero tolerance policies exploit. Also, implications of school disciplinary actions go well beyond the school context and affect the students’ life trajectory through emergence of a school-to-prison pipeline where student discipline cases are controlled by the juvenile justice system due to zero tolerance policies and school resource officers who become involuntarily involved in minor classroom infractions (Staats, 2014).

And lastly, the 2014 the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights report specifically mentions implicit bias as a recognized factor that affects the administration of school discipline and encourages educational leaders and staff to gain further awareness of the phenomena regarding their unrecognized and unconscious biases that contribute to racial, ethnic and other stereotypes and perceptions (Lhamon & Samuels, 2014).

Furthermore, according to research performed by the Kirwin Institute (2014), Black students do not “act out” in class more frequently than their White peers. But Black students are more likely to be sent to the principal’s office for subjective offenses, like “disrupting class,” and they are more likely to be sent there by White teachers. Further data collected by the Kirwan Institute support the concept of implicit bias. The reality gleaned from the study data supported that White students are more likely to be suspended for objective offenses, like drug possession. The Kirwan Institute cites “cultural deficit thinking” as a misconception that leads educators to “harbor negative assumptions about the ability, aspirations, and work ethic of poor students of color. The conceptualization is based on the assumption that these students and their families do not value education” (p.13). Racially disparaging perceptions create a stereotype that students of color are disrespectful and disruptive, which zero tolerance policies exploit (Staats, 2014). The

aforementioned empirical research data have begun many educator leaders to seek alternative solutions to punitive school discipline policies. In the search for an evidence-based framework that both disciplines and educates students, various schools have developed programs based on the tenets of restorative justice.

Conceptual Framework

Social relationships are instrumental in developing and regulating social life for all people, and particularly students. This is a central concept of restorative practices as well. Restorative practices promote the process of community building through developing relationships and common understandings among people (Morrison, 2007).

Social-cognitive Theory

Bandura's view of individuals and their role in community building supports the basic premises utilized in restorative practices (Wachtel, 2005). Bandura (2007) defined self-efficacy as the belief an individual has in his or her own capabilities to successfully accomplish a specific task or set of tasks. The theory was developed within the framework of the social-cognitive theory.

Self-efficacy is determined by the feelings and thoughts that motivate one's behavior. According to Bandura, a strong self-efficacy enhances accomplishments for attaining tasks regardless of difficulty levels. Self-efficacy is based on four principal sources of information: mastery experiences, social modeling, social/verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal including stress, fear, anxiety and depression. Therefore, self-efficacy plays a significant role in task-related performance by influencing individual's choices, efforts, and persistence. The positive effect of self-efficacy on performance has been supported by individual and collective measures (Bandura, 1993).

Bandura proposed that self-efficacy is an individual's belief in the power of one's capabilities (Bandura & Locke, 2003). In addition, self-efficacy affects individual motivation in regards to level of task performance. "The stronger the self-perceived self-efficacy, the more likely persons are to select challenging tasks, the longer they persist at them, and the more likely to perform them successfully" (p. 1175), supporting the idea that self-efficacy will enhance improved behavior (Bandura, 1989).

Growth-fostering relationships are created through mutual empathy and mutual empowerment (Jordan et al., 1991) and are characterized by a sense of zest; empowerment to act or be productive; better understanding of self and others; a sense of worth; and increased desire for connections with others (Miller & Stiver, 1997; Tucker, Smith-Adcock, & Trepal, 2011). The ideal movement of a relationship, says Jordan (2010), is toward greater authenticity, mutual empathy and mutual empowerment. Ultimately, in a growth-fostering relationship, it is about feeling respected, heard and understood—all fundamental tenets of Restorative Justice.

Social relationships are instrumental in regulating social life. This is a central concept of restorative practices. Restorative practices promote the process of community building through developing relationships and common understanding between people (Morrison, 2007). When used in a school setting, restorative practices are not focused on violations of rules from the student code of conduct. Restorative practices focus on the harm caused to other people in the classroom or the school building and how that harm to the relationship between the people can be repaired (Cameron & Thorsborne, 2001). "Restorative justice provides an opportunity for schools to practice participatory, deliberative democracy in their attempts to problem solve

around those serious incidents of misconduct that they find so challenging” (Cameron & Thorsborne, 2001, p. 183).

Social cognitive theory is central to the conceptual framework of this research to explain how restorative practices work. Social cognitive approaches are a resource that is embedded in the learned relationships among people in order to facilitate activities of social or personal benefit. Such relationships enable individuals to acquire information, gain help and other resources, thus allowing them to cope with individual and social problems and to manage everyday life (Sacco & Nakhaie, 2007).

Relational Cultural Theory

Students can utilize social cognitive skills through their relationships with a range of people including teachers, other students, and administrators. These relational resources can provide support or advice for students to help them avoid or face difficult conflict situations. In schools, young people who have a reliable web of social relationships have social resources and networks that can benefit them socially and educationally (Morrison, 2007). The web of social relationships may create a sense of attachment or connectedness to school, fostered by trust and shared understanding that lead to patterns of consistent non-violent behaviors by youth (Putnam, 1993; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Institutional settings in schools including informal relationships with teachers or friends offer broad, equitable access to rich sources of support. Many students may not have strong relationships with adults or peers who could support them in times of difficulty, such as in conflict or emotional incidents (Coleman, 1991). Teachers, in particular, may be helpful to guide young people and serve as protective factors against negative peer pressure, especially if the young person does not connect with a parent or guardian at home in this way.

If a child trusts an adult, whether a parent or a member from the community, and the adult is trustworthy, this relationship is a resource on which the child can draw when in difficulties, whether with school-work, with friends, with a teacher, or with other problems (Coleman, 1991).

The Restorative Movement

Restorative justice is a process and a movement that views crime as harm committed against individuals or interpersonal relationships rather than as the violation of laws or rules. Restorative practitioners believe that harm in any form creates needs, obligations, and opportunities—needs on the part of the victim for restitution, information, and empowerment; needs and obligations on the part of the wrongdoer for accountability, personal growth, and support; and opportunities for learning and empathy (Umbreit & Armour, 2011; Zehr, 2002). In order to address these needs and obligations, restorative justice brings together all the stakeholders affected by a crime in order to engage in dialogue, heal, and “put things as right as possible” through the creation of a plan for restitution (Zehr, 2002, p. 37). Primarily implemented within the criminal justice system, the restorative process only occurs if both victim and offender voluntarily agree to participate. While victim-focused, the process involves the sharing of both victim’s and offender’s personal stories in detail, thus humanizing the justice process through emphasizing context and fulfilling both parties’ needs for truth telling (Umbreit & Armour, 2011; Zehr, 2002).

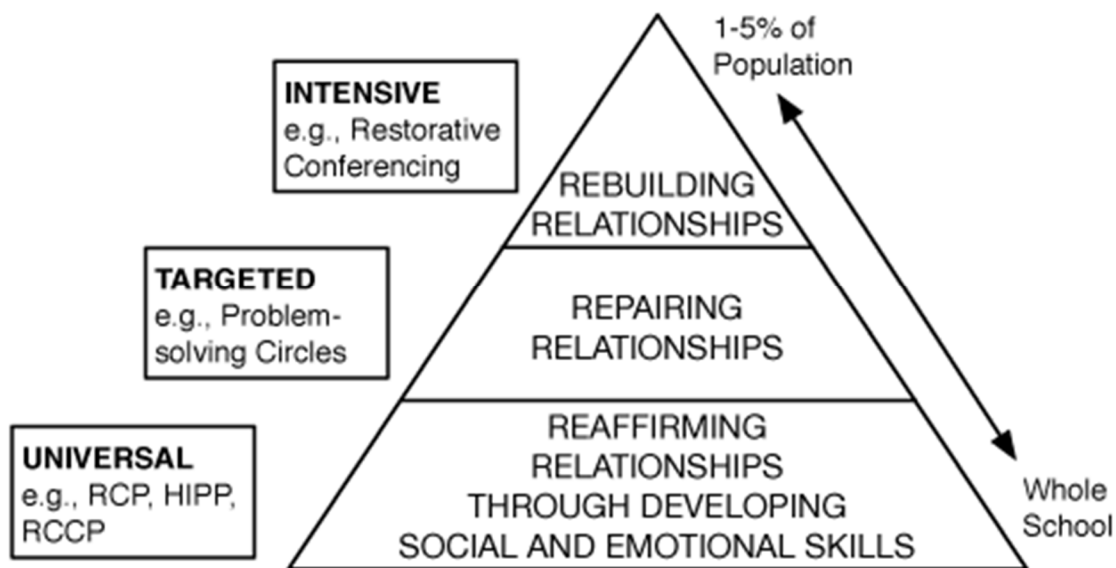
In the school context, restorative practices serve as an approach to discipline that treats student misbehavior, or school violence, as harm committed against the interpersonal relationships within the school community. Contrary to zero-tolerance policies, which remove students who have caused harm from the educational community, restorative discipline seeks to

involve these students in constructive dialogue with others affected by their behavior so that they may repair relationships and learn from their mistakes. This voluntary process is more educative than sitting through In-School Suspension (ISS) for two-days, as students must instead sit face-to-face with those they have harmed, listen to their feelings of hurt and need, and work cooperatively to figure out a plan for restitution. Reports from researchers, educators, students, and restorative practitioners suggest that this process helps young people develop understandings of accountability, empathy, and respect, while also building communication skills through the restorative process of dialogue and collaborative problem-solving (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005; Sumner et al., 2010; High HOPES, 2012). The act of restitution, too, can become a pedagogical tool, making the entire disciplinary process instructive rather than punitive.

Enhancing students' social and emotional development through the classroom curriculum offers opportunities for problem solving and emotional awareness, both of which help students become more socially and emotionally competent. Students who understand different perspectives and have good problem-solving skills will likely be better prepared to constructively address conflict when it arises. Data input is valued by all stakeholders and community members to address destructive conflict. Tension can be limited in a school community because individuals are working together to solve challenging problems (High HOPES, 2012).

Whole-school violence prevention theory includes approaches that are similar to, and overlap with, the goals of conflict resolution education. These include restorative practices and responsive regulation approaches (Braithwaite, 2007; Morrison, 2007; Skiba & Knesting, 2001). Whole-school restorative violence prevention approaches may be differentiated as a pyramid of three levels or types of activity (Morrison, 2007). These practices range from broad, proactive immunization strategies directed at the whole school population, to more focused intervention

strategies directed at more acute post-incident problem solving among specific groups or individuals. As Morrison (2007) explains, at the base or primary level of the pyramid, meant to be the most commonly and broadly used to prevent destructive conflict escalation, are basic or universal (whole-school) relational practices, followed by secondary or targeted practices (managing difficulties and disruptions). The tertiary or top level, ideally to be used least often, is intensive, mobilizing special resources to restore relationships in the most difficult conflict situations.



Morrison (2007)

Morrison's restorative practices pyramid, just described, refers to a comprehensive set of approaches to constructively address questions of conflict and justice in a school's curriculum and climate of relationships (2007).

In 2001, Skiba and Knesting investigated the history, underlying values and success of zero tolerance discipline policies utilized in U.S. schools. Through analysis of a descriptive sampling of zero tolerance suspension and expulsion records implies that the application is controversial and practiced without fidelity (2001). They also concluded that scant data exists

supporting that zero tolerance strategies contribute to positive student behavior or heightened school safety. However, suspension and expulsion data expose evidence that exclusionary measures create serious concerns regarding equity among all student subpopulations, especially students of color. Professional education organizations and administrative associations and concerned community leaders have prompted school districts to adopt research-based alternative methods stressing effective and less exclusionary programs and training agendas promoting equality.

Braithwaite (2007) of New Zealand University has vigorously supported the movement for restorative justice for victims and offenders internationally and recognizes restorative principles as applicable to mediating restorative educational responses to negative and punitive disciplinary practices such as zero tolerance. He advances evidence that justice interventions including restorative practices that repair the harm caused by negative behaviors of some community members, lead to a process that reduces recurrence and increases prevention of violations and the creation of a more equitable and restorative system.

Bickmore stated that it is the “redress of underlying inequities and social conflicts to restore healthy relationships and/or prevent future escalation of conflicts” (2004, p. 77). Bickmore also posits that restorative practices attempt to resolve disagreements between individuals or groups after they arise and before these conflicts escalate into aggressive behavior. Comprehensive restorative practice methods emphasize proactive violence prevention and utilize post-incident restorative practices and security policies, where needed (Restorative justice resources for schools, 2015).

In traversing the ensuing paradigm shift from punitive disciplinary practices, restorative practices advocates and practitioners must be able to clearly differentiate restorative practices from other safe school initiatives that have been found to be moderately effective, or chance that restorative practices be relegated null and void by dominant institutional disciplinary frameworks (Morrison and Vaandering 2012). It is particularly significant to be able to differentiate restorative practices from school-wide positive behavior supports (SWPBS) and social and social emotional learning (SEL). Both are recognized evidence-based approaches acknowledged in the 2010 U.S. Capitol Hill conference on safe schools (AERA, 2010).

The aforementioned initiatives have similarities and differences to the exercise of restorative practices. The SWPBS agenda is similar to restorative models since both aim to develop integrated systems of support for students and adults at the school-wide, classroom, individual and student/family levels (Horner, Sugai, Todd, & Lewis-Palmer, 2005). However, restorative practices differ because SWPBS is a behaviorist, rule-based system, with a focus on external sanctioning. Most traditional sanctioning-based systems emphasize the balance between rewards and punishments, SWPBS supports rewards over punishment in bringing about behavioral compliance. Practically, a whole-school system teaches behavioral expectation and rules and rewards obedience. When intervention is necessary, a function-based strategy is employed ((Morrison and Vaandering 2012; Horner et al., 2005). The objective is to institutionalize a positive school and classroom climate through recognized expectations for students that are accepted, directly taught, reliably acknowledged, and aggressively monitored (Morrison and Vaandering 2012). These behaviorist methodologies are entrenched in social control and order. Morrison and Vaandering further suggest that a community understanding of human nature establishes how its people behave and recognize justice. Societies that identify

humans as inherently competitive, selfish, and requiring social training rely primarily on rewards and punishments. People that see humans as inherently pro-social, cooperative, and striving to contribute engage apology, forgiveness, and restitution (2012).

While behavioral strategies focus on the development of fair and just external sanctioning systems, restorative practice models concentrate on the growth of internal sanctioning techniques, utilizing the rewarding, value-based recognitions of individuals and communities while diminishing harm and increasing restitution. Purely behavioral approaches value external social control and order, while restorative approaches value social harmony and engagement (Morrison and Vaandering 2012).

Student access to restorative practices is an important component of relationship and community building, rooted in a school's climate of social interactions, that reflects shared norms, shared practices, and shared expectations. These positive networks, accessible to all students, can help prevent violence and assist school community members to address challenges constructively (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). Restorative practices, "through its focus on reconnecting people to each other and highlighting inherent relational qualities, emphasizes social engagement, which also includes addressing violence and aggression in schools" (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012, p. 146).

Punitive school discipline procedures have increasingly taken hold in America's schools. While they are detrimental to the wellbeing and to the academic success of all students, they have proven to disproportionately punish minority students, especially African American youth. Such policies feed into wider social issues that, once more, disproportionately affect minority communities: the school-to-prison pipeline, high school dropout rates, the push-out phenomenon, and the criminalization of schools. Restorative Justice is an alternative method of dealing with

misbehavior distinguished from the two dominant models of discipline: retribution and rehabilitation (Braithwaite, 1999). Its core values focus on “healing rather than hurting, moral learning, community participation and community caring, respectful dialogue, forgiveness, responsibility, apology, and making amends” in an attempt to restore victims and offenders, as well as broader affected communities, to a more positive place after something bad has happened (p. 6).

The most familiar form of disciplinary policy making associated with Restorative Justice is victim-offender mediation (VOM), a practice that has been utilized periodically in the U.S. criminal justice system (Umbreit, 1998). The goal of VOM and Restorative Justice, more broadly, is to first identify specifically what harm has occurred and to then develop, through dialogue, as opposed to a top-down punishment leadership approach, a mutually agreeable solution for repairing the harm and reintegrating the perpetrator into the wider community. For example, a possible outcome of Restorative Justice could be a consequence such as community service (Umbreit, 1998). Restorative Justice attempts to counteract problems within the current punitive framework for dealing with misbehavior that often includes excessive punishment, excessive imprisonment, and victim alienation, by implementing a collaborative process that focuses on repairing harms through reconciliation, dialogue, and greater inclusion of the stakeholders in any particular incident (Umbreit, 1998).

Other authors including Wachtel, Pranis, Hopkins have proposed models similar to Restorative Justice representations as potentially effective alternative ways of administering school discipline, especially as compared to zero tolerance policies, because they take into account the needs of the multiple actors involved in a K-12 disciplinary proceeding as well as the multiple levels of harm that a school community experiences when it has to deal with violence.

