

A CASE STUDY EXAMINING THE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRACTICES
IMPLEMENTED IN THREE CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOLS

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study uses a multiple case study research design to examine the implementation and development of restorative justice (RJ) practices currently adopted by three high schools in California. Interviews were held at each of three participating public high school sites with the principal, an administrator in charge of student discipline, and a school counselor.

Documentation, such as office referrals, and archival records were analyzed as part of the data collection process. The participating high schools are all located in California and have enrollments between 1,600 and 2,000 students. Each of the schools adopted RJ programs to address student misbehavior in place of traditional exclusionary practices, suspension and expulsion. This study highlighted the use of mediation, peace circles, and Behavioral Support Centers as the most popular, and most effective, RJ strategies. Students referred to RJ programs were perceived by the participants to exhibit improved behavioral decision making and lower levels of recidivism than students experiencing the punitive discipline programs in place prior to RJ. This study also identified the resource commitment required for RJ to succeed. The investment in both time and money required for the implementation of RJ is significant. Community involvement in the process of RJ was not found to be an essential component of the program at any of the three schools. Data was analyzed through a process of coding and a cross-case synthesis was developed.

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List of Abbreviations

Aggression Replacement Training (ART)

Behavior Support Centers (BSC's)

Brief Intervention (BI)

California Department of Education (CDE)

More Knowledgeable Other (MKO)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS)

Restorative Justice (RJ)

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The use of exclusionary disciplinary practices, including suspension and expulsion, by schools to punish inappropriate pupil behavior has a long history in America's schools (Allman & Slate, 2011). The resulting consequences of these actions include lower academic achievement and higher truancy and dropout rates (Gonzalez, 2012). The No Child Left Behind Act required schools to report their graduation rates. It also set ever increasing goals for the graduation rate as part of school district level goals known as annual measurable objectives (Losen, 2011). The tendency for students who are prohibited from attending school, even for short periods of time, to become drop outs at a later date is well established (Gonzalez, 2012). As a result of this long term impact of punitive practices and federally legislated mandates for higher graduation rates, schools have been looking to find alternatives to exclusionary practices for incidents of pupil misbehavior. One of the many alternatives being adopted by schools is restorative justice (RJ).

Background

Restorative justice (RJ) developed as a response to the ineffective nature of punitive practices in the field of criminal justice during the 1990's and early 2000's (Braithwaite, 2004). The actual origins of RJ date back to ancient civilizations and aboriginal tribes (Maxwell & Morris, 2006). Researchers have found recidivism rate for juvenile offenders who were placed in the criminal justice system, and often found themselves in institutions for relatively minor offences, showed retributive punishment to be ineffective (Choi, Bazemore, & Gilbert, 2012). Better results were achieved through alternative methods of punishment, and these alternatives eventually became known as RJ practices. As research documented the effectiveness of RJ, the

application of the concepts gradually spread into other fields. Most germane to this study, RJ was implemented in educational settings. RJ programs in schools are designed to focus on reparations for the victim, as opposed to punitive punishment, specifically suspension and expulsion. Some aspects of RJ could include the use of peace circles, victim/offender mediation (VOM), victim assistance, restitution, community service, peer mediation, and ex-offender assistance (Johnson & Johnson, 2012). Other RJ interventions include Behavior Support Centers (BCS), exclusion re-entry protocols, and in-school community service (California Department of Education, 2013). While this list of possible components of RJ is lengthy, it is hardly comprehensive. The programs developed by a school in response to student misbehavior are a reflection of the resources a school or district makes available for RJ (Michail, 2011). At times, RJ programs may indicate a politically correct label, while the program itself may not be consistent with the values and goals normally associated with RJ (Choi, et al., 2012). This possible incongruence provides an interesting facet of needed research.

There is ample evidence to support that RJ can be effective in diminishing the number of suspensions and expulsions reported by schools (Rideout, Roland, Salinitri, & Frey, 2010). While the quantifiable effectiveness is simple to examine, it is not a complete indication of the effectiveness, or intention, of school based RJ programs. Examining a variety of experiences with RJ can provide best practice standards for RJ (Choi, et al., 2012). By examining the experiences of practitioners to highlight the most impactful RJ strategies, it is hoped those adopting RJ can reduce disciplinary exclusion avoid any adverse student outcomes (Choi, et al., 2012).

Only through a qualitative investigation can a practical definition and judgment of effectiveness be conducted. The lack of high quality and consistently applied standards for RJ

programs remains an area of need for schools examining the subject. An evaluation of the impact RJ has on high school campuses need to go beyond the reported numbers of exclusions at a RJ school site. There is a need to examine the impact from a cultural lens that examines the experience of the practitioners.

Situation to Self

As a district level administrator in a California high school district, I have to answer questions from other public agencies and the local school board regarding high rates of suspension and expulsion from the schools in my district. Civil rights organizations and county committees devoted to community relations have also placed scrutiny on the disciplinary practices within my school district. Recent legislation has taken effect in California to change the way school districts respond to pupil misbehavior (California Education Code, 2013). One of the many options noted in the new law is the use of RJ.

As part of the responsibilities for my position within the district I oversee the disciplinary programs at all of the school sites. That also means it is my responsibility to respond to inquiries about disciplinary practices that remove students from the educational setting. Those inquiries come from numerous sources, including the media and concerned citizens. As a result, a bias exists regarding the need to determine what aspects of RJ are being implemented and used effectively in other California high schools. I understand a perceived bias may exist to find RJ effective, but recognizing that concern should help to mitigate it. Finding RJ practices which have failed is an equally important result of this research.

I will approach this study using an ontological philosophical premise. This belief that many realities exist, depending on the perspectives and experiences of the participants, provides a foundation for interpreting data from a variety of sources. A pragmatic interpretive framework

will be utilized to interpret the collected data. This provides for multiple answers to the research questions depending on the situation each of the participating school sites found themselves in at the time they began to adopt RJ strategies.

Problem Statement

The problem with developing and implementing RJ programs is the ambiguous nature of the program itself. There is a failure in the current literature to define the specific strategies being implemented by practitioners. There are many RJ interventions which may be part of a discipline program; there remains little evidence defining which practices are actually being adopted. Information regarding resource allocation and perceived effectiveness of various strategies has not been documented either. The desire of educational administrators to develop RJ programs for their schools is curtailed by a dirge of specific information related to the required investment of resources and the expected outcomes.

There is mounting pressure in California to change the way high schools respond to misbehavior by pupils. This pressure needs to be balanced with the need to develop a sense of student safety (Rideout, Roland, Salinitri, & Frey, 2010). The long held practice of exclusion has shown itself to be detrimental to the academic and social success of individual pupils (Losen, 2011 and Suvall, 2009). This has resulted in many high schools being labeled as needing improvement as a result of the indicators for success mandated by No Child Left Behind. According to Wadhwa (2010), school boards have approved board policies and resolutions directing school sites to develop RJ programs. While the theoretical definition of RJ is broad, and includes many different programs, there is no practical definition of RJ programs as they are being developed (Rideout, et al., 2010). There are some places where RJ is used along with retributive justice programs, in apparent contradiction to each other (Wenzel, Okimoto, &

Cameron, 2011). While RJ can mesh with the values of a variety of cultures, there has been a limited examination of how RJ can exist within the culture of American high schools (Wong, Chen, Ngan, & Ma, 2011). There is no ongoing research to indicate the perceived successes of RJ programs, the possible changes practitioners would like to make in the program, or the philosophical perspective of discipline at these early adopting campuses. The process of RJ has become almost secretive in practice, leaving others to wonder how RJ delivers services and actually works in practice (Choi & Severson, 2009). This is true in both the field of criminal justice, as these authors point out, but even truer where RJ has been applied outside of the criminal justice field, such as education.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this multiple case study is to examine the implementation of restorative justice practices in three California high schools. At this point in the research restorative justice practices will be defined as a discipline program where all of the affected parties discuss how they have been affected and punishment is centered on reparations instead of punitive actions (Zehr, 2002). Punitive discipline in a school environment typically results in the separation of students from the instructional environment. This means students are either suspended outside of school or expelled from the school entirely.

The intention of the study is to discover the specific RJ strategies selected California high schools are implementing when establishing restorative approaches to pupil misbehavior. There are many possible facets to RJ which schools could consider adopting. Few, if any, high schools are adopting every possible strategy associated with RJ. How school sites are determining the strategies they are employing is a focus of this study. Another focus of this study is to determine

what, if any, changes the schools would like to make in their RJ programs, now that time has passed, to provide some perspective on the effectiveness of the work the schools have done.

Significance of the Study

This study provided educational practitioners with a detailed examination of RJ program being adopted in some California high schools. This will assist other schools and districts as they begin the process of reevaluating their discipline practices. Further, there are also recommendations from those who have been working with RJ to assist those who are considering a shift in their philosophy toward pupil discipline. These recommendations will make future RJ programs more effective and purposeful than the ones developed by the early adopting school sites. The findings have provided a framework to evaluate various aspects of RJ as they relate to the theoretical framework that was employed. The correlation between various RJ strategies and the philosophical direction of the adopting school sites provided guidance for others to consider as they examine their options to student discipline. Just because RJ seems to be widely accepted, does not mean it is universally understood (Albrecht, 2010).

The U. S. Department of Education recently published guidelines to reform school disciplinary programs. One of the guiding principles of the reform efforts is the implementation of RJ programs (Duncan, 2014). According to the report, institutional responses to pupil misbehavior need to move away from the zero-tolerance models and incorporate RJ strategies. While failing to define or recommend specific strategies, the report does set a national expectation for the development of RJ programs (Duncan, 2014). The expanded focus on RJ magnifies the significance of this study. The findings of this study provide guidance for the development of the programs described in the federal guidelines related to student discipline.

Research Questions

Research questions provide the focus for qualitative research studies. They guide the development of data collection and analysis strategies (Creswell, 2007). For the purpose of this study the research questions were:

1. Which RJ interventions are being adopted in some California high schools? The need to clearly define the programs being implemented requires attention (Rideout, et al., 2010).
2. What resources are required to effectively implement RJ and how were those resources made available? This question is based on the apparent need for the allocation of additional resources to be directed toward RJ for successful program implementation (Duncan, 2014).
3. How has the implementation of specific RJ strategies improved student behavior, and how could these strategies be made more impactful, given the school site's experience? Determining which specific interventions have the greatest impact has not been examined in previous research (Choi, et al., 2012).
4. How are the principles of a restorative and communal framework reflected in all aspects of school relations? Inquiry into this issue remains underdeveloped at this time (Payne & Welch, 2013).

