
Theses, Dissertations, and Projects

2018

Exploring the implementation of restorative practices in Bay Area schools

Vanessa Shea
Smith College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.smith.edu/theses>



Part of the [Student Counseling and Personnel Services Commons](#), and the [Urban Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Shea, Vanessa, "Exploring the implementation of restorative practices in Bay Area schools" (2018).
Masters Thesis, Smith College, Northampton, MA.
<https://scholarworks.smith.edu/theses/2091>

This Masters Thesis has been accepted for inclusion in Theses, Dissertations, and Projects by an authorized administrator of Smith ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@smith.edu.

Exploring the Implementation of Restorative Practices in Bay Area Schools

A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

Vanessa Rose Shea
Smith College School for Social Work
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063

2017

ABSTRACT

Factors associated with successful implementation of school-based restorative justice communities were examined. Restorative practices are alternatives to zero-tolerance, top down approaches that emphasize social engagement over social control (i.e. proactive and reactive responses promote school safety and health). A mixed-methods, survey-based, approach was selected for data collection. Front-line school-based practitioners and administrators from various schools/districts in the Bay Area of California were informed of the study via email and invited to complete an online survey. Analysis of the 37 completed responses suggest that implementation involves various stages that can be identified by practitioners and successful engagement of the wider community is a goal for effectiveness and sustainability. The study highlights the complexities and messiness of planning, managing, and sustaining small or large-scale processes of change. Findings support the literature which indicates how a whole school approach improves the likelihood of successful outcomes by clarifying stages of implementation and associated steps.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis could not have been accomplished without the assistance of many people whose contributions are gratefully acknowledged. Most importantly, to the 37 participants, please know this study would not be possible without your thoughtful contributions.

I wish to thank Fred Newdom, my initial research advisor and mentor, for his radical spirit, humor, and genuine belief in me, especially during the earlier stages of project formulation and writing process, and of course for modeling the kind of social worker and activist I aspire to become. I also would like to acknowledge the help that Elizabeth Irvin has offered me as my most recent advisor in my thesis writing process.

Thank you to my family, especially my parents and grandparents, for their unconditional love, encouragement, and overall support throughout my journey.

Thank you to my friends and colleagues who are educators, activists, restorative justice practitioners, and mental health professionals, for sharing invaluable stories in the collective fight for justice. Such stories and my experiences with restorative justice in schools nurtured the research questions and ideas contained in this study, which is why I deeply appreciate all contributions.

Thank you to all of my mentors, teachers, professors, and people I've had opportunity to work alongside in the community here and abroad over the years for cultivating my cultural humility, as well as my desire to always work towards dismantling systemic inequality and white supremacy.

Lastly, this study is dedicated to the all of the young people I've had the opportunity to work with over the years up until today. The passion I have in my heart and soul for a profession that makes me feel alive is because I've witnessed young people's immeasurable courage, loving kindness, humor, creativity, and resilience.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	i
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	ii
LIST OF TABLES.....	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	iv
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION.....	1
II LITERATURE REVIEW.....	8
III METHODOLOGY.....	30
IV FINDINGS	44
V DISCUSSION.....	75
REFERENCES	86
APPENDICES	
Appendix A: Informed Consent Form	99
Appendix B: Recruitment Email 1 and 2	102
Appendix C: Online Survey	103
Appendix D: Human Subjects Review Board Approval Letter	109

LIST OF TABLES

Tables

1. Participant Race/Ethnicity	33
2. Participant Age	34
3. Participant Gender	34
4. Participant Role at School	35
5. Duration of Participant RJ Experience	35
6. Participant Learning Experience Guiding Work	36
7. Restorative Justice Principles Reflected in Daily Practice	45
8. Skills / Solo Practices Reported by Study Participants	46
9. Restorative Justice Outcomes in Participant Schools	47

LIST OF FIGURES

Figures

1. A Whole School Approach	52
2. Social Discipline Window	59

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

“Justice is love correcting that which revolts against love.”

Martin Luther King, Jr., Montgomery Bus Boycott

Overview

Zero-tolerance policies in schools have failed to produce safer, more effective schools and have led to detrimental outcomes disproportionately impacting students of color (Skiba, Reynolds, Graham, Sheras, Conoley, and Garcia-Vazquez, 2008). Zero-tolerance disciplinary approaches such as expulsion threaten educational opportunities for students and make dropout and incarceration far more likely for millions of children and youth across the country. Zero-tolerance policies have created what many have referred to as the civil rights issue of our time: *school-to-prison pipeline* (Advancement Project, 2010). The school-to-prison pipeline has wreaked havoc in marginalized communities across the country, pushing out students, creating unhealthy learning environments, and demoralizing our workforce (U.S. Department of Education, 2004a).

Educators and policy advocates are demanding change in school environments, seeking alternatives to zero-tolerance policies. States are encouraged to implement alternative disciplinary approaches such as *restorative justice* (U.S. Department of Education, 2014a). Implementing restorative practices in school settings has been shown to promote alternatives to zero-tolerance policies (Advancement Project, 2010; Skiba et al., 2008; Burke and Ashley, 2009; Evans and Lester, 2014; Peebles-Wilkins, 2005). Federal and State initiatives have begun to

address student push out and unhealthy learning environments. The Departments of Education and Justice (2009) have embarked on a joint *Supportive School Discipline Initiative*.

Research outcomes suggest that implementing restorative practices in school settings offers alternatives to zero-tolerance policies that disproportionately push many K-12 students into the school-to-prison pipeline (Advancement Project, 2010; Skiba et al., 2008; Evans and Lester, 2014; Peebles-Wilkins, 2005). Restorative practices are now part of the national education conversation. With the U.S. Federal Government issuing guidelines that explicitly recommend restorative practices as an alternative to harmful, racially biased zero-tolerance policies, school districts from coast to coast have begun to incorporate these practices into their discipline principles.

Research Purpose

Given the fundamental paradigm shift occurring in school communities nationwide, research illuminating school-based restorative justice programs may be helpful for both for RJ practitioners, families, and society at large, while also contributing to a growing body of knowledge and research (Thorsborne and Blood, 2013; Davis, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2014a). This study was undertaken to explore the implementation of school-based restorative justice initiatives in the East Bay region of northern California across various school districts. Of particular interest to the researcher is learning about the nature of culture change and barriers to implementation of restorative practices in a setting of shifting paradigms. The experiences and views of school-based professionals who are responsible for the implementation of RJ practices were queried, including the successes, challenges, and factors needed for improvement apparent during the process. The questions that motivated the research study were:

- What RJ practices are being implemented by school-based professionals, (conceptualized along a continuum ranging from non-restorative or punitive to fully restorative practices)?
- Within their role / practice, what are participant observations about the school climate?
- Where are RJ principles being practiced (school-wide, in the classroom, in individual/group interventions, and/or other school-based contexts)?
- What opportunities and challenges were encountered while implementing restorative justice practices?

Study Design

This exploratory study examines the process and outcomes of implementing restorative justice practices in Bay Area public schools. School-based practitioners were surveyed, asking them to speak to the potential impact of restorative practices in their school, as well as any barriers to implementation that were encountered while shifting to this new paradigm. In addition, the study captures the variety of approaches, practices, and goals reported by the practitioners in order to further understand the challenges met while implementing restorative practices.

Theoretical framework. The study design was informed by literature from the fields of criminology, sociology, psychology, social work, law, policy, education, and organizational management (Kropf, 2011; Rodriguez, 2007; Morrison and Vaandering, 2012; Utheim, 2014; Walgrave, 2011; Sharkey and Fenning, 2012; Connolly, James, and Beales, 2011; Curtis and Stollar, 1996). A restorative justice framework, grounded in relational pedagogy (Baker, Terry, Bridger, and Winsor, 1997; Kropf, 2011; Hopkins, 2002), praxis and discipline (Morrison and

Vaandering, 2012), is presented to further understand how this distinctive paradigm employs a responsive regulatory approach emphasizing social engagement over social control. For instance, the continuum of practice and a whole school approach to RJ are concepts illuminated to fully understand the nature of school-based RJ practices being implemented in the Bay Area.

In addition, organizational culture change is useful for making sense of the complex, multidimensional processes of culture change in educational settings (Curtis and Stollar, 1996; Connolly, James, and Beales, 2011). This particular study aims to contribute the perspective of investigating the problem by introducing theoretical sources from organizational culture change theory and linking it with contemporary restorative justice theoretical frameworks. This will contribute to a limited body of knowledge and research focused on school-based restorative justice practices in the Bay Area.

Significance and potential contributions. The potential audiences for this study are social workers, educators, administrators, and other school-based professionals interested in strengthening the resiliency of youth, addressing issues of equity and disproportionality, as well as cultivating healthy school communities through the implementation of restorative practices. This particular study aims to bring in a new lens for investigating the problem by highlighting contemporary RJ theoretical frameworks and examining narratives of RJ practitioners to further understand successes, obstacles, and areas for improvement regarding the implementation of restorative practices in Bay Area school communities. This will contribute to a limited body of knowledge and research focused on school-based restorative practices.

Gathering RJ practitioners' narratives will expand the scope of research available to mental health clinicians/social workers about the historical and contemporary forces (i.e., both healing and harmful) that impact the daily lives of young people; and in a manner supportive of

the need to disentangle the complex and understudied relationship between systemic inequalities and young people's psychological and emotional well-being. Study findings can be used to inform interventions and increase cultural humility, as well as promote an integrative approach to mental health services or clinical work and macro level social change work in school systems (Ward, Clark, and Heidrichet, 2009; Hamilton and Nitcy Hope, 2011; Sachs and Newdom, 1999) by pursuing a deeper understanding of school-based professionals' experiences.

Restorative justice models in schools often seek to address harm/wrongdoing committed, enhance responsibility and accountability, build relationships and community, as well as cultivate the social-emotional development and resiliency of students. However, this research aimed to understand the nature and process of culture change that the participant and their affiliated school undergo while implementing a range of restorative practices.

Parallel Process of Researcher and the Present Study

Fania Davis, a long-time social justice activist and leading restorative justice scholar based in the Bay Area, honors how the civil rights movement is a new but ancient justice of our time. In *What's Love Got to Do with It*, Davis (2012) observes that love is sidelined in our work as social justice workers, which includes the professional social work codes of ethics (NASW, 1996, revised 2017); Social workers will, despite our best intentions, always operate out of a system of oppression. She presents a compelling alternative, *radical love*, defined as a political process capable of transforming systems of injustice such as capitalism, patriarchy, and racism, while reflecting the emancipatory imperative of social work (Davis, 2012). Certainly, an "ethic of love," or a model of relationship-oriented practice and activism that encompasses dialogue, nonviolence, and interconnectedness between people, has informed my work in schools and influenced the development of this study.

The experiences of my youth clients and their families with whom I have worked in schools and communities over the past 5 years reflect the racial, class, and gender inequities that persist in the San Francisco Bay Area. However, prevalent community organizing and policy initiatives that address overarching structural inequities and the need for healthy, safe communities, have all influenced the development of this study. In the past 10 years Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) has done a noteworthy job of implementing restorative practices, as an alternative strategy to suspending students for minor behavioral infractions. Particularly in the last 6 years, there has been substantial growth in number of schools implementing RJ, staffing, capacity, and subsequent effect over time, closing the discipline gap and improving academic outcomes (i.e. literacy levels, graduation/dropout rates) for schools and students participating in RJ (Jain, Basse, Brown, and Kalra, 2014). My initial interest in RJ was sparked in 2008 while studying abroad with a South African Reconciliation and Development program. My experiences working with activists, school-based professionals, and community members of Oakland and neighboring East Bay schools for the past 5 years solidified my interest in this field of study and significantly influenced the development of this research.

Since individual and collective engagement are essential for improving the oppressive conditions of people's lives, social justice-oriented social workers and other stakeholders must find valuable strategies/tools for personal and professional development. The work and legacy of Grace Lee Boggs, a writer, revolutionary, and community organizer, encourages us to think more critically and reflect on the connections between theory, practice, and the ways in which we can sustain commitment to social justice. Boggs (2016) reaffirms my belief that the fight for liberation begins with ourselves and, in her autobiography *Living for Change*, she proclaims:

“To make a revolution, people must not only struggle against existing institutions. They must make a philosophical/ spiritual leap and become more 'human' human beings. In order to change/transform the world, they must change/transform themselves” (p. 153).

It has been a personal journey of transformation and healing as I've taken the time needed to implement restorative justice in my own life. Indeed, my extended process in the completion of my master's thesis has much to do with my own essential journey of integrating restorative values and principles in my life personally and professionally.

The next chapter presents the literature reviewed for this research.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Overview

This chapter describes the history of restorative justice, with an emphasis on its ideological foundations and theoretical framework. Major recurring themes in the restorative justice literature are discussed, including significant contributions to theoretical foundations, evaluations, and debates in the field, as well as the foundational values and principles that guide application across settings. The literature review is presented in five sections. The first section defines restorative justice and other key terms. The second section reviews the history of restorative justice and its practice across various settings. The third section reviews the history of racial disproportionality in schools and the school-to-prison pipeline that evolved. The fourth section presents the theoretical underpinnings of the study.

Defining Restorative Justice and Other Key Terms

Restorative justice encompasses values, principles, and an approach to community building and resolving conflict peacefully to manage crime, harm, and/or wrongdoing in communities, criminal justice agencies (police, court, corrections), as well as non-criminal contexts such as schools and organizations. Restorative justice approaches move engagement from zero-tolerance, top down practices such as expulsion, to a values-based, community-based strengths approach that emphasizes social engagement over social control. Such approaches have been gaining a foothold in public education in the US over the past decade as schools and communities struggle with how to improve educational opportunities, retention, and engage disenfranchised students, families, and the larger community.

Some researchers and administrators use the term “restorative practices” or “restorative measures,” rather than “restorative justice” to draw a clear line between the proactive/reactive restorative practices taking place in schools (Karp and Breslin, 2001; McCluskey, Lloyd, Kane, Riddell, Stead, and Weedon, 2008); Wachtel, 2007). Today, however, the terms are used interchangeably in restorative literature and I do the same. Restorative justice practices offer the promise to transform teacher-student relationships and achieve equity in school discipline, thereby narrowing the racial discipline gap.

Restorative justice represents a radically different approach to discipline, shifting emphasis from punitive interventions such as mandatory suspension and expulsion to a “restorative” model based on respect, responsibility, relationship-building and relationship-repairing. RJ interventions focus on mediation and agreement rather than punishment. Goals are to keep kids in school and create a safe-environment where learning can flourish. In short, RJ is a fundamental change in how the community (school) responds to rule violations and “misbehavior.” Outcomes are best accomplished through cooperative processes that include all stakeholders. This can lead to transformation of people, relationships and communities. Restorative justice requires a major paradigm shift for everyone involved. Restorative justice gives priority to repairing the harm done to the community due to a rupture in (school) relationships; accountability is defined in terms of assuming responsibility and taking action to repair harm.

Restorative justice is a philosophy in which infractions against the state (or a school) are reframed as violations against the community (Amstutz and Mullet, 2005; Morrison, 2007; Zehr, 2002). Restorative justice is often described in sharp contrast to a retributive notions of justice in which punishment is of prime importance. In restorative justice, healing is of prime importance.

The philosophy, which has roots in indigenous traditions from around the world (Zehr, 2002), can manifest itself in a variety of practices such as peer mediation, teen courts, peacemaking circles, and conferences (Pranis, 1998). In these practices, students are brought face to face with people whom they have harmed, and through the process of conversation, come to an agreement about how to 'make things right.' RJ programs differ across communities as they reflect any given community's distinctive combination of concerns, needs, and resources.

Restorative practices serve as an umbrella term that covers a broad range of techniques, strategies and processes, which not only address conflict and wrongdoing, but also encourage the development of social connectedness and self-discipline, emotional literacy skills, social support and social capital.

Restorative practices have increasingly become part of the national education conversation, particularly regarding the dismantling of the school-to-prison pipeline. With the U.S. federal government issuing guidelines that explicitly recommend restorative practices as an alternative to harmful, racially biased zero-tolerance policies (U.S. Department of Education, 2014a), school districts from coast to coast have incorporated these practices into their discipline principles. Restorative practices aren't just for discipline; they are also essential to high-quality teaching and learning. Such restorative principles apply to learners of all ages and abilities: that learning builds social capital and a sense of community; that students feel connected to the group and responsible for each other's learning and well-being; that students feel empowered to engage in restorative processes to promote their own academic success and social-emotional health, as well as that of their peers.

History of Restorative Justice and It's Use in Various Settings

Modern conceptions of restorative justice has its roots in ancient and indigenous practices engaged in cultures across the world, from Native American and First Nation Canadian to African, Asian, Celtic, Hebrew, Arab and others (Wachtel, 2013; Mirsky, 2004).

Eventually RJ broadened to include communities of care as well, with victims' and offenders' families and friends participating in collaborative processes called conferences and circles. Conferencing addresses power imbalances between the victim and offender by including additional supporters (McCold, 2003). The family group conference (FGC) started in New Zealand in 1989 as a response to native Maori people's concerns with the number of their children being removed from their homes by the courts. It was originally envisioned as a family empowerment process, not as restorative justice (Doolan, 2003). In North America it was renamed family group decision making (FGDM) (Burford & Pennell, 2000).

Subsequently other countries have incorporated restorative justice, and its practices, into legislation. It has been widely embraced by the U.S., particularly juvenile justice programs and in recent decades have crossed over to use in public schools in 1990 when a juvenile justice worker, Roxanne Classen, began teaching at an inner city elementary school in California and took the practices into her classroom (Claassen and Claassen, 2008).

Use in juvenile justice. Restorative justice has been implemented as a core component of the juvenile justice system in a number of countries through a specialized juvenile justice acts and programs based on RJ principles, such as New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and many U.S. jurisdictions (Van Ness and Heetderks Strong, 2002). These Acts identify and integrate restorative justice as a governing principle. In introducing a restorative justice model, most countries initially create pilot projects that draw from existing legislation in order to divert

children from the formal justice system to restorative justice programs. These projects have largely relied on the expertise of NGOs and civil society organizations and the practice has produced positive results in several countries, as measured by a feeling of safety on the part of the harmed parties, closer relationships between participants, and a feeling of acceptance on the part of responsible parties (Gavrielides, 2007).