These scholars stress that Restorative Justice's greater focus on accountability, reintegration and inclusion (instead of exclusion and exiling), community building, and the development of problem solving skills is particularly beneficial for schools because it allows for the development of a safe, collaborative, and positive environment in which students are more likely to learn alternative behaviors and succeed (Sumner, Silverman, & Frampton, 2010).

In general, restorative practices as described by McCold and Wachtel incorporate a variety of activities and interventions to plan for, address and dialogue regarding the needs of the associated community (2001). These practices provide an avenue to guide and improve relationships among community members, allowing each person the opportunity to develop and apply universally adopted core values (2001). Restorative practices encourage processes that proactively build healthy relationships and a sense of community to prevent and address conflict and wrongdoing (2001). McCold and Wachtel further suggest that if conflict or a transgression occurs, restorative measures allow the individual or individuals who have committed harm to accept responsibility by addressing others affected by the behavior (2001). The acknowledgement of responsibility involves understanding how the act affected others, taking action to mend the harm and making personal changes to avoid a recurrence of the behavior (2001).

Reistenberg also advances that restorative practices also characterize a community's conviction that builds on a foundation and culture of compassion. When the community is infused with restorative strategies, incidents are attended to speedily and in a judicious manner since the framework of caring and support that has been established (2012).

Several types of restorative practices have been developed to accommodate various communities and situations. The first approach is restorative justice. Schiff posits that restorative

justice was developed initially for the justice system to address righting a committed wrong and repairing harm done to victims (2013). Another focus is the repair of relationships injured by the harm perpetrated by an individual or group, allowing for a dialogue between offender(s) and victim(s) on how the harm affected them and how the harm may subsequently be resolved (2013). Restorative justice in educational settings is evidence-based and used to effectively reduce disciplinary referrals, suspensions and expulsions (Reistenberg, 2012).

The second type of restorative practice described by McMorris et al. (2013) is community conferencing, used to provide a context and avenue for addressing broader conflict within the community. Each affected community member is given the opportunity to participate and contribute to the conflict resolution process (McMorris et al., 2013). Educationally, the process allows students, parents, community stakeholders and educators effective ways to prevent and respond to school conflict (McMorris et al., 2013).

The third restorative practice is community service, which Schiff (2013) describes as allowing persons to restore a harm they committed by providing a meaningful service that contributes to the community while adding to the individual's improvement. Community service is often utilized in educational settings.

The fourth restorative practice includes peer mediation and peer juries, explained by Dodge (2011) as a process that assists individuals who have violated a community rule or caused harm to discuss with trained peer jurors why the rule was broken, who was affected and how the harm can be rectified. Educational environments are utilizing the peer jury model to address students who have transgressed a school rule and consult on ways the referred student might right the wrong.

The fifth restorative practice is the circle process. Pranis (2005) suggests that the circle is an adaptable approach that may be used proactively to develop relationships and build a sense of community, or reactively to respond to a community transgression, conflict or other issue that has already occurred. Circles provide community members an opportunity to speak and listen to varying points of view presented in a respectful atmosphere (2005). Reistenberg (2012) states that in schools, circles can be utilized as an educational opportunity to teach social skills like listening, respecting others and problem solving. Since all voices are heard equally in a circle, it allows students, teachers and administrators to offer their perspectives on an issue. Pranis (2005) suggests that circles can therefore empower students and are also used to celebrate achievements, begin and end the day and utilized as a forum for discussing difficult issues.

A sixth restorative practice is the preventive and post-conflict resolution programs. Dodge (2011) suggests that conflict resolution programs provide communities with and show members how to manage potential conflict, assuage hurt feelings and diffuse situations while reducing the inclination to retaliate after conflict has occurred. These programs take community members through scenarios to rehearse team processes to address root causes of conflict and prevent recurring incidents. Dodge (2011) also states that academic environments utilize such programs to provide students with problem solving, self-awareness and self-control skill building. Conflict resolution programs help students walk through their emotions in a safe environment while being trained, guided and positively reinforced.

Peer mediation is a seventh restorative practice and is a method that Losen and Gillespie (2012) sets forth helps trains community members to assist other members by modeling conflict resolution skills while taking a leadership role in the community. Student peer mediation is a proven effective student leadership model assisting other students to resolve differences through

civil discourse. Helping other students practice these unifying social skills increases peace and reduces violence in the school.

There are many other more informal restorative practices as described by McCold and Wachtel (2001) such as those utilized by communities including affective statements that communicate more effectively how individuals feel and affective questioning which allows people to reflect on their behavior and how their actions affected other community members. Proactive engagement with individuals and stakeholder groups, mentor relationships and informal “coffee shop” talks are other examples. Certainly, school-based informal activities mirror these practices with students, staff and administrators.

Gibson and Barr (2013) suggest that through restorative practices, social-emotional experience and learning imparts skills to community members including acknowledging and handling emotions, learning care and concern for others, encouraging positive relationships, formulating responsible decisions, and managing challenging circumstances constructively and ethically. These skills will allow both adults and children alike to make friends, calm themselves when angry, resolve conflicts and make ethical and safe choices. These skills are addressed and practiced through restorative models.

Restorative Justice models incorporate different kinds of practices at varying levels of sophistication ranging from simple circle discussions between the victim, offender, a mediator, and any other stakeholders to affective statements that provide for emotion sharing, to whole-school implementation across a variety of school activities beyond disciplinary practices. Because Restorative Justice focuses on reintegration, dialogue, collaboration, and mutual respect, it offers useful tools for countering the problems created by current regimes of punitive school discipline.

Perceptual Segregation

Restorative Justice might be an attractive alternative to punitive zero tolerance policies because it is a practice that can provide a forum for minority voices to show that systematic inequalities remain a reality in society. Critical Race Theory (CRT) scholars, such as Russell Robinson, have pointed to data that underscores a disparity between the perceptions of whites and the perceptions of African Americans on the issue of racial discrimination in the United States (Robinson, 2008). This phenomenon is called perceptual segregation and posits that “blacks and whites, on average, tend to view allegations of racial discrimination through substantially different perceptual frameworks” (Robinson, 2008, p.1093). In particular, whites generally subscribe to a colorblindness perspective, which “views discrimination as an aberration from a colorblind norm, and . . . regards most forms of race-consciousness as socially disruptive”, while blacks more often subscribe to a “pervasive prejudice perspective”, which “views discrimination as a commonplace event, rooted in daily social dynamics” (Robinson, 2008, p. 1195). The existence of such perceptual segregation is thus highly significant in the context of school discipline because it affects a person’s “very definition of racial discrimination” (Robinson, 2008, p.1195).

According to Robinson, disciplinary decision makers who subscribe to the colorblindness perspective will be more likely to suspend African American students for two interacting reasons. First, they will be less aware that Restorative Justice has the potential to bridge the gap of understanding created, in part, by perceptual segregation. In particular, the restorative practices model focuses on dialogue and on giving all parties an opportunity to interact and to share their perspectives that might lead to the discovery of misunderstandings and of different perceptions of the interactions between members of a school community in the first place. After

all, the “failure . . . to interact meaningfully with [others] and to engage those of other races on racial issues” maintains perceptual differences (Robinson, 2008, p.1196). Secondly, Restorative Justice, especially when it is implemented in schools on a broad and daily basis, encourages meaningful interaction and gives a voice to those who otherwise might not have a safe place to express their thoughts and emotions.

Restorative Justice circles, affective statements, conferences, and the like can also bring to the surface the causes of behavioral problems by encouraging both students and disciplinary decision makers to be honest about how they perceived the other person’s behavior in the interaction that might lead to a suspension for, say, defiance. A teacher may discover that the student felt neglected by the teacher, not sufficiently respected, or that issues outside of the classroom weighed on their behavior in class. The teacher might then understand both how his or her own behavior might have caused the situation to escalate into a suspension-worthy event, or that what the student might need is not being kicked out from school for a number of days, but a showing of respect and care. Even more importantly, students have a greater ability to share their belief that a teacher’s behavior toward them was inappropriate and their belief that their race played a role in this process (Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel, 2010). In the best-case scenario, teachers will reconsider their own potential biases and adjust their behavior appropriately. In any case, they will be reminded that a different interpretation of their behavior exists and that it might impose racial harm on the students they are committed to serve (Costello et al., 2010).

Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace and Bachman (2008) published a longitudinal quantitative study suggesting that punitive approaches to school discipline, such as zero tolerance policies, have failed America’s youth. The purpose of this study was to examine the problem of school discipline among youth in the United States, with a particular focus on racial and ethnic

differences. Specifically, the study sought to document the magnitude of racial and ethnic differences in the prevalence and disproportionality of the problem, to investigate the extent it had or had not changed over time, and determine whether controlling for potential socio-demographic confounders might help to explain why non-White youth experience higher rates of school discipline than their White peers.

Using a large representative sample of White, Black, Hispanic, Asian American, and American Indian middle and secondary high students document the prevalence of both minor and more serious school disciplinary practices experienced, examine explicitly the extent to which there is racial and ethnic disproportionality in the application of minor and serious school disciplinary practices and examine racial and ethnic differences in school discipline longitudinally between the years of 1997 to 2005 (Wallace et al., 2008).

The Wallace et al. (2008) data were gleaned from University of Michigan Monitoring the Future research results utilizing questionnaires with a response rate of 86%. The key dependent variables were designed to indicate the proportion of students who had experienced school discipline across racial and ethnic group and gender subgroups. The primary independent measures are racial and ethnic identification and gender of the participating students.

The research supported that punitive discipline policies are robbing students of needed educational opportunities and are contributing to a wide variety of social problems. Not only that, but racial minorities, especially African Americans, who are already the most vulnerable to societal maltreatment, are hit hardest by such policies (Wallace et al., 2008).

This is not surprising, given the long history of stigmatization, dehumanization, and prejudice that American society has directed toward such minorities. Improper racial stereotypes and implicit bias continue to distort our perception and evaluation of others' behaviors, and thus

negatively affect our decision making regarding how to respond to instances of what the majority considers inappropriate behavior. Such processes seem to be at work in disciplinary decision-making by educational leaders in this country's primary and secondary schools and have led to serious negative and disproportionate treatment of African American youth. One way it could change is through the implementation of Restorative Justice principles into the ways in which schools administer their disciplinary codes (Wallace et al., 2008).

Restorative Justice has shown promise, not only in reducing the overt manifestations of punitive policies, such as suspension numbers, but also in exhibiting conceptual strengths that can counter the processes underlying racial discrimination in the United States more broadly. Restorative Justice deserves a chance to help remediate the damage caused by zero tolerance policies and to undermine the sources of racial conflict that have plagued this nation for too long (Wallace et al., 2008).

Summary

Chapter II reviewed zero tolerance policies recognized as the current dominant approach to K-12 educational discipline and the implications of such policies created by leadership implemented on this faulty premise. The exploration included the significance of zero tolerance discipline policies in degrading student success, teacher and staff self-efficacy and negatively impacting overall school and district climate. Furthermore, zero tolerance has been significantly detrimental to academically marginalized students with disabilities and students of color. The chapter then looked at in-school suspension and PBIS as possible alternatives to zero tolerance. The literature review then explored studies describing restorative practices as a recent and viable alternative disciplinary approach. Finally, the chapter described restorative practices and how they might be utilized in place of zero tolerance policies.

By presenting three similar studies regarding restorative practices in Chapter III the author will glean data necessary to develop an in-depth analysis in Chapter IV of educational leadership and school discipline best practices through triangulation of data from these multiple sources (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION OF CASES

By examining three existing case studies related to implementing Restorative Practices in public schools, this comparative case study analysis will utilize multiple restatements to disclose emergent themes regarding how restorative practices have a positive impact on the students, the school leadership, school climate and the community at large.

Methodological Context

The initial examination of the three texts will allow the author to select a set of criteria to focus on while conducting a comparative and contrastive analysis. Some differences may moderately preclude the researcher from comparing and contrasting the three case study perspectives on the same grounds in all aspects of cases (Yazan, 2015). Yin suggests presenting the design and methods of the case studies to conduct inquiries into a theoretical proposition (2002). The author will then utilize a multiple case study analysis approach to apply the data and findings to develop a comprehensive understanding of the overarching themes for comparison, and relate those themes in an integrative conceptual framework. Therefore, the researcher chose a qualitative multiple case study analysis approach to discover rich data from the three studies and develop a conceptual framework utilizing the three chosen case studies.

Creswell posits that multiple case study analysis is a qualitative strategy of inquiry in which the researcher derives a general process, action, or interaction based on the views of participants in a study (Creswell, 2009). Case study analysis consists of making a detailed description of the case and the setting. The analysis, interpretation and presentation of data

provide a methodology inspiring the emergence of themes as a part of the process (Creswell, 2009). Creswell also offered the importance of describing how or why events emerged. Accordingly, the interpretation includes a credible statement regarding the frequent relationships between concepts established by the data. Through the acknowledgement of similarities and differences in data represented in cases, the researcher both explains and describes an emerging phenomenon. The goal of the multiple case study approach is to generate conclusions that explain how similarities and differences occurred and why (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2008).

Case Study One

Hamilton, M. V. (2008). *Restorative Justice: Reconceptualizing school disciplinary theory and practice* (Doctoral dissertation, University of the Pacific). Retrieved from https://books.google.com/books/about/Restorative_Justice_Reconceptualizing_Sc.html?id=_PHdkyVwb4cC

The purpose of the Hamilton (2008) study was to examine the use of restorative justice practices, specifically circles, to address behavioral infractions among high school students. The findings of this study add to the current literature surrounding school disciplinary theory and practice and provide school administrators with an alternative option for addressing negative student behavior. A qualitative case study approach was utilized to examine the impact of classroom restorative circles (CRC) at one high school. Thirteen participants were interviewed during a one-week visit to West Valley High School (WVHS, identified by pseudonym). Interview responses were transcribed, analyzed and coded into themes representing the experiences of the participants in the circle process.

Methodology

WVHS was chosen as a research site because it is one of a handful of schools still

utilizing restorative justice practices, specifically Circles for an extended period of time. WVHS has a student population of approximately 2,222 students and is located in the United States. For purposes of confidentiality, the research participants, as well as the site name and location, will remain anonymous. WVHS began using the Circle process during the 1999-2000 school year. WVHS began using Healing Circles, Accountability Circles and Classroom Circles to address student behavior during this time. The case study (Hamilton, 2008) was bounded by the fall 2007 academic semester and provided a detailed description of the school's disciplinary philosophy, practices and procedures associated with the use of Circles. The research also included a description of the school, the length and duration of the program, the referral process, the Circle process, documented as well as undocumented outcomes, and follow up activities and implications for future practice. Important aspects of the research revolved around the impact of the Circle process on student behavior and school climate as it relates to disciplinary leadership practices. Likewise, data include defining the perceptions of the faculty, staff and students involved in the Circle process through the use of interviews and observations and describing the school's approach to discipline through document analysis. Interviews consisted of utilizing open-ended questions.

Furthermore, Hamilton does not address disciplinary leadership in the research questions. It should be noted however that disciplinary practices are established by regional or state departments of education, school boards and administered by the individual leadership team in a specific school. Consequently, the research questions and discussions regarding discipline practices in educational settings ultimately refer to the strategic disciplinary leadership plan agreed upon.

The research questions for the Hamilton (2008) study were:

1. How does the implementation of Circles affect the use of predictable disciplinary measures at WVHS?
2. To what extent does the use of Circles impact the occurrence/recurrence of behavioral violations among students at involved in the study?
3. To what degree does incorporating the circle process into established disciplinary practices influence student behavior and the discernment of school climate qualified by student discipline data? (p.7).

A qualitative case study approach was used to answer the research questions identified at the beginning of this section. Qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on a relatively small participant sample, involved in even a single case, selected purposefully. A qualitative case study approach is utilized to describe with depth and in detail, holistically, and in context, the unit of analysis. A single unit of analysis is appropriate because it represents an information-rich case that can yield in-depth understanding and insights as opposed to empirical generalizations (Patton, 2002). In a qualitative case study, the researcher initiated general questions and then refined those questions as the study progressed. This process was intended to produce a general description of the restorative justice practices moving toward a more specific description of the Circle process at WVHS. Observations were achieved by attending Circles conducted at the school and also by examining the disciplinary procedures used by administrators dealing with students referred for infractions. The data were recorded through field notes including both descriptive and reflective formats. The participants' roles in the Circle process along with their perceptions regarding student behavior and school climate emerged from the research findings (Hamilton, 2008). Document analysis included reviewing annual reports, project/grant reports, independent site reports, student attendance records, student retention, rates of recidivism,

student discipline records.

In this study (Hamilton, 2008), narrative inquiry provided the participants an opportunity to tell their stories in their own voice. By telling their stories, the participants informed, validated or challenged their own understanding as well as current considerations of how the Circle process may impact students, staff, the school climate and the community.