Research Plan

This qualitative research study utilized a multiple case study design. This design was especially helpful to answer questions of how and why (Yin, 1994). In this case, how RJ was implemented and why the aspects of RJ were selected for implementation, were specific concerns best addressed by this research design. There was no opportunity for the researcher to influence the facts of the phenomenon, RJ, or the context it was being studied in, the school sites.

The researcher's distance from the participants is a prerequisite for the use of this chosen design (Yin, 1994). The existence of the phenomenon being studied as a contemporary issue in a real life context meets the final condition to consider the case study design (Yin, 1994).

A case study uses a bound sample for intense investigation into a phenomenon. A single case would look at one instance, while a multiple case study design would examine several. A central concept at the foundation of case study research is to develop a sense of great depth into a specific phenomenon within a real life context (Creswell, 2007). Schramm (1971) describes a case study as illuminating a decision or series of decisions, why they were made, how they were implemented, and what the results were. Descriptive case studies provide information about a phenomenon and the context it takes place in (Yin, 1994). Stake (1995) believes there is value in the use of multiple cases to determine if common theme can be developed. The power of this research design as it relates to this topic is very strong. Thus, the multiple case study approach was used for the purpose of this study.

Delimitations

This research relied on a bounded system to research RJ programs. Only selected high schools located in California were examined for the purpose of this study. High schools present a much different social and cultural environment than elementary, middle, or K-12 schools. The approach to discipline for young adults has always been different than the approach associated with other student demographics, especially primary aged pupils. The public high schools considered for this study reported enrollments between 1,600 and 2,000 students in the previous school year. Larger high schools should have additional resources available to implement new programs, and the application of the findings regarding resources allocation would not have been transferable. The rationale for limiting the cases to California was two-fold. Disciplinary data

for California high schools illustrates an historical trend highlighting the use of punitive disciplinary measures, as illustrated by high rates of suspension and expulsion. Secondly, there has been a recent surge in RJ directives from local school boards and the California state legislature which have focused schools throughout the state to consider shifting their approach to student misbehavior. Examining the voluntary adoption of RJ practices within the new backdrop of these directives and mandates provided great insight for educational practitioners interested in the development of RJ for their schools.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Social development within the context of the school environment has been a challenge since the early days of public education. During the early and mid 1900's it was socially acceptable for students to drop out of school if they were not successful in an academic environment. America's decrease in factory jobs and accountability legislation changed this perception. With research indicating a strong relationship between exclusionary discipline practices and dropout rates, educational leaders looked for alternatives to suspension and expulsion as a response to misbehavior. To actualize this changing philosophy schools utilized a variety of approaches to discipline, including RJ. The effectiveness of RJ to meet both the needs of the school community and provide accountability for student behavior has resulted in the widespread adoption of RJ practices in schools. Given California's long history of punitive disciplinary practices, it is no wonder recent legislation has directed schools in this state to reexamine their discipline codes.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework provides a lens to view a specific idea or phenomenon. It is the point of view from which research should be considered. This context serves the purpose of placing a perspective on the research and also placing a set of limitations on the scope of what is being examined. Understanding this foundational framework is critical to fully grasping the relationship between the phenomenon being studied and the environment in which it is being examined. School safety has traditionally been interpreted through a philosophy based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, while RJ is more aligned with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory.

Using the combination of these two frameworks should allow for a complete examination of both the past and contemporary state of school discipline in California high schools.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Abraham Maslow (1943) describes a hierarchy of organismic needs based on the notion that the satisfaction of one need is a prerequisite for less essential needs to be addressed. The hierarchy is designed so the needs become more personal and psychological as individuals transition from one need to the next. These needs range from basic physiological components to the ethereal need for self actualization (Rowan, 1998). The hierarchy of needs consist of physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self actualization (Maslow, 1943). The physiological needs can be satisfied by securing food, water, shelter and clothing (Maslow, 1948). For most individuals, the attainment of this basic level is realistic, if not expected.

If person's physiological needs are well satisfied then the individual can consider their need for safety, the next layer of the hierarchy. In attempting to create an environment of safety, individual motivation will focus on actions to establish security from all threats (Maslow, 1943). This focus will impact not only current behavior and actions, but also future plans and decisions. Individuals will try to distance themselves from threats by either eliminating or avoiding them. When faced with uncertainty a feeling of insecurity will dominate the thoughts of the individual and can result in drastic and unpredictable behavior in an attempt to retain that sense of safety (Maslow, 1943). As a result, most people try to develop an environment and routine which promote a sense of organization and stability.

Once hunger and safety have been adequately sated, the next aspect of life the individual may address is the need for love and belonging (Maslow, 1943). This is the need to be part of a societal group. Belonging can take many forms, depending upon the situation. Being loved and

accepted, Maslow (1948) argues, is a requirement of individuals in every environment. Some of the circumstances people pursue acceptance and love are within the family, a peer social group, and also the school community. At times the desire to be accepted can lead to dangerous or foolish behaviors in an effort to gain the esteem of others.

These initial needs of individuals are the focus of a school system functioning as an organism. The concept of an organization acting as an individual is a widely held metaphor supported by literature within the field of organizational management (Morgan, 2006). When functioning as an organism, school systems have traditionally prioritized the safety of students above the need for students to be accepted. This has manifested itself in philosophies and policies which exclude students from school when they pose behavioral challenges (Gonzalez, 2012). The impact of exclusion from schools on individuals was discounted in favor of the belief that ensuring the safety of the majority of students should be considered more valuable. The urgency associated with safety was greater than the concern provided for a sense of belonging, which is consistent with the way individuals function to ensure their primary physiological and safety needs are met prior to less imperative needs being addressed (Maslow, 1948). Examining the use of school disciplinary practices through this framework should help to provide a foundation for the perspective of traditional discipline. Returning to this theory in examining a more restorative approach to discipline should provide insights to how schools manage discipline policies.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

While the predominate theory of learning during the 1900's focused on individuals and their specific levels of intelligence and motivation, Lev Vygotsky promoted the idea that learning should be a social and collaborative process (Macready, 2009). The sociocultural theory of

learning focuses on individuals being exposed to specific skills, as their maturation allows, by a more knowledgeable individual, often referred to as a More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) (Miller, 2011). By working closely with other individuals who have mastered skills and knowledge, information or skills are shared, and knowledge is transferred to less knowledgeable individuals (Macready, 2009). This relationship of exposure to an MKO provides the foundation for learning to take place in a collaborative environment. Socialization is critical for learning to take place. According to Macready (2009), “new understanding does not come about by the single consciousness of an individual, but in the interaction between individuals (p. 213).”

A second feature of the sociocultural theory emphasizes the ability of a child to learn not be measured by their IQ, but instead through a test of their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 2011). The ZPD is best described as the gap between what an individual knows and what an individual is capable of knowing, if given the opportunity to learn from an MKO (Macready, 2009). There is often a need for individuals to absorb new knowledge in an incremental manner over time. This concept of “scaffolding” is used regularly to teach traditional academic skills within the school environment. By slowly exposing an individual to unfamiliar content new connections and greater complexity of thought are developed (Vygotsky, 1978). The simple idea that individuals have limitations to their ability to learn based on what they already know seems short sighted and unproductive. Just because a set of knowledge has not been acquired by a certain predetermined association with age should not determine the potential of an individual (Vygotsky, 2011). Only through the development of supportive learning environments, ZPD’s, can individuals accelerate their learning, eventually meeting the expectation of others.

The principles of knowledge best supported by RJ are those associated with the knowledge of others and the inter-dependence of learning (Macready, 2009). People learn social and emotional skills by observing the reaction of others to their behavior and receiving feedback regarding their interactions (Macready, 2009). The need for individuals to learn behavioral expectations and norms is as critical in the school environment as learning the curriculum. When students are removed from the school environment they are no longer in a ZPD to understand appropriate behavior. These same students also fail to associate with an MKO in order to assimilate the requisite knowledge of behavioral expectations. The premise of RJ is to keep students engaged in the ZPD and associate with MKO's in order to improve student behavior through a process of shared knowledge and accountability (Macready, 2009). Vygotsky's contention that learning is derived from the outside by associating with others is supported by RJ, and runs in complete contrast to many of the punitive practices schools have employed to address incidents of student misbehavior.

Background of School Discipline Policies

Schools have long been charged with the task of establishing and maintaining safe environments to ensure student learning. Creating discipline codes and policies to address student behavior has been a challenging issue for schools, despite the integral need for schools to be successful in this area (Hemphill & Hargreaves, 2009). Initial attempts to codify school policies regarding discipline focused on punitive practices. According to Michail (2011) this results in one size fits all approaches to behavior, regardless of the specific circumstances of the students involved. These practices punish the child based on the assumption the student knowingly and deliberately violated the school rules. Punitive strategies also assume the negative consequences of a pupil's action will result in correcting the student behavior in the

future. Examples of punitive strategies include suspension, expulsion, Saturday school programs, detention and the loss of other student privileges (Michail, 2011). Some schools have gone so far as to include the involvement of the criminal justice system to create a culture of deterrence for misbehavior, including minor offences (Payne & Welch, 2013). There has been a long standing association between the criminal justice system and punitive discipline policies in schools (Gonzalez, 2012). In the majority of situations, this connection between student misbehavior and the criminal justice system is created at the discretion of the school or district. The use of police officers to act as school disciplinarians should be reexamine and eliminated whenever possible (Duncan, 2014).

There is a long standing practice in schools throughout the world to prohibit students from attending school in response to misbehavior (Michail, 2011). Educational systems in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States have shown an increasing reliance on punitive practices, such as disciplinary exclusion, to manage challenging student behavior. This practice of punitive discipline continues to be the most widely used in American schools today (Payne & Welch, 2013). One reason for the prevalence of punitive policies is the desire by school officials to maintain authority. It is important that schools keep their authority as it relates to discipline within the school community (Omale, 2006). There is ample evidence to illustrate how punitive practices are a result of a culture where concerns for who has control and power are favored to the detriment of developing customized plans to meet the needs of the individuals involved (Wenzel, Okimoto, & Cameron, 2011). In reality, there are many ways for a school to keep control over student behavior while providing support for students who are involved in wrongdoing (Omale, 2006).

For more than 50 years schools in the United States have developed a punitive, or punishment, based response to student misbehavior (Allman & Slate, 2011). The genesis of these programs dates back to the 1960's in most school districts. Punitive disciplinary practices have been associated with out of school suspension, expulsion, and even corporal punishment (Allman & Slate, 2011). These types of practices are efficient responses to behavioral issues as they take little time or resources to administer. The use of punitive practices were perceived as deterrents for students and allowed administrators to spend their energy focused on other tasks needed to properly manage a school site. While out of school suspension was originally intended to address only serious behavioral issues, the practice has been applied in recent years to nearly any student misbehavior (Allman & Slate, 2011). This means students with marginal behavior are often treated with the most severe forms of discipline available to school administrators. While there is an appropriate role for suspension and expulsion in the school environment, they should be used as last resorts, not the primary intervention (Duncan, 2014).