School-based. A restorative justice program was first deployed in an inner-city elementary school in California in an effort to reduce suspensions in their schools. Morrison, Blood, and Thorsborne (2005) discuss the importance of schools attending to all aspects of the school culture and organization by developing a whole school model of RJ:

“Practices move from proactive to reactive, along a continuum of responses. Movement from one end of the continuum to the other involves widening the circle of care around participants. The emphasis is on early intervention through building a strong base at the universal level, which grounds a normative continuum of school community”
(p.11).

Based on Braithwaite’s work on responsive regulation (2002), a whole school approach for the implementation of restorative justice was introduced, proposing three levels of intervention: primary, secondary, and tertiary (Morrison, 2003; Morrison, Blood, and Thorsborne, 2005). The *primary* (or universal) level involves all members of the school community utilizing a pro-active, preventative strategy to develop and affirm students’ social and emotional competencies. An example of a tier one practice would be school-wide community building circles or any relational practices in classrooms and across whole school. At this universal level, it is important for whole school community to understand and apply RJ

principles at personal level. The *secondary* (or targeted) level often involves a small to medium sized group within school community, such as a class, as a conflict situation affects a large number of people. An example of a targeted intervention would be peer mediation or problem-solving circles. The *tertiary* (or intensive) level involves the participation of an even larger cross-section of the school community, including parents/guardians, social workers, and other stakeholders impacted. Restorative conferencing and healing circles is one example that would fall into this level of intervention. Morrison (2005) further clarifies the way in which a whole-school model of RJ spans across three tiers in school system practice: “the emphasis is on early intervention through building a strong base at the primary level, which grounds a normative continuum of responsive regulation across the school community” (p. 106). Likewise, Braithwaite’s concept of how responsive regulation and restorative justice is simply about responding to behavior and restoring relationships. Additionally, Morrison (2005) is magnifying this integrated framework in the discussion of school-based RJ implementation to illustrate how a combined responsive and restorative framework has the power to support institutional and cultural changes, while supporting the implementation, development and sustainability of restorative practices in schools. Moreover, such a framework capitalizes off of Braithwaite’s notion of separating the behavior from the person, since too many policies and practices that seek to regulate school communities focus too much on the rules of behavior, while failing to address “the relational needs of the school community and the web of relationships that sustain the school community’s health and safety” (p. 108). Thus, it is apparent how existing literature particularly focused on restorative justice and responsive regulation, emphasizes how it is essential for policies and practices to be responsive to the needs of individuals, as well as the needs of communities. Additionally, it is noted by many researchers and scholars in the field of

RJ that schools are highly influential institutions for youth development and wellness, in which there is widespread opportunity for school communities to promote just outcomes for students on all levels (i.e. safety, health, academic).

Despite there being little evidence of what it takes for individuals to feel connected to the school community, restorative justice has much to offer to ongoing research and development in this area.

Research on School-Based Restorative Justice Initiatives

The social science of restorative practices offers a common thread to tie together theory, research and practice in diverse fields such as education, counseling, criminal justice, social work and organizational management. Individuals and organizations in many fields are developing models and methodology and performing empirical research that share the same implicit premise, but are often unaware of the commonality of each other's efforts.

Restorative practices are the focus of current research in schools nationwide, including by Johns Hopkins University and *Diplomas Now*, supported by the Atlantic Philanthropies; and by RAND Corporation, supported by the National Institutes of Mental Health and the U.S. Department of Justice (International Institute for Restorative Practices, 2014). These projects are exploring a wide range of outcomes, including restorative practices' effects on graduation rates, social competency, academic achievement, substance abuse and bullying.

Research completed during the past fifteen years has identified an association between school connectedness and adolescent health/wellbeing (Bell, 2001; McNeely Nonnemaker, and Blum, 2002; Whitlock, 2010). Many authors have described the powerful experience of speaking and listening from the heart, as well as the potential for deeply connecting with others in restorative *circles* (Braithwaite, 2001; Boyes-Watson, 2008; Pranis, Stuart, and Wedge, 2003;

Pranis, 2005; Riestenberg, 2012). Emerging research points to positive outcomes of *classroom circles* for addressing classroom issues before they escalate, while building community spirit and supporting teaching curriculum (McCold, 2002; Riestenberg, 2012; Wachtel, Costello, and Wachtel, 2009; Advancement Project, 2014).

Research by educators points to the academic and emotional benefits of building closer relationships among students and with staff (McNeely, Nonnemaker, and Blum, 2002; Gregory, Clawson, Davis, and Gerewitz, 2013). Additionally, supporters of whole-school restorative practices espouse proactive programs that speak to students' social-emotional needs (Hopkins, 2004; Riestenberg, 2012; Wachtel and McCold, 2003; Mirsky, 2011) and how the implementation of RJ requires a paradigm shift in the ways schools work (Thorsborne and Blood, 2013; Evans, 2001; Fullan, 1996; Connolly, James, and Beales, 2011). In a small scale study, Gregory, Clawson, Davis, and Gerewitz (2013) demonstrated that classrooms characterized by more frequent implementation of restorative practices tended to have narrow racial discipline gaps when comparing classrooms with lower frequency RP practices. Additionally, in classrooms with more restorative practices, students tended to experience their teachers as very respectful of them. Positive outcomes included significant reductions in misbehavior and punitive discipline and improved teacher-student relationships. These improvements tend to narrow the "racial-discipline gap" a concern in schools nationwide (Gregory et al., 2013).

Racial Disproportionality in Schools and the "School-to-Prison" pipeline

National data show significant disparities in rates and types of discipline administered in schools when students violate school rules. Students with disabilities and students of color are disproportionately impacted by punitive intervention practices. Black students are suspended and

expelled at a rate three times greater than white students, while students with disabilities are twice as likely to receive an out-of-school suspension as their non-disabled peers. School-based arrests have also increased dramatically over the past 20 years, with Black students and students with disabilities being arrested at higher rates than White and non-disabled students (U.S. Department of Education, 2014a; Civil Rights Data Collection, 2017). The U. S. Department of Justice enforces Title IV, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race or national origin in public schools, and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1963, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin by schools, law enforcement agencies, and other recipients of federal financial assistance (U.S. Department of Education, 2014a).

School-to-prison pipeline. The phrase “school-to-prison pipeline” refers to an overemphasis of policies and practices in schools that funnel students found in violation of school rules out of school and toward the juvenile (and adult) criminal justice systems (Wald and Losen, 2003; NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, 2014; Advancement Project, 2010; U.S. Department of Education, 2014a). The widespread expansion of punitive practices and policies across systems in society, dubbed by scholars as *zero-tolerance policies*, is highlighted as they play a role in the perpetuation of the school-to-prison-pipeline.

Such policies and practices include zero tolerance and harsh discipline such as out-of-school suspensions and expulsions for even minor misbehavior, prison-like security procedures, overreliance on police or school resource officers to provide security, and increasing numbers of school-based arrests and referrals to juvenile court. The school-to-prison pipeline operates directly through the criminalization of youth for school-based incidents and indirectly through practices that lead to students dropping out, making them far more likely to become involved in juvenile or adult court.

A history of prior suspensions from school is one of the strongest predictors of whether a student will ultimately drop out, thus increasing his likelihood of entering the juvenile or adult justice systems. In a study of 26,000 U.S. middle and high schools, researchers found that over two million students received out-of-school suspensions in 2009-2010 school year. In the schools studied, one out of every nine secondary students was suspended at least once.

A 2013 Chicago study found that 73% of children arrested as adolescents later dropped out of high school, compared with 51% of those not arrested. A single arrest raises the odds of dropping out of high school by 22%. National data also show strong disparities in discipline rates based on race and disability. One out of every six Black K-12 students was suspended at least once and more than 13% of students with disabilities were suspended nationally – about twice the rate of their non-disabled peers. School-based arrests have also increased dramatically over the past 20 years, with Black students and students with disabilities being arrested at higher rates than White and non-disabled students (Children’s Defense Fund-Ohio, 2015).

The school-to-prison pipeline, in particular, has caught the attention of many communities, scholars, and policy advocates. Six states provide restorative responses and positive interventions to school discipline in statute/code refuting past, aversive zero tolerance policies. In addition, Restorative justice seeks to promote equitable outcomes and mediate the impacts of institutionalized racism.

Disproportionality refers to a group’s representation in a particular category that exceeds the researchers expectations for that group, or differs substantially from the representation of others in that category (Skiba, Horner, Chung, Rausch, May, and Tobin, 2011). Disproportionality also refers to the extent to which a given group’s experience is not proportional to their representation in society at large and how it compares the proportion of one

racial or ethnic group to the same racial or ethnic group in the population. For instance, marginalized populations, particularly low-income communities of color, experience phenomena differently when compared to White counterparts within the larger population, including (but not limited to) maltreatment, discrimination, incarceration, and punitive discipline. While disproportionality refers to the state of being out of proportion, the term *disparity* refers to a state of being unequal. In social service systems, disparity is typically used to describe unequal treatment or outcomes experienced by one racial or ethnic group when compared to another racial or ethnic group in the same circumstance.

Several decades of research document that students from certain racial/ethnic groups, particularly Black/African American students, have historically been disproportionately identified as in need of special education services and are subsequently placed in more restrictive special educational settings (Albrecht, Skiba, Losen, Chung, and Middelberg, 2012), as well as subjected to higher rates of exclusionary disciplinary practices (i.e. discipline referrals, suspensions, school arrests, and expulsion) (Children’s Defense Fund, 2011; Skiba, et al., 2002; Skiba, Horner, Chung, Rausch, May, and Tobin, 2011; Losen and Martinez, 2013; Wald and Losen, 2003). Researchers have also recognized that special education and disciplinary disproportionality produce inequitable opportunities for learning.

Disproportionality exists in national systems, such as child welfare, juvenile justice, health care, as well as education. Data suggests that youth of color are significantly more likely than their White counterparts to be arrested, detained, prosecuted, incarcerated, given probation, or transferred to adult court (Models for Change, 2011). For instance, youth of color are more likely than their White counterparts to experience difficulties in school, which contributes to a cycle of involvement in the juvenile justice system (National Council of La Raza, 2011). Not

only are children of color overrepresented in the child welfare system, but also two thirds of youth in the juvenile justice system are youth of color (Children’s Defense Fund, 2011). Within the juvenile justice system, this phenomenon is referred to as disproportionate minority contact (National Council of La Raza, 2011; Huizinga, Thornberry, Knight, and Lovegrove, 2007). In 2009, among the 1.5 million youth seen in juvenile courts, 34% were African American, although they represented only 16% of youth ages 10 to 17 in the population (Puzzanchera and Kang, 2011). Similarly, Latino youth represented 25% of youth who were incarcerated, although they represented only 19% of youth ages 10 to 17 (Saavedra, 2010). Statistics appear to suggest that Asian American or Pacific Islander and American Indian youth are proportionally represented within this system. However, American Indian youth are largely seen in federal courts because crimes committed on tribal lands are considered federal offenses. These contacts are not included among those with the juvenile justice system and thus affect the interpretation of those data. Several studies have noted that many of the youth in the juvenile system are “dually involved” or “crossover youth” who have experienced both juvenile justice and child welfare system involvement (Herz, Lee, Lutz, Stewart, Tuell, and Wiig, 2012). Similar to the child welfare system, the causes of DMC are complex and include racial bias within the system, differences in the types and levels of offending behavior, legislation and policies with disproportionate impact, and the presence of other risk factors, including family economic status, family structure, and neighborhood (Huizinga, et al., 2007).

Disproportionality is apparent in the U.S. educational system and is reflected by the disparities in educational outcomes for K-12 students of color, where it can manifest in a number of different ways. For example, the overrepresentation and persistence of young people of color among students receiving harsh disciplinary actions has significant consequences. African

American students are more than three times as likely as their White peers to be suspended or expelled and are overrepresented among children identified with a learning disability or emotional disturbance. Latino and African American students comprise 56% of students expelled from school under zero-tolerance policies, although they represent only 45% of the student body (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

Causes of disproportionality in the education system are multifaceted, while most discussions of roots focus on the historic privilege that white children have benefitted from in an “apartheid school system,” which is what Jonathan Kozol (2005) refers to in the title of his book *The Shame of the Nation*. Since 1973, the number of students suspended annually in the United States has more than doubled to 3.3 million students, in which Black students or 17 percent of the US student population in 2000, comprised 34 percent of suspended students that same year, yet were 2.6 times as likely to be suspended as White students. Suspension increases the likelihood of a student being expelled, dropping out, and being incarcerated, a phenomenon dubbed the 'school to prison pipeline' (Wald and Losen, 2003). One less punitive model of discipline that is gaining popularity worldwide is restorative justice (Amstutz and Mullet, 2005). Since restorative justice is now being used in the U.S. to address racial disproportionality in the education system and improve outcomes for the students who get trapped in the pipeline, the study aims to contribute to the expanding body of knowledge that addresses the impacts and challenges of implementing school-based RJ.

A growing critique of disproportionality within the national education system has led to calls for reform and alternatives to traditionally punitive disciplinary practices that disproportionately impacts marginalized youth. For instance, whole schools and individual school-based professionals across the U.S. are implementing restorative justice practices and

shifting cultural paradigms through proactive community building and restorative approaches to discipline (Advancement Project, 2014; Baker, Terry, Bridger, and Winsor, 1997; Beck, 2012; Hopkins, 2002; Thorsborne and Blood, 2013). Intentional efforts to interrupt the school-to-prison pipeline by interrupting cycles of racialized mass incarceration have succeeded in communities across the country with restorative justice values, principles, and practices. Federal and State initiatives have also been developed to provide guidance to schools.

Guidance Initiatives

Based on the existing body of knowledge, a majority of schools do not make systematic efforts to institutionalize social and emotional competencies, nor create school climates to promote youth development and well-being. Indeed, the implementation of restorative justice in schools seeks to foster safe climates where the whole child is nurtured and developed (Wald and Losen, 2003; Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, and Hawkins, 2004). In response, In the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice formed the Supportive School Discipline Initiative (SSDI) to reduce the school to prison pipeline by supporting school discipline practices that foster safe, positive learning environments and keep children in school (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, and Schellinger, 2011).

A school discipline guidance package was released in 2014 to provide states, districts, and schools with tools and resources they need to improve school climate and ensure that their discipline practices comply with federal law and reduce disparities. This resource, titled *The School Discipline Guidance Package to Enhance School Climate and Improve School Discipline Policies/Practices*, sought to assist states, districts and schools in developing practices and strategies to enhance school climate, and ensure those policies and practices comply with federal law (U.S. Department of Education 2014b).

The guidance package was intended to provide tools that would promote fair and effective disciplinary practices that would make schools safe, supportive and inclusive for all students. In remarks during ceremonies releasing the document (Department of Education, 2014b), Attorney General Eric Holder stated:

“A routine school disciplinary infraction should land a student in the principal’s office, not in a police precinct. By ensuring federal civil rights protections, offering alternatives to exclusionary discipline and providing useful information to school resource officers, we can keep America’s young people safe and on the right path.”

The guidelines recommended that schools revise their discipline policies to move away from zero tolerance policies, which exclude large numbers of students with suspensions and expulsions, often for minor infractions. Instead the guidelines recommend the use of methods such as restorative practices, which foster positive school climates:

"Positive discipline policies can help create safer learning environments without relying heavily on suspensions and expulsions. Schools also must understand their civil rights obligations and avoid unfair disciplinary practices. We need to keep students in class where they can learn. These resources are a step in the right direction.” (U.S. Department of Education, 2014b)

The resource package consists of four components:

The Dear Colleague guidance letter on civil rights and discipline, prepared in conjunction with DOJ, describes how schools can meet their legal obligations under federal law to administer student discipline without discriminating against students on the basis of race, color or national origin; **The Guiding Principles** document draws from emerging research and best

practices to describe three key principles and related action steps that can help guide state and local efforts to improve school climate and school discipline; **The Directory of Federal School Climate and Discipline Resources** indexes the extensive federal technical assistance and other resources related to school discipline and climate available to schools and districts; and **The Compendium of School Discipline Laws and Regulations**, an online catalogue of the laws and regulations related to school discipline in each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, compares laws across states and jurisdictions.

Theoretical Underpinnings of Study. There is no causal theory that describes the exact mechanisms by which restorative justice is intended to work. However, there are strong theoretical connections to Braithwaite’s reintegrative shaming theory (1989), Tyler and Blader’s procedural justice theory (2000), Sherman’s defiance theory (2003), and Turner’s self-categorization theory (Oakes, Haslam, and Turner, 1994). These theories form the broad theoretical basis for an ‘optimistic’ vision of restorative justice. Indeed, it is time for a new paradigm of justice, or what Sherman (2003) terms “emotionally intelligent justice.”

Self-categorization theory. Social status is useful for understanding the social dynamics of conflict and cooperation within institutions, including schools. Concerns over social status are central to understanding and preventing school violence, since young people need spaces and communities where they feel valued, needed, and connected. Tyler and Blader (2000) demonstrated that individuals care about justice because of concern over social status, since justice communicates a message about status. Building on the procedural justice model, high levels of relational cooperation within institutions have been found when individuals feel a high level of pride in being a member of the collective and are given a high level of respect within the collective. Moreover, self categorization theory (Oakes et al., 1994) postulates that there are

three levels of category abstraction which can be used to categorize the self: personal identity (the self as an individual), social identity (the self as a group member) and interspecies (the self as a human being). Each level is as valid as the next, with the self being defined equally both as an individual and as a social group member. More recently, existing literature suggests the integration of the aforementioned theoretical frameworks; “establishes an empirical association between the affect of shame and a sense of belonging, or identification, within the school community” (Morrison, 2005, p. 105).