Participant Selection

Participants for the Hamilton (2008) study were selected utilizing a combination approach: criterion, operational construct, purposeful random and emergent sampling for the purposes of triangulation, flexibility and to meet multiple needs and interests. The purpose of criterion sampling is to study all cases that converge on a predetermined criterion (Patton, 2002). For criterion sampling, participants had to be currently or previously involved in the Circle process and/or responsible for the implementation of the restorative justice program/practices. The purpose of operational construct sampling involves studying real world examples (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). WVHS fulfilled the operational construct sampling method because the chosen site was one of a minority of schools that currently use restorative justice practices, specifically the Circle process. Regarding purposeful random sampling, the participants were designated from teachers, staff and students involved in restorative justice practices, specifically Circles implemented in the classrooms. The study employed emergent sampling and snowball or chain sampling for the purpose of being open to new interviewing prospects and observations (Patton, 2002) that emerged during the process.

Interview members included three administrators, two teachers, one staff member, five students and two community stakeholders that were familiar with, or participating in the Circle procedures. Other interview participants were also identified as the researcher observed the

Circle activities. These people were provided a brief description of the study, and an invitation to contribute to the research process. Candidates who agreed to participate were then informed of their institutional review board rights and asked to sign an informed consent agreement (Hamilton, 2008).

Student participants were identified from the group of students who had previous Circle time. These students were afforded a concise explanation of the project and an invitation to participate in the project. Interested youth were also provided two informed consent documents. One record required the parent's signature authorizing student participation in the study. The other form necessitated the student's signature affirming their decision to participate (Hamilton, 2008).

Data Collection

Data were gathered during a one-week examination of WVHS restorative practices. Data collection was comprised of consultations, observational data, naturalistic observations (Patton, 2002) and descriptive quantitative data, such as rates of expulsion, suspension and behavior infractions. Observations included attending Circles led in classrooms and scrutinizing the disciplinary processes used with students referred to the associate principal (Hamilton, 2008). These descriptions were recorded through field notes, including both descriptive and reflective anecdotes. Other data that were examined included annual reports, project/grant reports, independent site review reports, student attendance records, student retention, recidivism rates, and possible budget savings data. The interviews, Circle observations and document analysis afforded precious understanding into the success of the Circle process as well as participant opinions of school climate relative to school discipline. Open-ended interviews were carried out with 13 individuals. To insure discretion, all interview participants, as well as the school name,

were assigned aliases. Interviews were done at the school site and lasted 30 to 60 minutes. Adult and student participants were interviewed by the examiner and audio taped for future evaluation. All parents were asked to attend student sessions, yet parents failed to participate. Therefore, the research assistant attended all interviews conducted with the students for added validity and safety. Before the interview conferences, adults and students were informed that they could halt the interview at any time, or decline to answer any query(s) and/or terminate being audio taped. Interview respondents were also guaranteed that no identifying information would associate them with the specific school (Hamilton, 2008).

Data Analysis

Data analysis included transcribing the audio taped interview sessions. The results of the data analysis were utilized to create an inclusive description including the research location and identified participants. The audio taped interviews were transcribed, analyzed and coded for themes, as delineated by Creswell (2009) to establish the participants' perceptions and attitudes regarding student behavior and school climate relative to current discipline procedures utilizing the Circle process. Analyzing the interview responses, observational data and documents included triangulation of the multiple data streams to establish the consistency of the themes and the participants' perspectives that emerged. Triangulation also consisted of cross-data validity checks, member checking and combining both interviewing results and observation field notes (Creswell, 2009). Participants were provided copies of their own transcript and encouraged to review, modify, change or clarify information contained in the document (Hamilton, 2008).

Findings

The Hamilton (2008) research findings included a discussion of specific themes that emerged from the interviews, observations, physical artifacts and the ideas garnered from the

data (Creswell, 1998). Hamilton collected and analyzed the information to assess the relative impact of the Circle process on student behavior and school climate.

An analysis of the interview responses, documents and observational data established five themes: (a) Restorative Approach to School Discipline, (b) Student Behavior, (c) Conflict Resolution and Learning, (d) Personal Satisfaction, and (e) School Climate. These themes were utilized to address the research questions (Hamilton, 2008).

Recommendations

The significance of the Hamilton (2008) study was to make certain that school disciplinary practices and policies utilized by administrators with the intent of controlling student behavior and creating safety and order were also restorative in nature. Traditional disciplinary procedures, such as expulsion, suspension and exclusion are punitive, whereas Circles are a means to the restoration of community and positive relationships. Hamilton (2008) identified that the findings of the study could provide administrators with a restorative model for managing student behavior. Furthermore, the research findings helped administrators engage students in the process of conflict resolution and successfully reduce the use of more punitive responses to behavioral infractions. Finally, the Hamilton (2008) research study assisted regional educational institutions in re-conceptualizing their use of school disciplinary practices as a tool to teach appropriate behavior.

Case Study Two

Mateer, S. C. (2010). *The use of restorative justice practices in a school community traumatized by an incident of planned school violence: a case study* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from dspace.library.colostate.edu

The purpose of the Mateer (2010) research was to look at ways restorative justice

practices were used in response to an incident of severe violence in a school in 2007. A case study format was introduced and interviews with involved administrators, teachers and juvenile justice practitioners were analyzed to document how the school community recovered from the traumatic event, restored and transformed. The study approached the responses to the trauma based in restorative justice values, beliefs and practices, and resolved why restorative justice played a significant part in the total community recovery. The school employed restorative justice practices that were uniquely suited to the event and responsive to the healing needs of the community at the time. Responses included utilizing a talking piece and facilitative conferences served to exemplify the restorative healing process. The restorative justice conferences were held and, subsequently, two of the offending students responded to the concerns of individuals and the school and were reconnected to the school and community.

What was recognized as transformational was that each of the restorative actions taken by the school served not only to repair the harm caused by the event, but also to raise the community to heightened levels of safety, interdependence, respect, and inclusivity.

Methodology

The Mateer (2010) research design and methodology included a uniquely qualitative perspective to show the rich stories of those individuals affected by the incident and its aftermath. Early qualitative analysis relied heavily on data analysis methods adapted from quantitative theory (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). As the qualitative study method evolved, a richness of both method and analysis followed. The ability to delve deeply into the topic, and to be able to present the results in a rich narrative form is part of the rationale behind Mateer's (2010) choice of analysis methods, particularly since it corresponds with restorative justice philosophy.

According to Zehr (2002), restorative justice is based upon the fundamental assumption that society is interconnected. The framework to support this assumption is premised on the following understanding of wrongdoing:

1. Misconduct is a disturbance concerning people and of personal associations.
2. Damage creates accountability.
3. The principal responsibility is to correct the offense. (p.19)

The Mateer (2010) study presents an example in more detail of what has been introduced as the research design and methodology, the research questions, sampling processes and criteria, the means of data collection and the assessment of methodology.

A qualitative paradigm fits well with the phenomena studied here. A qualitative process allowed for thick, rich descriptions and texture, explanation of processes, plus insights and discoveries (Miles & Huberman, 1994). When the Mateer (2010) research project was designed, restorative justice philosophy was also considered in the design. Restorative philosophy considers story, both the importance of the participants telling and of the community hearing each other (Weitekamp, 1999). It is significant to remember Hopkins (2004), who in her discussion of restorative inquiry, lists the following questions as critical components of restorative inquiry:

- What happened?
- Who has been affected and how?
- What can we do to put things right? (p. 30).

Some of the characteristics of qualitative analysis that influenced the choice to use a qualitative paradigm are:

- A natural setting, in context;

- The researcher present;
- The use of multiple and varied sources of data;
- Inductive data analysis;
- An interpretivist inquiry (Creswell, 2013, p. 89).

When discussing case studies, Creswell (2009; 2013) describes them as a strategy in qualitative research including the object of the study, as well as a product of the investigation.

The Mateer (2010) study was circumscribed in both time and space. Multiple sources of information were accessed. The theme of restorative justice included case-based stories, rich in context, making the case study method (Merriam, 1998) ideal. The Mateer research contains an embedded analysis that concerns not only the initial event, but also the restorative justice response to the event. The data collection methods for this case study included a review of documents, interviews with involved parties and personal recollections and observations of the author (Yin, 2003)

The purpose of the Mateer (2010) research was to determine the viability of restorative practices as an alternative to punitive discipline approaches for students. Are restorative practices a viable alternative to suspensions? Insights were revealed by gathering lived experiences of the 2011-2012 12th grade students and staff at one urban high school that implemented a program of restorative practices with fidelity in order to eliminate excessive suspensions and expulsions. The related research questions included:

1. What aspects of the school climate changed as a result of the adoption of the restorative practices model?
2. What impact does the restorative practices model have on student-to- student and student-to-staff relationships?

3. What is the effect of restorative practices implementation on the suspension rate?
4. How did leadership implement the restorative practices model and create the necessary conditions for ownership of the new restorative practices model? (p. 8).

The research methodology employed by Mateer (2010) to resolve the questions addressed by the study was that of qualitative methodology through a single case study. Qualitative research is conducted through an intense and prolonged contact with a life situation, which reflects the everyday life of individuals, groups, societies, and organizations (Miles & Huberman, 1994). “Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2013), “In a case study, a particular individual, program, or event is studied in depth for a defined period of time” (p.135). The study of the restorative practices model, as well as the perspectives and perceptions of administrators, faculty, and 12th grade students in one urban high school, provided the best research benefits for the context of the situation.

The research approach (Mateer, 2010) involved qualitative methodology through the use of a single case study employing the methods of document analysis, observation, and individual interviews. Once completed, an analytical schema of restorative practices would naturally materialize from this study’s research results for the purpose of sustaining future successful replication of the model in other educational systems.

The healing responses to the harm caused by this incident arose organically from many places within the community. These responses were seeped in restorative justice philosophy

(Zehr, 2002). The research questions, outlined in this section, developed organically as well. Although there may be generalizations to be gleaned from this case, the questions were developed with the understanding that this is an intrinsic case study. In keeping with the stated purpose of this study, the questions were designed to maximize the understanding of the key issue in this event (Zehr, 2002). The primary question of the Mateer (2010) research was: “How did a restorative justice philosophy inform a community’s and its’ leaderships response to harm caused by this act of planned school violence?” (p.7)

The secondary Mateer (2010) research questions developed and enlightened the primary question were as follows:

1. What specifically occurred and what was the effect of the incident?
2. Was harm caused to the community and what was that harm?
3. What specific practices were employed to reduce or heal the harm and were they restorative in nature?
4. Did restorative justice practices help restore a feeling of safety and control to the school community?
5. What skills are needed and what backgrounds are necessary for a restorative justice response? (p. 8).

Participant Selection

Participants for the Mateer (2010) study were selected by the roles they fulfilled in the school. They are as follows: School Principal, Assistant Principal, Teacher, Parole Officer, Restorative Justice Facilitator, and a School Resource Officer. The interview participants were all adults and no contact was made with any person who is currently, or was, a juvenile at the time of the incident. The main site for the interviews was the junior high school. It was the

central location of this event and the harm was focused there.

Data Collection

The data collection for this study (Mateer, 2010) included the following elements consistent with the requirements of a bounded single case study (Yin, 1984):

- Written reports from the criminal justice system
- Interviews with the subjects mentioned earlier
- Historical observations from the researcher's perspective.

Data Analysis

As discussed earlier, the data collection methods for this case study (Mateer, 2010) included a review of documents, interviews with involved parties and personal recollections and observations of the researcher. This section considers analysis of those data and the presentation and form of results. Early qualitative analysis relied heavily on data analysis methods adapted from quantitative theory (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). As the field of qualitative study developed, a richness of both method and analysis followed. The ability to delve deeply into the topic, to obtain thick, rich impressions and to present the results in a thick, rich narrative form is the rationale behind this choice of analysis methods. Strategies for analyzing data obtained from mixed method inquiry include data transformation, where quantitative data are transformed to qualitative to make one merged set of data (Creswell, 2009).

Grounded on the fundamental attitudes of restorative justice, a matrix (Mateer, 2010) delineating these principles was aligned with the reactions to the occurrence, signaling that they were, in fact, restorative. To characterize and methodically recapitulate the data collected, exhibit designs consistent with restorative justice writings and common in that field were utilized. The account was presented chronologically to chart the advance of events and the restorative

responses to those incidents. The data were reviewed in ways consistent with legitimacy through triangulation, the use of multiple interview participants, validity, reliability and the acknowledgment of bias.

Findings

The findings of the Mateer (2010) research were presented in narrative form, in the words of the interview subjects that were present during the act of violence and participating in the restorative events that followed. The interview participants all agreed that the response to this incident was beneficial for the school community and might have made the school community a better place than it was before. If there were cultural reasons embedded within the school culture that may have originally led to this incident, the persons who were at the school at the time of the incident felt that those areas had been well addressed. In that way, the school became a better place as a result of the incident and the restorative actions that were taken after the traumatic events occurred. The in-depth examination of this incident and the responses to the harm caused by the incident show that on many levels restorative philosophy infused the responses both of school district personnel and juvenile justice personnel. The culture of the school was changed by that incident, but changed for the better. Attempts were not made to restore the school to pre-incident condition but steps were taken to improve the school community, to critically examine what had happened. Then, taking input from the student and staff community, action was taken to devise ways to address issues such as exclusion, bullying and clique behavior that were seen as detrimental to the school climate.

Recommendations

The recommendations that come out of this study have to do with the importance of receiving restorative justice training prior to any time when trauma or conflict occurs.

Additionally, administrators mentioned that they had used mediation and restorative justice on a daily basis in their interactions at school (Mateer, 2010). The first recommendation, therefore, is that restorative justice training be extended across disciplines, particularly in school settings. Even if there is not a specific restorative justice program in place, an exploration of restorative justice philosophy should be available, especially to those in leadership roles in schools, communities, law enforcement and the criminal justice system. By doing so, restorative justice philosophy will inform the response when there is a need for it, as in this case of a traumatized school community. The next recommendation is to acknowledge the importance of the Discovery program in the school response to this incident. The final recommendation outlined here is that the importance of school memorials and the symbolism associated with them should not be overlooked when responding to and healing from traumatic incidents.

Case Study Three

Reimer, K. (2011, March 11, 2011). An exploration of the implementation of restorative justice in one Ontario public school. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, 119(), 1-42. Retrieved from http://www.academia.edu/5348550/An_Exploration_of_the_Implementation_of_Restorative_Justice_in_an_Ontario_Public_School

Reimer (2011) conducted a case study that explores the implementation of restorative justice within one Ontario Public School. Restorative justice is a philosophy and a process for dealing with harmful behavior, viewing such behavior as a violation of relationships, not rules. Notably, a few Ontario school boards chose to implement restorative justice programs. At its

core, restorative justice views harm as a violation of people and relationships, rather than of rules or laws. Community Justice Initiatives, a Canadian non-profit organization recognized as having started the first modern restorative justice program defines restorative justice as a way of addressing conflict and crime that engages the person who caused the harm, people who were affected by the harm, and the community (Community Justice Initiatives Association, 2017). With this study, the author entered into an exploration of one school board that chose to introduce a restorative justice approach into its schools as part of its Safe Schools initiative. The purpose of this case study was to discover and analyze how restorative justice was being experienced and implemented by teachers and administrators in an Ontario public school district during the 2008-2009 school year.

Prior research in both the justice and educational systems, conducted in Canada, the United States and Australia, has indicated that restorative justice and educational practices effectively reduce recidivism rates and promote learning and positive community relationships (Arnott, 2007; Morrison & Martinez, 2001; Porter, 2007; Riestenberg, 2003a; White, 1998). While there is a growing body of research on the effectiveness of restorative justice in schools and its impact on the lives of students, there has been little written about the teachers and administrators who implement restorative approaches.

Methodology

The Reimer (2011) research used questionnaires, document analysis and interviews in an exploration of participant teachers and administrators employed by an Ontario School Board that implemented a district-wide restorative justice approach. While many teachers and administrators of this School Board were trained in the same restorative justice approach, the manner in which individuals understood, experienced and implemented restorative justice

varied widely. To examine these differences of understanding, experience and practice, the Reimer (2011) study asked the following three related questions: 1) How do teachers and administrators perceive restorative justice and its implementation in their school? 2) How do teachers and administrators perceive their own roles in enacting restorative justice practices? 3) How do the teachers' and administrators' perspectives fit with the school system understanding of restorative justice? (p. 3).

Teachers and administrators do not operate in a vacuum, but within a culture and context that affect their actions and beliefs. Educators, in an effort to create safe and effective learning environments, often find themselves bombarded by new ideas, philosophies and trends.

Depending on a large number of contributing factors, some of these new ideas take root and others disappear quite rapidly. While the quality of the new idea is obviously part of the dynamic, quality is not the sole determinant of which programs become successfully institutionalized (Feldman, 2000; Fullan, 1995).