A number of different legislative actions have reinforced the punitive disciplinary practices in schools. Schools have been forced to abide by mandates such as the Gun Free Schools Act of 1994 (Allman & Slate, 2011). The federal law requires schools to expel students for a full year if they were found to violate the specific provision of the law, possessing a gun on a school campus. The No Child Left Behind Act forced schools to adopt strict policies to ensure the safety of the school environment (Allman & Slate, 2011). Many of these policies were enacted in reaction to the 1999 Columbine shootings (Welch & Payne, 2013). Schools perceived many pieces of post-Columbine legislation as endorsements for overly strict disciplinary guidelines. This resulted in a proliferation of zero tolerance policies for drug related offences, possession of any weapon, involvement in gang activities, tobacco use, school

disruption, and other less severe offenses (Allman & Slate, 2011). Zero tolerance, a term developed in the 1980's, equates to severe punishment for rules infractions, beginning with the first offense. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 1998) found the rate of zero tolerance policies widespread with 79% of schools adopting zero tolerance for violent actions, 79% for tobacco possession, 87% for alcohol use, 88% for drug possession or distribution, and 91% for non-gun related weapons offenses. For some schools zero tolerance policies were expanded to include the possession of over the counter medications (Payne & Welch, 2013). School exclusion for disciplinary reason has become the accepted response from schools for misbehavior, with little regard given to the severity of the offense (Michail, 2011). Often, schools do have flexibility and discretion in handling misbehavior, even though punitive practices are not designed to exercise exemptions (Allman & Slate, 2011). Most zero tolerance policies have evolved to eliminate flexibility in responding to disciplinary issues (Duncan, 2014). Too often, schools use the rationale of zero tolerance to apply discretionary suspension and expulsion for minor rule infractions. This trend illustrates how schools having options in how to handle student misbehavior, have remained reliant on punitive measures as the preferred model for discipline in most schools in the United States.

An examination of school discipline codes, from six representative states in the United States, showed the extent of punitive practices. Regardless of the severity of the offense, schools focused on punitive measures to punish students who misbehaved (Fenning et al., 2012). While these findings may not reflect the practices in schools, since the study examined discipline codes reported by the schools, they do illustrate the predominate opinion of schools related to student discipline. Schools have been enthusiastic in their pursuit of punitive discipline policies (Payne & Welch, 2013). Since there is no evidence to support the use of exclusionary practices as

effective in changing student behavior or establishing safer school climates, the widespread use of exclusionary policies should be scrutinized (Payne & Welch, 2013). The lack of evidence showing punitive responses to student misbehavior are effective should act as a motivator for educators to consider other disciplinary practices, including RJ (Fenning, 2012).

Another criticism of punitive discipline policies has been the disproportionate use of exclusion as it relates to minority students (Wadhwa, 2010). Minority students are excluded from school with greater frequency than their white counterparts (Losen, 2011). Duncan (2014) points out how minority students often receive harsher punishments for similar disciplinary violations than Caucasian counterparts, even when previous student disciplinary history is accounted for. This can be partially explained by cultural differences, differences that RJ could assist mitigating, keeping more students in school (Wadhwa, 2010). Often times, miscommunication between different cultures results in a misinterpretation of a student's actions. When communication is improved these miscommunications can be minimized. There is little time to develop cultural understanding in a punitive disciplinary model.

Further, there is evidence showing that schools with high levels of minority enrollment are less likely to adopt alternatives to suspension and expulsion (Payne & Welch, 2013). The failure of school to ensure equitable treatment of students, and consider alternative disciplinary measures, is well established and entrenched in the United States. Recent examinations of the discrepancies in how schools treat students have not resulted in sweeping changes to school policies (Duncan, 2014). There continues to be mounting evidence showing that students of color are not being treated fairly in schools as it relates to discipline (Gonzalez, 2012). Schools are not using this data to adequately change their discipline programs to ensure equity and fairness for everyone.

Background of School Discipline in California

California has long been one of the nation's leaders in the use of suspension and expulsion as a response to student misbehavior. While California's suspension rates hovered near 5% from the 1970's into the early 1980's the number began to soar as zero tolerance policies were implemented in the mid to late 1980's (Losen, 2011). According to the California Department of Education (CDE) in the 2004-2005 school year more than 738,000 out of school suspensions were issued and nearly 21,000 students were expelled from the public school system (DataQuest, 2013). This translates to a suspension rate of 11.7%, meaning a suspension was reported for more than one in nine students enrolled in California public schools during that school year. Slightly more than three of every 1,000 students enrolled in public schools were expelled. Given the correlation between suspension and expulsion, these statistics should be alarming. No matter how frightening this situation may have seemed, in 2006-2007, the numbers continued to rise. Over 815,000 incidents of suspension were reported to accompany more than 28,000 expulsions during that year (DataQuest, 2013). This increasing trend occurred despite a decrease in enrollment for the state system. During the 2006-2007 school year a suspension was reported for more than one in seven students and the expulsion level elevated to approximately 4.5 of every 1,000 students. By 2008-2009 the number of suspensions had leveled off with nearly 783,000 incidents being reported, one suspension reported for every eight students enrolled. The number of expulsions reported began to drop significantly with 20,883 being reported (DataQuest, 2013). This leveling off and decrease in disciplinary exclusion coincides with the isolated adoption of RJ programs in some of the larger school districts within the state. As RJ programs have expanded in the past few years, the disciplinary incidents have continued to decline. In 2011-2012, the most recent year for which statistics are available, the

suspension rate had declined to just over one in 20 students and only 9,553 expulsions were reported (DataQuest, 2013). This data shows a return to suspension rates similar to those reported by the state in the early 1970's (Losen, 2011). It should be noted that the suspension rates do not reflect the number of students suspended, as one student could have been suspended more than one time, as reporting requirements did not disaggregate the data to this level. It should also be noted in 2009 the rate of suspensions reported to the Office of Civil Rights by California high schools is nearly 4 times greater than the rates reported by elementary schools (Civil Rights Data Collection, 2013). This helps to illustrate the extreme need for secondary schools to immediately examine the alternatives to suspension.

Changing View Regarding School Discipline

Research during the past decade has questioned the effectiveness of out of school suspension. In fact, there is a growing body of evidence indicating disciplinary exclusion, even for short periods of time, results in academic frustration for students and is correlated with students dropping out of school (Allman & Slate, 2011). Instead of seeking out the opportunity to punish students, schools should be developing positive climates and responsible approaches to discipline (Duncan, 2014). The available evidence strongly suggests the negative consequences reach far beyond the student and include damage to the school community, the parents and family, as well as the community as a whole (Michael, 2011). Additionally, students need to feel safe and cared for by the school if they are to risk performing well academically or avoid negative behaviors (Rideout et al., 2010). The concept of creating a safe school environment was the basis for excluding so many misbehaved students. The principle that keeping misbehaved students out of the school environment would promote better behavior became a commonly held belief. If only well behaved pupils are allowed to attend, then schools should

remain safe. In reality, it became clear there would always be a population of misbehaved students.

One long standing belief which has anchored school discipline policies for decades promotes the idea that stiff penalties are needed to develop and maintain safe schools. While this is a widely held premise, the research does not indicate it is true (Michail, 2011). In specifically challenging this assumption Michail (2011) states “punitive practices do not maintain a pleasant, safe, or engaged school community” (p. 162). When students feel like schools take actions against them, instead of working with them, there is little opportunity for positive changes in behavior to develop (Rideout et al., 2010). Despite severe consequences associated with zero tolerance policies, the number of disciplinary actions reported by schools have not diminished since they have been adopted (Allman & Slate, 2011). In fact, in some instances, the number of suspensions and expulsions associated with zero tolerance policies were often higher in the years immediately following their adoption, and remained high in subsequent years (Allman & Slate, 2011). The use of punitive measures has not necessarily created safer schools, although more students have been subjected to more suspensions and expulsions than at any time since records have been maintained (Payne & Welch, 2013). There has been a growing body of evidence to show the use of rewards and punishment to develop a sense of social responsibility among students has been ineffective, if not a downright failed approach (Macready, 2009).

While local education agencies have been provided guidelines for student discipline through legislative mandates, the application of these guidelines provides a great deal of latitude in their actualization for school district (Allman & Slate, 2011). Recent research emphasizes the need for programmatic flexibility to focus on the specific child’s needs, the context of the situation, and the resources available to the school (Michail, 2011). The development of

individualized disciplinary plans contradicts the rigid rules associated with punitive discipline. The unchanging policies in schools remain a critical concern for all stakeholders. Until schools recognize the harm they are doing to students, and the community as a whole, there will be little motivation to adopt new approaches to misbehavior. This collective response to discipline empowers the community at large to make positive changes and reduce the risk of recurrence (Pavelka, 2013).

A second broadly held belief of schools focuses on the desire of students to remain engaged in the school environment. Suspension, it is believed, serves as a deterrent for undesirable behavior because students want to be in school. This idea is misplaced as at-risk students often view exclusion as being more advantageous than attendance (Michail, 2011). For many students they never feel like they are part of the school community to begin with, further exclusion simply reinforces the idea, doing little to change behavior (Haney, Thomas, & Vaughn, 2011). The desire of certain students to be removed from the school environment far outweighs any type of deterrent effect punitive practices may have on their behavior. This is especially true when exclusionary practices are employed to address truancy issues. Students who are already distancing themselves from the school environment will rarely be motivated to change that behavior when the school uses punitive practices to address the behavior (Michail, 2011).

This persistent belief in the effectiveness of disciplinary exclusion contradicts the recent focus on educational and social inclusion (Michail, 2011). In reality, exclusionary practices are associated with the “school to prison pipeline” resulting in higher levels of juvenile crime, not improved student behavior (Payne & Welch, 2013). Repeated suspensions for individual students often result in reduced academic achievement, a greater likelihood of dropping out, and

long term reductions in economic and employment prospects (Michail. 2011). Despite the negative consequences associated with current practice in student discipline, the belief that student exclusion is a legitimate response to misbehavior persists.