Reintegrative shaming theory. The affect of shame has been central to our understanding of restorative justice, notably through the work of John Braithwaite (1989, 2002) and roots in indigenous practices. Shame is a powerful predictor of harmful behavior since it indicates the rupture of social relationships. Ahmed and Braithwaite (2005) writings on shame management and bullying is significant, illustrating how bullying and victimization are related to shame-management styles, as well as how axes of the social discipline window are useful for mapping the four shame-management strategies. Likewise, the social discipline window helps us distinguish restorative justice from punitive, permissive, and negligent responses to harmful behavior, in which restorative responses are high on both accountability (or control) and support (Wachtel and McCold, 2001, 2003; Wachtel, 2013)

Certainly, RJ is about creating spaces that addresses social and emotional imbalances affecting young people. This resonates with Zehr’s understanding of RJ as a journey to *belonging* (Zehr, 2000). These spaces honor young people’s voices and support youth participation in creating healthy, safe communities. Braithwaite’s theory of reintegrative shaming provides important concepts in creating such spaces (1989). Braithwaite argues that reintegration is maximized through participatory processes that address *wrongdoing*, while

maintaining respect for all parties. Also, Braithwaite argues that while this framework has its origins in addressing harmful behavior, it can equally be as effective for community building and fostering personal growth. The collaborative nature of circles, or what Braithwaite terms youth development circles, allows for the social and emotional learning of young people, which successfully enhances students' academic performance and reduces misbehavior (Braithwaite, 2001; Greenberg, Weissberg, O'Brien, Zins, Fredericks, Resnik, and Elias, 2003). Braithwaite (1989) asserts that the emotion of shame is central to the social and emotional development of youth in circle processes; This concept has indigenous roots, particularly the beliefs of the Maori people of New Zealand. Furthermore, Braithwaite and other advocates in the field of RJ anticipate that underlying values of restorative justice theory (i.e. accountability, empowerment, restitution, prevention of future injustice, forgiveness), as well as an emphasis on restorative processes and outcomes, will enable all institutions to be restructured (Van Ness and Heetderks, 2002). For instance, Braithwaite describes his theory of restorative justice as a vision for holistic change in the way we address justice in the world.

Furthermore, storytelling is fundamental for healthy social relationships, school connectedness, and the empowerment of young people. Undeniably through empowerment, diverse narratives, or the multiplicity of voices within school communities emerge, which is a key element of restorative processes. Kay Pranis, a respected RJ advocate and practitioner, writes:

“Having others listen to your story is a function of power in our culture. The more power you have, the more people will listen respectfully to your story. Consequently, listening to someone's story is a way of empowering them, of validating their intrinsic worth as a human being” (2001, p. 7).

Restorative justice engages all stakeholders by valuing and engaging all members in an education setting (stakeholders), including students, faculty, families, and the extended community. In a presidential address to the American Society of Criminology, Larry Sherman (2003) argued that expanding research and RJ practices can help transform theory and modern advances by promoting the development of democratic institutions, including the implementation of structural supports and strategies that offers the school community an opportunity to foster growth, resilience, and responsibility.

A range of restorative justice practices allows school communities to be more responsive, while challenging exclusionary, punitive zero-tolerance policies that are formal responses to student misbehavior and perpetuate systemic inequality. A key facet of RJ is the role of emotional intelligence in preventing and reducing conflict. Morrison highlights the strength of a whole-school RJ approach in schools and argues that:

“a framework based on restorative justice and responsive regulation brings together three important aspects of regulating safe school communities- conflict resolution, social and emotional intelligence, and shame management- under one conceptual umbrella” (2007, p. 103).

Empirical research supports the successes of peer mediation and conflict resolution programs that fit within the ethos of a wider safe school framework. It is apparent that RJ has the strength to capitalize on conflict and harness growth both individually and at a community level.

In support of a whole school approach to implementing RJ in schools, Braithwaite states:

“It appears a whole school approach is needed that not just tackles individual incidents but also links incidents to a change program for the culture of the school.” His example of bullying illustrates how the

school “not only must resolve the bullying incident; but must also use it as a resource to affirm the disapproval of bullying in the culture of the school” (2002, p. 60).

We must create school communities that promote collective pride, respect, and well-being for young people by transforming exclusionary environments that capitalize on difference and domination, into safe, inclusive environments characterized by participative democracies that recognize cultural complexities of schools. Relinquishing shame, as well as the reaffirming, repairing, and rebuilding of relationships is at the heart of democratic citizenship and a whole school approach to responsive regulation and restorative justice.

Continuum of restorative practices. Evidence suggests the need for a broader institutional approach that supports restorative practices across all levels of behavior and how RJ must touch the culture of the whole school community (Cameron and Thorsborne, 2001; Hopkins, 2004. Morrison writes: “a synergy between proactive and reactive strategies will unite programs across a continuum of practices” (2007, p. 106). Therefore, a continuum of restorative practices, from proactive to reactive, must be situated within an institutional framework that is comprehensive and loyal to a range of responsive regulatory practices based on the principles of restorative justice. Guided by Braithwaite’s (2002) work on responsive regulation, a whole school model of restorative justice has been developed based on three levels of intervention: primary, secondary, and tertiary (Morrison, 2003; Morrison, Blood, and Thorsborne, 2005; Hopkins, 2004).

The primary (or universal) level involves all members of the school community utilizing a pro-active, preventative strategy to develop and affirm students’ social and emotional competencies. An example of a tier one practice would be school-wide community building

circles or any relational practices in classrooms and across whole school. At this universal level, it is important for the school community to understand and apply RJ principles across the whole school. **The secondary (or targeted) level** often involves a small to medium sized group within school, such as a class, or a conflict situation that affects a number of people within school community. An example of a targeted intervention would be peer mediation or problem-solving circles. **The tertiary (or intensive) level** involves the participation of an even larger cross-section of the school community, including parents/guardians, social workers, and other stakeholders impacted, particularly when serious offenses occur within the school. Restorative conferencing and healing circles is one example that would fall into this level of intervention.

Existing literature highlights how the critical underlying strategy for sustainability of RJ in schools is a whole-school approach. A number of promising whole-school approaches have developed in the recent decade, among them those of Wachtel and McCold (2001), Hopkins (2004), Morrison, Blood, and Thorsborne (2005), Morrison (2005). A focus on quality relationships and the social-emotional skill development of students seems to provide a solid foundation for implementing whole school restorative practices. Shaw further explains that “enabling factors within such an approach are characterized by supportive and productive leadership, a climate of professional learning, and congruence with policy and practice” (2007 p. 133). Morrison, Blood, and Thorsborne (2005) also emphasize the importance of leadership for successful implementation, particularly the leadership style, quality, and passion. A continuum of prevention and intervention strategies implemented within a whole school model can cohesively be embedded within a school policy and practices framework for significant culture change. A widespread conviction is that the major challenge for schools is addressing the culture change required to make the shift from traditional discipline, driven by punitive (or rewards

based) external motivators, to restorative discipline, driven by relational motivators that seek to empower individuals and their communities. The topic of culture change and the complexities of the change process in the context of school-based RJ implementation is certainly addressed in the existing literature by scholars and practitioners worldwide to address the challenges of and resistance to whole-school applications of RJ. Building the foundation for a school-wide restorative community can also be difficult if restorative practices/discipline is implemented in a rigid manner or is incongruent with the unique needs of the larger community outside the school. Amstutz and Mullet warn against a “cookie cutter approach” that does not take into consideration the diversity of each distinctive school culture (2005, p.4). This statement echoes much literature that suggests how the successful cultivation of restorative culture depends largely on a program’s ability to adapt to the culture of a school, as well as its surrounding community, which therefore creates buy-in with education professionals, families, local leaders, and other community supports influencing school community. Based on the literature, such an approach to whole school implementation necessitates securing support, or buy-in, from all stakeholders at various levels within the school system.

Empirical research, as well as reports from various schools suggest that youth respond best to restorative discipline when implemented consistently across the entire school community (Amstutz and Mullet, 2005). The shifting of culture along with school-wide policies and practice must be an intentional component of the implementation process, which is often difficult to do and incredibly complex in nature. In conclusion, this literature review chapter honors the many contributions to the field of restorative justice and while it informed the research design of the study’s methodology, it ultimately provides an underlying theoretical framework for the Findings and Discussion chapters.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The study was undertaken to deepen awareness and understanding of restorative justice in educational settings. By directly accessing the opinions of school-based restorative justice professionals, the study proposed to examine individual experiences with implementing school-based restorative justice programs across various west coast school districts in the Bay Area. A mixed methods survey-based study asked school-based professionals to describe their experience with restorative justice implementation in their school, addressing such areas as pedagogy, direct work/practice, trainings, research/evaluation, as well a restorative continuum of practices.

Finally, the study sought feedback on possible areas of improvement for implementing/disseminating restorative practices in school settings. The researcher assessed the narrative responses of school-based professionals collected through an online survey. This study's findings can be used to inform how schools and restorative justice practitioners can more effectively implement restorative practices in school settings by pursuing a deeper understanding of practitioners' collective experiences. Ultimately, this researcher fulfilled these ethical obligations by engaging school-based professionals and representing their experiences with restorative justice and the challenges met with implementation in research.

Research Design

A non-probability, cross-sectional survey of restorative justice practitioners was undertaken using an internet-based survey. The survey included a screening section, an informed consent section, a demographics section, a referral section, and a set of open-ended

narrative questions. The design provided access to an array of perspectives and experiences of school-based professionals who are implementing a range of restorative practices.

Methods. Univariate and narrative analysis of responses were examined to identify the restorative justice practices implemented in the practitioner's school, the school's organizational structure and vision, quality of relationships, resources needed for support, and the cultural paradigm shift, if any, in the school community. The survey, which was posted on the SurveyMonkey secure socket platform, took participants approximately twenty minutes to complete. The recruitment email contained a link to the survey, and, if an individual chose to participate, it was possible for the survey to be distributed to more potential participants through snowball sampling.

The proposed study utilized a nonprobability, non-random method of sampling selection known as purposive sampling. This particular approach was selected because such a strategy may prove to be effective when only limited numbers of people can serve as primary data sources, such as is the case with the aims of the study. Potential restorative justice school personnel were identified by reaching out to my personal network via email. The e-mail recruitment consisted of a brief synopsis of the questionnaire, the eligibility requirements for participation, and a link to the online questionnaire. Screening questions were asked to disqualify individuals who do not meet the inclusionary criteria. Please see Appendix B for copies of the recruitment emails.

One challenge was that in the beginning of recruitment process people were not enrolling in the study at the expected rate. Only several participants completed survey in the few weeks following the survey's launch. To address this, a second recruitment email was drafted and more concise, and the word "URGENT" appeared in the SUBJ line. All changes in the contact email

were approved by Human Subjects Review (HSR) Board. Furthermore, I reached out to school-based professionals in my network to ask for their continued support with forwarding my recruitment email to their networks. Another challenge I encountered throughout the data collection phase of my study was a pattern I noticed from the beginning was that many people did not go on to complete the survey after answering the screening questions (approximately 25 people did not complete survey after getting beyond the screening questions at beginning of survey). The way I resolved this challenge was by increasing my recruitment efforts through word of mouth at conferences and trainings in the Bay Area, as well as consistently sending my recruitment email to people in the field. Certainly the people working in schools have extremely busy schedules and since there was no immediate benefit, such as financial compensation, it was understandable. Another thing I did to resolve this issue was to create a recruitment poster on *Linked In*, a professional networking site that helps individuals connect with other professionals in similar fields of interest. Certainly it was not easy recruiting people from one of the most overworked, underpaid fields in the U.S.

Sample: Inclusion criteria. There were six eligibility requirements for study enrollment:

- Age 18 or older
- Read and write English
- Currently employed at a public middle or high school in the Bay Area for at least one year, or have worked at a school during the past five years, for at least one year.
- School-based professional, with one of the following roles: educators, restorative justice practitioner, counselor, principal/admin, intern, and school social worker.

- Must have had contact with RJ practices being utilized in the school setting and/or implemented practices themselves.

Throughout the study, participants are referred to as school-based professionals and restorative justice practitioners interchangeably. 86 people started the survey and 48 completed some portion of the survey. After a careful inspection of the responses, 36 surveys were complete enough to include in the analysis. Therefore, 36 restorative justice practitioners in the Bay Area across school districts successfully completed the online survey designed for the project.

Exclusion criteria. Participants who did not answer yes to all of the screening questions were ineligible to participate in the study. 7 people inquired about the study but were disqualified because they did not meet eligibility requirements.

Participant Demographics

The following tables describe the demographic characteristics of the sample, including: race/ethnicity, age, gender, role at school, years of experience in RJ, and educational / training influences.

Table 1: Participant Race/Ethnicity (N=37)

Race / Ethnicity	n	% of responses
White	17	54.8
Latin or Hispanic American	4	12.9
Black, Afro Caribbean, or African American	6	19.4
East Asian or Asian American	2	6.5
No response	6	16.2
South Asian or Indian American	1	3.2
Middle Eastern or Arab American	1	3.2
Native American or Alaskan Native	0	0

It is apparent that the sample is overwhelmingly identified as White (54.8%). However, six participants (16.2%) did not prefer to identify their racial/ethnic background, so it is unclear how the sample of participants is represented in regards to race/ethnicity.

Table 2: Participant Age (N=37)

Age	n	% of responses
18-24	3	8.1
25-34	18	48.6
35-44	9	24.3
45-54	5	13.5
55-64	1	2.7
65-74	1	2.7
75 or older	0	0.0

48.6% of participants were between the ages of 25-34 (n=18), which suggests that younger RJ practitioners or millennials with less years of experience in education represent close to half of the sample.

Table 3: Participant Gender (N=37)

Gender	n	% of responses
Female	28	75.7
Male	8	21.6
Gender Non-Binary	1	2.7

Table 4: Participant Role at School (N = 37)

Role	n	% of responses
Teacher	7	19.5
SPED	2	5.6
Principal/Dean	3	8.3
School Counselor	8	22.2
Restorative Justice Coordinator/Program Director	6	16.7
Intern with School District	2	5.6
Social Worker	7	19.4
Other Administrative Role	1	2.8
No Response	1	2.7

Table 5: Duration of Participant RJ Experience (N=37)

Duration	n	% responses
0-6 months	2	5.4
6-11 months	3	8.1
1-2 years	11	29.7
2-5 years	14	37.8
5-10 years	7	18.9

Enrollment criteria for the study required at least 1 year of experience working at a public middle or high school in the Bay Area. The above data in Table 5 reflects how 5 respondents have less than one year of experience with implementing school-based RJ, while the majority (37.8%) have between 2-5 years of experience.

Participants (N=36) were next asked to provide information about education, training, or professional experiences that guide their restorative justice work. There were 11 descriptors and responders were instructed to endorse as many as described to their experience.

Table 6: Participant Learning Experiences Guiding Work (N=36)

Learning Experience	n
Community-based or district-wide training	22
Hands-on experience	15
Receiving mentoring /coaching / consultation support	12
Staff meetings / staff circles	9
School-site based professional development	8
Educational courses / webinars	7
Conducting research	7
Facilitation training	7
Curriculum development	5
Providing mentoring / coaching / supervision	5
Internship	2

Data Collection

The participant was directed to an online questionnaire on SurveyMonkey and were prompted with screening questions (Appendix C). Prospective participants did not have access to the survey if they answered “no” to any of the eligibility screening questions, but instead were directed to a screen that explained their ineligibility for participation in the study. If a potential participant answered “yes” to all of the screening questions, they were automatically directed to the informed consent page.

If participants reached out to me personally with concerns or questions, their identity would be known to the researcher, but not recorded in any data set.

Anonymity was also preserved since names were not obtained with the consent procedures. Since the recruitment email was sent to personal contacts within the researcher's network, the risk of coercion was evident, but all necessary precautions were taken to ensure that each participant was aware of the benefits and risks of participation. For instance, these precautions were reflected in the electronic consent form and explained in detail. It is possible that participants in my personal network filled out the survey questionnaire because they knew me and were trying to do me a favor, which could have created a social desirability bias. To avoid this situation, I explicitly cautioned against this in the consent materials.

Ethics and Safeguards

Informed consent. All participants signed a consent form. Informed consent was obtained electronically through the internet-based survey. Please see Appendix A for a copy of the Informed Consent.

Precautions Taken to Safeguard Confidentiality and Identifiable Information. Participant responses were recorded through an online survey. Since my personal and professional contacts were both close and distant, I took into consideration ways to uphold confidentiality. Therefore, the recruits fully understood that they were not obligated to participate and that there were clear protections in place to prevent their opinions from becoming attached to any identifying factors. No personally identifying information was requested in the survey except age and race. Due to the safeguards put in place, there was no way participants' identities could be linked with their responses. For example, IP addresses were not collected. Unique ID numbers were assigned to each participant's responses. Data were password protected at all times. All research materials including recordings, transcriptions, analyses and consent/assent documents, were stored in a secure location under the researcher's control throughout the study

period. These materials will be kept secured for three years after the thesis is accepted and will be destroyed at that time unless needed for further study. If not destroyed at the 3 year mark, the Human Subjects Committee at Smith College School for Social Work will be notified of the continuation. All electronically stored data will be safeguarded by password protection throughout the storage period.

Human Subjects Review Board. The Human Subject Review Board (HSRB) at Smith College, Northampton, MA approved the study after assuring that all materials met Federal and institutional standards for protection of human subjects. A copy of the Human Subjects Review Board approval letter is provided in Appendix D.

Risks of Participation. Risks were considered minimal, but nonetheless relevant to highlight. The potential “social risks” were within the participant’s work setting if their views became known. Therefore, to mitigate such risks, the participant agreed that the intent of the study was to preserve anonymity of both the participants and the schools that they worked in. It was made clear that if participants revealed identifying information linked to themselves, colleagues, students, or schools, either in their survey responses or when contacting me, they were choosing to rescind anonymity. Once the study closed, data were examined for any instances of PII and none was identified. If PII had been observed, it would have been scrubbed from the data set prior to data analysis.

Benefits of Participation. A solid empirical research base is both limited and needed to help make sense of quantitative data and qualitative findings in many case studies examining the process of culture change and impact of implementing school-based restorative justice. This study has the potential to benefit school social workers, teachers, administrators, and families who wish to gain a deeper understanding of what is involved in the transformation of culture and

systems to mediate the impacts of phenomena such as the school-to-prison pipeline. All school-based professionals can benefit from learning about how to implement a range of restorative practices along a continuum since traditionally punitive, exclusionary disciplinary policies are exacerbating education inequities. Additionally, school-based professionals interested in culturally responsive, healing, and proactive processes of change, who recognize the powerful ability of restorative justice to cultivate healthier, safer school climates offer invaluable insight and narratives that are understudied. School and mental health professionals are in a unique position to offer in-depth, humanistic, strengths-based, culturally responsive, and empirically significant practices along a three-tiered intervention model based on health care tiered model of intervention. Moreover, a potential benefit for participants was that responses to the questionnaire allowed for the opportunity to anonymously share personal views related to their unique experiences. While participants completed the survey, it could have stimulated personal reflection and interest in learning more or being involved with a growing movement for social change.