Participants

By speaking with those people who are entrusted to bring life to the practice of restorative justice, while also being cognizant of the context within which they are working, the reader is given a window into the influences that help restorative justice flourish in schools as well as those factors that damage its chances of survival. Through data review, it becomes clear how educators in one school system experienced and implemented a restorative justice approach (Reimer, 2011).

Reimer (2011) focused on educators and leadership working in the same school of the specified district who were all experiencing restorative justice training. A questionnaire was sent to all teachers and administrators. Out of 36 questionnaires sent, 14 were returned, a 39 percent response rate. Of these, seven respondents indicated a willingness to be contacted for interviews. Two of the respondents were administrators and both involved in restorative justice in their school. One administrator was chosen due to his advocacy of restorative practices in the school (Reimer, 2011).

Data Collection

Five teachers were willing to be interviewed and four returned the questionnaire (Reimer, 2011). Two were male and two were female. Three were classroom teachers and one was a student support individual. All educators received restorative practices training. All participants were interviewed and interviews were electronically recorded and subsequently transcribed (Reimer, 2011).

Data Analysis

Data were initially analyzed by conducting a preliminary review of all the documents provided to Reimer by the School Board (Reimer, 2011). By reviewing the documents, Reimer achieved an understanding of the leadership's articulated understanding of restorative practices in order to later compare this understanding with that of teacher's philosophical comprehension to fully comprehend the district context that educators and leaders operationally followed. Throughout the original reading, Reimer classified words, phrases and images that implied the restorative practices philosophy, chronological program indications, references to the

restorative program efficacy, restorative training specifics, and the interconnectedness of the data to program effectiveness. The texts were transcribed and common themes and ideas were identified. Areas in the initial Reimer overview that were not well supported were reviewed and revised. Next, interview data from the Board Administrator were transcribed and evaluated to add depth and detail to the overarching themes that emerged from the documents (Reimer, 2011).

The preliminary questionnaire sent to all teachers and administrators in the district was intended to both provide an overview of the use, knowledge and beliefs regarding restorative practices, as well as identifying potential interviewees (Reimer, 2011).

The actual interviews contained the largest amount of raw data and were coded by Reimer (2011) according to an adapted version of Auerbach and Silverstein's coding method. The phases as Reimer presented them were: making the text manageable; hearing what was said; and developing theory (2011). After transcription, Reimer selected the relevant data from each interview. Reimer then grouped the relevant text that expressed similar views. Reimer's cadre of repeating concepts included 33 distinct ideas. These 33 repeating ideas were organized into 15 larger theme groups. Finally, the themes were organized into four theoretical constructs (Reimer, 2011).

Significance

The significance of the study of restorative justice is still a relatively new concept in Canadian schools. Thus, the research conducted on schools implementing restorative approaches is limited, and although schools and school boards are interested in learning from these experiences, there are still few resources from which to draw. As a descriptive case study of individuals within a Canadian school system in its fourth year of restorative justice

implementation, the Reimer (2011) study contributes to those limited resources. By examining a school identified as a model by the system superintendent within the district recognized as a leader in restorative justice and identifying specific practices that facilitate the adoption and continuation of restorative practices, it becomes possible to recognize some of the larger challenges that other school systems might face.

Findings

Generally, the Reimer (2011) study demonstrates the complexity involved in educational reform. The multiple factors interacting with one another create a kaleidoscope of changes, with the community unable to process which factors will emerge dominant. The main lesson derived from the Reimer (2011) study is that personal commitment on the part of teachers and even administrators is not enough. Without a system that can support the restorative approach, through public encouragement, sustained training, and complimentary structural procedures, restorative justice will remain at an individual level and be phased out as individuals themselves relocate. Therefore, the inconsistent support from the gatekeepers of change within both the district and region hinders the school board in implementing the restorative practice model jointly agreed upon.

Recommendations

In conclusion, Reimer (2011) found that the complexity of educational reforms involved in restorative practice programs require a herculean amount of personal commitment, particularly from the teachers and administrators involved in restorative efforts engaged in to heal the community after a school act of violence. Without a system in place that will support the restorative approach, the program is doomed to failure. The Reimer (2011) study demonstrates the need for an extensive and ever-responsive plan executed by supportive school board

administrators. Only then will the community culture change and be self-sustaining, becoming a normative of the educational culture instead of an unexploited alternative.

Summary

Chapter III presents three unique qualitative case studies, Hamilton (2008), Mateer (2010) and Reimer (2011), in public school settings that utilize restorative discipline practices. The studies exemplify how restorative discipline affects individual students, their families, the staff, teachers, administrators, the school community's climate and the surrounding larger community in various positive ways. The purpose of the qualitative approach utilizing a comparative research study design is to uncover effective educational leadership disciplinary processes in K-12 public schools through the multiple case study analysis. Since zero tolerance discipline practices have been unsuccessful and detrimental to school populations, information regarding effective alternative discipline programs in public school districts necessitates further study by effective leadership. To meet the current and future needs of students, particularly those most effected by the zero tolerance policies still used in schools, it is incumbent on policy and decision makers to focus on the importance of strategic, effective discipline planning and implementation.

Chapter IV will employ a qualitative data analysis, comparing and contrasting the data in the three case studies, Hamilton (2008), Mateer (2010) and Reimer (2011), utilizing a table matrix to assist with organization and subsequent synthesizing of the data presented in the cases, searching for words and word combinations to triangulate concepts, therefore allowing the researcher to analyze the existing data in a more coherent and efficient way. As the data are organized, compared and contrasted, themes will emerge for further discussion and elaboration as well as areas of discrepancy or omission that will be noted for further discussion or

subsequently mentioned for future research (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2008).

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of the current qualitative study utilizing a comparative research design was to uncover effective educational leadership disciplinary processes in K-12 public schools utilizing a multiple case study analysis. Three unique qualitative case studies in public school settings that utilize restorative discipline practices were chosen to exemplify how restorative discipline affects individual students, their families, the staff, teachers, administrators, the school community's climate and the surrounding larger community in various positive ways. The present chapter employed a rigorous comparative analysis conducted to distinguish common themes, outcomes and findings of the three studies as well as disclosing any discrepancies or incompatible data and findings discovered through the comparative analysis process. Comparative analysis encompasses a layered strategy to advance commonality and triangulation of data points and themes. Utilizing a data matrix, the commonalities and differences were visualized and noted for inclusion in a later discussion set forth in the last chapter.

4. 1 Cross-study Findings Comparison

Table 1 illustrates a visual representation of the comparison of the three designated case studies.

Table 1: Brief Comparison of Three Case Studies

Characteristics	Case Study One Hamilton (2008)	Case Study Two Mateer (2010)	Case Study Three Reimer (2011)
Theme	Restorative justice:	The use of restorative	An exploration of the

	Reconceptualizing school disciplinary theory and practice	justice practices in a school community traumatized by an incident of planned school violence: A case study.	implementation of restorative justice in an Ontario public school.
Problem	<p>The increase of school violence and the political and social pressure to maintain school order often overshadow students' rights, especially for students of color. Students may be disciplined under stringent, punitive practices that leave little room for interpretation of the</p>	<p>How does a school community begin to heal from incidents of real or planned violence? One answer may be restorative practices. Using a case study of an incident of violence in a middle school, it was hoped to reveal how restorative justice practices were applied to the healing process in this circumstance.</p>	<p>In 2000 the Ontario Ministry of Education introduced the Safe Schools Act (Bill 81). Some school administrators emphasized mandatory consequences for student actions as outlined in the Act; others introduced preventative anti-bullying or conflict resolution measures. A few Ontario school boards introduced</p>

	<p>facts or the circumstances surrounding the offense. The penalty for behavioral infractions is likely to be formulaic and rigid. Conversely, restorative justice practices aim to build social capital by involving the entire school community in a process that seeks to understand, repair and prevent harmful behavior. Previous research has documented restorative justice practices and</p>		<p>restorative justice approaches into schools as part of the 2000 Safe Schools mandate.</p>
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	<p>programs as well as the effects of zero tolerance policies.</p> <p>However, there is limited research to examine the impact of utilizing Circles in response to student conduct referrals among high school students. This study focuses on the restorative justice strategy known as Circles.</p>		
Purpose	<p>The purpose of this study is to examine the use of restorative justice practices, specifically Circles to address</p>	<p>The purpose of the research was to gain insight and understanding as to how restorative justice was incorporated into the</p>	<p>The purpose of this case study was to discover and analyze how restorative justice was experienced and implemented by teachers and</p>

	<p>behavioral infractions among high school students. This study focuses on the restorative justice practice known as Circles at West Valley High School (WVHS).</p>	<p>response to violence and how these practices can be applied to future traumatic events of this type. The study examined many types of restorative practices and the many forms these practices took. Interviews, storytelling, and an examination of records were used to connect the reader to what happened at the time and the effect it had on the persons involved.</p>	<p>administrators in a specific Ontario Public School Board during the 2008/2009 school-year.</p>
Theoretical framework	<p>Critical theory analyzes the</p>	<p>Restorative justice was the major</p>	<p>Woodbury and Gess-Newsome's (2002)</p>

	<p>formation and enforcement of power issues between groups and individuals. The emphasis reveals inherent winners and losers within social systems. Critical research exposes privileged groups and their desire to maintain the status quo with the intent of restricting marginalized groups and their access to freedom and liberation (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). Critical theory</p>	<p>theoretical framework referenced in the study. Mateer cited Kay Pranis, a prolific writer and practitioner in the field of restorative justice, who describes the restorative lens as informed by the following values (2006):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -All humans have value. -Relationships are more important than power. -The personal is the political. <p>Restorative practices integrate</p>	<p>model of educational reform, the Teacher-Centered Systemic Reform (TCSR) model as well as Feldman's (2000) concept of teacher's personal practice theories created a framework for both data collection and analysis of the implementation of restorative justice.</p>
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	<p>provides a framework for reconceptualizing issues of power and influence regarding school disciplinary procedures so that practice move beyond dominance and control of students to reflection and transformation of student behaviors. Laub and Sampson's (2003) age-graded social control theory provides a justification for disciplinary practices that teach appropriate behavior. By</p>	<p>wisdom from a variety of disciplines and fields including education, psychology, social work, criminology, sociology and organizational development focused on building healthy communities, increasing social capital, decreasing crime and antisocial behavior, repairing harm and restoring relationships (Wachtel, 1999).</p>	
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	<p>teaching appropriate behavior, educational institutions can provide students with a critical understanding of their behavior and opportunities to transform their reality.</p> <p>The use of punitive disciplinary practices to address minor to moderate behavioral infractions may reinforce concepts of inequity, injustice and control. Zero-tolerance may not be the answer to the</p>		
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	<p>problem of school violence.</p> <p>Restorative discipline provides a new theoretical framework for viewing wrongdoing diametrically opposed to the traditional practice of administering punishment in response to behavior infractions.</p> <p>Restorative discipline is rooted in a number of other educational movements. These movements or perspectives include Conflict Resolution</p>		
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	Education (CRE), Character Education (CE) and Daniel Goleman's work in Emotional Literacy.		
Research questions	<p>The study addressed the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -How did the implementation of Circles impact the use of traditional disciplinary procedures at WVHS? -To what extent does the implementation of Circles impact the occurrence or recurrence of behavioral infractions among 	<p>How did a restorative justice philosophy inform a community's response to harm caused by an act of planned school violence? Secondary questions:</p> <p>What specifically occurred and what was the effect (harm) of the incident?</p> <p>What was done to repair the harm, specifically what restorative justice</p>	<p>1. How do teachers and administrators perceive restorative justice and its implementation in their school? 2. How do teachers and administrators perceive their own roles in enacting restorative justice practices? 3. How do the teachers' and administrators' perspectives fit with the School Board's understanding of restorative justice?</p>

	<p>students at WVHS?</p> <p>-To what extent does integrating the Circle process into traditional disciplinary practices impact student behavior and the perception of school climate relative to student discipline?</p>	<p>practices were employed?</p> <p>Did restorative justice help restore a feeling of safety and control to the school community?</p> <p>What background skills did the responders possess that led to a restorative response?</p>	
Methodology	<p>A qualitative case study approach was chosen. An initial search for potential research sites resulted in a limited number of high schools utilizing restorative practices, specifically the</p>	<p>The primary site for the narrative case study research was a particular junior high school. It was the central location of the event and the harm was focused there.</p> <p>The interview subjects were all</p>	<p>Case study using individual semi-structured, open-ended interviews at a single school employing RP.</p> <p>Selection</p> <p>An initial interview with the Board Administrator gained information on the</p>

	<p>Circle process.</p> <p>Because the implementation of restorative justice practices and the Circle process were fragmented, most schools could not provide sufficient research data required for the study. WVHS began using the Circle process during the 1999-2000 school year. The case study occurred during the 2007 fall academic semester.</p> <p>Observational data were recorded through field notes</p>	<p>involved adults and no contact was made with any person who was a juvenile at the time of the incident.</p> <p>Interviewees had the opportunity to review responses for accuracy.</p> <p>The data collection methods included a review of documents, interviews with involved parties and personal recollections and observations of the researcher. Based on the foundational principals of restorative justice, a matrix outlining these principles was</p>	<p>districts RP philosophy and expectations and a recommendation of a specific school where staff were trained and utilized RP with fidelity. It was suggested that Reimer focus on educators in the same school to better understand the context in which they all experienced restorative justice.</p> <p>After an initial questionnaire sent to all 36 administrators and teachers of the school, 14 were returned, a response rate of 39%. Of the 14, seven agreed to be interviewed. Two</p>
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	<p>in both descriptive and reflective formats. Document analysis included review of annual reports, project/grant reports, independent site reports, student attendance records, student retention, rates of recidivism, student discipline records, cost saving information and an evaluation of school climate.</p> <p>Participants for the study were selected utilizing a combination approach including criterion, operational</p>	<p>aligned with the data responses to the incident, determining which actions were restorative in nature. Because responses to the event changed with changing needs over time, a chronological order was superimposed using a time-ordered display (Miles & Huberman, 1994). A descriptive case study in narrative format was chosen to best honor the experiences of the participants. The narrative was presented chronologically to</p>	<p>were administrators and five were teaching staff. One administrator identified by the Board Administrator as strongest in RP, was chosen for the study. Of the five staff, four responded, two female and two male, and were selected as participants.</p> <p>Data Collection</p> <p>The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Each participant was provided a copy of the transcription with an invitation to respond with comments and clarifications.</p> <p>Data Analysis</p>
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	<p>construct, purposeful random and emergent sampling for the purposes of triangulation, and flexibility.</p> <p>Participant members included three administrators, two teachers, one staff member, five students and two community members familiar with restorative processes.</p> <p>Data were collected during a one-week site visit to WVHS by the researcher.</p> <p>Observations</p>	<p>follow the development of events and the restorative responses to those events. To maintain confidentiality and protect the identities of all involved, the interview subjects were coded. Finally, the data were summarized in ways that address validity and goodness criteria through the use of triangulation, the use of multiple interview subjects, validity, reliability and the acknowledgment of bias.</p>	<p>Board documents were examined first to gain the Board's expressed understanding of RP to later compare this understanding with teachers' and administrators' expressed understandings; and comprehend the regional context of RP.</p> <p>Next, all interview data were coded using Auerbach and Silverstein's (2003) three coding phases. After coding, 33 repeating ideas occurred. These 33 repeating ideas were</p>
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	<p>included attending</p> <p>Circles conducted on campus and examining the disciplinary procedures used with students referred to the assistant principal.</p> <p>Data analysis involved transcribing the audio taped interviews verbatim.</p> <p>Categorical aggregation was utilized to examine the collection of instances within the data to find issue-relevant meanings regarding the impact</p>		<p>then organized into 15 larger themes. Finally, the themes were organized into four theoretical constructs.</p>
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	<p>of restorative justice and the Circle Process. The audio taped interviews were transcribed, analyzed and coded for themes to ascertain the administrator participants' perceptions and attitudes on student behavior and school climate relative to student discipline. Analyzing the interview responses, observational data and documents assisted in triangulation of the multiple sources of</p>		
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	<p>data to determine the consistency of the themes and the participants' perspectives that emerged from the study. Triangulation also consisted of cross-data validity checks, member checking and combining both interview results and observation field notes.</p>		
Findings	<p>WVHS has integrated Circles, a restorative justice practice, into its formal disciplinary procedures. School administrators have</p>	<p>The research followed the format of restorative justice conferences (Hopkins, 2004). The format of restorative justice conferencing</p>	<p>School Board and Regional From 2004 to 2007, funding and been available for RP training and implementation efforts. In 2004, the program</p>