Rigid disciplinary codes are unable to adjust for the context surrounding student misbehavior (Allman & Slate, 2011). Some aspects to consider when adjudicating a disciplinary issue could include student motivation, the circumstances of the situation, and the actual damage a student may have caused, or not caused, by their actions. Hemphill and Hargreaves (2009) documented the ineffectiveness of out of school suspension by showing how suspended students were 50% more likely to demonstrate anti-social behavior and 70% of effected students were more likely to engage in violence than non suspended students during the year following the disciplinary exclusion. The obvious ineffectiveness of suspension to curb inappropriate behavior is undeniable in light of these findings. As Michail (2011) notes, “punitive approaches are not considered to be constructive responses (p. 168)” to student misbehavior. Negative consequences to misbehavior often result in more frequent and more severe incidents of student misconduct.

Punitive discipline practices fail on many levels. They are an ineffective response to student misconduct, they fail to address the needs of victims, and they do not address the systematic problems that lead to misconduct (Suvall, 2009). Suvall (2009) also indicates students are not deterred by punitive practices and, in reality, are much more likely to repeat violations of the rules in the future when punitive practices are used by school officials. The research indicates there is no reasonable defense for the maintenance of punitive practices in school systems. There are no stated goals of these policies which appear to be supported or attained when subjected to the scrutiny of research. Student discipline should use research based

approaches to improve student behavior and reduce future occurrences of wrongdoing (Duncan, 2014).

A tailored approach to discipline seeks to determine the root cause of the misbehavior and provide appropriate support to the student based on their individual needs. This approach is closely associated with providing a variety of alternate interventions to meet the academic, behavioral, or therapeutic causes of misbehavior (Michail, 2011). This type of approach allows schools to take into consideration the specific circumstances a student finds themselves in at any given time. Some of the mitigating factors a student could be facing includes bereavement, illness, learning disabilities, giftedness, family unrest, and peer pressure. Any of these variables require specific interventions based on need, as opposed to the stringent guidelines punitive practices often require schools to employ.

Effective school policies to curtail student discipline are not based on a single prescriptive approach, but instead depend on the development of a variety of strategies and a tiered approach to student behavior (Michail, 2012). The most severe interventions, such as disciplinary exclusion, can be used, but should be reserved as the last options for dealing with students. It makes no sense for schools to ignore the behavioral needs of students. If a student struggles academically they are referred to remediation and intervention programs. The current policies of schools treat student misbehavior, not by providing pro-social intervention but, through the systematic alienation of students.

California Law Requires Change in Discipline Practices

In response to the persistently high, and disproportionate, exclusionary discipline incidents reported by California schools, the state legislature passed AB 1729 in 2012. The law, which took effect on July 1, 2013, is designed to mandate schools examine and adopt alternative

methods to address student discipline. While this legislation does not prohibit the use of suspension or expulsion by schools, it does require schools to document the use of less restrictive behavioral interventions prior to exclusion. Specifically, California Education Code (2013) Section 48900.5 lists student participation in RJ programs as one of the alternatives to disciplinary exclusion schools should consider. This promotion of RJ has resulted in an increased interest in the concept by schools and districts throughout the state. As part of the state's desire to increase the implementation of RJ, the California Department of Education has sponsored trainings for school and district leaders to obtain more information about RJ programs. The combination of directives and support by the CDE is encouraging to support RJ in schools but is accompanied by several shortcomings. During the course of these trainings the questions of programmatic composition, resource requirements, philosophical goals, and the effectiveness of specific interventions remain unanswered. Duncan (2014) agrees that more information about the composition and adoption of alternative practices needs to be compiled, but there remains advocacy for schools to start changing the way they respond to wrongdoing.

Defining RJ

Nearly every culture in the world has used the principles of RJ to address instances of communal violations. Omale (2006) goes so far as to indicate that RJ has been the dominant model used in criminal justice systems throughout human history. RJ provides the opportunity to improve the culture of a community through the peaceful resolution of conflict and misbehavior (Pavelka, 2013). The notion that RJ is based on specific actions is slightly misplaced. RJ is based on a set of ideas designed to address unacceptable behavior by holding perpetrators accountable and providing the opportunity for wrongdoer to make amends for their

actions (Omale, 2006). Combining the actions of RJ interventions with the philosophical and cultural principles of RJ provides the essence of a successful program.

The use of RJ should focus on two critical components: Resolving past conflicts among effected parties and developing the circumstances to create on-going cooperation between the parties in the future (Johnson & Johnson, 2012). The use of RJ should restore positive relationships, often by eliminating the negative sanctions associated with punitive disciplinary programs. Situations where injustices arise are often the result of an underlying competition to dominate or exploit weaker individuals by those who perceive themselves as being more powerful. RJ attempts to modify these social situations to promote positive interactions and reestablish the moral expectations of the community (Johnson & Johnson, 2012). According to Hopkins (2004) RJ schools view misbehavior not as a violation of the institution's rules, but instead as a violation against either the victim or the relationship between the offender and the school community. When viewed in this context, there is little need for the institution to feel harmed and seek punishment. Instead, the institution should seek to repair the harm to the actual victim while holding the perpetrator accountable for their actions. Appropriate responses to discipline should seek to empower the school to maintain order while also creating an environment of inclusion for the involved students (Duncan, 2014).

There are many different RJ practices/strategies, the most established being Victim Offender Mediation (VOM), which can be employed as part of a larger program focused on RJ (Albrecht, 2010). Other strategies incorporated into RJ programs include restorative dialogues, preventative classroom circles, teacher-student mediations, student-student mediation, student support conferences, family group conferences, and student-led peace circles (Gonzalez, 2012). These interventions are based on communication between victims, offenders, and other members

of the school community. Behavioral replacement programs, social emotional learning opportunities, in-school community service, and behavior support centers provide additional RJ strategies a school may choose to employ (California Department of Education, 2013). These strategies focus on behavioral skill building and social-emotional education for the wrongdoer. The wide range of programmatic opportunities provides flexibility for schools to select the interventions which can be implemented based upon many factors. These factors include available resources, cultural expectations, community perspectives, and the willingness of leaders to deviate from traditional punitive practices. Few, if any, schools will incorporate all of these interventions programs, especially during the initial phases of implementing RJ. Schools should seek to make changes in discipline based on opportunity and community readiness (Wearmouth, McKinney, & Glenn, 2007).

RJ attempts to bring affected parties together so a victim and offender can discuss what happened, how individuals were affected, and agreeing upon what should be done to repair any damages which might have arisen (Johnson & Johnson, 2012). Turning a confrontational relationship into a constructive relationship is central to RJ. Positive relationships become the behavioral expectation when the appropriate environment is developed. Affecting the environment can be incorporated into a variety of RJ strategies, including peer mediation and conflict resolution sometimes labeled as Peace Maker programs (Johnson & Johnson, 2012). Restitution and community service are also strategies associated with RJ which can produce a sense of justice while maintaining inclusion of the offender in the school environment (Payne & Welch, 2013). These strategies require offenders to repair the damage done through a combination of monetary repayment and community improvement activities. The result is the

understanding by misbehaved students that their actions have consequences for others as well as themselves.

Whole school approaches to RJ, where every member of the school community is actively involved in modifying student behavior, represents a typical approach implemented in schools (Hemphill & Hargreaves, 2009). However some schools have relied on a program based on personal interactions and relationships, focusing on the one-to-one approach to transforming student behavior (McCluskey et al., 2008). This contrasting approach to RJ should be investigated and provides the foundation for one of the research questions in this study. There is no agreed upon combination of RJ strategies deemed most effective, nor can a single model of RJ be applied to all learning communities (Michail, 2011). Schools need to develop programs based on their individual goals and expectations while still maintaining a focus on what is fair to the students being impacted (Duncan, 2014). However, examining what practitioners perceive as being effective should provide some guidance to educational leaders who are seeking information about RJ programs and strategies.

Application of RJ to Education

Many RJ strategies began as instruments of the criminal justice system, and have a history of success in this area throughout the world (Albrecht, 2010). Over the course of the past 20 years the implementation of RJ practices has been profound, especially as it relates to criminal justice (Choi & Severson, 2009). Implementation of RJ for youthful offenders has been associated with decreases in the recidivism rate as well as reducing the future severity of criminal infractions that do occur following participation in RJ (Choi & Severson, 2009). Since misbehavior in school is often linked to criminal actions, there seemed to be something of a natural transference from one professional discipline to another. This link is associated with

disciplinary infractions simultaneously violating the penal code such as weapons charges, drug or alcohol related offences, and acts of violence. These offences are perpetrated both in and out of the school environment. With the effectiveness of RJ practices in the criminal justice system, it seemed strange these same methods would not be used within the educational setting. RJ principles found in the criminal justice system can, and should, be transferred to the educational environment (Payne & Welch, 2013). These principles include a focus on repairing relationships, creating a sense of belonging, and providing justice for victims and offenders.

Internationally, many countries in Western Europe have experimented with government subsidized pilot programs to examine the implementation and effectiveness of RJ in schools (McCluskey et al., 2008). Canadian programs in the province of Ontario used special government subsidies to increase the resources available to implement RJ interventions (Rideout et al., 2010). These pilot programs were the result of highly effective experiences in the juvenile justice system where RJ had been implemented earlier. An examination of the results of these studies showed the effectiveness of RJ to reduce school related behavioral incidents and higher levels of academic achievement. Worldwide, there continues to be an increasing movement for schools to implement discipline codes based on RJ (Porter, 2007). This movement is based on the success of RJ in other settings, such as the criminal justice system. More specifically the effectiveness of RJ in both schools and criminal justice has been documented in many countries in the United Kingdom (McCluskey, 2008).

Although the implementation of RJ programs has increased, there has been little uniformity in its application to education. Secondary schools approach RJ with the most diversity, tending to opt for individual interventions, as opposed to whole school approaches (McCluskey et al., 2008). The cultural shift associated with RJ are often seen as contradictory to

long standing classroom practices, challenging more experienced teachers to believe they have the capacity to change (McCluskey et al., 2008). For this reason, it seems as though secondary school tend to shy away from the whole school approach and focus instead on creating change in isolated pockets. At times this can mean there is an apparent contradiction between the stated goals of a discipline program and programmatic components (McCluskey et al., 2008).

Although there seems to be an impossible contradiction in the adoption of RJ and the development of goals associated with discipline codes, that is not really the true (Duncan, 2014). Despite the limited and varying use of RJ in secondary schools, there is mounting evidence illustrating RJ is perhaps more suited for the educational environment than the criminal justice system (Payne & Welch, 2013). It is this uncertainty regarding programmatic components and the means to develop RJ which remains to be addressed by current research.

Given the established validity of RJ in the criminal justice system, it is no wonder schools are attempting to incorporate these same strategies in their discipline codes. Secondary schools seem to change more slowly and with less consistency than other types of schools (McCluskey et al., 2008). Even when uniform goals were adopted by participating schools, the resulting programs often differed greatly. This inconsistency provides the foundation to further examine the transference of RJ from the criminal justice system to the educational environment.