Furthermore, participation in research could remind participants of the continuing dilemma of changing school culture and could highlight how there is much more to know about restorative practices, particularly in terms of the process itself and what impact it has on other school practices. For instance, restorative justice practitioners could become curious about how their experiences or school contexts compare to the experiences of others in the field with implementing whole school restorative practices across a wide range of school contexts. Also, upon completion of survey, perhaps participants became involved in a process of inquiry when reminded that no one is alone in the fight for social change and how challenges met while shifting cultural paradigms reflects a need for a serious commitment of time and effort beyond

workplace. For example, the survey could have underscored the importance of dialogue with all stakeholders (teachers, administration, counselors, students, their families, etc.) for the purpose of becoming more grounded in the theory/practice of RJ to advance efforts that promote culture change and cultivate the well-being of young people in school communities.

Benefits of the research. The study may contribute to the overall empirical knowledge base highlighting the implementation of school-based restorative practices as it pertains to organizational culture change. The more research that exists, the more feasible it will be for school districts or schools to commit to shifting paradigms with the intention of benefiting their unique student body and school culture. Moreover, the study is relevant for education and social work development, since school-based educators and clinicians often spend the most time with students and are responsible for the implementation of Restorative Justice.

Benefits to the researcher. A potential benefit for the researcher is to expand my knowledge on a topic of research that speaks to the heart and soul by furthering my understanding of the powerful, interconnected, and complimentary fields of social work and restorative justice. Limited research exists focused on the implementation of restorative practices in American school settings, so the study can potentially broaden the social work profession's understanding of the implications and effects of Restorative Justice in our communities. Most importantly, completing the thesis project was a potential benefit for the researcher, since it is a requirement for completion of the master's degree in social work. As a school social worker in training, the knowledge and gratification I gained throughout the study was invaluable since I plan to integrate restorative justice in my work as a professional. Restorative justice principles of empathy, empowerment, and community involvement coincide with social work values and code of ethics. Indeed, I embarked on my own journey of transformation and healing while working

on this project over the course of a few years as a post-resident. Lastly, the particular focus on school-based restorative justice in the research study helped instill a sense of urgency as a social worker to have a stronger presence in the field of restorative justice and offer increased participation in the transformation of our schools and in the healing process to individuals, families, communities, and society at large. Understanding the challenges and successes school communities are faced with at different stages of implementation sheds light on to the extent that schools are changing their school climate and mediating the impacts of systemic inequalities.

Participants' responses provided further insight and awareness into what restorative practices are being implemented generally across Bay Area public schools, as well as the implications for fostering culture change in particular school communities. Overall, it was my hope that partaking in the study would be a positive experience for participants since engaging in reflection around role in school could shed light on what is working and what the barriers are to developing safe, supportive, and civil learning environments. Another potential benefit for participants could be how their contributions supported research that explored how a range prevention and intervention strategies can effectively address discipline, well-being, and educational objectives. Thus, participation in research could potentially shed light on new ways to embed restorative practices cohesively within a school policy and practice framework using a whole school model of restorative justice.

Since issues of inequity plague social institutions across American society and as schools continue to diversify, it is even more crucial for the expansion of whole-school culturally-responsive, restorative practices to shift paradigms, as well as promote equity, wellness, and safety in education. Therefore, the study has the potential to benefit any one in the fields of social work and education, including anyone who wants to gain a deeper understanding of the

nature of restorative practices being utilized in Bay Area public schools. Moreover, the research presents the experiences and views of people engaged in the direct work of school-based restorative justice. Perhaps this study could engage others interested in learning more about the possibilities and challenges met with implementation of restorative practices, including the potential of a whole school approach to transform schools into more healthy, safe, equitable communities.

Data Analysis

A large portion of the researcher's time spent on data analysis was focused on qualitative component of study. Frequencies were also generated for demographic data. The framework used for analyzing data was based on Thomas's (2006) general inductive approach. The intention of the approach is to provide researchers with a mode of analysis to truncate raw data and highlight themes or concepts within the data. Through close readings of the text and multiple considerations of what meaning can be gathered through the text, "the researcher then identifies text segments that contain meaning units, and creates a label for a new category into which the text segment is assigned" (Thomas, 2006, p. 4). I created three sections for themes to fall under relevant categories. The creation of categories allowed me to identify themes in the data and organize responses in a way that corresponds with theoretical underpinnings of each open-ended question.

Moreover, qualitative data gathered in this study were electronically recorded and analyzed manually, incorporating a phenomenological analysis approach. Specifically, narrative, qualitative data analyzed were derived from both written comments participants made in the dialogue or comment boxes provided in the survey itself. A thematic analysis was conducted after the surveys were completed and frequencies were created by a data analyst. This

researcher's thesis advisor assisted with the qualitative analyses as a check on validity of these assessments, in which the strategy used to evaluate responses was a consensus evaluation approach. Consensus was developed between the two readers and such observations inform the organization of findings in Chapter 4 and the discussion of findings in Chapter 5. Themes were identified using a consensus evaluation approach, in which all narrative responses to the open-ended questions in survey were examined by the individual researcher and discussed with a second observer, this researcher's advisor.

More specifically, prior to consulting with thesis advisor and reaching a consensus, I carefully read every participant response to 10 different open-ended questions. The narratives found in the qualitative component of the study produced a variety of answers and a great deal of readings were done to understand the data collected as well as ensure its accuracy and quality. This particular approach to analysis provided a way in which the researcher could receive feedback about the categories and themes gathered by getting support from thesis advisor and enhance credibility of findings. Indeed, the similarities, differences, and frequencies among themes were recognized, organized, and discussed accordingly.

Furthermore, the quantitative data concretized into frequencies were completed by a data analyst from the Smith College School for Social Work, which were incredibly helpful. The resulting frequencies were used by this researcher in preparing the quantitative portion of the Findings chapter following.

Lastly, the general inductive approach for data analysis engaged by this researcher was a framework that allowed for collaborative examination of raw data. The study findings were analyzed with the support and guidance of the thesis advisor, which certainly contributed to the validity of assessment and ease of data analysis in general.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

Overview

The study findings are presented in two sections. The first section presents responses to 26 multiple choice questions examining the nature of practitioners' school environment and status of restorative justice (RJ) implementation. Section two presents analysis of narrative responses. There are three sub-sections: 1) defining restorative justice and the practice continuum, 2) practices, interventions, and skills utilized in participant school settings, and 3) successes and challenges. Participant responses to a group of questions designed to elicit their conceptual understanding of RJ are presented first. Next, responses to a set of questions designed to better understand participant practice settings are described. The third section focuses on successes and challenges experienced by participants, as well as suggestions for improved implementation of restorative practices.

Section 1: Overview of Responses

Participants (N=37) replied to a list of 26 multiple-choice questions inquiring about the nature of their practice work and the integration of restorative justice in their school environment. The results are presented in the following three tables.

Restorative principles. Participants were given a list of three principles that are considered hallmarks for building restorative school communities and were asked to select which are reflected in their own setting. In Table 1, the restorative principles and values reflected in participants' everyday work/practice are presented.

Table 7: Restorative Justice Principles Reflected in Daily Practice (N=37)

Principle	n
Building/maintaining healthy relationships	36
Creating just and equitable learning environment for all students	31
Repairing harm and transforming conflict	31

Solo practices, interventions, and skills. Participants were next asked to considering their pertinent knowledge and skills and identify the types of RJ practices they implement in their work by selecting among a list of 12 restorative practices. Q5: “How would you characterize your commitment to implementing RJ practices, including your personal knowledge and skills? Please select all that apply.” Table 2 presents the responses.

Table 8: Skills / Solo Practices Reported by Study Participants (N=37)

Solo Practices / Skills	n	Percent reporting practice/skill
Respectful dialogue or informal restorative chats	36	97.3
Social/emotional competency development	32	86.5
Mediation and healing circles	30	81.8
Facilitation of circles to build / maintain positive relationships	30	81.1
Positive classroom management	30	81.8
De-escalation	28	75.7
Case management to support at-risk students	24	64.9
Leadership development for students and staff in key positions	23	62.2
Coaching/mentoring	22	59.5
Facilitation of formal conferences for serious matters	19	51.4
Facilitation of class conferences for managing misbehavior/conflict	19	51.4
RJ processes applied to manage staff relationships	18	48.6
Other effort(s) which build, maintains, and repairs relationships	5	13.5

Accomplishments. Participants were next presented with a list of 10 statements and asked to endorse those which reflect accomplishments or outcomes in their practice/school setting. Responses could reflect their own observations, or ones reported by leadership.

Table 9: Restorative Justice Outcomes in Participant Schools (N=37)

Outcome	n	Percent of sample reporting this outcome
Increased positive school climate	33	89.2
Reduction in school suspensions and expulsions	32	86.5
Fewer pupil incidences of fighting and aggression	29	78.4
An increased sense of belonging for students	26	70.3
Improved staff to staff and student to student relationships	25	67.7
Students and/or families involved in the process of implementing RJ	22	59.5
Students and staff feeling a greater sense of safety	20	54.1
Fewer office referrals (discipline referrals)	18	48.6
Creation of partnerships with community organizations	13	35.1
Improved retention of teachers	7	18.9

Table 3 data suggest that that restorative justice programming has had a positive impact on the school community in participant schools, with a reduction in discipline referrals and improved relationships between student-student and staff-student. As anticipated by the literature review, the involvement of partnering community organizations is a promising outcome, but it was reported by only one third of respondents.

Section 2: Narrative Responses

This section describes participants' conceptual understanding of restorative justice theory, values, and principles. Two questions in the survey addressed this question. Overall, there was quite a bit of variability in how participants described restorative justice values and practices.

Conceptualization of Restorative Justice

Participants were asked to describe how they conceptualize restorative justice (Question 1: "How do you understand or define restorative justice"). A wide-range of responses were reported. Responses fell principally into four groups: the *got it* group (n=7), the *high* group (n=9), the *medium* group (n=12), and the *low* group (n=8).

The Got It group: The responses of 7 participants (19.4%) were classified in the *got it* group. Responses were placed in this group if they demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of RJ philosophy. Such responses reflected an understanding of restorative values, practices, and acknowledged the importance of a "whole-school" approach to transforming school communities from being punitive, exclusionary, alienating, and unsafe to being proactive, responsive, restorative, and safer for all. For instance, one respondent stated:

"I understand RJ as both a set of practices for conflict mediation and for creating strong, safe community, as well as a state of mind that is compassionate and oriented towards healing."

This response suggests that the participant understands how the two top layers of practice are a restorative, responsive continuum (repairing and reconnecting) and the bottom layer is about preventing issues from occurring and building healthy relationships (preventing and building).

Another response in the *got it* group was:

“To me, Restorative Justice is fostering a community wherein all members share a collective responsibility to maintain healthy and productive relationships. This looks like: developing trust, open and honest talking, quick response to concerns in the community. If there is a breach of trust or issue that arises in the community, all those involved discuss the issue and agree on a plan to restore relationships and repair harm.”

A third relevant example follows:

“RJ is a philosophy, a set of principles and practices based on indigenous values that seek to build community, repair harm and provide individualized support in schools.”

Responses grouped in this category reflect a belief in the need for unity and a whole school community approach to transforming climate and promoting the well-being of all students.

High level of understanding. The responses of 9 participants (25%) were classified as having a high level of understanding of RJ principles. *High* group responses reflected the belief that changing culture, prioritizing relationships, building community, and repairing harm in the school community are all important elements of school-based restorative justice.

For instance, one respondent stated, “Restorative Justice is about changing the culture so that we prioritize relationships and restitution over rules and exclusionary punishment.”

Another explained:

“I understand restorative justice as a philosophy shift towards understanding the importance of building relationships with students/staff and letting everyone have a voice in the aftermath of an issue vs. relying on punishment to fix what went

wrong. Schools are learning institutions so we have to provide an opportunity for our students to make mistakes and make them right and in the meantime learn something about themselves and others, skills they can use into adulthood.”

The responses classified in the *got it* group (n=7) differ from the *high* group (n=9) in the degree to which an understanding of the value of all stake holders and their involvement in the process was reported as an RJ value. Their responses reflected an understanding of three layers of practice within a whole school approach to restorative justice implementation. While responses in the *high* group had a solid grasp on school-based restorative justice and array of practices, the *got it* group demonstrated a two-fold understanding and ability to effectively implement restorative practices.

The medium group. The responses of 12 participants (33.3%) were classified as having a “medium” level of understanding of RJ principles. The responses classified into the medium-group demonstrated some knowledge of restorative justice and efficacy of practices, but lacked a comprehensive understanding of how a continuum of practices can be implemented in a school setting.

Examples of responses classified into the medium group follows:

1. “I understand RJ as the practice of building community and relationships, especially in times when rupture, separation, or punishment usually occur.”
2. “RJ (as opposed to traditional discipline) provides the opportunity for a person who has committed harm to another person or community to take actions that restore that harm.”
3. “RJ is an approach to address conflict or wrong-doing when someone or a community of people have been harmed. It is a way for the harm to be undone that allows for

healing for the victim. At the same time, it allows the harmer to express his/her unmet needs that led to their harmful actions, get support, and learn how to meet his/her needs in more productive, less harmful ways.”

Low group. The responses of 8 participants (22.2%) were classified as having a limited understanding of RJ principles and/or practices (low-group). Examples of responses classified into the low-group follow:

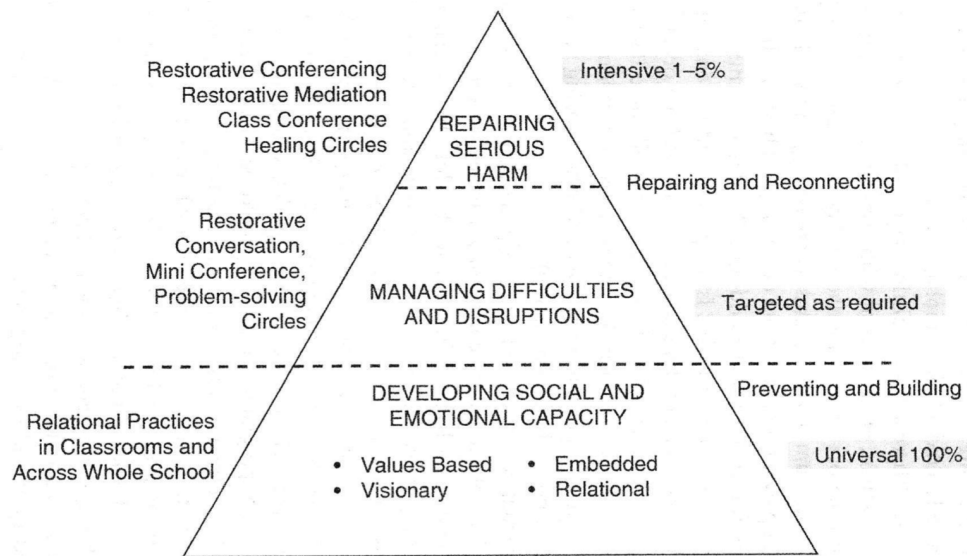
1. “Restorative justice is repairing harm that was caused by criminal justice.”
2. “A way to deal with conflicts/fights, that leaves all parties feeling ok about themselves.”
3. “Not punishment based but community centered plans to help student conflicts.”
4. “Students are given the opportunity to support each other and opportunity restore their referrals.”

Medium group responses differ from the *low group* responses because they include knowledge of a restorative, responsive continuum of practices (repairing and reconnecting after harm is done), whereas the low understanding group lacks an understanding of the multifaceted layers of restorative practice in schools. It is apparent that the low group is distinct from the other three levels of understanding in that responses demonstrate a limited understanding of restorative justice and scope of practice in school settings.

In summary, the particular classification of responses reflects a consensus rating of participant levels of knowledge about school-based restorative justice, in which two observers collectively rated each response appropriately.

Solo Practice Continuum. Thorsborne and Blood (2013), building upon the earlier work of Morrison (2005), conceptualize a hierarchy of restorative responses based on a responsive regulatory framework and three-tiered health care continuum model.

Figure 1: A Whole School Approach (Thorsborne and Blood, 2013, p. 44)



Responsive regulation involves listening to/assessing the needs of multiple stakeholders and making a deliberative and flexible (responsive) choices. Reflexive regulation offers an alternative to traditional command and control (top-down, policy driven) regulation.

The health care continuum model of intervention in the medical field has been adapted by RJ scholars/practitioners to convey how three types of restorative practices combine to illustrate a whole-school approach to RJ; Practices across tiers 1-3 range from proactive to reactive along a continuum of responses (Thorsborne and Blood, 2013; Hopkins, 2004; Morrison, 2005, 2007).

The response hierarchy guides classification of responses to Question 3. Participants were asked to describe how they integrate RJ principles and practices in their distinctive role in school setting by responding to the following question: (Q3: “How do you integrate RJ principles and practices into the classroom, policies, individual or group interventions, and/or other school-

based contexts in your role? Pay particular attention to how you have been trained or equip others to utilize RJ in school communities. (i.e. training, mentoring, experiential exercises, curriculum development, role plays, staff circles, hands-on opportunities, research, education, etc.”). On the following page, the categorization of responses to Q3 are represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 illustrates three distinct layers of practice areas clustered under two objectives: *Preventing and Building* (Tier 1: bottom layer), and *Repairing and Reconnecting* (Tier 2 and Tier 3: top two layers). Repairing and Reconnecting is comprised of two tiers of practice intended to manage difficulties and disruptions (Tier 2) and repair serious harm (Tier 3). Participant responses (N=37) to Question 3 were classified into four groups. 1) Preventing and Building (N=25), 2) Managing Difficulties and Disruptions (N=20), Repairing Serious Harm (n=15), and 4) Whole School Approach (N=13).