	<p>opted to address student conduct with a restorative approach versus a punitive system. However, the Circle process does not negate the use of more formal measures when the behavioral offense threatens school safety. Moreover, school administrators have the option of using the Circle process in place of more formal disciplinary concerns. The determination depends upon the</p>	<p>is commonly accepted as including:</p> <p>What happened?</p> <p>Who was harmed by what happened and how were they harmed?</p> <p>What can be done to repair the harm?</p> <p>Section One of findings details what happened and addresses research question one.</p> <p>To determine what happened, the police report is referenced as well as the interviews of the involved persons.</p> <p>Also, the role of each</p>	<p>saved ten students from expulsion and 45 from suspension. Public communication was positive and celebratory, citing many improvements to the school community. In 2007, the district was hailed as a RP leader and the program a success. Individuals and the administration received regional honors. The school board had even set a national goal that every student in Canada have access to RP. In the Fall, 2007, outside funding came to a halt and by Fall 2008 over</p>
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	<p>circumstances of the incident, the severity of the infraction and the willingness of the participants to restore and heal the harm.</p> <p>The Circle process provided students an opportunity to be active participants in the disciplinary process. The Circle process provides a learning experience for students and allows adults the chance to acknowledge and understand deeper issues that might be challenging a</p>	<p>interviewee as well as any past training in restorative justice or restorative practices is ascertained.</p> <p>Section Two addresses who was harmed and in the opinions of the interview subjects, what that harm was.</p> <p>Section Three continued to follow the parameters of a restorative justice conference and addressed the question of what was done to repair the harm. Section Four asked a final follow-up question, “Do you</p>	<p>350 staff were backlogged for RP training.</p> <p>Four theoretical constructs and 15 themes emerged from the repeating ideas taken from interview data. The first construct was <i>Constructing personal understandings of restorative justice</i> and incorporated a definition of RP, enactment of RP, transmission of RP and inappropriate use of RP. The next construct was <i>Facilitating adoption of new personal practical</i></p>
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	<p>student. Data suggested that the Circle process did directly impact the participants' perception of school climate positively. Moreover, WVHS had no formal system for tracking students who were involved in the Circle process. However, both student and adult participants expressed their satisfaction with the Circle process to resolve conflicts and indicated a sense of safety on campus.</p>	<p>believe the actions taken addressed the harm, why or why not?"</p> <p>The first finding:</p> <p>A background in restorative practices, mediation, or the Discovery process on the part of all persons interviewed tended to create fertile ground for restorative practices responses in this case.</p> <p>The restorative practices implemented in this case were creative and particularly suited to the climate in the school building</p>	<p><i>theories</i> and included benefits for students, benefits for the school community and positive fits with past theories. The third construct was <i>Complicating contextual factors of structure and culture</i> and identified obstacles to overcome, RP requires a strong community, working against mainstream culture, collegial collaboration, and community connections. The final construct was <i>Inconsistent support from the gatekeepers of</i></p>
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	<p>Among the many challenges, adult respondents cited the issues of time, lack of student participation and staff resistance as obstacles to Circle success. Circles conducted at WVHS included the following essential elements: a ceremony, a talking piece, a facilitator or circle keeper, ceremony guidelines and consensus decision-making.</p> <p>Unlike traditional disciplinary procedures, Circles</p>	<p>at the time. The school leaders did not fall back on established responses but, being informed by their past training and experience, developed responses and took actions that were designed to directly address the harm at that particular time in ways that were unique to that situation.</p> <p>Even if a person's position was not primarily focused on restorative justice, having the exposure to those values</p>	<p><i>change</i> and included top-down support, feeling out of the loop, and lack of sustainability.</p>
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	<p>conducted at WVHS were not determined by a prescribed formula. Likewise, administrators did not mandate a Circle process as a consequence for inappropriate behavior.</p> <p>Although there were insufficient data to suggest a direct correlation between the rates of suspension and the Circle process, the data suggested that the Circle process was an effective disciplinary intervention for</p>	<p>allowed him or her to use restorative principles when the need arose.</p> <p>The actions taken; the Tree, the Summit, the sculpture, and eventually the restorative justice conference, helped to heal the harm according to the recollections of the interview subjects.</p> <p>Persons playing a leadership role in this situation were well versed in restorative justice practices.</p>	
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	<p>reducing conflict and improving student behavior.</p> <p>In terms of the school climate relative to student discipline, the data for this study revealed that participants felt safe on campus and viewed the Circle process as an effective way to resolve conflicts.</p> <p>The issues of power and control were minimized because the Circle activity places all participants on a level playing field.</p>		
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	<p>Data also supported that the Circle process was used to address issues where staff members experienced conflict with other staff. The process thus focused on relationship building and community-building among both students and staff.</p>		
Limitations	<p>The four limitations in this study were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -A small sample size of 13 student participants were 	<p>One incident was examined in this case study, involving one school community at large, specifically a junior high school</p>	<p>The case study is based on four teachers and two administrators in one specific School and one specific School Board, and is</p>

	<p>interviewed.</p> <p>-Only one school was chosen and data gathered regarding one restorative practice, specifically Circles, was analyzed to address the research questions.</p> <p>-There were time constraints in terms of how much data could be reasonably collected during the one-week site visit.</p> <p>-WVHS continued to use the restorative practices devoid of external funding, differentiating it from other schools</p>	<p>located in a school district west of the Mississippi. There were three juvenile perpetrators who pled guilty to planning a school shooting. The research looked at those responses to the harm the school community experienced from that incident and fell within the realm of restorative practices. The incident occurred in 2001 and the responses examined continued into 2003. Even though restorative justice practices generally</p>	<p>impossible to generalize the findings and apply them universally to other schools and school boards.</p> <p>The school was considered to be a model restorative practice school within the School Board and does not preclude that different results might be discovered at other locations.</p> <p>Perceptions of respondents were heavily influenced by personal experiences, impacting generalizability.</p>
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	<p>where funding hampered the restorative efforts, making generalization difficult or impossible.</p>	<p>include the offenders involved in an event, the study excluded the juvenile offenders and focused primarily on the responses that included and affected the school community.</p>	
Recommendations	<p>Instead of a consequence-driven approach that delivers a punitive response for behavioral infractions, school personnel could employ a restorative approach to discipline that values the</p>	<p>The recommendations that come out of this study show the importance of receiving restorative justice training prior to any time when trauma or conflict occurs.</p> <p>The importance of school memorials and</p>	<p>Due to lack of time and research focus, many voices were left out of this study: parents, students, teachers who had not received any training in RP, superintendents, etc. If those voices had been included, the data would have produced a richer portrait of the</p>

	<p>interconnectedness of all people and their relationships.</p> <p>A restorative approach challenges the school leadership to critically examine their view of conflict as a tool to model and teach appropriate behavior. Also encourages administrators to provide youth with social skills necessary for the future</p> <p>The school leadership is faced with the responsibility of</p>	<p>the symbolism associated with them should not be overlooked when responding to and healing from traumatic incidents.</p> <p>Further research suggestions include allowing the offenders and the student reporters of the incident as well as a random cross section of the student body to be included in the interview process. Also, the female student reporters were unrecognized victims.</p> <p>They felt unsafe and</p>	<p>school community.</p> <p>The study did not gather data on actual disciplinary measures, perceived changes in school climate, bullying activity or any other indicator of success.</p> <p>The study should be replicated after the recommendations have been implemented to determine if perceptions of teachers and leaders have changed regarding RP.</p> <p>RP must be supported from the top-down and taught to as many individuals as possible.</p> <p>The Board</p>
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	<p>responding to all community members in ways that value honesty and respect. Instruction through disciplinary procedures and not exclusion provides the vehicle for this mission to be accomplished. Students must be strategically involved in the process of creating order and safety on a school campus. The individuals who are most affected by the school environment cannot be systematically</p>	<p>unwanted in their school after reporting the incident. In retrospect, they were not included in any of the healing processes and should have been. Future research into the connection between the Discovery process and restorative principles and values may explain why the two meshed well and were used extensively in the healing process. Future research is also needed in the area of determining</p>	<p>Administrator should recommend that courses be offered in restorative practices. By offering such staff development, would restorative justice be seen as normative rather than a fad? Would this contribute to sustainability? Data should be collected on staff and administration that received the training for several years into their practice. Do they utilize restorative approaches even if they are doing so in isolation? Does the school climate change as a result?</p>
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	<p>excluded from the resolution process.</p> <p>A further recommendation is that school administrators closely monitor the use of traditional disciplinary practices to ensure that students are not denied the opportunity to learn positive conflict resolution skills and appropriate behavior practices. Also, leaders should monitor the educational services provided students who are excluded to</p>	<p>what happened in other similar circumstances. In other communities experiencing interrupted school shootings, did those communities suffer harm?</p> <p>Restorative justice is becoming more and more widespread in schools. In order to implement the best practices, more research needs to be done. In addition to how restorative justice affects the schools, research needs to be conducted into how</p>	
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	<p>ensure that they will still progress academically.</p> <p>Increased monitoring of excluded students will require that schools reconceptualize the premise that unruly students forfeit their access to education.</p> <p>Finally, higher education programs instruct schoolteachers and administrators in school law issues, classroom management and policies relevant to school discipline. An</p>	<p>restorative justice affects students and their social and emotional well-being and development.</p>	
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	<p>inclusion of the restorative practices processes including Circles would enhance school and district personnel abilities to effectively manage student and staff behaviors and create a safe school environment for all.</p> <p>Future study recommendations should examine how educational leaders and practitioners can utilize Circles and other restorative processes to produce significant changes in school climate</p>		
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	<p>and school culture.</p> <p>A second recommendation was to develop effective evaluation tools to measure the short and long-range effects of utilizing Circles and restorative practices in the school setting.</p> <p>Do students consistently apply the newly acquired conflict resolution and social skills in future situations?</p> <p>Research examining the possible costs and relative savings associated with restorative practices</p>		
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	<p>would inform school and district administrators to make data-driven decisions.</p> <p>Future research could potentially examine several high schools that utilize a restorative approaches, to determine if results are consistent among different school communities and districts.</p> <p>Would the Circle process produce the same results in an urban high school serving mostly low-income or students</p>		
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	<p>of color?</p> <p>Finally, how do school systems undergo the philosophical shift required to implement the use of Circles and restorative practices to address student behavior? What training is required of school staff, parents and students as the school transforms its disciplinary philosophy from a punitive, consequence-driven approach to a more restorative view?</p>		
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	How is the paradigm shift accomplished?		
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4.2 Case Study Research Problems

Each case study research problem was stated uniquely. However, all three studies were organized to gather observations and opinions regarding the use of restorative discipline practices in identified learning communities acknowledging novel or innovative relationships that might emerge from the collection and analysis of the data. All three case studies employed comparable terminology when discussing zero tolerance discipline procedures and examined these policies in the review of the literature. All three studies also spoke of educational restorative justice and educational restorative practices synonymously. Educational restorative discipline practices grew out of the restorative justice movement that originated in the 1970s as practitioners attempted to emphasize repairing harm and relationships between offenders and victims rather than underscoring offenders punishment and negating victim recognition and dialogue (Watchel, 2016).

4.3 Research Questions

Hamilton (2008) posed the following research questions including:

1. How did the implementation of Circles impact the use of traditional disciplinary procedures at WVHS?
2. To what extent does the implementation of Circles impact the occurrence or recurrence

of behavioral infractions among students at WVHS?

3. To what extent does integrating the Circle process into traditional disciplinary practices impact student behavior and the perception of school climate relative to student discipline? (p. 6-7).

Mateer (2010) presented the following questions:

1. How did a restorative justice philosophy inform a community's response to harm caused by an act of planned school violence?
2. What specifically occurred and what was the effect (harm) of the incident?
3. What was done to repair the harm, specifically what restorative justice practices were employed?
4. Did restorative justice help restore a feeling of safety and control to the school community?
5. What background skills did the responders possess that led to a restorative response? (p. 27).

The Reimer (2011) study included the following research questions:

1. How do teachers and administrators perceive restorative justice and its implementation in their school?
2. How do teachers and administrators perceive their own roles in enacting restorative justice practices?
3. How do the teacher and administrator perspectives fit with the School Board's understanding of restorative justice? (p. 11).

4.4 Theoretical Framework

Hamilton (2008) reveals the use of three primary theories underpinning the case study.

The first is Critical Theory that analyzes and explains the formation and reinforcement of power between both groups and individuals. The concept divulges that within any social system there are winners and losers based on privilege and this groups desire to remain in power by maintaining the status quo. Actions that enhance the dominant groups power and authority naturally restrict marginalized groups and their access to upward mobility and equal access to power, stifling their voice and growth as individuals. Hamilton suggests that it is this conceptualization of power and privilege that has influenced educational systems, recognizing them as a major component of society. The use of school disciplinary procedures that maintain power and control over students creates a culture that manifests beyond dominance and allows punitive discipline to become a reflection of student self-perceptions and intimates that student behaviors can be transformed solely through negative measures. Therefore, use of punitive disciplinary practices to address minor to moderate behavioral infractions may reinforce concepts of inequity, injustice and lack of control.

Hamilton suggests a more positive disciplinary theory is the age-graded social control theory, postulating a justification for disciplinary practices that teach appropriate behavior by providing students with a critical understanding of their conduct and opportunities to transform their reality (2008). The aforementioned theory affords a transition to restorative disciplinary practices that provide a new theoretical framework for viewing wrong doing that is diametrically opposed to the traditional practice of administering punishment in response to behavior infractions. Restorative discipline philosophy is recognized through a number of other educational movements. These movements or perspectives include Conflict Resolution Education (CRE), Character Education (CE) and Emotional Literacy programs (Hamilton, 2008).

The Mateer (2010) research utilizes restorative justice as the major theoretical framework referenced in the study. Mateer describes the restorative lens as one informed by universal human values that regard building relationships as more important than holding either power or privilege. This personal reality influences all societal norms. Restorative practices integrate wisdom from a variety of disciplines and fields including education, psychology, social work, criminology, sociology and organizational development. The multi-disciplinary view therefore integrates building healthy communities, increasing social capital, decreasing crime and antisocial behavior, repairing harm and restoring relationships (Mateer, 2010).

Reimer (2011) sets forth the theory of teacher-centered educational reform and the concept of teachers' personal practice theories as the framework for both data collection and analysis of the implementation of restorative justice in the depicted case study. Reimer suggests that reform initiatives need to first take into consideration the contextual factors of structure and culture.

Reimer (2011) further stipulates that these contextual factors may include the interactions of national, provincial and municipal governments, agencies and organizations, the structures and climates of schools and classrooms, and cultural norms of behavior. Placed within this context are the individual teachers and administrators. Their thinking and practices emerge from the interplay between their knowledge and beliefs reflected in their personal and contextual dynamics. For educators to put aside previously held ideas and practices regarding discipline and accept restorative justice as a new way of thinking and responding, they must accept the practices as sensible, equally beneficial as practices previously utilized and able to improve current disciplinary practices.

4.5 Study Methodologies

The predominant similarity of the three chosen case studies is their consideration of restorative discipline practices in educational communities as an alternative to the currently used punitive zero tolerance discipline policies. The research in each study was supported by data that were gathered in school districts in the North American region. All studies were acknowledged as qualitative case studies gleaned observations and information from identified K-12 public school district communities. Similarities also included the data collection procedures that encompassed discipline policy documentation and student disciplinary data as well as formal interviews of district and school administrators, educational staff and other stakeholders as well as informal reflections, observations and researcher notes.

The comparisons and contrasts of the methodologies of the three identified case studies engaged analogous qualitative approaches. Closer inspection showed that the Hamilton (2008) research incorporated a case study taking place in one high school that utilized a specific restorative practice identified as Circles. West Valley High School (WVHS) was chosen as the study site because Circles had been a restorative practice integrated into discipline procedures since the 1999 school year. The Hamilton (2008) study took place during the 2007 fall semester and was published in 2008. The Mateer (2010) case study focused on a single junior high school where an intended violent act by student perpetrators was thwarted and created an event of healing for the school community, the district and the broader community. The documentation of the case data details were narrative in nature, deriving reflections collected through discussions with adult interview subjects all involved in the incident. The Reimer (2011) research focused on one public school in Ontario, Canada where restorative practices were actively incorporated as part of the overall cadre of disciplinary procedures recognized by one district and employed by

disciplinary leaders at one specified school. Data were gathered using semi-structured, open-ended interviews with the Board administrator, an identified, knowledgeable school administrator and trained staff at the one specific school to gain insights into how these participants experienced restorative discipline practices (2011). Thus, although the research data were assembled from the three identified case studies with many apparent methodological similarities, each case also acknowledged unique perspectives of restorative practices.

4.5.1 Site Selection

The Hamilton (2008) research site was chosen from a limited number of high schools utilizing restorative practices to address disciplinary issues and encourage positive student socio-emotional learning and school community climate through the Circle process. Since West Valley High School (WVHS) had benefitted from restorative approaches since the 1999-2000 school year and had continuity with Circles and included administrative and staff training in restorative practices through the 2007 academic calendar, the research was initiated at this location for the aforementioned reasons.