Effectiveness of RJ

There are many benefits associated with the adoption of RJ programs at schools. Specifically, conflict resolution and peer mediation show statistical improvements in academic achievement, student retention, improved student attitudes and improved student behavior (Johnson & Johnson, 2012). Research indicates the implementation of RJ programs has been associated with having a positive impact on the number of behavioral referrals and suspension

reported by schools (Grossi & Mendes dos Santos, 2012). Adopting as few as two RJ strategies can result in significant improvements in the number of incidents of conflict and the ability of the educational institution to respond to the conflict in a constructive manner (Johnson & Johnson, 2012). Gonzalez (2011) found students who participated in two or three RJ practices were generally satisfied with the results of the program. This satisfaction is associated with the victim's desire for justice and the school's desire to hold offenders accountable for their actions. In terms of bullying, RJ programs have been proven effective in reducing bullying incidents and creating a feeling of community within the school as a whole (Grossi & Mendes dos Santos, 2012). Payne and Welch (2013) indicate RJ has the potential to greatly reduce general misbehavior and acts of violence. This result was observed previously by Rideout et al. (2010) where a 40% decrease in behavioral incidents was reported following the implantation of RJ in a pilot program of secondary schools in Canada. These studies of effectiveness continue to ignore the need of practitioners to identify the specific interventions and resources associated with RJ programs.

Alternatives to out of school suspension can help prevent the development of negative feelings toward the school environment. Students often transfer their feelings of anger, shame and frustration toward the educational environment, regardless of where these feelings originate (Michail, 2011). The use of RJ strategies can help to reintegrate students to the school community, placing relationships above punishment (Haney et al., 2011). Since students are more likely to have opportunities to become involved in harmful behaviors when excluded from school, as they are typically unsupervised during periods of suspension, finding alternatives to suspension should enhance the student's chances of becoming socially successful at school

(Michail, 2011). While not all efforts to use RJ will result in success, the opportunities RJ provides to assimilate students is certainly worth consideration by schools (Haney et al., 2011). A Canadian study examining the impact of RJ strategies showed increased levels of perceived feeling of belonging to the school environment and lower levels of student exclusion and perceived alienation among student participants (Rideout et al., 2010). This type of success should provide a higher level of student engagement and success.

Unanticipated benefits of RJ have been widely documented, aside from the typically targeted improvements in student behavior. One of these benefits is a general increase in academic performance by students in RJ schools (Rideout et al., 2010). A second and possibly correlated impact was an improvement in student attendance (McCluskey, 2008). One reason given for this improvement is associated with fewer days of discipline related exclusion. Researchers have also associated improved attendance with fewer elective absences resulting from students feeling a greater sense of belonging within the school community (Rideout et al., 2010). The increased level of attendance and improved academic achievement has been specifically correlated in studies of the Denver public schools where the failure rate decreased by 50% and attendance improved by 44% for participants in the RJ program (Gonzalez, 2012). These benefits are in addition to significant decreases in office referrals, reported incidents of misbehavior, suspensions, and expulsions (Gonzalez, 2012).

Punitive disciplinary practices focus on the use of punishment to respond to misbehavior. The goal is to reinforce positive behavioral expectations through the use of practices which punish students. This behaviorist approach to discipline has proven to fall short of establishing a positive school culture and producing consistent behavioral modifications. The goals of behavioral change and cultural change can be achieved through RJ (Gonzalez, 2012). One more

advantage of RJ is the fostering of an environment of empathy and reparation (Rideout et al., 2010). The unique ability to meet the school's need for responding to behavioral infractions and creating an environment of inclusion makes RJ a credible alternative to schools seeking to effectively meet the potentially conflicting needs of the school community. Further, administrators in RJ schools maintain the authority and control they need to establish and preserve a safe school environment (Gonzalez, 2012).

Cultural Shifts Associated with RJ

Alternative approaches to discipline are often associated with significant shifts in a school's approach to student discipline (Southern Poverty Law Centre, 2008). While schools choose different philosophical approaches to address incidents of misbehavior, the maturity of these discipline policies may not have been developed with an eye towards the underlying philosophical assumptions of the programs being adopted (Michail, 2011). An analysis of these assumptions is critical in determining the role of the students and school staff regarding discipline (Laluvein, 2010). Schools need to reflect on the philosophical assumptions associated with their disciplinary practices and ensure these practices align themselves with the goals of the educational community (Michail, 2011). By examining core beliefs, policies can be developed to balance the cultural underpinnings of the community with the needs of the student and the school. Creating a shift in culture and philosophy from one of violence to one of peace demands the abandonment of punitive beliefs (Grossi & Mendes dos Santos, 2012). This may not be possible in certain communities for a variety of reasons. Morrison (2005) takes this idea further to indicate the cultural shift required for RJ to be effective in schools is the "key challenge for schools (p. 335)." Examining how schools with RJ programs have incorporated the principles of community and inclusion into their values and beliefs is the bases for one of the research

questions in this study. How successful RJ programs may have shifted their preliminary goals over time could prove critical to the successful adoption of a new philosophy towards discipline. While it seems contradictory to provide safety and support in a single program to effectively approach student wrongdoing, this is not the case (Duncan, 2014). It is a complicated process to assure the goals are complimentary, not competitive, but very attainable.

Beliefs about student misbehavior may need to take a different form for schools to adopt RJ. An institutional belief that student misbehavior is simply a violation of abstract rules needs to be challenged, if not replaced. Violations of the rules, in RJ societies, are seen in terms of harm to the individual, organization, or community (Albrecht, 2010). By viewing the affective nature of misbehavior as more critical than the actual violation, the need to punish is diminished. This atmosphere allows for the proliferation of alternative, restorative, approaches to punitive discipline. Developing a culture of tolerance, including respect for diversity, can be fostered by the adoption of RJ practices (Grossi & Mendes dos Santos, 2012). This cultural shift will result in an atmosphere of equity and fairness that all students deserve in their school communities (Duncan, 2014).

In fact, creating a culture of inclusion is essential to implementing RJ practices (Haney et al., 2011). This focus on creating an atmosphere of social engagement, in lieu of social control, permeates the literature, but not necessarily the school sites adopting RJ (Payne & Welch, 2013). The importance of shifting cultural expectations from placing blame and providing punishment to respect and engagement appears to be essential, as opposed to optional, in RJ programs. According to Payne and Welch (2013) “future research should attempt to measure whether schools have adopted an overall restorative and communal framework to guide relationships within the school” (p. 19). Examining the degree to which RJ principles have permeated a

school culture and community should prove insightful in determining overall programmatic effectiveness.

For some, RJ is simply a series of behavioral modification techniques. While this may be true on the surface, RJ implementation with high levels of fidelity requires a philosophical shift, not just in schools, but throughout the educational community (Payne & Welch, 2013). Failure to make this full scale commitment to change the school community's approach to discipline jeopardizes the sustainability of the program in general. Mandating a shift into a RJ community will not yield the anticipated results without the cultural approval of the school community as a whole (Wearmouth, et al., 2007). Isolated adoptions in one classroom, or one level within the school's administration, promote a belief that RJ is just another program which will eventually be abandoned in favor of another approach at some point in the future (Payne & Welch, 2013). The need for school communities to change the vision and goals of discipline policies is an important underlying reality to effectively implementing RJ. Determining if these types of changes are taking place remains an area requiring additional research.

Programmatic Limits

There could be many reasons for the variation in RJ program development in schools. Schools have limited and varying levels of resources to support discipline policies (Michail, 2011). Schools often need to make decisions about the type of RJ program they will implement, ranging from whole school to individual pockets of behavioral modification (Payne & Welch, 2013). These decisions are based on perceived effectiveness, community and cultural expectations, and resource availability. Schools with limited resources may have few alternatives to punitive discipline policies which provide the most efficient mechanism to address misbehavior. In this case, efficiency is related to the amount of time spend adjudicating student

actions and the time required to execute RJ strategies (Michail, 2011). This could be partially related to the need to provide additional personnel to make support services available to students prescribed RJ interventions. Additional resources, at times provided through special government programs, supply the assets and training to school staff which are critical for effective implementation of RJ (McCluskey, 2008). Schools need to develop RJ programs regardless of the availability of government support. Research needs to examine the resource allocation required for effective RJ programs. This information will be used to guide others as they develop their own strategies to address student discipline issues.

Time is also a critical element in the successful implementation of RJ programs. Teachers need time for reflection, so they can determine what role inclusion should play in their classrooms (Wearmouth et al., 2007). This reflection needs to take place both during the planning phase and also during the deployment of RJ in a school setting. The Board of Trustees also needs to take the time to understand and define the role they will play in the RJ process. The traditional role of a governance board is to approve the exclusion of students through the expulsion process. This role is minimized in a school using RJ, and the governance board needs to be comfortable with their changing role (Wearmouth et al., 2007).

The quality and quantity of professional development related to alternative discipline training is extremely important to the scope and effectiveness of RJ programs (Payne & Welch, 2013). Every staff member needs to be trained to successfully implement alternative disciplinary practices (Duncan, 2014). Other research has corroborated this fact. The need for professional training of teachers and students is inherent to the establishment of a whole school approach to RJ (Wong, Chen, Ngan, & Ma, 2011). Implementing RJ programs without adequate training and professional development can result in failure, undermining the community's commitment to,

and belief in, the pursuit of RJ programs (Choi et al., 2012). Eventually this failure can lead to the worst of all possible situations, the revictimization of the offended party (Choi et al., 2012). Schools considering the implementation of RJ need to understand the level of resource commitment essential to meet the professional development threshold for a successful transition to become an RJ school.

While resource allocation may provide one excuse for limitations on RJ adoption, a second issue is the school or district culture. The concept of school wide RJ may encounter significant resistance due to an ingrained reliance on punitive practices (Gonzalez, 2012). Further, community involvement, especially for the parents of both victims and wrongdoers, needs to be nurtured to fully embed RJ in a school community (Wearmouth, et al., 2007). Often, schools need to revise the original framework for RJ to incorporate a mixture of traditional and restorative discipline practices (Gonzalez, 2012). Examining this maturation process as it relates to RJ is critical for the long-term success and sustainability of systematic change in a school or district. There is ample evidence illustrating the implementation of RJ evolves from a one-dimensional model to a multi-tiered approach, as the school becomes more familiar with RJ and develops an increased willingness to venture into a more comprehensive RJ approach to discipline (Gonzalez, 2012). Examining the research shows there is a need to study the development of the mechanics of RJ processes to fully understand where how best to develop these process in other locations (Choi et al., 2012). The examination of programmatic goals may not agree with the basic tenants of RJ during the initial phase of implementation, however, those competing ideas may become more aligned over time. A nuanced approach to student discipline will find a way to turn these initial contradistinctions into complicated mechanisms to support each other (Duncan, 2014).