Preventing and Building. The responses of 25 participants (69.4%) were classified in the *preventing and building* category (Tier 1). Examples of responses thus classified include:

“We use circles a lot in classrooms to encourage all students to have a chance to share their thoughts and feelings. To do this, we develop norms for different classrooms/groups of students to live by during our group discussions. In our policies, we have reduced punitive responses to transgressions and have allowed students to take responsibility for repairing harm they have caused rather than face punishment.”

Another respondent whose answers were classified in the *Preventing and Building* group wrote:

“In my role as a social worker, I keep community building circles daily. I provide training and coaching to teachers to bring restorative practices into their classrooms.”

Responses in Tier 1 reflect the intent of developing social-emotional capacity of all, characterized by relational practices in classrooms and across the whole school.

Managing difficulties and disruptions. The responses of 20 participants (55.5%) were classified as *Managing Difficulties and Disruptions (Tier 2)*. Responses identified practices that are targeted to repairing relationships (Tier 2). For instance, one respondent stated that they use “RJ circles as needed between peers.” Another explained their efforts in more depth:

1. “We use talking pieces for class discussion, appreciations, and shout outs, respecting the speaker, weekly advisory community circles, and small group circles for planning and conflict resolution.”
2. “I often mediate any conflicts that arise between students and help them solve their issues before they become a bigger problem. I encourage them to speak to one another and also be willing to listen to the full story.”

Repairing serious harm. The responses of 15 participants (41.6%) were classified as *repairing serious harm*. Responses reflected Tier 2 practices that are intensive, with the intent to both repair serious harm and reconnect individuals to communities. One respondent wrote:

“We focus on restoring situations, learning from experiences, and providing fair expectations, in all areas of the school community. RJ is the basis for all our primary and secondary behavioral interventions.”

Similarly, another explained, “We hold harm circles, community building circles, and align consequences to the harm done.”

Whole school approach. The responses of 13 participants (36.1%) spanned all three tiers of practice and were categorized into a group that is considered to fall under a *whole school approach*. For instance, one school social worker stated:

“I hold restorative meetings and circles with most students when a conflict has arisen. I use restorative/affective language when addressing issues with students and staff. I help to lead community building circles in classrooms and staff meetings. I train others and consult with others on using RP practices.”

Another respondent reflects understanding of multi-layered or tiered practice in their explanation:

“1:1 conversations, classroom circles, family conferencing, community building circles, alternatives to suspension, relationship building, mediations, restorative conferences, restorative circles.”

Several responses were detailed in nature and outlined efforts that spanned across all levels of practice. One participant in particular illustrated their work, which prioritizes all relationships and the importance social-emotional learning for youth:

“The key to our work with students is through building strong and healthy relationships and teaching them how to build those relationships in their lives. In my role as counselor I often use the positive relationships I have with students to help build that type of relationship and conversation between students and their teachers when there is conflict. I also am constantly promoting assertive, respectful, non-violent communication skills between students and students and teachers, as well as in my group counseling. As counselor I am also able to assist in community building circles, both as a way to address harm and create connection and student voice. Finally, I integrate RJ principles into the school by promoting school-wide policies and practices that teach the social skills integral to RJ.”

Those classified in the *whole school approach* described a practice environment that reflected a restorative continuum of practice, including a preventative, proactive, and responsive layer of practice. Lastly, a respondent explains:

“I assist in training school staff and students on restorative practices, develop community building circles and keep circles, and conduct harm circles when appropriate and possible. My role is to assist the school in becoming a restorative school. As such, the primary focus currently is on building the school's capacity to engage in a restorative way; through community building activities in the classroom, harm circles when needed, and disciplinary policies that are restorative.”

Responses in the *whole school* group category were the most comprehensive and reflect the restorative justice practitioner's grasp on a whole school approach to implementation.

Practice Settings

This section describes participant observations of the school communities in which they work. Two questions in the survey addressed this. There was a wide array of participant responses related to the school climate and restorative practices being implemented.

School-wide Continuum of Practices. Participants were asked to identify the range of practices that exist in their school setting (Q8: “What informal and/or formal RJ practices exist in the whole school community?”). As with the framework guiding Question 2, three layers of practice are clustered under two objectives: 1) preventing and building group and 2) repairing and reconnecting group.

Responses fell principally into three groups: *preventing and building group*, *managing difficulties and disruptions* group, and *repairing serious harm*. Also, participant responses that

spanned across three tiers of practice were categorized into a fourth group: *whole school approach*. Respondents who said that they did not know or did not respond to the question altogether, were categorized into the fifth group *none/uncertain*.

Preventing and building. The responses of 26 participants (72.2%) were classified in the *preventing and building* group. One respondent in this category stated: “award assemblies and class games.” Another wrote: “circles, valuing relationships, using affective statements, meeting students where they are at.”

Managing difficulties and disruptions. The responses of 24 participants (66.6%) were classified as managing difficulties and disruptions group. One respondent in this category wrote:

“A lot of mediation circles. Also the expectation is to do a circle every Wednesday in advisory class to build community and talk about concerns/issues, and a lot of restoral talks.”

Additionally, a respondent categorized in this group wrote: “Restorative inquiry by teachers and guidance counselors; RJ circles/mediations for conflict resolution.”

Repairing serious harm. The responses of 20 participants (55.5%) were classified as *repairing serious harm* group. One respondent in this category stated: “Family group conferences and circles to address harm.” Another response that fell into this category was:

“3 RJ coordinators who support our students. Restoring a referral rather than traditional consequences, students share apology/awareness messages on the morning announcements.”

Whole school approach group. Examples of responses classified in the whole school approach group (n=12, 33.3%) follow:

“1:1 conversations, classroom circles, family conferencing, alternatives to suspension, relationship building, mediations, restorative conferences, and restorative circles.”

Another stated: “Formal conferences to informal restorative conversations/language.”

No response / uncertain: The responses of 4 participants (11.1%) were classified as *none/uncertain*. Three respondents stated that their school settings were not implementing any restorative practices. Answers included:

1. “As of now I am the only staff member using RJ;”
2. “None”
3. “None, just starting this conversation and some staff are natural at building positive healthy relationships.”

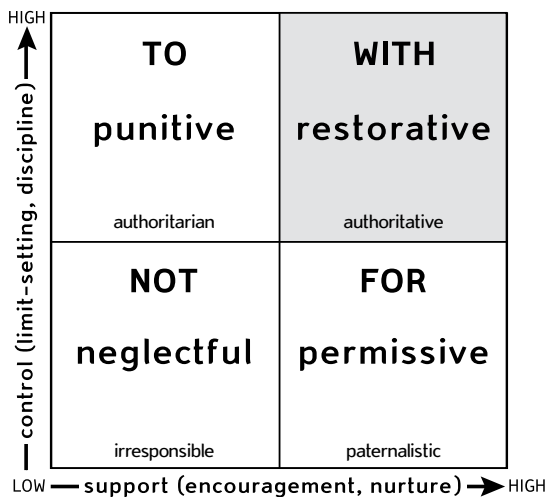
The respondent who was considered uncertain stated: “Hard to assess to what extent people are implementing well and with fidelity [to the RP model].”

School Discipline Approach. Participants were asked to explain the reasoning guiding their response to Question 13 (how they identified the school’s approach to discipline), as well as if they observe either an alignment or disconnect between whole school climate and practice (Q15: “Please provide a brief explanation for the approach to social discipline you identified above and note if there is an alignment or a disconnect between the school’s discipline policies and existing climate?”).

To help further understanding of Question 15 participants were presented with Figure 2 and an accompanying quote referring to Wachtel and McCold’s (2002, 2003) framework for social discipline:

“Punishment and other choices in school settings are illustrated by the Social Discipline Window, which is created by combining two continuums: ‘control,’ or directing influence over others, and ‘support,’ or nurturing, encouraging and assisting others. The combinations from each of the two continuums range from low to high. Clear limit-setting and diligent enforcement of behavioral standards characterize high social control, whereas vague or weak behavioral standards and lax or nonexistent regulation of behavior characterize low social control. Active assistance and concern for well-being characterize high social support, whereas lack of encouragement and minimal provision for physical and emotional needs characterize low social support. By combining a high or low level of control with a high or low level of support, the Social Discipline Window defines four approaches to the regulation of behavior: punitive, permissive, neglectful and restorative” (Wachtel and McCold, 2001, 2003; Wachtel, 2013)

Figure 2: Social Discipline Window (Wachtel, 2013, p. 3)



There were a wide-range of responses that fell principally into two groups: **aligned** (n=9) and **disconnected** (n=20). Four participants left the question blank (no response) and 3 responded “don’t know” and were placed in the **don’t know/no response** group (n=7).

Aligned group. The responses of 9 participants (25%) were classified in the aligned group. Responses suggested that there was an alignment between the school’s discipline policies or implementation of restorative practices and the existing climate. For instance, one respondent stated,

“I think our discipline policy this year is much more aligned with our actual practices. We allow much more space for student voice and decision making within the school as a whole and in cases of harm.”

Another explained: “The approach above is about using strength based and restorative approaches to improve the current situation and for all people in the community. The school’s discipline policies are aligned.”

Disconnected group. The responses of 20 participants (55.5%) were classified in the disconnected group. Responses in this group articulated that there was a disconnection or discrepancy between the school’s discipline policies or implementation of restorative practices and the existing climate. For instance, one respondent stated: “Each school is different; each district I work with is in a different stage of change; mostly still a disconnect.”

Another explained: “We are still punitive, because we still give consequences TO students. We do not yet have the capacity and skill to be restorative fully in our discipline system, though we use restorative practices to off-set punitive consequences.”

The responses of 3 participants (8.3%) were classified in the “Don’t Know” group. Responses in this group were: “Don’t know;” “Not sure.” The responses of 4 participants

(11.1%) were classified in the “No Response” group. Respondents in this group chose not to answer question altogether.

Implementation

This third section describes the successes and challenges observed and/or experienced by participants who have implemented restorative practices. This section also includes suggestions participants had for improving implementation, changing culture, and promoting “buy-in.” Four questions in the survey addressed this. Overall, there was quite a bit of variability in how participants described their observations and recommendations.

Possibilities for Success. Participants were asked to illuminate their successes encountered as RJ practitioners and if anything in particular was achieved with ease in their work in the first part of Question 16. (Q16a: “What, if anything, has been easy to do while integrating RJ practices in your work with students?”). Responses fell principally into three groups that reflect successes observed by participants. The groups were *buy-in/engagement* (n=17), *building relationships* (n=18), *improved school community/student outcomes* (n=4). Two participants left the question blank no response (n=2).

Buy-in/engagement. The responses of 17 participants (47.2%) were classified as buy-in/engagement group. Examples of responses classified into this group follow:

1. “Students buy-in easily to the program.”
2. “Getting staff and team members on board with our philosophy.”
3. “Once kids understand the process, they are more willing to engage and it helps them to communicate and solve their own problems. Students have even begun to ask for circles.”
4. “Most students are benefiting and have bought in.”

5. “The activity-driven processes are loved by the students.”
6. “Getting teachers on board and engaged in the process.”

Respondents in *buy-in/engagement* group mostly specified student buy-in and only a few mentioned staff buy-in as a success in this category. Also, when respondents in *buy-in/engagement* group identified engagement as an achievement they’ve experienced, answers in this category specified student engagement, omitting engagement of staff, administration, and families.

Building relationships. The responses of 18 participants (50%) were classified as *building relationships* group (BR-group). Examples of responses classified into the *building relationships* group include:

1. “Building relationships has been easy.”
2. “I think building relationships is easy.”
3. “Building relationships among school staff, parents, and students while maintaining common goal has been easy.”
4. “Working from a positive communication and relationship model.”
5. “Relationship building has been easy for me to do in my work.”
6. “It is easy for me to develop relationships with students and get to know them.”

“Kids truly enjoy the connections made when utilizing community building circles.”

Improved school community. The responses of 4 participants (11.1%) were classified into the *improved school community* group.

1. “When RJ works, its so powerful!”
2. “In working with students, the easiest thing has been to successfully create spaces where they can be open and authentic with each other and gain a much

firmer platform for trusting relationships.”

3. Lastly, another respondent in ISC-group said: “Creating fun and safe spaces for students to interact.”

Overall responses categorized into this group suggested improved school climate or outcomes in community, and the responses were mostly student-centered in nature.

Two participants (5.5%) chose not to answer question altogether.

Challenges and Concerns. Participants were asked to express any challenges encountered, or specifically if anything was difficult to do while implementing RJ and working with students in their role (Q16b: “What has been challenging” [to do while integrating RJ practices in your work]?).

There were a wide-range of responses that fell into five groups: *buy-in/engagement* (n=15), *building relationships* (n=2), *changing culture* (n=9), *lack of resources/support* (n=8). Two participants left the question blank (n=2). Responses that could not be classified into any of the aforementioned 5 groups were due to no responses given for Q16b.

Buy-in/engagement. The responses of 15 participants (41.6%) were classified as *buy-in/engagement group*. Respondents described the buy-in and engagement of staff, students, and administration as challenging. Examples of BIE-group responses follow:

1. “I think the challenges would be buy-in.”
2. “Determining extreme consequences for lack of student effort has been difficult.”
3. “Getting buy-in from administration.”
4. “The change for students can be challenging. Some students are not good with change.”
5. “Getting teachers on board, trained, and willing to commit to the process is hard.”

6. "It is difficult in circles to get all students involved."
7. "Convincing some of the long-time teachers to make any changes has been extremely challenging."
8. "Helping all kids get on board with it in all facets of their school experience."
9. "Having to sometimes let go of students when the RJ process does not work or they continue unsafe behavior."
10. "Getting teachers who are ambivalent or anti-RJ to engage."

Building relationships. The responses of 2 participants (5.5%) were classified as *building relationships* (BR-group). Although only a few responses were classified in this category, a few examples suggest difficulty with the cultivation of relationships:

1. "It has been hard to help students build relationships with teachers at times, especially when the teachers are new and overwhelmed."
2. "[Community building] circles has been both challenging [and easy]."

Changing culture. The responses of 9 participants (25%) were classified as *changing culture* group. All responses in this category alluded to the challenges met while shifting cultural paradigms in schools. Examples of responses follow:

1. "Nothing has been easy. Many people don't even understand that they are operating with a punitive framework and it is hard to make that shift. It takes a lot of time."
2. "Creating lasting change."
3. "Shifting the paradigm for adults has at times been more difficult."
4. "What has been challenging is systemic fidelity in implementation amongst staff."
5. "They [students] often have black and white mentalities about wrongdoings as well since they are raised in a heavily punitive society."

Lack of resources / support. The responses of 8 participants (22.2%) were classified as *lack of resources/support*. Respondents in this group described how either a lack of support, time, staff, and/or training were challenges. Examples of LRS-group responses follow:

1. “RJ became overwhelmed with cases, making it challenging to provide students with RJ support.”
2. “Biggest challenge is lack of time to run RJ to the standards we would like.”
3. “What has been challenging is getting adequate staffing.”
4. “Maintaining structure is challenging.”
5. “Students need a lot of support to think critically and shift mentality.”

Concerns with Transforming Culture and Implementation Challenges. Participants were asked to identify the concerns they have related to the processes of culture change and implementation of restorative practices (Q7: “What concerns do you have about culture change and implementing RJ? How have these concerns been addressed by leaders and/or colleagues?”). Responses were understood as the things getting in the way of effective implementation, development, and sustainability of RJ. There were a wide-range of responses that were categorized into 8 groups, which were: *resources/support* (n=18), *family engagement* (n=2), *staff/leadership buy-in* (n=12), *RJ misconceptions* (n=5), *changing culture* (n=20), *data tracking* (n=2), *racism/power* (n=3), *accountability* (n=6).

Resources/training/support group. The responses of 18 participants (50%) were classified as *resources/training/support (RTS group)*. Respondents in this group described how either a lack of support, time, staff, and/or training were barriers to implementation. Examples of *RTS group* responses follow:

1. “School board funding to implement program.”

2. “I have concerns about all staff being trained in RJ.”
3. “RJ is time consuming and requires dedicated PD time. It is difficult to carve out this time given the numerous changes that are happening with standards and testing nationally.”
4. “One barrier is carving out time for staff development.”
5. “It takes a lot of time to implement and resources.”
6. “It is very difficult work to do when you don’t have adequate resources.”

Family engagement. The responses of 2 participants (5.5%) were classified as *family engagement*. Respondents described how a lack of family engagement and/or buy-in were concerns. A response classified into this group was: “Students who continue to get in fights on a regular basis, etc. What can be done to get parents and families on board?”

Staff / leadership buy-in. The responses of 12 participants (33.3%) were classified as *staff / leadership buy-in*. Respondents described how there was a need for staff and/or leadership buy-in to embrace restorative paradigms in schools. Examples of responses include:

1. “When teaching staff are unwilling to develop new skills.”
2. “We still have staff members who are not all the way bought into the principles of RJ.”
3. “Old school teachers who refuse to participate in RJ.”

Restorative justice misconceptions. The responses of 5 participants (13.8%) were classified as *RJ misconceptions*. Respondents in this category described how misconceptions of restorative justice philosophy and practice was a concern for them regarding successful implementation (or a lack thereof). Examples of RJM-group responses follow:

1. “There are misunderstandings about RJ being ‘too touchy feely’ or ‘hippie-dippie,’ with circles and talking pieces and focus objects. I think RJ is what you make it and its really a nice ‘excuse’ to slow down and listen to kids instead of refer them, which my old administration made me do!”
2. “Some people believe that it is too easy and sets students up to fail in the ‘real world.’”

Changing culture. The responses of 20 participants (55.5%) were classified as *changing culture group*. Responses in this group were categorized as such because participants described the difficulties met while trying to change the existing cultural paradigms of school climate in general, which includes the beliefs and practices of school staff. Examples of responses classified in the culture change group follow:

1. “When teaching staff are unwilling to change.”
2. “It can be hard to change the deficit perspective in some teachers.”
3. “Assimilate practices to change.”
4. “My largest challenges come with teachers who are not student centered or introspective.”