In the Mateer (2010) case study, the specific junior high school was established for the research due to the occurrence of an act of planned school violence thwarted prior to the plans fulfillment. Restorative practices were chosen to assist in the healing process of the school community and the surrounding municipality.

Reimer (2011) conducted a preliminary interview with a Canadian District Board Administrator to ascertain if the district understood and valued the restorative philosophy, trained administrators and staff in restorative principles and if there were any schools the Board supervised that utilized a restorative practice model as disciplinary expectations shared with students. The Board Administrator made a proposal of one specific school and suggested that the

research focus on educators in the same site to better understand the context in which they all experienced restorative justice.

4.5.2 Participant Selection

Participants for the Hamilton (2008) study were selected utilizing a combination approach including criterion, operational construct, purposeful random and emergent sampling for the purposes of triangulation, and flexibility. Participant members included three administrators, two teachers, one staff member, five students and two community members familiar with restorative processes.

The Mateer (2010) research initially identified a school principal, assistant principal, a teacher, a parole officer, a restorative justice facilitator and a school resource officer. Every attempt was made to present a truthful depiction of each respondents recollections. The interview subjects were all adults and no contact was made with juveniles. Interviewees had the opportunity to review their transcripts for accuracy.

Participant respondents in the Reimer (2011) case study were identified by first accessing an initial interview with the board administrator to gain information on the district's restorative practice philosophy and expectations and recommendations designating a specific school where staff were trained and utilized restorative practices with fidelity. The board administrator also suggested that Reimer focus on educators in the same school to better understand the context in which they had all experienced restorative training and usage. An initial questionnaire was sent to all 36 administrators and teachers of the designated school and 14 were returned, a response rate of 39%. Of the 14, seven agreed to be interviewed. Two were administrators and five were teaching staff. One administrator was recognized by the board administrator as strongest in restorative practices and was chosen for the study. Of the five staff, two females and two males

completed the full process and were selected as participants.

4.5.3 Data Collection

The Hamilton (2008) study data were recorded through field notes in both descriptive and reflective formats. Document data collection also included review of annual reports, project/grant reports, independent site reports, student attendance records, student retention, rates of recidivism, student discipline records, cost saving information and an evaluation of school climate.

Data were collected by Mateer (2010) during a one-week site visit to WVHS. Observations were gathered by attending restorative circles conducted on campus and by examining the disciplinary procedures used with students referred to the assistant principal (2010). During the Mateer case study, data collection methods included a review of school documents, interviews with involved parties and personal recollections and observations of the researcher. To maintain confidentiality and protect the identities of all participants, the interview subjects were designated using a numbered code.

In the Reimer (2011) research study, the school board website and pertinent documents, including the school board's restorative training materials and public communications and a semi-structured interview with the board administrator, provided important background and programmatic information. Next, a questionnaire was piloted at the designated school before sending a finalized version to the selected teachers and administrator. The questionnaire highlighted educator practices, knowledge and beliefs. Participants were requested to respond to nine statements, three based on their practice of restorative justice, three on their knowledge and three on their beliefs. After the questionnaires were reviewed, interviews with selected participants were held. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Each participant was

provided a copy of the transcription with an invitation to respond with comments and clarifications for accuracy.

4.5.4 Data Analysis

The Hamilton (2008) data analysis involved transcribing the audio interviews verbatim. Categorical aggregation was utilized to examine the collection of instances restorative practices were mentioned within the data to find issue-relevant meanings regarding the impact of restorative justice and specifically, the circle process. The audio taped interviews were transcribed, analyzed and coded for themes to ascertain the administrator participants' perceptions and attitudes on student behavior and school climate relative to student discipline. Analyzing the interview responses (Hamilton, 2008), observational data and documents assisted in triangulation of the multiple sources of data to determine the consistency of the themes and the participants' perspectives that emerged from the study. Triangulation also consisted of cross-data validity checks, member checking and combining both interview results and observational field notes.

Within the Mateer (2010) study, a matrix outlining restorative principles was aligned with the data responses to the incident of harm to determine actions that were restorative in nature. Since responses to the event transformed with the changing needs of the school community over time, a chronological order was superimposed to capture the timing of events. A narrative of the events was presented chronologically to follow the development of events and the restorative responses the trauma. The data were summarized through the use of triangulation, the use of multiple interview subjects, validity, reliability and the acknowledgment of biases. The Reimer (2011) research data analysis began by examining Board documents to gain the district's expressed understanding of restorative practices. This also allowed for a later

comparison of restorative philosophy understanding of the board in relation to teachers' and administrators' expressed understandings; to gain a richer contextual appreciation of restorative practices. After data coding, 33 repeating ideas were detected. These 33 recurring ideas were then organized into 15 larger themes and discussed.

4.6 Limitations

The limitations of the Hamilton (2008) case study included the small sample size of 13 interviewed student participants. Also, only one school was chosen as a research site and data were gathered regarding one restorative practice model identified as Circles. Circles were observed and analyzed to address the research questions. Time constraints were mentioned as a third limitation since the research only included a one-week site visit window to collect data utilizing individual interviews. Finally, WVHS continued to use the restorative practices devoid of external funding, differentiating it from other schools. The funding irregularities hampered the restorative efforts, making generalization to other schools and districts difficult or impossible.

The Mateer (2010) case study limitations encompassed a single incident of harm at one junior high school community west of the Mississippi. The study excluded the juvenile offenders and focused primarily on the responses that included and affected the school community. The research only looked at those responses to the harm the school community experienced from that incident that fell within the realm of restorative practices.

The Reimer (2011) case study is based on the interview responses of four teachers and two administrators in one specified school and the School Board where the school was located. Therefore, it is impossible to generalize the findings and apply them universally to other schools and school boards. The school was considered to be a model restorative practice school within the district and does not preclude that different results might be discovered if other locations had

been considered. Perceptions of respondents were heavily influenced by personal experiences, also impacting generalizability.

4.7 Case Findings

The Hamilton (2008) case study revealed that the chosen high school, known as WVHS integrated Circles as a restorative practice within the recognized school disciplinary procedures since the 1999-2000 school year. School administrators chose to address student conduct within a restorative framework instead of applying the punitive zero tolerance measures used in other districts. Through document review as well as interviews, it was acknowledged that the circle process and other restorative practices did not negate the use of more formulated punitive measures and these came into use when behaviors threatened school safety.

Administrators (Hamilton, 2008) were even given the option to utilize the circle process in place of the more formulaic disciplinary approaches. The determination of the disciplinary approach depended on factors including the circumstances of the incident, the severity of the infraction and the willingness of students to participate in the alternative remedy, seek restoration and repair the recognized harm. The Circle process was recognized by the leadership as a way to provide a learning experience for students and staff. The process also allowed adults an opportunity to acknowledge and understand deeper or more long-standing issues challenging students or colleagues.

Research data (Hamilton, 2008) suggested that the Circle process directly impacted participant perceptions of the school climate in positive ways. Findings also revealed that no formal system was employed to track involvement in the restorative circle activities. Hamilton reported however that both student and adult participants expressed satisfaction in the Circle process to resolve conflicts. There was an acknowledgement of a sense of safety on campus.

Challenges were also addressed by adult respondents and included time constraints, lack of student participation and staff resistance to the process. The Circles process elements included a ceremonial opening, a talking piece, a facilitator, ceremony guidelines and consensus decision-making. Unlike more traditional and punitive discipline measures, Circles were not predetermined or set by policy. Administrators did not mandate Circles as a consequence for a specific inappropriate behavior.

Hamilton (2008) stated that there were insufficient data to indicate a direct correlation between suspension rates and the use of Circle procedures. Data did suggest that the circle process was an effective disciplinary intervention for lowering conflict and improving student behavior. In terms of school climate, relative to student discipline, data for the study revealed that there was a heightened sense of safety and viewed the circle activities as useful in resolving conflicts. Issues of power and control were minimized among students and between students and staff since the circle format created a level playing field for all involved.

Data also supported that Circles were included to address issues when staff members experienced conflict with other staff. The process was therefore recognized among students, staff and administrators as focusing on both relationship building and community building among all participants (Hamilton, 2008).

In the Mateer (2010) case study, the findings followed the restorative justice conference format commonly accepted as the following: What happened? Who was harmed by what happened and in what ways were they harmed? What can be done to repair the harm?

The first section of the findings (Mateer, 2010) detailed what occurred and also addressed research question one; “How did a restorative justice philosophy inform a community’s response to harm caused by an act of planned school violence?” (p.11). To determine what happened, the

police report was referenced as well as the interviews with the involved persons. Also, the role of each interviewee, as well as any past training in restorative justice or restorative practices was ascertained. These data also addressed the research question; “What background skills did the responders possess that led to a restorative response?” (p.11).

Section two findings (Mateer, 2010) detailed answers to who was harmed by presenting opinions of the interview subjects and what they thought that harm involved. The section also concentrated on research question two; “What specifically occurred and what was the effect (harm) of the incident?” (p.11).

Section three (Mateer, 2010) continued to follow the parameters by detailing ways the harm was repaired, mirroring research question; “What restorative practices were utilized to repair the harm (2010)?” (p.11).

Section four (Mateer, 2010) queried whether the respondents believed the actions taken addressed the harm. Then Mateer (2010) asked if respondents did or did not agree with the actions taken. Finally, it was asked if restorative justice helped restore a feeling of safety and control to the school community. Utilizing this procedure, several concepts and ideas emerged. First, persons playing a leadership role in this situation were well versed in restorative justice practices. Also, a background in restorative practices, mediation, or the Discovery process on the part of individuals involved in the healing activities and interviewed by Mateer (2010) created a basis of understanding and allowed for credible restorative practice responses regarding the events detailed in this case.

The restorative practices implemented to address the incident were creative and particularly suited to the climate in the school building at the time. The school leaders did not depend on established or formulaic responses; rather, being informed by their past training and

experience, they chose sensitive responses and took actions that were designed to directly address the harm, meeting the needs of that particular time in ways that were both unique and responsive to the situation as it unfolded (Mateer, 2010).

Even individuals not focused on or familiar with restorative practices engaged in the community healing process were exposed to the tenets and values and included restorative principles when necessary. The specific activities including the Tree, the Summit, the sculpture, and eventually the restorative justice conference, assisted in healing the harm, according to the reports included as data derived from interview subjects (Mateer, 2010).

The Reimer (2011) research began as an exploration of how teachers and administrators within one school understood and enacted restorative justice. The case study collected data regarding restorative practices from regional and school board sources. From 2004 to 2007, funding was readily available for restorative practice training and implementation and since funding sources required extensive documentation, it was ascertained that in 2004, the restorative programs saved ten students from expulsions and 45 students from suspensions.

Due to the regional and district support and buy-in from top leaders, public communications contained many celebratory and positive messages citing positive improvements in school performance and positive changes in the school community's climate and improved student behavior. In 2007, the district was chosen as an ambassador site for restorative practices, a leader in the use of restorative activities and unprecedented program success. Also, many individuals and the district administration received regional honors. The school board also announced their call for the initiation of a national goal that every school in Canada should adopt the restorative philosophy, allowing every student to have access to restorative programs, teaching important life skills and the benefit of the restorative approach to

discipline, supporting non-punitive actions for school infractions (Reimer, 2011).

The Reimer (2011) research findings then stated that during the fall of 2007, outside funding for restorative training and new initiatives was cut and by 2008, 350 staff were still awaiting restorative training and the restorative movement slowly lost support and momentum.

Reimer (2011) advanced 15 themes, stating that they had emerged from the repeating ideas taken from the study interview data. The first concept involved constructing personal understandings of restorative justice and incorporated personal definitions of restorative practice, transmission of restorative practices and inappropriate use of restorative practices. Some understood restorative practices as a process while others defined it as a philosophy helping to build relationships with people.

The second construct (Reimer, 2011) engaged the enactment of restorative practices. Reimer surmised that the use of restorative practices varied depending on the role of the interviewee in the educational setting whether teacher, school leader or board administrator. The severity of the offenses, the time spent utilizing the process and the formality of the process increased with each individual's role and responsibility. Teachers employed restorative practices for minor classroom infractions or harm between individuals. The school and district administrators used restorative practices when addressing more serious harmful incidents. The Board Administrator utilized the most formal process to deal with offenses, beginning with preparation work, meeting with all parties separately to determine the appropriateness of the case and obtaining background information. Next a restorative justice conference was facilitated with parties deemed necessary to address the harm and finally, a formal contract would be created and all parties asked to sign. The board administrator would inquire several weeks after the process to gain feedback and ensure the contract was being upheld.

Reimer (2011) established the third theme as inappropriate use of restorative practices. Two respondents felt that restorative practices could not be used in all situations, stating that there was still a need for traditional discipline measures to be considered when the safety of victims was in question, if the individuals refused to engage the restorative process or if a more extensive investigation were necessary.

The fourth theme (Reimer, 2011) set forth was how restorative practice was transmitted to administrators and staff, acknowledging that the primary vehicle was training sessions and included logistics of the training, negative aspects of the training and positive impressions. The board administrator remarked that the training of staff was a paramount priority after the board had decided to endorse the restorative discipline process. One omission recognized was that students and parents were not included in restorative training or overview as the program was established.

The fifth theme (Reimer, 2011) explained the benefits of restorative practices to students. All participants agreed that restorative processes provided positive benefits including providing character education, giving value to student voices and assisting in healing of individual relationships.

Sixth (Reimer, 2011) was the concept of benefits to the entire school community. Five of the six participants felt positive rewards including positive effects on individual classroom environments, creating a base of common understanding of expectations regarding individual behaviors and their effects on the community and helping create a calm learning environment for the majority of students. The school administrator claimed that restorative justice helped maintain positive relationships within the building, between staff, students and parents, encouraging a more effective and positive environment.

The seventh construct (Reimer, 2011) indicated that five out of six participants recognized that restorative practices were not radically different from other approaches to behavior infractions and fit prior ways of responding to inappropriate behaviors. The majority also believed that past ways of punitively dealing with infractions were less successful and may have done more harm than good.

The eighth emergent theme (Reimer, 2011) included obstacles to overcome when establishing and continuing a restorative discipline program. Time was indicated as the primary challenge to the continuity and fidelity of utilizing restorative practices. Teachers and administrators alike agreed that it was less time consuming to use the formulaic punitive approach to discipline. Teachers expressed that time spent utilizing a restorative justice approach was time taken away from more formal classroom instruction. Despite the pressure to keep instructional pacing, two of the participants were adamant that the benefits of using a restorative justice approach far outweigh the negatives, such as consumption of time. One teacher went so far as to advocate that it was most important to graduate a positive, thankful, appreciative citizen student than making sure they had completed every curriculum expectation.

Reimer (2011) set forth the ninth theme emerging from the data as the requirement that maintaining restorative practices requires a strong community. All participants agreed that an established strong sense of community was important to creating a positive school climate. All concurred that the use of restorative practices helped maintain that community sense and identity. Several factors were agreed upon as contributing to the sense of community including the quality of the staff, the building layout, the leadership of the school and the implementation of Tribes. It was recognized that the administrator chose the staff because each one espoused relationships and restoring relationships as a key to learning. Classrooms were clustered around a

shared workspace and this layout was advantageous to collaboration among staff and students. Administrative leadership was recognized as highly important to creating a supportive community as well. Finally, the root of the creation of community in the school was significantly accredited to the program, Tribes.

The tenth theme established by the Reimer (2011) data was working against mainstream cultural norms and values. Four of the six participants agreed that restorative philosophy and practices were difficult to establish in present day educational circles. From the administration to staff, parents and finally students, restorative values go against upbringing, past education and current social norms. Many individuals including administrators cannot justify the ideals of restorative practice against their own understanding of power and control. The board administrator was particularly vocal regarding the difficulty of proclaiming a counter-cultural approach such as restorative practices within the mainstream establishment school system. The administrator also highlighted systemic issues identified that prevented restorative practices from becoming a common practice in education and continued use of zero tolerance discipline. Finally, two issues arose regarding restorative practices. Restorative actions were not being tracked and restorative practices were not being systemically considered as a normative practice when a harmful incident had occurred in a school system.

The eleventh theme (Reimer, 2011) cited collegial collaboration, indicating that introducing a school-wide philosophy of restorative practices had established a uniformity of practice. One participant shared that a common understanding and practice of restorative practices within the school made the practice more effective since the students are familiar with the process and fairness of the outcomes.

Theme twelve (Reimer, 2011) was extremely viable for the district board administrator

and Reimer noted how building and maintaining community connections were enhanced through the use of restorative practices. Central to sustaining a restorative program was creating networks with stakeholders outside the school including police officers, restorative organizations, community agencies, higher education institutions and the general public. The school community opened restorative training to other local agencies including the courts and police department and integrated all district school resource officers allowing for the avoidance of possible criminal charges and an acceptance of the outcome of a restorative justice conference.