While some RJ programs suffer as a result of inadequate resources and support, there are times when RJ programs fail due to their composition. The goals of RJ communities should be to expand the principles associated with inclusion (Pavelka (2013). Discipline code should seek to develop developmentally appropriate and proportionate responses to wrongdoing (Duncan, 2014). Too often, the restorative nature of discipline programs takes a back seat to the data driven goals of a school community (Maxwell & Morris, 2006). Misbehavior may be handled using programs that keep pupils participating in the campus environment, but the interventions may not actually create an environment of accountability, justice, or satisfaction. The failure to generate restorativeness in the process of addressing wrongdoing indicates a complete failure to incorporate restorative principles into the school community (Pavelka, 2013).

Summary

Traditional school approaches to discipline have resulted in high rates of student exclusion. The use of punishment to alienate offenders has proven to have few positive effects on student behavior. Punitive forms of justice, such as suspension and expulsion, have been the basis for schools to respond to student misbehavior for decades. Instead of schools becoming safer, students felt alienated by a system designed for the purpose of supporting them. Despite this, many schools continue to cling to these approaches as efficient, if not effective, means to address wrongdoing.

In an effort to improve behavioral results, educational leaders began looking for alternative approaches. The use of RJ in the juvenile justice system provided one alternative for schools to consider. The results of a variety of pilot programs showed the promise of RJ in an educational environment. Guidelines issued on both the state and federal level have identified RJ

as one option to the previously failed policies. This particularly true in the California where the guidelines have been written into state law.

While there is great promise in RJ, there are also many unanswered questions focusing on the implementation. Concerns surround the model of implementation, the ability to create systemic cultural and philosophical inroads, and determining the source of available support for RJ remain. However the effectiveness of discipline programs based on RJ is undeniable. This combination of uncertainty coupled with proven effectiveness provides the rationale to further investigate RJ, especially within the context of secondary schools. Universal educational opportunities for all students needs to reconcile the problems sometimes associated with individuality and diversity with the principle of inclusion which lay at the foundation of RJ communities (Wearmouth, 2007).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of this multiple case study is to examine the impact of RJ on school climate and perceptions of the effectiveness of interventions by practitioners. The purpose of this study is to examine the implementation of RJ through the observations of adult staff members. The focus of the multiple-case study will scrutinize what is working in schools and what adjustments need to be made to reach a balance between meeting the needs of misbehaved students and the goals of the school community.

Design

This qualitative research study will use a multiple case study design. This design is especially helpful to answer questions of how and why (Yin, 1994). In this case, how RJ has been implemented and why the aspects of RJ were selected for implementation, would seem appropriate for this design. There is no opportunity for the researcher to influence the facts of the phenomenon or the context being studied. The researcher's distance from the participants is a prerequisite for the use of the chosen design (Yin, 1994). The existence of the phenomenon being studied as a contemporary issue in a real life context meets the final condition to consider the case study design (Yin, 1994).

A case study uses a bound sample for intense investigation into a phenomenon. A single case would look at one instance, while a multiple case study design would examine several. A central concept at the foundation of case study research is to develop a sense of great depth into a specific phenomenon within a real life context (Creswell, 2007). Schramm (1971) describes a case study as illuminating a decision or series of decisions, why they were made, how they were implemented, and what the results were. Descriptive case studies provide information about a

phenomenon and the context it takes place in (Yin, 1994). Stake (1995) believes there is value in the use of multiple cases to determine if common themes can be developed. The power of this research design as it relates to this topic is very strong. A multiple case study design assists in capturing the complexity of the phenomenon being studied, as well as the participants' experiences and perceptions of the phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Research Questions

Research questions provide the focus for qualitative research studies. They guide the development of data collection and analysis strategies (Creswell, 2007). For the purpose of this study the research questions are:

1. Which RJ interventions are being adopted in some California high schools?
2. What resources are required to effectively implement RJ and how were those resources made available?
3. How has the implementation of specific RJ strategies improved student behavior, and how could these strategies be made more impactful, given the school site's experience?
4. How are the principles of a restorative and communal framework reflected in all aspects of school relations?

Setting

The setting and selected sites for this study incorporated a number of different aspects of the varying California high school environment. This included representation in the form of one high school located in a rural, urban, or suburban location. The three schools exhibited variations in the ethnic makeup of their enrollment. This allowed for the phenomenon of RJ to be studied in diversified settings, providing the best opportunity to yield replication of the

findings (Darke, Shanks, & Broadbent, 1998). The sites under examination reflected the diversity of California high schools with regards to ethnicity and socio-economic status.

While there are many schools that have chosen to begin RJ programs in the recent past, there are a number of factors which have influenced the selection of the sites involved in this research. Small schools, those with less than 1,000 students, may not have the resources to implement a comprehensive program. Their limited ability to fully engage RJ would provide skewed data for larger school populations which are typical in California high schools. Examining the programs within a single district, or geographic area, would also provide a limited scope of the data. Schools within the same district may have Board of Trustee or district level mandates which define which interventions were implement. This study collected data from a broad spectrum of sources to produce a rich resource of findings.

High schools provide a unique situation in comparison to middle or elementary schools. The adolescent development of 13-18 year old pupils cannot be compared to the maturity of other grade level students. The number of incidents of student misbehavior at the high school level, and the severity of those incidents, dictated a different approach to alternative discipline compared to the programs which have been deployed in schools serving younger pupils. This justified a unique examination of RJ at the high school level.

Creswell (2007) provides a number of examples and definitions of sampling for research, including purposive and typical samples, the types being employed in this study. This type of sampling provides for the best opportunity to generalize to other situations. Purposive sampling utilizes an intentional inclusion, or exclusion, of certain cases for a reason. In this study, schools with fewer than 1,000 students were excluded. Small schools like this may have social conditions which would resulted in limiting transferability of findings. They may also have

resource levels available to them which are disproportionate to larger schools. This could include an excess or scarcity of resources. The focus of this study was high schools, so all middle and elementary schools were excluded. Private schools and charter schools were excluded as well. Due to the voluntary nature of attendance at these sites, the experience of establish RJ programs may not provide an accurate depiction of what is effective in a typical public school setting. This study identified three cases from California high schools with enrollments of over 1,600 students representing a variety of metropolitan locations for further examination. Typical sampling was used to narrow the qualifying schools down to the three participating schools.

Typical sampling is used to find cases which are ordinary, not exceptional or outstanding in any way (Creswell, 2007). For the results of this case study to have any degree of relevance outside of the case, it was important to find participants which represent the norm. For the purpose of this study a sample size of three high schools were examined. This allowed for a purposive and typical sample which reflected a pragmatic reality of RJ programs. The value of the research findings and conclusions was enhanced due to the use of typical sample of participants.

RJHS #1

The first school participating in this study is located in a rural community with a population of approximately 25,000 people situated in central California. More than 60% of the residents identify Spanish as their primary language and over 78% identify themselves as being Hispanic or Latino. The high school's enrollment has averaged more than 1,900 students for each of the past three years, with a cumulative enrollment of more than 2,000 students during each school year. This indicates a relatively stable school population and moderate mobility rate

in comparison to other high schools in California. The city is small and relatively isolated from other, larger, communities. More than 78% of the students qualify for participation in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). This number is lower than it should be, according to one of the interviewees at the site, because of “students failing to turn in the application for fear of being discovered as undocumented.”

RJHS #2

The next school participating in the study is located in a suburban community in northern California with a population of over 75,000 people. Just over 49% of the residents identify themselves as either Hispanic or Latino, but only 35% identify Spanish as their primary language. The school enrollment dropped to fewer than 2,000 for the current year as a result of new attendance boundaries and school openings. Previously the school enrollment had averaged more than 2,100 students. The cumulative enrollment was indicates a mobility rate of nearly 10%, with more than 2,300 individuals enrolling in the school each of the past two school years. This is a relatively high rate of mobility for California high schools. Of those students enrolled, nearly 73% qualify for reduced price or free meals as part of the NSLP. One of the interviewees at the site described the school as “a United Nations of diversity and we are working on several programs to meet the needs of our students.” One way they are trying to accomplish this is through the implementation of a one-one technology program at the school.

RJHS #3

The remaining school participating in the study is located in an urban area with a population of more than 145,000 people. This area is embedded with a large megalopolis where millions of people live in northern California. The largest ethnic group is comprised of Caucasians, approximately 34%, but a large percentage of Hispanic/Latinos, over 33%, Asians,

nearly 20%, and African Americans, over 10%, illustrates the wide diversity of the community. While 42% speak English and 33% speak Spanish as their primary languages, 25% of the community communicates in a different language. The school enrollment has remained steady of the past three years at just over 1,600 students, while the cumulative enrollment has varied from less than 6% of the enrollment to more than 12% during the same time span. No explanation for this variation was identified, and it is unusual for high school in California to see such high variations in mobility. Approximately 65% of the students are enrolled in the NSLP, however there is a likelihood that number will increase. As one interviewee indicated, “many high school students do not eat at school, but we know eating at school is good for students and we want to do everything we can to ensure every student has the opportunity to eat lunch so they can learn more throughout the day.”

Participants

The participants in this research consisted of current staff working at the selected sites. A series of interviews were held at each school. The principal of the school was the first individual to participate in the interview process at each site. As the instructional leader of the site, their perception was critical in determine the current and future course of the school’s disciplinary program. Principal leadership has been identified as a predictor of discipline management (Payne & Welch, 2013). The administrator in charge of disciplinary actions provided insight into the practical application of RJ strategies to student misbehavior. This was a lower level administrator such as a dean or assistant principal. The principal of each school determined who best filled this role and identified them to participate in the interview process. A counselor involved in the affective components of RJ, also selected by the school site, provided a different practitioner’s perspective. This array of practitioners provided a rich base of information to

translate the theories of RJ into effective practice with consideration for restorative principles. Translating theory into practice was an important aspect of expanding the knowledge of RJ (Choi & Severson, 2009).

Procedures

Three sources of data were used to address each of the research questions used in this study. Individual interviews, archival records, and documentation were examined from each of the school sites to provide the basis for data analysis. These methods provided an in-depth understanding of the RJ programs at each of the school sites in the study. This resulted in the accurate identification of the RJ interventions implemented at schools, the resources allocated by each site, and the degree to which schools developed a general sense of community with their RJ adoption. Using multiple sources of data resulted in rich descriptions in response to the research questions.

Approval for conducting the study was obtained from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to the undertaking of any data collection (see Appendix E). Once IRB approval was obtained, then permission was sought out from individual school sites to participate in the study. This permission was granted by the principal of each school site. Consent forms for each of the individual participants were obtained prior to the beginning of each interview (see Appendix F). No assent forms were required for this research study.