Data tracking. The responses of 2 participants (5.5%) were classified as *data tracking group*. Respondents mentioned how data collection and the tracking or measurement of outcomes are concerns regarding the implementation of restorative practices. Two examples of participant responses are:

1. “Results are tough to measure.”
2. “Working on data collection to measure the fidelity of school wide implementation of RJ is a concern.”

Racism / power. The responses of 3 participants (8.3%) were classified as *racism/power group*. Responses in this group were categorized as such because participants described how issues of power, including systemic racism or implicit bias impede the implementation of restorative practices. Examples of *RP-group* responses were:

1. “The most difficult changes are when you have staff who have belief barriers about students and the relationships or power differential between students and staff.”
2. “[A concern is] predominantly white, middle to upper class school staff that have difficulty understanding the experience of populations represented in the schools leading to errors of omission and commission. This concern is difficult to address- it is bigger than district policy, though district could have a stronger commitment.”

Accountability. The responses of 6 participants (16.6%) were classified as *accountability group*. Responses in this group were categorized as such because participants mentioned a lack of accountability during implementation process within their role or in practice setting.

Examples of responses classified in the *accountability group* include:

1. “The main concern I have is that sometimes students take advantage of this approach and need for accountability. They think that if they don’t ‘get in trouble’ then they can do whatever they want.”
2. “The only concerns I have about RJ is making excuses or not giving students proper consequences for their actions, or there being accountability.”

Out of 37 participants, only four mentioned how their concerns were addressed in their practice setting by leaders and/or colleagues. The four responses that cited how concerns of theirs being addressed by leadership and/or colleagues explained their responses:

1. “Making sure RJ is done effectively so students and staff feel that students are being

- held accountable for their actions. Leaders have had open discussions about this topic and more trainings have been offered.”
2. “We have pushed for the past 2 years through PD and staff conversation so people understand the ‘why’ behind RJ.”
 3. “We’ve addressed this through steady, slow progress and building strong SEL skills in our students, as well as educating staff on trauma-informed practices and equity issues that affect our youth.”
 4. “It has helped to have supportive administration who make RP a priority, as well as a district who uses it to help reduce disproportionality.”

Envisioning Possibilities for Effective Implementation. Participants were asked to identify recommendations for the effective, sustainable implementation of restorative practices, including suggestions they have for increasing buy-in. (Q9: “What do you think would help the ‘buy-in’ or effective implementation of RJ at your school?”). Again, there were a wide-range of responses that were categorized into 3 groups: *resources/support* (n=20); *data tracking* (n=3); *culture change* (n=11). 3 participants left the question blank or had no response (n=3).

Resources / support. The responses of 20 participants (54%) were classified as *resources/support group*. Respondents in this group described how increased support, time, staff, and/or training would help promote “buy-in” and/or effective implementation. Examples of responses follow:

1. “More funding to increase RJ staff at all school sites.”
2. “If everyone in the whole entire school was trained in RJ practices at least tier 1.”
3. “More staff to support the practices.”

4. “Continuous staff training opportunities, learning community, and relationship building meetings.”
5. “More resources for teachers so they can take the time to have the conversations.”
6. “More coaches, training, and modeling.”
7. “Everyone needs to be trained in the basics or Tier 1. We also need a full-time RJ coordinator to support all staff.”

The responses of 3 participants (8%) were classified as *data tracking*.

Data tracking. Respondents in this group state how data collection and the tracking or measurement of outcomes would help with “buy-in” and/or implementation. Examples of responses classified into this group follow:

1. “Show us some data.”
2. “Evidence that RJ works.”
3. “Clear data supporting its effectiveness.”

Culture change. The responses of 11 participants (30%) were classified as *culture change group*. Respondents in this group mention an element of change process to encourage “buy-in” and/or effective implementation by changing culture. For example, responses allude to paradigm shifts in the way schools work generally, as well as people’s beliefs, behaviors, and knowledge (students, staff, families). Examples of CC-group responses follow:

1. “A better student understanding of how RJ works.”
2. “Present it as a community-building strategy and social-emotional development strategy and just leave any talk of ‘this is how kids will be held accountable for stuff’ until you have buy in that works and helps students express themselves.”
3. “More conversations and better communication around restorative justice.”

4. “Students need to care about and take control over their own goals and outcomes. If we intrinsically motivate students to learn the students will begin to take on leadership roles in RJ.”
5. “Students learning these principles in elementary school and middle school.”
6. “Leading by example and creating a whole cultural shift.”

Request for Final Thoughts

Sixteen participants (43% of study participants) offered concluding thoughts for Question 17 (Q17: “Is there anything else you would like to share about implementing school-based RJ and changing school culture?”).

Responses varied so much that specific groups were not created to categorize responses.

Examples of final remarks and insight regarding the implementation of RJ follow:

1. “RJ seems to be more effective than other discipline policies.”
2. “It's a fantastic strategy, but fails when people want it to work "right now." Really what's happened is that we've renamed our incidents ‘restorations,’ and gotten the numbers we want. Hopefully we continue to improve and build our community enough that we don't need to wiggle around the numbers and truly have a restorative community.”
3. “We need help.”
4. “For full school implementation helping teachers to understand the WHY behind RJ is important (what is happening for students developmentally and especially in cases of high trauma), as well as promote SEL throughout the school.”
5. “In the three pilot schools, there has been the most success when there's both top-down and bottom-up support.”

6. "I would love to move forward with implementing RP but I feel skeptical of the school districts goals. They change their focus every couple of years. Currently they are moving towards embracing RTI. I think this has a huge impact on staff and teacher's willingness to fully embrace a new method or set of practices. It's really frustrating."
7. "RJ humanizes the school experience for our young people and teachers."
8. "I am excited about the road to RJ implementation in my school district and am dedicated and passionate about seeing it through."
9. "It is not something that can be done in 1 year. It takes persistence, faith, and a willingness to stick with it for true change to occur. It is also not a program or a curriculum, programming and curriculum can help facilitate RJ implementation in schools, but the underlying philosophical belief in the importance of relationships, harmony, and accountability have to be there for it to work."
10. "Keep your eyes on the prize and stick with it."
11. "It is a lot harder working with the adults. Getting them to make time for restorative practices - both among staff and with students - and getting them to shift their approach toward a more restorative one has been challenging. Also we have had a lot of teacher and administrator turnover, which really affects this as well."

Lastly, one response that is the underlying theme for all responses for Question 9 states:

12. "RJ is a valuable strategy and philosophy. Much harder to implement. Well worth the time and effort."

Summary

In total, 37 school-based professionals participated in this mixed-methods study; Narratives offered insight into the personal views of participants who have familiarity with restorative practices in their respective schools, particularly the apparent successes and challenges of shifting cultural paradigms encountered through implementation. The findings presented in this chapter support the goals outlined for that this exploratory study which was undertaken to further understand the implementation of restorative justice in school systems across the East Bay of northern California.

The questions in the survey were designed to elicit the all-encompassing opportunities and challenges that arise for schools and individuals during processes of implementation. Certainly, narrative responses illuminate the rich experiences of restorative justice practitioners who are doing the direct work in school settings. This is a valuable outcome of the study as such perspectives fill a gap in the research by cataloging the experiences of direct practitioners and capturing their impressions of the “why” and “how” of RJ program implementation. Similarly, quantitative findings presented in this chapter shed light on the nature of the “who” and “what” within the field, as it pertains to individual practitioners, interrelated school systems, and existing practices.

This chapter outlined the study outcomes including, but not limited to: 1) the variability of restorative practices reflected within particular school-based contexts; 2) understandings of school climate as related to the complex process of change; 3) school approach to discipline and leadership; 4) to what extent a school community is implementing restorative practices along a continuum of practice outside of practitioner’s efforts; 5) process of changing culture and cultivating “buy-in” is challenging; 6) the potency of whole-school approaches to

implementation; 7) need for more evidence and data tracking of what works; 8) recommendations for how to improve outcomes, effectiveness, and sustainability of RJ.

The next chapter will engage in a reflective discussion to make sense of how the findings relate to the theoretical framework of the study, impact social work practice, as well as inform what future research is needed across the fields of restorative justice, education, and social work.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

Overview

When I began formulating this study, my intention was to illuminate the nature of restorative practices and shifting paradigms in Bay Area school communities, which I had become familiar with as a clinical social work intern during grad school internship placements. Additionally, the mysterious landscape of endorsed restorative values/principles and continuum of practices being implemented in proximate schools/districts was of huge interest to the researcher. By tapping into the views and experiences of restorative justice (RJ) practitioners, it was possible to investigate the impacts of RJ as well as the complex processes of culture change through first-hand accounts. Indeed, study participants spoke to the possibilities and pitfalls of RJ implementation in their schools by illuminating the barriers that impeded such efforts well as by identifying the supportive factors that promoted effectiveness and sustainability.

The findings of this study truly speak for themselves. The evocative responses from participants bring a depth of understanding to this little-studied phenomenon. This chapter will discuss the study's findings in comparison to previous research. Subsequently, strengths and limitations of the study will be summarized, followed by the implications for social work practice, and lastly, recommendations for future research.

Findings and Relevance to Existing Literature

The literature indicates the power and positive impact of restorative practices in transforming schools, promoting RJ values and principles in practice, as well as common challenges encountered with the implementation of school-based RJ. In this population,

implementation outcomes were uneven across schools, with some settings demonstrating significant penetration of RJ values and principles school-wide, while other reports suggest that practitioners function pretty much in isolation. While it was not reviewed here extensively, there is a significant literature on organizational change that could be applied to the change process in school settings. It seems apparent from this small sample that even in a very committed school district/school, outcomes were quite diverse.

One possibility is that school districts may want to consider consulting with organizational change specialists as they consider implementing such a substantial program or set of practices. Furthermore, it is apparent that youth, families, school-based professionals and other community stakeholders (i.e. individual/collective supports, social service organizations, etc.) all play a collective role in cultivating the academic, social-emotional, and health/wellness of youth. Thus, according to the existing literature and the study's findings, in order to ensure effectiveness and sustainability of RJ in school systems, the larger group of school and community stakeholders have an essential role to play in the process of successful implementation and implementation strategies will need to take this into account.

Expected findings. Findings support the literature with regard to how difficult or messy it is to implement practices that require culture change. Both literature and participants highlight the need and benefits of restorative practices in school systems. Moreover, there is enormous variability across schools about what actually is being implemented. Participants conveyed a range of important themes in their narratives that fall under the following categories for expected findings: 1) *The power and impact of restorative practices in schools*; 2) *Restorative principles in practice*; 3) *challenges for implementation and recommendations*.

The power and impact of restorative practices in schools. The qualitative and quantitative findings of the study both shed light on the range of positive impacts and improved outcomes of school-based RJ practices in distinctive school systems. RJ practitioners express their understanding and/or principles in practice that reflect how school-based implementation falls along a three-tiered model of intervention and also how RJ significantly addresses issues of equity, bullying, conflicts, importance of relationships, alienation, reintegration of marginalized students, as well as whole-school transformation. It was noted that only several study participants mentioned how the implementation of restorative practices in schools is not exclusively a mechanism for discipline, since it is a means to address structural inequality (i.e. issues of equity and the school-to-prison pipeline) and to promote social justice across all school outcomes (i.e. safety, individual/collective healing).

Prior to administering the survey, I expected participants to either be familiar with or at least integrate a range of restorative values and principles in their practice. This happened to be the case and examples reflected in the responses of study participants include: the importance of relationships, justice as collective process, healing action, holistic responsibility, community building, meetings needs of all stakeholders, providing accountability and support, making things right, viewing conflict as a learning opportunity, building healthy learning communities w/ both pro-active and responsive processes, restoring relationships.

Restorative principles in practice. The data supports the expectation that a wide range of restorative justice practices are being implemented in respondents' settings (or a continuum of restorative practices ranging from informal to formal). Brenda Morrison (2005), a well-known Australian-based RJ practitioner researcher, educator, and policy advocate describes how restorative justice values and principles have more and more widespread support by school-based

professionals: “Restorative justice, which values healing over hurting, inclusion over exclusion, has never been stronger, and against this rising tide, there has been the rise and fall of many restorative justice programs in schools. At the same time, there are beacons of hope arising internationally, as different schools and administrators embrace the values and principles of restorative justice” (p. 99).

Even though most of the study participants support RJ values and had at least a basic understanding of principles in practice (such community mediation, victim-offender mediation, circles, family group conferencing) it was expected by the researcher that many of the study participants would implement practices primarily within tier 1 (primarily circles). To that end, when respondents were asked how they understood or defined RJ, it wasn’t surprising that such a low percentage of participants (19.4%) demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of RJ philosophy.

Such responses reflected an understanding of restorative values, practices, and acknowledged the importance of a “whole-school” approach to transforming school communities from being punitive, exclusionary, alienating, and unsafe to being proactive, responsive, restorative, and safer for all. It seems clear that the problem is not really one of definition, but of understanding and other systemic factors such as a need for funding, training resources, and administrative support. Furthermore, the lack of a clear and comprehensive definition for RJ was apparent in the findings, which most likely impacts implementation.

Challenges for implementation and recommendations. RJ practitioners allude to how hard it is to create a restorative community and some feel isolated in their work. Hopkins (2002) states: “The question of how to effect behavioral change within a school is complex and the key,

to my mind, is in finding common ground and using restorative principles from the beginning” (p. 148).

Efforts to promote whole school buy-in, including trainings (Tier 1-3) so school members are familiar with principles in practice and entire school communities have common ground with a restorative vision, policies, and school culture were all expected findings that came up in the respondents’ open-ended questions. One participant alluded to several challenges that many of the participants in the study face:

“It takes a lot of time to implement and there is a need for resources. It can be hard to change the deficit perspective in some teachers. Some people believe that it is too easy and sets students up to fail in the ‘real world.’ We’ve addressed this through steady, slow progress and building strong SEL skills in our students, as well as educating staff on trauma-informed practices and equity issues that affect our youth.”

Moreover, based on responses, there was a significant degree of isolation among practitioners and that schools had adopted only one stage of implementation. This suggests there is a need for widening the lens and involving the wider school community in implementation by developing a range of responses (whole-school model/hierarchy of restorative responses); importance of quality relationships between all members of school community and involvement in planning; strong leadership drives the success of implementation and school culture change; people are not enabled to develop new skills (i.e. lack of training for staff and provision for training and networking not built into the budget, or access restricted to certain people only); a lack of funding impedes the training of school staff and community partnerships with consultants or designated RJ coordinators.

Based on these findings, it is apparent that inevitable tensions arise in the transition from a traditional to a restorative approach in schools. These competing assumptions and contexts (retributive vs. restorative paradigms) are at the basis of all challenges met during implementation. Certainly buy-in is complex as our data suggest that there was a lack of comprehensive definition of RJ in addition to challenges of time and conflicting priorities of school/district/school staff.

Additionally, the issue of RJ being co-opted by individual practitioners/schools was an unexpected finding, although only several study participants mentioned this phenomenon. Perhaps, this is because in general RJ is the new buzzword in the education system and many people in the education system are not aware of the program complexity. Hopkins describes the importance of whole-school buy-in and training:

“If those affected [by implementation] do not want to take part then the issue needs to be dealt with in a different way. However enthusiastic senior management or governors might be in restorative justice- and as news spreads many such people want information and in-service training- the project will not be successful unless the majority of the school community is on board. By the community I would include teaching staff, support staff, students, governors, parents, administrative staff, lunchtime staff and caretakers, and this list is not exhaustive. It would seem crucial to consult as many people as possible before embarking on a project and use as many channels as possible to communicate what the project is really about”

(Hopkins, 2002, p. 148).

A common theme in the existing literature is how whole school involvement with implementation is at the heart of effective school transformation and culture change. Findings from this study support this conclusion. This is congruent with the restorative values of respect, inclusion, and empowerment and the belief that those with the problems are those most likely to find and embrace community, strength-based solutions to the needs of all stakeholders in school(s).

Unexpected findings. The findings did not reveal any contradictions to the existing literature. However, something I learned is that the literature or my own expectations did not prepare me for how difficult it would be to measure success and positive outcomes.

Implications for Social Work & Restorative Justice Practice

Social work professionals working in school settings have a role to play in both micro-level practice (i.e. clinical interventions, SEL curriculum development, teacher consultation, staff trainings, the implementation of restorative practices, etc.) and macro-level work (i.e. advocacy for state/local funding and legislation that promotes school improvement policies such as RJ practices). Social workers are in a unique position to advocate for much needed paradigm shifts in our schools.

The literature review found that there was a surprising lack of literature by professional social workers on this important topic, suggesting that both social workers, and the schools that train them, need to more fully embrace the field of restorative justice across practice settings, including the juvenile justice, child welfare, and education systems.

Research participants described 1) the importance and need for building alliances between schools and communities, as well as strengths-based, community-centered assessment and intervention. These findings have the following implications.

Community level assessment and intervention. Participants shared the importance of documenting what works and how. In regards to primary areas of intervention, school social workers engage with individuals, families, groups, and the community (Staudt, Cherry, and Watson, 2005). Study findings can be used to inform strengths-based approaches to individual, group, and community interventions by pursuing a deeper understanding of how professionals, including social workers, teachers, and others working on behalf of children, can engage in school community level assessment and intervention to strengthen the resiliency of youth. In Bell's (2001) work on building and strengthening resiliency in youth, he outlined the importance of developing emotional resilience through macro practice, or what he labels "rebuilding the village" (p. 375). Therefore, the study has potential to encourage the use of practices that enhance a school community's capacity to support youth, as well as to illuminate the power of interdisciplinary collaboration for the well-being of people and institutions being served.

Ethical obligation for social workers. As discussed in the findings section, schools and staff were already implementing and seeing the rewards of RJ practices at an average rate of at least 50% in 13 major categories. Based on these findings, an important implication of the study is that RJ is already or may be easily integrated into these environments that are culturally and financially prepared to install RJ programs.