The thirteenth theme established through the Reimer (2011) data regarded top-down support for restorative programming. Unanimously, all six participants confirmed that support from those in authority including school administration, the school board, school board administrator and other regional and national leadership, as well, was essential. The teachers interviewed all felt supported and encouraged by the school administration, in utilizing restorative practices. It was agreed that the school administration, through personal and professional influence, sets the tone and direction of restorative programs and ultimate program success. Although individual board members were recognized for their positive efforts regarding restorative practices, there was an overall sense that the board as an entity failed in reinforcing restorative practices in the district other systemic policies discouraged support of the restorative movement. For instance, one of the factors used in determining whether a school received a vice-principal was the number of suspensions that school records thus penalizing a school with lower suspension rates due to the positive influences of the restorative program. The Board Administrator also expressed frustration with the lack of support from those in authority in the School Board, citing lack of promotion and encouragement from the superintendent and trustees.

The fourteenth theme considered feeling out of the loop, and was expressed by a teacher

and the board administrator, both experiencing being disconnected from activities and decisions regarding restorative practices by the School Board decisions (Reimer, 2011).

The fifteenth and final theme was presented as a lack of sustainability of restorative initiatives. Five out of six participants identified the sustainability issue as significant and lamented that a program with recognized positive gains for the school climate and discipline coupled with relationship building advancements for administrators, staff, students and the community at large had begun to fade and become passé. All participants expressed frustration and a sense of rejection by the board leaders for relegating the program to slow extinction. Even the board administrator concurred that there had been a shift in momentum regarding discipline and a focus on punitive measures to deal with referrals. The impetus for the reorientation sadly was monetary and the board had chosen to curtail restorative training and designate professional development days for other specific purposes. It also seems that the board and trustees are often not able to resist the influence of better-promoted, more prominently endorsed programs, even when they do not provide soundly researched, data-driven results. Despite the challenges, the board administrator had attempted to increase the sustainability of the restorative program in several different ways. Public communications were regularly published three times a year and garnered quite a following in the larger community and regional school systems regularly contacted the school to ask for restorative assistance or gain insights on how to establish a restorative program in their locality. Also, a connected electronic restorative social media community had been established to post restorative associated questions or relate experiences regarding restorative practices in the classroom or school environment. Lastly, several related sustainability suggestions were posed by study participants and included mandatory restorative training for all new administrators and staff and a call for institutions of higher education to

include in their education curriculum enhanced courses regarding school law and classroom management with the addition of courses regarding restorative educational practices for teachers and administrators (Reimer, 2011).

4.8 Recommendations

The Hamilton (2008) case study recommended that instead of a consequence-driven approach that delivers a punitive response for behavioral infractions, school disciplinary personnel including school resource officers should employ a restorative approach to discipline that values the interconnectedness of all people and the establishment or reformation of relationships.

A restorative approach might also challenge the school leadership to critically examine their view of conflict as a tool to model and teach appropriate behavior. A restorative approach would also encourage administrators to provide youth with social skills necessary for the future. Instruction through constructive disciplinary procedures and not by exclusionary discipline measures would provide the vehicle accomplishing this mission. Students also need to be strategically involved in the process of creating order and safety on the school campus. The students who are most affected by the school environment and conflict cannot be systematically excluded from the resolution process (Hamilton, 2008).

Hamilton (2008) further recommended that school administrators closely monitor the use of traditional disciplinary practices to ensure that students are not denied the opportunity to learn positive conflict resolution skills and appropriate behavior practices. Also, leaders should monitor the educational services provided students who are excluded from classes to ensure that they will still progress academically. Increased monitoring of excluded students will further require that schools re-conceptualize the premise that unruly students forfeit their rights and

access to education. Finally, higher education programs must instruct classroom educators and administrators in school law issues, classroom management and policies relevant to the inclusion of the restorative practices processes.

Future study recommendations by Hamilton (2008) included examining how educational leaders and practitioners can utilize Circles and other restorative processes to produce significant changes in school climate and school culture. A second future study recommendation was to develop effective evaluation tools to measure the short and long-range effects of utilizing restorative practices in the school setting. It would also be useful to study if students consistently apply the newly acquired conflict resolution and social skills in future situations. Research examining the possible costs and relative savings associated with restorative practices would inform school and district administrators to make data-driven decisions. Finally, what best practices assist school systems to undergo the philosophical shift required to implement the use of restorative practices addressing student discipline and what training is required of school staff, parents and students as the school transforms its disciplinary philosophy from a punitive, consequence-driven approach to a more restorative view?

Recommendations set forth in the Mateer (2010) case study admonish school systems to gain restorative justice training and experience prior to an act of trauma or conflict occurs. Secondly, the importance of school memorials and the symbolism associated with healing after an incident should not be overlooked when responding to and healing from traumatic events.

Mateer (2010) suggested further research to allow the offenders and the student reporters of the incident as well as a random cross section of the student body to be included in the interview process. Also, the female student reporters should have been recognized as victims since they felt unsafe and unwanted in their school after reporting the incident. In retrospect,

they were not included in any of the healing processes and should have been. Future research into the connection between the Discovery process and restorative principles and values might explain similarities between the programs and why the two value systems meshed well and were used extensively and simultaneously in the healing process.

Mateer (2010) also allowed that future research is necessary to determine what might happen under similar circumstances in other school communities. In other communities experiencing interrupted school shootings, how did those communities suffer harm? Restorative justice has become more and more widespread in school systems. In order to implement the best practices, more research needs to occur. In addition to how restorative justice affects the school system, longitudinal research needs to be conducted regarding how restorative justice affects students and their social and emotional wellbeing and development (Mateer, 2010).

Reimer (2011) suggested that many voices, including parents, students, teachers and administrators who had received restorative training and those who had not been exposed to restorative practices, were not included in the research. The ensuing data would produce a richer portrait of the school community. The study also did not gather data on actual disciplinary measures, perceived changes in school climate, restorative actions used when acts of bullying transpired. Many other indicators of success were not included in the study and should be included in further research proposals.

Reimer (2011) also suggested that the study should be replicated after the recommendations had been implemented to determine if perceptions of teachers and leaders would change regarding restorative practices. Restorative practices should be supported from the top down and shared with as many individuals as possible. The board administrator should recommend that courses be offered in restorative practices. Through offering staff development

and recording data referencing staff and administration that received the training for several years into their practice, a follow-up study would identify whether this practice positively contributes to sustainability.

4. 9 Implications for Leadership

All three studies (Hamilton, 2008), (Mateer, 2010) and (Reimer, 2011) case study research portrayed that traditional punitive leadership policies were applied to administer discipline in the referenced locations prior to restorative program implementation. Restorative practices created a safer and more peaceful school environment even after an attempted act of school violence was uncovered and stopped. While suspensions and expulsions may be easier to track and implement, the results to individual students and the school community are primarily ineffective. Students who need to be in school most lose out on educational time through separation and create more individual complications and problems for the school community in the long run.

Restorative practices are deemed successful when implemented with integrity and fidelity. The studies (Hamilton, 2008), (Mateer, 2010) and (Reimer, 2011) concurred that a comprehensive approach to training, implementation and on-going support create positive, sustainable results. The consistent and intentional implementation of restorative practices proved vital to the success of the restorative program. Each of the three studies echoed the findings that leadership knowledge, roles and attitudes regarding systemic changes in disciplinary beliefs and procedures significantly impact the development of an inclusive, student oriented educational system.

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Each of the three studies (Hamilton, 2008), (Mateer, 2010) and (Reimer, 2011) echoed the findings that leadership knowledge, roles and attitudes regarding systemic changes in disciplinary beliefs and procedures significantly impact the development of an inclusive, student oriented educational system. Restorative practices support a positive school community. Relationships become established through the use of community building, assisting students and staff to shape a culture together that supports mutual respect and trust.

4.10 Summary

In summary, Chapter IV analyzed the three identified case studies to examine the impact of restorative disciplinary practices on educational leadership in K-12 school systems. The cross-study comparisons indicated that many similarities exist among the Hamilton (2008), Mateer (2010) and Reimer (2011) case study research regarding the disciplinary leadership philosophies and subsequent modifications made when a restorative practice disciplinary approach was utilized by school districts. Utilizing a restorative philosophy, the mission statement is revitalized, a refocus of strategic planning and implementation of restorative goals and daily practices are supported by district personnel and the surrounding community with a reconstituted, inclusive vision.

Chapter V will examine the comparative analysis findings from the current chapter and draw comparisons, reflecting on prevailing literature and the theoretical framework of the current research study. The discussion will also disclose the three studies' (Hamilton, 2008; Mateer, 2010; Reimer, 2011) relationships to the research questions, the significance of the study for leaders and policy makers, recommendations for future research and concluding remarks.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Chapter Five briefly restated the generalizations, similarities and differences realized through analysis of the three selected case studies from Hamilton (2008), Mateer (2010) and Reimer (2011). I then made note of any emergent themes and concepts that required further discussion. I then shared insights gleaned from the three studies regarding discipline leadership innovations occurring in research involved in the participating K-12 school systems. Finally, I highlighted any unexpected understandings detected through the research process and then concluded with observations and reflections.

I considered a thorough review of the literature and identified several theoretical frameworks to assist during the analysis of the three identified studies (Hamilton, 2008; Mateer, 2010 and (Reimer, 2011). Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory helped to explain how social relationships assist in regulating and developing social life for children and adults alike (Bandura, 2007). Since the patterns of social behaviors are learned from infancy and reinforced throughout life, it is critical to assist students with relationship building models utilized by both administrators and teachers.

Another theoretical lens that assisted my analysis was Relational Cultural Theory. This construct will help disciplinary leaders view student behaviors in a different light and also underscores the need for restorative discipline practices to mitigate the inequalities suffered by students of color, special needs students and other disenfranchised groups. Miller's Relational Cultural Theory suggests that the loss or distortion of empathy and a loss of empowerment in relationships culminates as a source of behavioral distress. Miller posited that empathetic listening and acting would lead to healthy, positive relationships and these skills and mindsets

should be taught and reinforced in schools (Miller, 1976).

The restorative philosophy was also considered as a basis for understanding how theoretical practices and the recognized paradigm shift supported the administration of discipline, maintaining social norms and improving behavioral boundaries within the three school communities researched (Wachtel, 2013). Braithwaite (2006) suggests that restorative principles become an individual and community process leading to consensus, restoration and relationship building.

Finally, Robinson's (2008) theory of Perceptual Segregation was referenced to focus data from the studies, suggesting that disparities exist between the perceptions of racial minority students and disciplinary leadership influenced by the dominant cultural norms. The implicit bias of zero tolerance discipline measures prejudices the context of school discipline, submitting that discipline decision makers are more likely to use more punitive procedures when engaging students of color, students with disabilities and other disenfranchised student groups. Restorative practice programs potentially bridge the gap created by perceptual segregation, giving all students an active voice through equal dialogue and shared interactions and when implemented on a daily basis creates a safe place for all students, teachers and administrators to express thoughts, emotions and be validated.

5.1 Solutions to Problems

The purpose of the current research was to explore changes in K-12 school disciplinary leadership moving from the present zero tolerance policies to restorative philosophy and associated practices. Although each singular study engaged the transformation in unique ways, the three acknowledged systems revealed perceptions to the researchers regarding the effects of restorative practices on leadership understandings and practices, on individual student behaviors,

on the school community culture, and on families and other community stakeholders. The three case studies, Hamilton (2008), Mateer (2010) and Reimer (2011), were selected because they asked a similar predominant question: How did the use of restorative practices inform and influence the administrative disciplinary responses, student reactions and the community reply to restorative innovations? I utilized a multiple case study analysis and found similarities and differences through a synthesis of the literature, referencing Yazan (2015), Yin (2002) and Creswell (2009). I chose a qualitative multiple case study analysis approach to uncover data from the three studies, Hamilton (2008), Mateer (2010) and Reimer (2011), and then developed a conceptual context utilizing the integrated data. Through the recognition of similarities and differences in the represented data, I interpreted and described an evolving phenomenon. The goal of the multiple case study method is to generate conclusions that explain how similarities and differences occurred and why (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2008).

5.2 Case Studies' Purpose Discussion

The purpose of the Hamilton (2008) study was to examine the restorative practice of Circles at one high school used to address behavioral infractions. The Mateer (2010) research was carried out to gain insights into the how restorative practices were applied as a school community's response to a planned school massacre plot that was uncovered and stopped. The Reimer (2011) case was initiated to discover and analyze how restorative practices were implemented, supported and experienced by district leaders, school administrators and teachers in an Ontario, Canada public school.

All three authors, Hamilton (2008), Mateer (2010) and Reimer (2011), interchanged the terms restorative justice practices and restorative educational practices in their manuscripts. However, all research was conducted in public school settings and referred to restorative

educational discipline practices. This author prefers the term restorative practices since it is more inclusive of all restorative methods.

5.3 Case Studies Questions Discussion

The Hamilton (2008) research questions were created to focus on the restorative practice of Circles and asked how they had impacted traditional discipline practices, if the use of Circles had reduced behavioral infractions among students and finally, did integrating Circles into traditional discipline procedures effect overall student behavior and school climate? Research questions in the Mateer (2010) study asked how the restorative philosophy informed a school community's responses to the planned act of school violence, what were the details of the incident, how did it harm the community and what restorative practices were used to repair the harm, and lastly, was a sense of safety and control regained through the use of restorative measures. Reimer (2011) focused the exploration questions on how administrators and teachers perceived the restorative philosophy and implementation of practices in their school, how did administrators and teachers perceive their own roles engaging restorative practices and whether the administrator and teacher views integrated with the school board administration and their perception of restorative practices?

Hamilton (2008) recorded data on one process of restorative practices, Mateer (2010) focused on an incident and how restorative practices transformed a situation, while Reimer (2011) chose individuals in administrative and teacher roles, highlighting their perceptions of the implementation and use of restorative practices in a single school and what understanding and support was given by the district leadership.

5.4 Case Studies Methodology Discussion

All of the three research studies, Hamilton (2008), Mateer (2010) and Reimer (2011),

were similar due to their use of a single case study method, examining aspects of restorative practices in their individual locations. The Hamilton (2008) study's methodology chose a site using the criteria that the restorative Circle practices were practiced with fidelity. The site West Valley High School was chosen since it was historically tied to restorative practices with significant background in training and service of the circle dynamics. Data were gathered through discipline documents and statistics as well as observations of Circles through field notes, descriptive and reflective observations and transcribed interviews of participants. Individuals were chosen using purposeful and emergent sampling. Data were collected during a one-week site visit. Analysis of data was enhanced through the use of coded themes and triangulation using cross-data validity checks and member checking of interview transcript accuracy.

The Mateer (2010) research methodology centered at one junior high school that was the location of the planned act of school violence. Interview subjects were adults involved in the incident willing to participate. Besides recorded interview transcripts, data were gathered through a review of documents, as well as personal recollections and field notes of the researcher. A restorative practices matrix was aligned with the data to identify responses used during the healing process that were restorative in nature. A chronological narrative was used to present the data. The use of multiple interviewees, validity checks by participants and acknowledgement of bias were shared in the data analysis.

The methodology for the Reimer (2011) research case study utilized semi-structured and open-ended interviews with administrators and staff at one high school including restorative practices in its array of disciplinary procedures. A district administrator was initially interviewed and gave an overview of the direction restorative practices had taken. A recommendation was also made to Reimer, suggesting a specific district school with the highest

percentage of staff trained in restorative practices and also one that had extensive experience operating a restorative practices program. After an initial questionnaire was sent to all administrators and teaching staff, and responses were tallied, one administrator and four staff agreed to the interview process. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Each participant was given a transcription and an opportunity to comment on validity and accuracy. Data included board documents pertaining to the restorative program and were analyzed. The respondents were also asked to comment on the expressed understandings and actions of the board regarding the restorative program. Data were coded and repeating themes were organized and noted for later discussion.

The three case studies, Hamilton (2008), Mateer (2010) and Reimer (2011), meticulously followed Institutional Review Board protocols for security, safety and anonymity of all participants. All cases used well-established methods and recognized validity and accuracy checks with all respondents. Finally, the three researchers triangulated data to establish the emergence of themes and ideas relevant to restorative practices in the findings and discussion sections of their manuscripts.

5.5 Case Studies Findings Discussion

Hamilton (2008) found that the case study site, West Valley High, had integrated restorative disciplinary practices as options utilized in classroom and more formal administrative disciplinary matters. Circles were of particular importance in the study, and Hamilton noted that the determination of traditional or restorative disciplinary approaches depended on the particular circumstances and severity of the infraction and the willingness and agreement of participation in the process by students. School administrators endeavored to use restorative approaches over punitive measures whenever possible. Hamilton (2008) also noted that Circles in particular

provided an opportunity to be active participants in their own discipline as well as affording a learning experience for adult and student participants to acknowledge and express deeper or challenging issues. Data suggested that restorative activities directly impacted both individuals and the school community climate positively, creating a heightened sense of safety on campus.