Individual contact was made with the principal of each school by telephone to determine their willingness to participate in the study (see Appendix D). Administrators who indicated interest provided letters of permission for the research to take place at their campuses. These letters were submitted to the IRB as part of the process to receive final approval. At this time the data collection could begin.

Interviews

Interviews were scheduled at the participating sites at a convenient time for the individuals being interviewed. I traveled to the location of the sites prepared to spend an entire day to complete the interviews. The interviews were digitally recorded for the purpose of providing a transcript of the interview for review at a later date. A certified court reporter was employed to complete this process. A confidentiality agreement was obtained prior to transmitting the interview recordings to the service provider. The purpose of interviewing the practitioners was to determine if there may be a contrast between the stated policies of the school's discipline code and the actual actions taken by practitioners when encountering discipline issues. This concern created the need to discuss the implemented disciplinary strategies actually being employed by the practitioners (Fenning et al., 2012). At the conclusion of interviews at each site I completed a field journal to identify any personal observations I may have. This included nonverbal communication and any personal perceptions I may have which could influence the data analysis later.

Documentation

Agendas and minutes from meetings of the Board of Trustees, study sessions, and parental notifications, also known as discipline codes, were obtained prior to completing the interviews at each school site. These documents were available in electronic formats through the school districts' web pages. Student handbooks were also gathered and analyzed for this research. Other documentation that was collected included the faculty handbooks at sites where they existed. Physical copies of this document were collected at the school site when the interviews were being held.

Archival Records

Archival records such as student survey instruments used for accreditation, the frequency and severity of disciplinary referrals and reports of suspension and expulsion incidents were reviewed for the two years prior to the implementation of RJ and all of the years following it. The Dataquest system, an online database supported by the CDE, was used to access general information regarding discipline history at the school sites. These records helped to determine if the frequency of student wrongdoing had an influence on the initial RJ interventions chosen for adoption. Current records of student wrongdoing were obtained at each of the school sites for the current academic year.

The Researcher's Role

As a district level administrator in a California high school district, I have to answer questions from other public agencies and the local school board regarding high rates of suspension and expulsion from the schools in my district. Civil rights organizations and county committees devoted to community relations have also placed scrutiny on the disciplinary practices within my school district. Recent legislation has taken effect in California to change the way school districts respond to pupil misbehavior. One of the many options noted in the new law is the use of RJ.

As part of the responsibilities for my position within the district I oversee the disciplinary programs at all of the school sites. That also means it is my responsibility to respond to inquiries about disciplinary practices that remove students from the educational setting. Those inquiries come from numerous sources, including the media and concerned citizens. As a result, a bias exists regarding the need to determine what aspects of RJ are being implemented and used effectively in other California high schools. I understand a perceived bias may exist to find RJ

effective, but recognizing that concern should help to mitigate it. Finding RJ practices which have failed is an equally important result of this research.

I approached this study using an ontological philosophical premise. This belief that many realities exist, depending on the perspectives and experiences of the participants, provided a foundation for interpreting data from a variety of sources. A pragmatic interpretive framework was utilized to bring meaning to the collected data. This methodology provided for multiple answers to the research questions depending on the situation each of the participating school sites found themselves in at the time they began to develop their RJ programs.

There are no prior relationships between the individuals that were interviewed for this study and myself. Lacking a previous relationship with the participants eliminated any perceived coercion during the data collection process. There was nothing for the participants to gain by participating in this study, other than to add to the literature associated with RJ.

Data Collection

This qualitative multiple case study utilized multiple methods of data collection to develop both trustworthiness and integrity in the development of the research findings (Creswell, 2007). Purposeful sampling and typical site selection established credibility in the data collection process. Appropriate data collection methods, as outlined below, were employed for this study (Creswell, 2007).

Data collection for a case study should focus on interviews, archival information, and observations (Creswell, 2007 and Yin, 1994). However, there is little chance that emerging researchers will develop the relationships, and spend the time to develop familiarity, and become effective in making observations (Yin, 1994). This case study relied on school site interviews, documents and physical artifacts as described by Yin (1994) and Tellis (1997). Yin (2009)

identifies six distinct types of data, specifically interviews, documentation, archival records, direct observations, participant observations and physical artifacts. The latter three sources of data were not pertinent to this study.

Interviews

Interview questions were developed with a focus on the research questions designed for this study and the literature review surrounding the topic. Once established, the preliminary interview questions were piloted with a school site outside of the sample for the research, following IRB approval. The pilot interviews simulated the interview process with the goal of assessing the clarity and completeness of the questions. Data collected in the pilot interviews were examined to determine the need if the research questions were adequately addressed. Input from the pilot participants was also considered prior to finalizing the interview questions see Appendix A-C). Developing validity in the interview process is critical to obtain appropriate and untainted data from interview subjects. A semi-structured interview protocol was followed to allow for extemporaneous follow-up to participant answers. This type of protocol allowed for the greatest depth of data collection (Creswell, 2013).

Documentation

As part of the research into the topic of RJ, a number of archived documents were analyzed as they relate to the research questions. These documents included any resolutions, directives, or policy changes involving RJ approved by the Board of Trustees. Yin (2009) shows how an examination of these documents can yield valuable information regarding the phenomenon being studied. Additional documentation came from an examination of the discipline codes and policies of the participating school sites. The purpose of using this type of data was to compare and contrast the information found in the documents with the data gathered

through the interview process. Documentation also illustrated the details surrounding the phenomenon by describing the public image of RJ promoted by the school district and site. This helped to determine the extent to which RJ permeated the school culture. The school site documents showed an apparent contradiction between the schools' stated positions regarding student discipline and their commitment to RJ principles.

Archival Records

Archival records such as student survey instruments used for accreditation, the frequency and severity of disciplinary referrals and reports of suspension and expulsion incidents were reviewed. These records helped to determine if the frequency of student wrongdoing had an influence on the initial RJ interventions chosen for adoption. The use of records assisted in determining how effective RJ programs have been in changing student behavior since being implemented. While access to archival records can create a challenge to researchers, the fact these documents are public records should help to mitigate this concern (Yin, 1994).

Data Analysis

Data for qualitative research should be examined in a spiraling technique that requires multiple examinations and analysis (Creswell, 2007). The use of a variety of data sources created richness to the data analysis as a whole. I incorporated interviews, documents, and physical artifacts into a synthesis which represented the findings of the research process. By comparing archival records with the personal experiences of the interviewees, a greater understanding of the RJ phenomenon was developed (Tellis, 1997).

Coding

One method of data analysis, coding, is designed to identify repeated patterns within the research. The use of structural coding is particularly useful as it relates to the semi-structured

interview protocol being employed in this study (Saldana, 2009). This method resulted in broad ideas and themes being identified. The use of the research questions to provide the format for data extraction allowed for the identification of various similarities and differences within each of the case settings. By asking and answering the research questions within the context of the various data sources meaningful connections could be identified (Saldana, 2009).

Structural coding was followed by the development of themes, extracting related codes to create greater depth of analysis and understanding. This strategy of piecing together data until an important trend develops is also known as categorical aggregation. Stake (1995) indicates this method can assist in developing concepts and ideas about the case as a whole, thus making generalizations possible. The determination of the magnitude of a specific code was based upon the number of data sources mentioning a code, rather than based upon the frequency a particular code is mentioned. Following this type of protocol will develop a more authentic determination as to the importance of the themes as they are discovered (Saldana, 2009).

The result of the coding exercises yielded a new set of data which was then processed using axial coding. Mutually related codes were reorganized using the analytic framework associated with the research questions and theoretical framework identified for this study. This resulted in clarity by reducing the number of codes while finding complexity in the newly formulated overarching themes (Swanborn, 2010).

The coding process for this study began by color coating the different sources of data, such as transcripts of interviews and drafts of parent and student handbooks. Each of the sources of data were represented by a different color, such as counselor interview green, principal interviews yellow, student handbook blue, and so on. The data was then classified into various codes and themes based upon the ideas and phrases which are repeated in the various sources of

data. Analyzing the data in this way allowed for a visual representation of the content of the data. This process also assisted in verifying the data through a variety of sources as a result of the color coding process.

Cross Case Synthesis

The data accumulated within a multiple case study should be interpreted to find obvious similarities and differences for the purpose of reaching significant conclusions. Cross case synthesis allows for a single set of conclusions to be developed, despite the incorporation of several cases into the examination (Yin, 2009). A single set of conclusions and findings should assist to make the research more transferable to other sites, outside of the cases under examination. Examining the various codes from each of the cases provided the foundation for cross case synthesis. Finding common frames of reference and processes central to the success of the phenomenon create a significant depth to the findings as a whole (Swanborn, 2010).

Naturalistic Generalizations

Naturalistic generalizations were developed through the use of the variety of data analysis methods, which will create truths for the purpose of generalizing the findings to other cases (Stake, 1995). This is the natural extension of developing formal themes within the data. These themes were then examined to determine when and where similarities permeated multiple sites within the case. In addition, naturalistic generalizations may also exist within the various categories of participants. Site principals, administrators in charge of discipline, and counselors may have specific ideas and perspectives which are universal and fall into this category of data analysis. Although each individual case involved in the study was unique, analyzing data to find similarities provided a degree of generalization which magnifies the significance of the study (Punch, 1998).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is closely associated with the development of validity and reliability (Frederick, 2008). The establishment of dependability, credibility, and confirmability increases the integrity of the research process, data, and findings.

Collecting data through an interview process can result in the unintentional omission of information by the participants (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The use of member checks to validate the data gathered through the interview process established high levels of credibility within the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). To perform member checks, participants reviewed transcripts of their interviews to determine if they are accurate reflections of their intended thoughts at the time. This allowed for a confirmation to indicate the data was credible as it related to the participant's experience during the study (Pitney & Parker, 2009).

Combining member checks with triangulation resulted in a synergistic effect, greatly increasing the level of trustworthiness (Pitney & Parker, 2009). The use of triangulation means verifying data through multiple sources (Patton, 2002). Themes, codes, and generalizations that developed through the use of multiple sources and types of data are considered highly reliable. The multiple sources of data helped to corroborate each other and show an accurate interpretation of the data (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007).

Reflexivity, an additional strategy to increase trustworthiness, was accomplished through the use of a researcher's journal (Frederick, 2008). The purpose of the journal was to keep the researcher mindful of their various biases and the possible impact the individual has on the research. The research journal was used to scrutinize any assumptions, personal beliefs, or preconceived perceptions which could influence the data collection and analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The purpose of the study was not to scrutinize the effectiveness of RJ programs. It was to determine what has been done and what changes could be made in programs if they were reconstructed. Aside from the intent of the study, individual participants were also protected by maintaining confidentiality in the reporting process. The study's findings were synthesized into generalizations, based on the totality of the data. This approach assisted in preserving the individual identity of participants.