The literature suggested that financial resources in low incomes or marginalized schools may act as a barrier to successful implementation of RJ in communities that could benefit the most. However, this study suggests that RJ principles are already foundationally present in many schools. The social worker and RJ practitioner should know that a school may intrinsically desire RJ principles and just not recognize their own procedures by that name. This suggests that the ability to increase student and school access to RJ does not have to be costly or feature a long

acculturation process. Practitioners and clinicians should consider approaching schools ready to praise and build on the existence or strengths of RJ already present in the school. Identifying as an early precedent, or stakeholder, can have a significant impact on helping the culture evolve and to promote a larger school culture shift to include /improve students status as stakeholders and gather the buy in necessary to RJ practices.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

Study findings were limited by the small sample size (N=37); the results cannot be generalized. While the survey instrument piloted here was successful in gathering a useful data, some of the questions were repetitive and could have been pared down and redesigned to be less cumbersome and potentially less confusing to participants. Also, the survey did not collect information about the participant's school in to order to ensure confidentiality of responses. I would have been useful to be able to stratify responses by school to better understand the settings across the school districts. Also, the sample was primarily female (75.7%) and White (54.8%), suggesting the need for a more diverse sample to including a broader range of gender and racial identities. Furthermore, keeping in mind my personal interests and experiences with restorative practices, I acknowledge my bias in researching this topic.

The study has several strengths. For instance, the mixed-methods nature of the study is allowed the researcher to evaluate outcomes through first-hand narratives rather than through traditional reports of student outcomes. Since it is a growing field, there needs to be qualitative data that addresses or describes the nature of this phenomena.

Directions for Future Research

The real-world experiences of practitioners should be included in future implementation and outcome studies. Likewise, there is a gap in literature with regard to understanding successful (and failed) implementation strategies. Reports from school districts in regions that have tried various strategies suggest that clarity about stages of intervention may be useful. However, future research would benefit from surveys of staff on the front-lines of school-based RJ training, community assessment, and implementation.

Organizational culture change literature would be a useful lens through which to examine the implementation of RJ in school settings. While not substantially reviewed here it is an important lens for future researchers and program designers to consider in thinking about how to implement restorative practices. The field of organizational culture change theory can be applied to this situation to better understand approaches to RJ implementation in schools. In addition, a suggestion for the direction of future research is to engage the sociological lens of critical race theory as it relates to systems implementation, as well as issues of oppression, racism, and equity.

Implementing RJ is a paradigm shift for everyone in the school community. Participant narratives revealed the importance of all school and community stakeholders working together in the messy process of culture change and whole school implementation of RJ. Teachers can play a huge role in the school-wide implementation and impact of RJ. Teachers need support to critically explore their perspectives and behaviors as well in this complex process of change. A respondent stated: “One barriers is carving out time for staff development; when teaching staff are unwilling to change or develop new skills.” Future recommendations for research could be to investigate teachers’ views and efforts related to getting their buy-in as well as explore how their

personal experiences, attitudes, school practices, personal discipline methods, and implicit bias may conflict with or not be in line with restorative practices.

Another direction for future research is to consider the possibility of collaboration between schools, social work agencies, consultants, community leaders, juvenile justice, public health systems, and families in the implementation of restorative justice practices. Thus, future research on the possible integration of social work services and community-based mental health with the practices already implemented in schools is recommended to better engage youth in safer, healthier climates, which would promote just and equitable learning environments.

Conclusion

This study sought to understand the successes and challenges met with the implementation of school-based restorative justice, particularly in a community that the researcher is embedded in personally and professionally. I can't draw conclusions from this study because it wasn't designed to compare models of implementation. Participants' narratives revealed the significant challenges (barriers) RJ practitioners face, even in setting where there is administrative interest and buy-in for the program implementation as was the case in this sample.

Participant narratives shed light on their experiences with the shifting cultural paradigms in Bay Area school communities. While the research literature has relied almost exclusively on student outcomes as an indicator of program success, a significant contribution of this study has been to examine implementation from the perspective of the RJ practitioner.

In summary, schools are dynamic, complex, and messy microcosms of society. What I learned in doing this small study is the perspective of staff implementing these practices need a louder voice in terms of their success and challenges met with implementation.

REFERENCES

- Advancement Project (2010, March). *Test, punish and push out: How zero tolerance and high-stakes testing funnel youth into the school-to-prison pipeline*. Washington, DC: Advancement Project Press. Retrieved from http://b3cdn.net/advancement/d05cb2181a4545db07_r2im6caqe.pdf
- Advancement Project (2014). *Restorative Practices: Fostering Healthy Relationships & Promoting Positive Discipline in Schools*. Washington, DC: Advancement Project Press. Retrieved from <http://schottfoundation.org/sites/default/files/restorative-practices-guide.pdf>
- Ahmed, E & Braithwaite, J. (2005) Forgiveness, Shaming, Shame and Bullying. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology*. Volume: 38: 3, page(s) 298-323, December 1, 2005. <https://doi.org/10.1375/acri.38.3.298>
- Albrecht, S., Skiba, R., Losen, D., Chung, C., & Middelberg, L. (2012). Federal policy on disproportionality in special education: Is it moving us forward? *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, 23(1), 14-25. doi: 10.1177/1044207311407917
- Amstutz, L.S. & Mullet, J.H. (2005). *The little book of restorative discipline for schools: Teaching responsibility; creating caring climates*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books.
- Baker, J. A., Terry, T., Bridger, R., & Winsor, A. (1997). Schools as caring communities: A relational approach to school reform. *School Psychology Review*, 26(4), 586-602.
- Beck, E. (2012). Transforming communities: Restorative justice as a community building strategy. *Journal of Community Practice*, 20, 380-401. DOI: 10.1080/10705422.2012.732003.
- Bell, C. (2001). Cultivating resilience in youth. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 29(5), 375-381.

- Boggs, G. L. (2016). *Living for Change: An Autobiography*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. ISBN 978-1-5179-0148-6(pb).
- Boyes-Watson, C. (2008). *Peacemaking circles and urban youth: Bringing justice home*. St. Paul: Living Justice Press. ISBN10: 0972188649.
- Braithwaite, J. (1989). *Crime, shame, and reintegration*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. ISBN-10: 0465021484.
- Braithwaite, J. (2001). Youth development circles. *Oxford Review of Education*, 27, 239-252.
- Braithwaite, J. (2002). *Restorative justice and responsive regulation*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Burford, G. & Pennell, J. (2000). Family group decision making and family violence. In G. Burford & J. Hudson (Eds.), *Family Group Conferencing: New Directions in Community Centered Child and Family Practice* (pp. 171-183). New York, NY: Aldine DeGruyter.
- Burke, K. & Ashley, J. (2009, April). *Implementing restorative justice: A guide for schools*. Retrieved from <http://www.icjia.state.il.us/public/pdf/BARJ/SCHOOL%20BARJ%20GUIDEBOOK.pdf>.
- Cameron, L. & Thorsborne, M. (2001). Restorative justice and school discipline: Mutually exclusive. In H.B. Strang & J. Braithwaite (Eds.), *Bureaucracies and corporations: Restorative justice and civil society* (pp. 180-194). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Catalano, R., Berglund, M.L., Ryan, J., Lonczak, H. & Hawkins, J.D. (2004). Positive youth development in the U.S.: Research findings on evaluations of positive youth development programs. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 591 (1), 98-124. DOI: 10.1177/0002716203260102

- Children's Defense Fund. (2011). *Portrait of inequality 2011: Black children in America*. Retrieved from <http://www.childrensdefense.org/programs-campaigns/black-community-crusade-for-children-II/bccc-assets/portrait-of-inequality.pdf>
- Children's Defense Fund-Ohio (2015). *Juvenile Justice Fact Sheet Series: School to Prison Pipeline*. Ohio Juvenile Justice Alliance Series of Fact Sheets. Retrieved from <http://www.cdfohio.org/research-library/2015/school-to-prison-pipeline.pdf>
- Claassen, Ron & Claassen, Roxanne. (2008). *Discipline that restores: Strategies to create respect, cooperation, and responsibility in the classroom*. Charleston, SC: Booksurge Publishing. ISBN10 1419699121.
- Connolly, M., James, C. & Beales, B. (2011). Contrasting perspectives on organizational culture change in schools. *Journal of Educational Change*, 12, 421-439. doi:10.1007/s10833-011-9166-x.
- Curtis, M. & Stollar, S. (1996). Applying principles and practices of organizational change to school reform. *School Psychology Review*, 25(4), 409-417.
- Davis, F. (2012). What's love got to do with it? *Tikkun*, 27(1):30. Retrieved from: https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/22844416/Whats_Love_Got_to_Do_With_It.pdf
- Doolan, M. (2003). *Restorative practices and family empowerment: both/ and or either/or?* Family Rights Newsletter. London: Family Rights Group.
- Durlak, J., Weissberg, R., Dymnicki, A., Taylor, R. & Schellinger, K. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1), 405-432.
- Evans, K. & Lester, J. (2014). Restorative justice in education: What we know so far. *Scholarly Journals*, 44(5), 57-63.

- Evans, R. (2001). The Culture of Resistance (pp. 510-521), In *The Jossey-Bass Reader on School Reform. The Jossey-Bass Education Series*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc.
- Fullan, M. (1996). Professional culture and educational change. *School Psychology Review*, 25(4), 496.
- Garcia, M. (2013). School discipline policy and school climate bill of rights. Los Angeles Unified School District. Retrieved from <http://www.publiccounsel.org/tools/assets/files/2013-School-Climate-Bill-of-Rights-Policy-FINAL.pdf>.
- Gavrielides, T. (2007). *Restorative justice theory and practice: Addressing the discrepancy*. Helsinki : European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations (HEUNI); Monsey, N.Y. : Criminal Justice Press. Retrieved from http://www.peacepalacelibrary.nl/ebooks/files/HEUNI_8oiteshk6w.pdf
- Gregory A., Clawson, K., Davis, A., & Gerewitz, J. (2013). The promise of restorative practices to transform teacher-student relationships and achieve equity in school discipline. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 17, 151-156.
- Green, E. J., McCollum, V. C., & Hays, D. G. (2008). Teaching advocacy and counseling within a social justice framework: Implications for school counselors and educators. *Journal for Social Action in Counseling & Psychology*, 1, 14-30.
- Greenberg, M.T., Weissberg, R.P., O'Brien, M.U., Zins, J.E., Fredericks, L., Resnik, H. & Elias, M.J. (2003). Enhancing school-based prevention and youth development through coordinated social, emotional, and academic learning. *American Psychologist*, 58, 466-474.

- Hamilton, M., & Nitcy Hope, L. (2011). Social work and restorative justice: Implications for school system practice. In N. Kropf, E. Beck, & P. Blume Leonard (Eds.). *Social work and restorative justice: Skills for dialogue, peacemaking, and reconciliation* (pp. 90-117). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Herz , D., Lee, P., Lutz , L., Stewart, M., Tuell, J. & Wiig, J. (2012). *Addressing the needs of multisystem youth: Strengthening the connection between child welfare and juvenile justice*. Washington, DC: Center for Juvenile Justice Reform.
- Hopkins, B. (2002). Restorative justice in schools. *Support for Learning*, 17(3), 144-149.
- Hopkins, B. (2004). *Just Schools: A Whole School Approach to Restorative Justice*. Philadelphia, PA and London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Huizinga, D., Thornberry, T.P., Knight, K. E. & Lovegrove, P.J. (2007). *Disproportionate minority contact in the juvenile justice system: A study of differential minority arrest/referral to court in three cities*. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- International Institute for Restorative Practices. (2014). Retrieved from https://www.revolvy.com/main/index.php?s=Restorative%practices&item_type=topic
- Jain, S., Basse, H., Brown, M. & Kalra, P. (2014). *Restorative justice in Oakland schools implementation and impacts 2014: An effective strategy to reduce disproportionate discipline, suspensions and improve academic outcomes*. Oakland Unified School District report prepared for the Office of Civil Rights U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://peacebuilders.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/OUUSD-RJ-Report-revised-Final.pdf>

- Karp, D. & Breslin, B. (2001). Restorative justice in school communities. *Youth & Society*, 33(2), 249-272. doi: 10.1177/0044118X01033002006
- Kropf, N. (2011). Justice, restoration, and social work. In N. Kropf, E. Beck, & P. Blume Leonard (Eds.). *Social work and restorative justice: Skills for dialogue, peacemaking, and reconciliation* (pp. 3-14). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Losen, D.J. & Martinez, T.E. (2013). *Out of school & off track: the overuse of suspensions in American middle and high schools*. The Center for Civil Rights Remedies. The Civil Rights Project. University of California, Los Angeles. Retrieved from <https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/resources/projects/center-for-civil-rights-remedies/school-to-prison-folder/federal-reports/out-of-school-and-off-track-the-overuse-of-suspensions-in-american-middle-and-high-schools/>
- McCluskey, G., Lloyd, G., Kane, J., Riddell, S., Stead, J. & Weedon, E. (2008). Can restorative practices in schools make a difference? *Educational Review*, 60(4), 405-417.
- McCold, P. (2002). *Evaluation of a restorative milieu: CSF buxmont school/day treatment programs 1999-2001 evaluation outcome technical report*. International Institute for Restorative Practices, USA. Paper presented at the American Society of Criminology annual meeting, November 13-16, 2002, Chicago, Illinois. Retrieved from http://www.iirp.edu/iirpWebsites/web/uploads/article_pdfs/erm.pdf
- McCold, P. & Wachtel, T. (2002). Restorative justice theory validation. In E. Weitekamp and H-J. Kerner (Eds.) *Restorative justice: Theoretical foundations* (pp. 110–142). Cullompton: Willan Publishing.

- McCold, P. (2003). A survey of assessment research on mediation and conferencing. In L. Walgrave (Ed.), *Repositioning restorative justice* (pp. 67–120). Collompton, UK: Willan Publishing.
- McNeely, C. A., Nonnemaker, J. M. & Blum, R. W. (2002). Promoting School Connectedness: Evidence for the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. *Journal of School Health*, 72(4), 138–146.
- Mirsky, L. (2011). *Restorative Practices: Whole-School Change to Build Safer, Saner School Communities*. International Institute for Restorative Practices, USA. Retrieved from http://www.iirp.edu/article_detail.php?article_id=Njkk.
- Mirsky, L. (2004). *Restorative justice practices of Native American, First Nation and other indigenous people of North America: Part one*. Retrieved from <http://www.iirp.edu/pdf/natjust1.pdf>
- Models for Change. (2011). *Knowledge brief: Are minority youths treated differently in juvenile probation?* Retrieved from <http://www.modelsforchange.net/publications/314>
- Morrison, B. (2003). Regulating Safe School Communities: Being Responsive and Restorative. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 41(6), 689–704.
- Morrison, B. (2005). *Building safe and healthy school communities: Restorative justice and responsive regulation*. Paper presented at the Sixth International Conference on Conferencing, Circles and Other Restorative Practices: ‘Building a Global Alliance for Restorative Practices and Family Empowerment.’ Sydney, Australia, March 3Y5, 2005. Retrieved from <https://www.iirp.edu/eforum-archive/4316-building-safe-and-healthy-school-communities-restorative-justice-and-responsive-regulation>

Morrison, B. (2007). *Restoring Safe School Communities: A Whole School Approach in Bullying, Violence, and Alienation*. Sydney, NSW: Federation Press.

Morrison, B., Blood, P., & Thorsborne, M. (2005). Practicing restorative justice in school communities: Addressing the challenge of culture change. *Public Organization Review*, 5(4), 335-357.

Morrison, B. & Vaandering, D. (2012). Restorative justice: pedagogy, praxis, and discipline.

Journal of School Violence, 11, 138-155. NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund

(2014). *Dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline*. Retrieved from

http://www.naacpldf.org/files/publications/Dismantling_the_School_to_Prison_Pipeline.pdf.

NASW (2017). *Code of Ethics*. Retrieved from <https://www.socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>

National Council of La Raza. (2011). *Men in motion in the community and the Philadelphia*

Latino juvenile justice network: Reducing disproportionate minority contact,

strengthening reentry, and building community. Retrieved from

<http://www.modelsforchange.net/publications/327>

Oakes P., Haslam, S. & Turner, J. (1994). *Stereotyping and Social Reality*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Peebles-Wilkins, W. (2005). Zero tolerance in educational settings. *Children & Schools*,

27(1),33.

Pranis, K. (1998). *Guide for implementing the balanced and restorative justice model*.

Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S.

Department of Justice. Retrieved from:

<https://www.ojjdp.gov/pubs/implementing/contents.html>

- Pranis, K. (2001). *Building justice on a foundation of democracy, caring, and mutual responsibility*. Minnesota Department of Corrections Retrieved from <http://www.corr.sMe.mn.us/ij/pdf/rjbuildingjustice.pdf>
- Pranis, K. (2005). *The little book of circle process: A new/old approach to peacemaking*. Good Books Press, St. Paul, MN. ISBN 0-9721886-0-6
- Pranis, K., Wedge, M. & Stuart, B. (2003). *Peacemaking Circles: From Crime to Community*. Living Justice Press. St. Paul, MN.
- Riestenberg, N. (2012). *Circle in the square: Building community and repairing harm in school*. Minnesota: Living Justice Press.
- Rodriguez, N. (2007). Restorative justice at work: Examining the impact of restorative justice resolutions on juvenile recidivism. *Crime & Delinquency*, 53(3), 355-379.
- Saavedra, J. D. (2010). *Just the facts: A snapshot of incarcerated Hispanic youth* [Fact Sheet]. Washington, DC: National Council of La Raza. Retrieved from <http://publications.nclr.org/handle/123456789/918>
- Sachs, J. & Newdom, F. (1999). *Clinical work and social action: An integrative approach*. New York, London, Oxford: The Haworth Press.
- Sharkey, J. & Fenning, P. (2012). Rationale for designing school contexts in support of proactive discipline. *Journal of School Violence*, 11(2), 95-104.
- Shaw, G. (2007). Restorative practices in Australian schools: Changing relationships, changing culture. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 25(1), 127-135. doi: 10.1002/crq.198
- Sherman, L. (2003). Reason for emotion: Reinventing justice with theories, innovations and research. American Society of Criminology 2002 presidential address, In *Criminology*, 41, 1-38.