Student and adult case study interviewees expressed satisfaction with Circles in resolving conflicts. Unfortunately, WVHS had no formal system for tracking circle activities in classrooms or the students that participated during their school tenure to graduation. Hamilton (2008) indicated adult respondents cited the additional time for the restorative process, lack of buy-in from students and staff creating an undercurrent of resistance. Administrators did not mandate the circle process as a consequence for inappropriate behavior, established as an essential element of restorative philosophy. However, this was perceived as a weakness in restorative discipline. Although recognized elements of the circle process were employed including a talking piece, a facilitator, ceremony agreements and consensus decision-making, there was also no indication that students had been trained as a student body in restorative practices or exposed to the restorative philosophy in any collective way. Hamilton (2008) found there were insufficient data to suggest a direct link between rates of suspension and the use of circles. Nevertheless, respondent data indicated that Circles were an effective disciplinary intervention for reducing conflict. Issues of power and control could be minimized for adult and student participants alike. Data also indicated that Circles had been used to resolve issues among staff members with positive results. When employed, the restorative process assisted relationship and community building among students and staff.

The findings of the Mateer (2010) study followed the format of a Restorative Justice Conference, detailing what happened to cause harm to the school community, who was harmed

and how were they effected, and what might be done to repair the harm. Mateer (2010) referenced the police report and interviews with involved parties, excluding the perpetrators of the exposed incident. Data detailed that a planned copycat of the Columbine Massacre in a junior high school was uncovered due to several students that informed the administration and was subsequently interrupted by school leaders and police. The roles of interviewed adults and leaders connected with the incident as well as their familiarity with and training in restorative practices were notated. Each interviewee had a background in restorative practices, mediation or the Discovery process, leading to the conclusion by Mateer (2010) that all respondents focused their replies with a restorative philosophical understanding.

Secondly, each participant was requested by Mateer (2010) to identify those who were harmed and in their opinion, what that harm was. Data showed that the school community students and staff as well as the surrounding community-at-large was traumatized by the realization that student peers had planned to complete an act of violence on their school campus against community members and secondly the community was injured by the negative media attention given to individuals, their school and the surrounding community. Although individuals were not physically harmed, the school community was shaken and victimized by the incident and the wider community harmed as well.

Thirdly, the Mateer (2010) study participants were asked to detail what was done to repair the harm. Data revealed that the responses to the incident of harm were supported by restorative values and beliefs. The school community employed the Tree, the Summit, the sculpture and the restorative justice conference as creative activities used to fit the changing circumstances as the community attempted to heal from the trauma. The school personnel involved in the restorative process utilized mediation and circle formats to conduct classroom

and larger meetings. Regarding the juvenile justice system involved in the restorative community activities, the Division of Youth Corrections had already begun to train and integrate restorative practices in a statewide program and encouraged the use of restorative activities in routine interactions. Therefore, when the traumatic incident happened, individuals in the juvenile justice system incorporated restorative values in dealing with the situation as well.

A final question probed whether or not the actions taken addressed the harm incurred by the community? The Mateer (2010) data allowed for the conclusion that the Tree, the first community meeting, the Summit, the sculpture, and the restorative justice conference were all restorative in nature and helped repair the harm the school and community suffered as a result of the planned act of violence.

The Reimer (2011) case findings indicated that from 2004 to 2007, school board funding had been available for restorative discipline practices training and implementation. Early statistics from 2004 suggested that ten students had been saved from expulsion and 45 students had not been suspended through the deployment of restorative efforts. Communication throughout the district and with the community was positive and celebrated the use of restorative responses in disciplinary procedures. In the early months of 2007, the district was awarded leadership honors for the use of restorative discipline and the school board had initiated a campaign to establish a national goal that every student in Canada would have access to restorative practices. However, during the Fall 2007, outside funding was cut for restorative training and implementation. Although the district tried to continue to use restorative practices in 2008, a backlog of 350 administrators and teachers waiting to be trained hampered efforts to continue the use of restorative practices district-wide.

Through interview data analysis and triangulation of repeating ideas, Reimer (2011)

identified 15 emergent themes that were subsequently collapsed into four constructs. The first of the concepts detailed how individuals established a personal understanding of restorative justice by acknowledging the restorative philosophy. Reimer (2011) suggested that the majority of participants understood that restorative measures did not affect the daily occurrences of teachers and their classrooms, but rather was a disciplinary procedure to be employed by administrators when addressing an act of harm. Reimer (2011) also found that no participant teachers had ever facilitated a restorative circle or conference. Although espousing restorative beliefs and philosophy and agreeing that restorative practices were important to students and the school community, teachers collectively chose restorative practices as a response to harm administered through school authorities and negating restorative practices inherent preventative qualities instilled through daily exposure and practice. Reimer (2011) suggests that this response was a misguided and inaccurate understanding and application of restorative practice, forgetting the relationship and community building possibilities of restorative programs as well as teaching positive behavior approaches students might employ.

The second construct Reimer (2011) identified was the facilitation of new personal practical theories among research participants. Data supported that all interviewees regarded restorative practices philosophy and procedures as effective and submitted that they incorporated the practices into their personal practical theories. Reimer recognized that for a disciplinary paradigm change to occur, educators must experience dissatisfaction with the existing punitive methods utilized. Data confirmed that several facilitating factors aided in the adoption of restorative practices, citing that the philosophy fit their existing belief systems. Participants also commended restorative practices, recognizing many benefits offered to students, staff, the school climate and parents. It would follow that the wide acceptance of the restorative movement would

sustain the long-range, positive continuation of restorative practices and program growth.

However, interview data suggested that the general consensus was that the restorative practices were expiring, losing traction and would not last.

Reimer (2011) explored the polarized dichotomy of the data in the third construct, recognizing the complicating contextual structures and cultures uncovered by the interviews. The data revealed that teachers and administration were caught between competing contexts that both supported and undermined the use and fulfillment of restorative principles and practices in the district and the case study school. Operating within a community that supported restorative philosophy and a school system that valued community building, the participants were ultimately required to adhere to broader zero tolerance policies situated in a predominantly retributive culture. The consequence was a continuous destructive tension and an inherent complexity of competing motives.

The fourth concept the Reimer (2011) research established was an inconsistency of support from the school board and regional board of education regarding restorative practices. These individuals in greater authority and policy makers were inconsistent with support for restorative practices, dropping funding, withdrawing public encouragement and limiting efforts for sustainability. Notwithstanding personal commitment from teachers and school leaders, credible backing from power brokers on the board and the department of education leadership dissipated and restorative practices continued to substantially weaken. These “gatekeepers of change” (p.111), through their power base, created and maintained structures and ultimately the culture of the schools they served and the culture and structures they sustained were punitive and retributive by design.

A final barrier to a sustainable restorative program recognized by Reimer (2011) seemed

to be the competing nature of a second program called Tribes. The Tribes program is based on the belief that creating a caring culture and emotionally safe learning community in the classroom and throughout a school is an effective way to improve engagement, behavior, and learning. The Tribes initiative was inaugurated at approximately the same time as restorative practices. Through the rollout and training coordinated by the Tribes program, the staff were led to believe that restorative practices were an ancillary discipline choice to be utilized by administrators as an alternative disciplinary procedure and restorative practices ownership by teachers and administrators was thus minimized.

5.6 Findings Conclusions

At this juncture it is applicable to address the research questions presented in the current study. The primary research question asked what did the case studies show was the effectiveness of restorative practices as an approach to discipline? The data from the Hamilton (2008), Mateer (2010) and Reimer (2011) case studies all support that restorative practices encourage relationship building and a sense of community cohesiveness not found in school environments strictly using punitive, zero tolerance disciplinary measures. The three school sites in three unique districts utilized restorative practices as an additional disciplinary approach, a way to address harm done to individuals, the school community, the community as a whole and as a way to reintegrate and reconnect individuals back into the school community. Restorative practices were acknowledged in the Hamilton (2008), Mateer (2010) and Reimer (2011) case studies not only as a positive disciplinary method but also as a continuum for students to learn communication and conflict resolution skills, develop empathy and how to connect with peers and adults. The restorative approach also allowed staff and administrators the opportunity to understand and validate deeper issues challenging students and colleagues alike.

Secondary research questions were posed to discover:

What aspects of the school climate changed as a result of the adoption of the restorative practices model? The three studies, Hamilton (2008), Mateer (2010) and Reimer (2011) agreed that school climate was directly and indirectly impacted positively by the enactment of restorative principles. By utilizing a restorative model, creative and particularly suited to the situation, students were allowed a voice. Previously, exercising a punitive and exclusionary disciplinary approach, they would have remained unheard. The three studies, Hamilton (2008), Mateer (2010) and Reimer (2011) also established that restorative programs created a sense of safety and justice in the school community.

What was the effect of restorative practices implementation on the suspension rate? The Hamilton (2008) and Reimer (2011) studies directly mentioned decreased suspension and expulsion rates due to the implementation of restorative measures. Through the restorative approach, students were allowed to become active participants in the discipline process. The severe nature of the actions of a small group of students attempting a Columbine copycat event was captured in the Mateer (2010) study. For the security and safety of students and staff, the perpetrators were expelled and adjudicated. These students were not allowed to participate in the healing process. Even so, during the aftermath of the event, restorative practices continued to be a positive influence for students, staff, administrators and the surrounding community.

How did leadership implement the restorative practices and create the necessary conditions for ownership of the new restorative practices plan? The studies validated that the district and school leadership perform a pivotal function as change is initiated and sustained. Leaders also are critical in the development of a culture where transformation is an ongoing component of the educational process. This was evident as the Hamilton (2008) study detailed

the satisfaction students, staff and administrators expressed after utilizing restorative circle activities, impacting school climate positively and imbuing the school campus with a heightened sense of safety. The Mateer (2010) research data reiterated the restorative philosophy and activities that positively focused the school community after the planned peer attack was thwarted. Several restorative gestures instilled hope and assisted individuals and the community in the healing process. School and community leadership were instrumental in the events intersecting the anguish and dismay that followed the incident. The Reimer (2011) data revealed that the lack of leader support is detrimental to growing and sustaining the positive effects achieved through the use of restorative principles and procedures. Ultimately, efforts to continue the restorative program gains were undone by a lack of district and regional administrative backing, funding and the preferred, competing and dominant zero tolerance culture.

All studies incorporated varying forms of interview formats to create a rich tapestry of information gleaned from students, teachers, administrators and the surrounding community. Through these dialogues, observations and author reflections, data confirmed that restorative practices are an effective method of disseminating positive behavioral learning and assisting each individual's recognition of their role in a situation and the responsibility of an individual's actions.

5.7 Relevance for Educational Leadership

Leadership is vital to the success of restorative practices in a public school setting. This leadership must not only include administrators, but also teachers, staff and students. The administration needs to ensure that the appropriate positive conditions are created for restorative practices to be implemented with fidelity. Leaders set the tone for the school climate and culture and may empower or deny the direction and sustainability of all the factors pertaining to the

school climate. Restorative practices are effective when school leaders believe that they work hand in hand with staff and students to empower and own the process. Proper implementation of restorative practices must also be supported with inclusive training for staff and students alike, providing support and time, and practical application of the circle process and other restorative activities.

Restorative practices implementation requires skilled leadership in the school community. Educational leaders must empower others and authentically lead by letting go. The traditional authoritarian sense of leadership (i.e., “I am in charge and do what I say”) is ineffective with restorative practices. The alternative model of leadership prefers facilitating, guiding, and building leadership capacity in others, including students.

In the past, principals have been taught to hold their staff accountable through contracts and evaluations and students answerable to rigid, punitive discipline policies. However, through restorative practices, staff members hold staff members accountable, students hold students accountable, and staff and students hold each other accountable. The top down leadership management style has shown to have more of a negative result than positive on school climate and culture.

As Fullan (2004) asserted:

An organization cannot be improved only from the top. The people involved are a key element. The top can provide a vision, policy incentives, mechanisms for interaction, coordination, and monitoring, but to realize the vision there must be people below building capacity and shared commitment so that the moral imperative becomes a collective endeavor. Everyone has to understand and align with the big picture. The processes embedded in pursuing moral purpose, the change process, new

relationships, and knowledge sharing actually produce greater and deeper coherence as they unfold. The result will be an improvement in the system. (p. 161)

A recommendation for school administrators would be to closely monitor the use of traditional disciplinary practices to ensure that students are not being denied the opportunity to learn positive conflict resolution skills and appropriate behaviors. Likewise, school leaders should monitor the educational services provided students who are excluded through disciplinary measures to ensure that they will still progress academically. Increased monitoring of excluded students will require that schools re-conceptualize the theory that unruly students forfeit their access to education. Additionally, establishments of higher education must carefully review teacher and educational leadership preparation programs to include restorative practices including circles so that future educators are fully prepared to engage in changing the disciplinary paradigm to a more restorative path.

5.8 Recommendations for Further Research

Longitudinal research regarding the effects of zero tolerance disciplinary methods on individual students, with particular attention to disenfranchised student populations including students of color and students with disabilities should be conducted. Secondly, longitudinal studies that look at the effects of zero tolerance policies on school communities and school climates should be initiated.

Restorative practices research should include longitudinal studies considering well established programs in the United States, Canada and Australia/New Zealand to garner the efficacy of this philosophy and practices on students, staff and administration of K-12 school systems. Next, restorative disciplinary responses should also be studied to assess best practices in long established programs. These well-recognized programs should also be reviewed to

ascertain how they were able to successfully begin and maintain restorative practices with a high level of integrity, inclusion and success with all student, staff and leadership stakeholders.

Finally, those restorative practice communities that have not been successful in starting or maintaining restorative practice approaches must be examined to reveal the challenges, obstacles or other aspects of the change process that were presented to assist the development of strategies so others may more productively cope during the program initiation, maturation and integration phases.

5.9 Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this comparative case study analysis was to investigate the implementation of restorative practices in schools urgently looking for reforms in response to school violence and the long-term detrimental effects of exclusion and disenfranchisement on students exposed to punitive zero tolerance policies in countless educational communities. Punitive discipline including suspensions and expulsions continue to distribute a negative effect on generations of young people. Recent horrific, catastrophic events in K-12 schools have made it all too obvious that a disconnect has occurred with a small but potentially dangerous population of marginalized youth who have not developed basic emotional skills.

Urban school students who come from poverty, exhibit increased levels of disabilities, and include high percentages of African American and Hispanic students have been shown to be at higher risk and data also support that these same students are more likely to face punitive discipline measures. Therefore, the students who need the most support in school are the same students being expelled most frequently. Exclusion has been used as a common classroom and district behavioral management strategy in many areas across the nation with documented detrimental effects.

However, there is hope in altering the repetition of punitive discipline approaches. An emergent body of research supports the use of restorative practices and schools utilizing restorative practices reduce negative disciplinary incidents and improve overall school climate. Restorative practices are intended to teach students, staff and administration to build strong relationships through enhanced communication and improved human interaction while supporting superior leadership capacity. The circle process is a significant part of restorative practices that helps create and maintain a sense of community in an increasingly disconnected world. Amstutz and Mullet (2005) state that the use of circles provides a systematic and reflective venue that fortifies positive values for all participants. Students learn they have a voice and acquire the ability to empathize with each other and listen to one another. Students and staff become connected and shape a healthy school community. Leadership capacity increases with a sense of shared ownership of the circle process. Students, staff and leaders become empowered and hold each other accountable to the fidelity and integrity of restorative practices implementation. Strong relationships connect students to school and help them excel academically and socially. When students trust and respect their peers and adults, they will avoid hurting one another. Every student, staff member, and administrator is a valued member of the school community in a restorative school.

The fundamental factor in ensuring effective implementation of restorative practices is leadership. School leadership includes the principal, staff and students. Empowering students to be part of the change process and decision making in their own school is an essential influence in restorative practices. Staff and students must be empowered and have a strong sense of ownership to make the school a safe and joyful place where leaders want to lead, teachers want to teach and students want to learn. Although teachers can dramatically change the classroom

climate by using restorative practices, the only true way to create a successful school-wide transformation is through the direction of the principal and district leadership. These leaders must offer support and commitment to the process, understand the new culture and strategically plan how to change the system for the better.

The impact of restorative practices in education can be truly momentous. If restorative practices replace the punitive processes for disciplining students, students and staff will discern the spirit of community within the school. Schools will focus on relationships, teaching, and learning. Discipline referrals will decrease and academic achievement will improve. The expectation is that lessons learned from restorative practices will transfigure home and community as well. Restorative practices can deeply improve school climate and help shape a safe and healthy community.

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