- Skiba, R.J., Horner, R.H., Chung, C.G., Rausch, M.K., May, S.L. & Tobin, T. (2011). Race is not neutral: A national investigation of African American and Latino disproportionality in school discipline. *School Psychology Review, 40*, 85-107.
- Skiba, R.J., Michael, R.S., Nardo, A.C. & Peterson, R.L. (2002). The color of discipline: Sources of racial and gender disproportionality in school punishment. *The Urban Review, 34*, 317–342. doi:10.1023/A:1021320817372
- Skiba, R., Reynolds, C.R., Graham, S., Sheras, P., Conoley, J.C. & Garcia-Vazquez, E. (2008). *Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in the Schools? An Evidentiary Review and Recommendations*. American Psychological Association, Zero Tolerance Task Force. August, 2009.
- Staudt, M., Cherry, D. & Watson, M. (2005). Practice guidelines for school social workers: A modified replication and extension of a prototype. *Children & Schools, 27*(2), 71-81.
- Umbreit, M. & Armour, M. (2011). *Restorative justice dialogue: An essential guide for research and practice*. New York: Springer Publishing Company.
- Thompson, J. (2016). Eliminating zero tolerance policies in schools: Miami-Dade county public schools' approach. *Brigham Young University Education & Law Journal, 2*, 325-349.
- Thorsborne, M. & Blood, P. (2013). *Implementing Restorative Practices in Schools*. Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Tyler, T. & Blader, S. (2000). *Cooperation in groups: Procedural justice, social identity, and behavioral engagement*. Philadelphia, PA: Psychology Press.
- Umbreit, M., Vos, B., Coates, R.B. & Brown, K.A. (2003). *Facing violence: The path of restorative justice and dialogue*. Monsey, NY: Criminal Justice Press.

Umbreit, M.S. (2006). *Restorative justice dialogue: Evidence-Based Practice*. (pp. 1–16).

Retrieved from http://www.cehd.umn.edu/ssw/RJP/PDFs/RJ_Dialogue_Evidence-based_Practice_1-06.pdf

Umbreit, M.S., Vos, B. & Coates, R.B. (2005). *Opportunities and Pitfalls Facing the Restorative*

Justice Movement. An International Resource Center in Support of Restorative Justice

Dialogue, Research and Training in Collaboration with the Restorative Justice Initiative,

Marquette University Law School. Retrieved from www.cehd.umn.edu/ssw/rjp

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) & U.S.

Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Indicators of School Crime and Safety*

(1999). Appendix A, Table A1. Retrieved from

http://b3cdn.net/advancement/8d91c72205a1b9d955_ujm6bhguv.pdf

U.S. Department of Education (2004). *The 2002-2003 elementary and secondary school survey: National and state projections*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

[Online]. Retrieved January 14, 2006 at <http://vistademo.beyond2020.com/ocr2002r/>

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights (2012). *The transformed civil rights data*

collection—March 2012 data summary. Retrieved from

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/data.html>

U.S. Department of Education (2014a). *Guiding Principles: A resource guide for improving*

school climate and discipline. Washington, D.C. Retrieved from

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/guiding-principles.pdf>

- U.S. Department of Education Press Office (2014b). *U.S. Departments of Education and Justice Release School Discipline Guidance Package to Enhance School Climate and Improve School Discipline Policies/Practices [Press release]*. Retrieved from <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-departments-education-and-justice-release-school-discipline-guidance-package->
- U.S. Department of Justice. *Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 42 U.S.C. § 2000D ET SEQ.* Code of Federal Regulations. Retrieved from: <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CFR-2011-title28-vol1/xml/CFR-2011-title28-vol1-part42-subpartC.xml>.
- Utheim, R. (2014), Restorative Justice, Reintegration, and Race: Reclaiming Collective Identity in the Post-racial Era. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 45(4), 355–372.
doi:10.1111/aeq.12075
- Van Ness, D. & Heetderks Strong, K. (2002). *Restoring Justice*, 2nd ed. Cincinnati, OH: Anderson.
- Wachtel, T. & McCold, P. (2003). *In pursuit of paradigm: A theory of restorative justice*. Paper presented at the XIII World Congress of Criminology, 10-15 August 2003, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Retrieved from International Institute for Restorative Practices archive: <https://www.iirp.edu/eforum-archive/4277-in-pursuit-of-paradigm-a-theory-of-restorative-justice>
- Wachtel, T., Costello, B. & Wachtel, J. (2009). *The Restorative Practices Handbook for Teachers, Disciplinarians and Administrators*. Bethelhem, PA: International Institute of Restorative Practices.

- Wachtel, T. (2007). *Restorative Justice: The Evidence—Report Draws Attention to RJ in the UK*. International Institute of Restorative Practices, USA. Retrieved from http://www.iirp.edu/iirpWebsites/web/uploads/article_pdfs/rjevidence.pdf
- Wachtel, T. (2013). *Defining Restorative*. Report by International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP), pp. 1-12. Retrieved from: <https://www.iirp.edu/pdf/Defining-Restorative.pdf>
- Wald, J. & Losen, D. J. (2003). Defining and redirecting a school-to-prison pipeline. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 99, 9–15. doi: 10.1002/yd.51.
- Walgrave, L. (2011). Investigating the potentials of restorative justice practice. *Washington University Journal of Law & Policy*, 36(1). Retrieved from http://openscholarship.wustl.edu/law_journal_law_policy/vol36/iss1/6
- Ward, E. C., Clark, L. & Heidrich, S. (2009). African American women’s beliefs, coping behaviors, and barriers to seeking mental health services. *Qualitative Health Research*, 19, 1589-1601.
- Whitlock, J. (2010). Youth perceptions of life at school: Contextual correlates of school connectedness in adolescence. *Applied Developmental Science*, 10(1), 13-29. doi: https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532480xads1001_2
- Zehr, H. (2000). *Journey to belonging*, a paper delivered at the international conference “Just Peace? Peace making and peacebuilding for the New Millennium.” Albany, New Zealand: Massey University, 24-28. Retrieved from <https://www.napierlibrary.co.nz/assets/mcelrea/Journey-to-Belonging-by-Howard-Zehr-Massey-University-20000424.pdf>
- Zehr, H. (2002). *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books, Inc.

Appendix A

Informed Consent Form



**Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Smith College School for Social Work • Northampton, MA**

.....

Possibilities and Pitfalls of Restorative Justice: Exploring the Implementation of RJ Practices and Changing Paradigms in Bay Area Public Schools

Investigator(s): Vanessa R. Shea, [REDACTED]

.....

Introduction

- You are being asked to be in a research study that is about your experience working in a public Bay Area middle school or high school.
- You were selected as a possible participant because you are a school-based staff member who has worked at a school that utilizes Restorative Justice practices or you have used RJ practices in your work with students.
- I ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Purpose of Study

- The purpose of this study is to explore how Bay Area public middle and high school schools are implementing Restorative Justice practices.
- This study is being conducted as a research requirement for my Master’s of Social Work degree.
- Ultimately, this research may be published or presented at professional conferences.

Description of the Study Procedures

- If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things: click on the link to the survey included in the recruitment email, and complete the anonymous survey. The survey should take you approximately twenty minutes to complete. You will only be asked to participate one time, and this is when you fill out the survey and/or forward recruitment email to make referrals.
- The study design is devised in a way to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of participants and their referrals. There is a “click-to-share” feature embedded in the survey so participants may refer people in their network who may meet criteria for participation.

Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study

- There is a small risk that participation may cause discomfort. You may skip a question or withdraw from the study completely if you experience discomfort.

Benefits of Being in the Study

- Potential benefits for me are gaining information on a topic of research that has been understudied, while potentially furthering the social work profession's understanding of the implications and effects of culturally responsive practices in schools, as well as completing my thesis project.
- The benefits of participation for you are gaining insight, and having the opportunity to talk about issues that may be important to you. The responses to the questionnaire will allow you to share your personal and unique perspective and experiences with utilizing culturally responsive practices in schools.
- Another benefit to you may be that you are contributing to improving public school environments by supporting research.
- The benefits to social work/society are: This research furthers our understanding of the needs of diverse students and what constitutes a healthy, safe, restorative community by furthering research. Also, it will potentially lead to increased understanding of the impact of school-based Restorative Justice and development of programs to challenge punitive systems of control. More schools nationwide could subsequently adopt restorative practices, thus creating a more equal balance of power within our society.

Confidentiality

- This study is anonymous and confidential. We will not be collecting or retaining any information about your identity. SurveyMonkey will not forward any of participants' identifying information to me, and I will have no way to know whether or not you participated.

Payments/gift

- You will not receive any financial payment for your participation.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study *at any time* without affecting your relationship with the researchers of this study or Smith College. Your decision to refuse will not result in any loss of benefits (including access to services) to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely by closing your browser window. Once you have submitted your data it will be impossible to withdraw from the study as your data is confidential and I will be unable to identify your survey responses from the others that have participated in the study. You will be able to access the online survey until April 1, 2015. After you submit your responses to the survey questions, your information will be part of the thesis, dissertation or final report.

Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns

- You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me, Vanessa Shea at vshea@smith.edu or by telephone at [REDACTED]. If you would like a summary of the study results, one will be sent to you once the study is completed. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant, or if you have any problems as a result of your participation, you may contact the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Committee at (413) 585-7974.

Please print a copy and save it for your records.

BY CHECKING "I AGREE" BELOW, YOU ARE INDICATING THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE INFORMATION ABOVE AND THAT YOU HAVE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY. (I Agree, I Disagree)

Appendix B

Recruitment Email

Version 1

Subject Title: RJ Study Invitation + Request to Distribute Survey

Dear Youth Advocate:

You are a potential candidate to participate in an important study in which you are invited to take a brief online survey at your earliest convenience. I am a social work graduate student who is conducting research that explores school-based restorative justice (RJ), including the opportunities and challenges of implementing culture change. Certainly the Bay Area is a national model for interrupting the school-to-prison pipeline, breaking cycles of racialized mass incarceration, and fostering community healing. I am in dire need of participants to help satisfy time-sensitive graduation requirements, so your support is appreciated!

Eligibility Criteria for Participation:

- * One must have at least one year of experience working in Bay Area public middle and/ or high school(s) in the past five years.
- * Affiliated school(s) implement restorative justice (RJ) practices and/or one utilizes RJ in respective work.

The study design ensures anonymity and it will take less than 15 minutes of your valuable time. It is my hope you will be inspired to share your experiences with restorative practices in schools to contribute to a growing body of knowledge and research.

Please spread the word! Feel free to forward this email or share the link to the survey below: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BayAreaSchoolBasedRJSurvey>

Thank you in advance for your time and your consideration in supporting an aspiring school social worker and RJ practitioner. Do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns via vanessa.r.shea@gmail.com or [REDACTED]

Version 2

Subject Title: URGENT: RJ Study Invitation+Request to Distribute Survey

(please see above email template; only subject title was changed)

Appendix C

Online Survey

A) Screening Questions

1. Do you have at least one year of experience working in Bay Area public middle and/or high school(s) within the past five years?
2. Has your affiliated school implemented Restorative Justice (RJ) practices and/or do you utilize RJ practices in your work with students?

B) Demographic Questions

1. Which of the following best represents your racial or ethnic heritage? Choose all that apply.
 - a) Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American
 - b) Latino or Hispanic American
 - c) East Asian or Asian American
 - d) South Asian or Indian American
 - e) Middle Eastern or Arab American
 - f) Native American or Alaskan Native
 - g) Prefer not to answer
 - h) Other (please specify): (Comment box)
2. What is your age?
 - a) 18 to 24
 - b) 25 to 34
 - c) 35 to 44
 - d) 45 to 54
 - e) 55 to 64
 - f) 65 to 74
 - g) 75 or older
3. What is your gender identity?
 - a) female
 - b) male
 - c) Other (please specify): (Comment box)
4. What are the primary student populations with whom you work? (Please select all that apply)
 - a) Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American
 - b) Latino or Hispanic American
 - c) East Asian or Asian American
 - d) South Asian or Indian American
 - e) Middle Eastern or Arab American
 - f) Native American or Alaskan Native
 - g) Prefer not to answer
 - h) Other (please specify): (Comment box)

5. Please identify your position or role at school(s). (Comment box)
6. Please identify the duration of your experiences in implementing RJ practices in public schools:
 - a) 0-6 months
 - b) 6-11 months
 - c) 1-2 years
 - d) 2-5 years
 - e) 5-10 years
 - f) 10 years or more

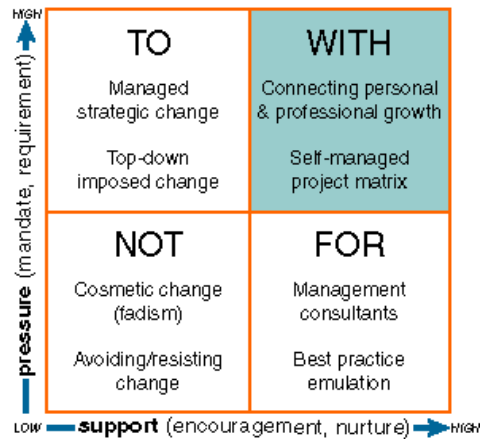
C) Survey Questions

1. How do you understand or define Restorative Justice (RJ)? (Comment box)
2. Which of the following RJ principles are actively reflected in your everyday work? (Please select all that apply)
 - a) Building and maintaining healthy relationships
 - b) Creating just and equitable learning environments for all students
 - c) Repairing harm and transforming conflict
3. How do you integrate RJ in the classroom, policies, individual or group interventions, and strategies have guided the integration of RJ in your work? Pay particular attention to how you have been trained or equip others to utilize RJ in school communities. (i.e. training, mentoring, experiential exercises, curriculum development, role plays, staff circles, hands-on opportunities, research, education, etc.)
(Comment box)
4. What kinds of learning experiences or training on RJ principles, practices, and strategies have guided the integration of RJ in your work? Pay particular attention to how you have been trained or equip others to utilize RJ in school communities. (i.e. training, mentoring, webinar, experiential exercises, curriculum development, role-plays, staff circles, hands-on opportunities, research, education, etc.)
(Comment box)
5. How would you characterize your commitment to implementing RJ practices, including your personal knowledge and skills? Please select all that apply:
 - a) Facilitation of formal conferences, for serious matters
 - b) Facilitation of circle processes to build and maintain positive classroom relationships
 - c) Facilitation of class conferences for situations where classes have become dysfunctional
 - d) Mediation and healing circles
 - e) Case management of students at risk
 - f) Positive classroom management
 - g) Social and emotional competency development
 - h) De-escalation
 - i) Respectful dialogue or informal restorative chats
 - j) Coaching/mentoring

- k) Leadership development for students and staff in key positions
- l) A range of processes described above being applied to manage staff relationship difficulties
- 6. Please briefly illustrate how you view conflict, harm, or wrongdoing and what do you do when you encounter it. How does the school address the harm from inappropriate behavior and incidents? (Comment Box)
- 7. What concerns do you have about culture change and implementing RJ? How have these concerns been addressed by leaders and/or colleagues? (Comment box)
- 8. What informal and/or formal RJ practices exist in the whole school community? (Comment box)
- 9. What do you think would help the “buy-in” or effective implementation of RJ in your school? (Comment Box)
- 10. Please check any of the following to indicate outcomes of RJ based on your own observations and what you have been told by leadership:
 - a) Reduction in school suspensions and expulsions
 - b) Improved retention of teachers
 - c) Fewer incidences of fighting and aggression
 - d) Increased positive school climate
 - e) Creation of partnerships with community organizations
 - f) Students and/or families involved in the process of implementing RJ
 - g) Fewer office referrals
 - h) Improved staff to staff, student to staff, and student to student relationships
 - i) Students and staff feeling a greater sense of safety
 - j) An increased sense of belonging for students
 - k) Other (please specify): (Comment box)

11. Based on the following diagram and quote *below*, please identify the box that most accurately describes how the school's leadership promotes a climate for change and implementation of RJ.

- a) To
- b) With
- c) Not
- d) For



“The most effective way to bring about change in a school- or any organization- is to combine high levels of both pressure and support and engage staff in a participatory process. Real change will occur only when teachers and staff recognize that they will be held accountable for change and simultaneously are given the support and tools they need.”

*Source: Wachtel, T., Costello, B. and Wachtel, J. (2009). The Restorative Practices Handbook for Teachers, Disciplinarians and Administrators. Bethelhem, PA: International Institute of Restorative Practices.

12. Please briefly explain your answer regarding school leadership. (Comment box)

13. Based on the following diagram and quote *below*, how would you describe the school's current approach to discipline?

- a) Punitive
- b) Permissive
- c) Neglectful
- d) Restorative



“Punishment and other choices in school settings are illustrated by the Social Discipline Window, which is created by combining two continuums: “control,” or directing influence over others, and “support,” or nurturing, encouraging and assisting others. The combinations from each of the two continuums range from low to high. Clear limit-setting and diligent enforcement of behavioral standards characterize high social control, whereas vague or weak behavioral standards and lax or nonexistent regulation of behavior characterize low social control. Active assistance and concern for well-being characterize high social support, whereas lack of encouragement and minimal provision for physical and emotional needs characterize low social support. By combining a high or low level of control with a high or low level of support, the Social Discipline Window defines four approaches to the regulation of behavior: punitive, permissive, neglectful and restorative.”

*Source: International Institute for Restorative Practices (2014). In Pursuit of Paradigm: A Theory of Restorative Justice. Retrieved from: http://www.iirp.edu/iirpWebsites/web/uploads/article_pdfs/paradigm.pdf

14. What steps in the process of culture change do you think the school has accomplished? *Please select all that apply.*

- a) Making a case for change
- b) Putting an implementation team together
- c) Creating a vision for the future
- d) Communicating the vision to capture hearts and minds
- e) Overcoming obstacles and getting the ball rolling
- f) Generating short term wins
- g) Keeping the pressure on
- h) Maintaining the gains
- i) Other (please specify): (Comment box)

15. Please provide a brief explanation for the approach to social discipline you identified above and note if there is an alignment or a disconnect between the school's discipline policies and existing climate. (Comment box)
16. What, if anything, has been easy to do while integrating RJ practices in your work with students? What has been challenging? (Comment box)
17. Is there anything else you would like to share about implementing school-based RJ and changing school culture? (Comment box)

Appendix D

Human Subjects Review Board Approval Letter



School for Social Work
Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950 F (413) 585-
7994

March 17, 2015

Vanessa Shea

Dear Vanessa,

You did a very nice job on your revisions. Your project is now approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Congratulations and our best wishes on your interesting study.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elaine Kersten".

Elaine Kersten, Ed.D.