Participation in the interview process presented minimal risk to participants. Interviews were held at the school sites, in the offices of the participants, and provided a comfortable environment for the participants. The personal interaction allowed for an authentic data collection process and diminished any levels of risk or ethical concerns. The familiar surroundings also assisted to minimize any emotional stress associated with participation.

Data, including audio recordings and associated transcripts, are being maintained in secure storage. For electronic documents and archival data, security is being ensured through the use of a computer with an enabled password access system. Any physical documents are being stored in a locking file cabinet inside a room with access restricted through the use of a lock and key. All data sources will have restricted accessibility reliant on the consent of the researcher. Both the identity of individuals and the archived records need to remain confidential, and these protocols will ensure they can be maintained over time.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The data collection included gathering a number of different archival records, historical documents, and completing face to face interviews with various participants. The process of data collection was duplicated at three different school sites. At the conclusion of the data collection time was spent processing the various data sources into themes, and eventually into codes, related to the research questions. The coding process was completed by the researcher without the assistance of computer software.

Four research questions provided the focus for this qualitative research study. Research Question 1 explored the specific RJ interventions being adopted by the California high schools involved in the study. Research Question 2 focused on the resources each of the schools allocated for the implementation of RJ. Research Question 3 examined the effect of RJ on student behavior and how the participants believed RJ could be improved at their school site. The final question reported the degree to which school sites adopted the RJ principles as part of the school and community culture.

The data collection began with an investigation of documents and records for each school. This analysis began with collecting the data through on-line resources including web sites sponsored by the school or district and a database supported by the CDE. After an initial examination of the artifacts I began the interview process. School officials at each of the high schools were asked to participate in a semi-structured interview. The interview process allowed me to investigate the individual perception of the RJ program at the respective schools. The semi-structured nature of the interview allowed me the freedom to ask additional probing questions as needed.

Participants

The participants included a total of 9 school site officials who willingly completed face to face interviews as part of the data collection process. The participants were provided the opportunity to share their experiences in the implementation of RJ at their school site. To protect the identity of the individuals involved in the interviews, they were assigned pseudonyms. All of the principals were male. Two were Hispanic and one was Caucasian. All of the disciplinary administrators were Hispanic males. Two of the counselors were Hispanic females, the other was an African American female. Table 1 presents the demographic information of the participants in terms of race, gender, and title.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Name	Race	Gender	Title
Brian	Hispanic	male	Principal
Scott	Hispanic	male	Principal
Dean	Caucasian	male	Principal
Marty	Hispanic	male	Learning Director
Paul	Hispanic	male	Assistant Principal
Patrick	Hispanic	male	Dean of Students
Anna	Hispanic	female	Counselor
Laurie	Hispanic	female	Counselor
Amy	African American	female	Counselor

RJHS #1

The implementation of RJ has focused on alternatives to suspension, such as Saturday school programs, and restitution, often in the form of community service. Peace circles are used as a means of mediating conflict and attempting to bring two parties together for the purpose of brokering a lasting resolution. The circles often focus on student/student relationships, but can also be used when teacher/student disputes arise. The use of restorative circles is not always possible. The adoption of RJ at the school has resulted in a decrease in the number of disciplinary actions. The number of suspensions has fallen more than 40% each of the past two years and expulsions are nearly unheard of at the school. The school has worked with a group of community members and an outside consulting firm to develop and monitor the RJ program to ensure its effectiveness and sustainability. The RJ program was designed to help students remain in the educational environment while still addressing behavioral issues. The implemented strategies were not intended to address specifically problematic areas of student behavior. The school is now looking at data regarding specific misbehaviors to determine the next steps in attempting to improve their behavioral interventions.

RJHS #2

The RJ program at the school focuses on the use of mediation and in-school alternatives to out of school suspension. Mediation typically takes place with the assistance of an administrator in charge of discipline and the parties involved in a specific incident. On many occasions the circle does not involve the parents or community at large, it focuses on the individuals at the school who are in dispute at the time. There are times when the mediation is not agreed to by both of the parties. When this happens, the administrator tries to work with both

individuals to create a better sense of resolution through independent conversations. The school has also relabeled some of the traditional terminology associated with discipline as well. Defiant student behavior, seen by many as disproportionately subjective and adversely impacting minority students, has been changed to Not Working the Program. This is a well defined set of behavioral expectations which can be used to address student wrongdoing in an unbiased and effective manner. The school has ensured the long term sustainability of the program by first working with a consulting firm to launch RJ and more recently by employing one of the consultants as an administrator at the school site. Since implementation of RJ the school has experienced a decrease in suspensions of more than 60% and a decrease in expulsions of more than 95%.

RJHS #3

The RJ practice implemented at the school site has almost exclusively focus on peace circles. Staff members have been asked to employ circles in their classrooms with the assistance of a trained consultant to address disruptive behaviors. The purpose for this is twofold. Initially it assists with addressing the primary concern of student wrongdoing. By performing the restorative circle in the classroom, other students could also observe the process and learn from the experience so they have the opportunity to approach difficult situations in a more productive manner. The result is intended to modify the behavior of students involved in an incident while also proactively attempting to prevent future misbehavior by other students. During the first two years of implementation there were minimal changes in the suspension and expulsion rates at the school. Now entering the third year significant progress is being report by the school. In the current year 40% fewer out of school suspensions have been enforced than in the previous two

years, and the number of days students are missing school as a result of suspension has declined by nearly 60%.

Results

For the purpose of clarity, the results will be reported in greater detail by using a systematic approach. A cross case synthesis will be presented, followed by an examination of the various themes identified in the data analysis, and finally each research question will be answered directly. This should enable readers to utilize the most responsive information in an easy to access manner.

Cross-Case Synthesis

This cross case synthesis seeks to illustrate the implementation of RJ interventions by providing a general sense of the process schools used to develop their programs. The purpose is to illustrate the developmental process in an incremental manner for others to understand the genesis of RJ at a typical California high school.

High schools in California begin the process of adopting RJ over a long period of time. The typical school spends nearly one year in the planning process, prior to the actualization of RJ at the school site. This time is spent determining which interventions the school will adopt, how staff members will be trained, and creating a consensus about the need to change within the school community. In the interview process Marty noted how “there is no way to cut corners” on the amount of preparation time needed for RJ.

The synthesis of school experiences shows the primary intervention adopted by the schools was mediation. This intervention is used widely to address issues of personal conflict and classroom disruption. The strategy requires a trained individual, typically a staff member, to act as a peace maker communicating between the two conflicting parties. Mediation is also

referred to as peace circles, a specific type of intervention related to the overarching concept of mediation. Conflicting parties are brought together to discuss the issues associated with the incident being addressed. Participants are typically two students, but often students and staff members participate in mediation as well. According to Amy, “mediation provides the chance for a student voice to be heard.” When students have the opportunity to share their perspective of an incident, they will “accept the results of the mediation” much easier than arbitrary punitive punishments according to Paul.

A second aspect of RJ programs observed universally was the use of BSC’s. These are places where students are assigned instead of attending the regular classroom. This assignment can last a single period, the remainder of a school day, or the entire day. While assigned to the BSC, students work with interventionists to reflect on their behavior. The interventionist is trained in a variety of strategies to help student consider the consequences of their behavior. These interventions include decision making flow charts, role playing, and restorative journaling. The interventionist is a new position at the school site and provides new support for students and staff by relating the principles of restoration and community to student misbehavior. Without the interventionist, Brian indicated, “RJ wouldn’t work here.”

Another facet of the RJ approach is the continued use of exclusionary practices for the most severe disciplinary offences. Just because a school has adopted RJ strategies to address student misbehavior does not mean that the traditional use of exclusion has been eliminated. The typical RJ school still uses suspension and expulsion when the need arises.

One method used to decrease the number of reported disciplinary actions, yet to continue to exclude students from the regular instructional program is the use of behavioral modification programs at off campus locations. Students may not be reported as suspended, but they are not

allowed to attend school for a set period of time. During this term of exclusion the pupil reports to a district facility to attend behavior modification classes. These programs are customized to address specific disciplinary violations. Aggression Replacement Therapy (ART) may be used to address fighting or assault. Brief Intervention (BI) is one support program for pupils who have used, or are in possession, of drugs. A student may attend a behavioral intervention program for up to five days at a time. Although not a reportable suspension, the student is not participating in the regular educational program.

The schools also implement a program of disciplinary related transfers. These transfers are discipline related but do not get reported to the CDE as part of the annual disciplinary report each district is required to file. This provides the schools a means of holding students accountable for egregious behavior. By meeting with parents and discussing the student's behavior, and possible educational options, the family may voluntarily agree to transfer their child to another school setting. According to Paul, one of the principals, "It is important to handle student behavior, not ignore it." The use of disciplinary transfers is one way certain types of student behavior can be addressed within the scope of RJ, even if the result does not embrace the principles of community and restoration. This procedure prevents students from having to overcome the stigma of expulsion, and keeps the school from being scrutinized for high levels of disciplinary exclusion.

The successful RJ program is supported through the use of an outside consultant to provide guidance and training in the process of implementation. Consultants provide anytime, anywhere, professional development for staff members. They also assist in facilitating conversations between staff members so they understand the purpose of RJ and can consider the need for change at the school site. The development of a consensus for change among staff

members is important for the success of RJ. Utilizing the experience of a consultant streamlines this process. The consultant brings a level of expertise to discussions about the fundamental changes in student discipline required for implementing RJ. They, the consultant, also provide an outside voice of reason to help act as a catalyst for an extremely emotional issue. As Dean noted in his interview when commenting on the value of a consultant, "You can't be a prophet in your own land." In other words, schools need to bring in expert individuals from outside the school organization when significant change is expected. This process helps ease the school through the transition process.

All of the schools involved in this study established a group to monitor their RJ programs and provide feedback for the purpose of continuous improvement. This committee provides a voice for a variety of employee groups, as each group has representation on the committee. If there are perceived inconsistencies or ineffectiveness within the program the issues can be brought to the committee for consideration. The committee can then go about a discussion to problem solve the situation. The committee also examines data to guide the evolution at the school site. This group ensures there is a free flow of communication between staff members and administration so problems are addressed before they are able to erode the principles of RJ at the school.

One final aspect of RJ that is universal to all of the schools in this study was the development of other school wide programs design to promote student success. The use of PBIS as a secondary behavioral support is typical of California high schools. This particular support is designed to define appropriate student behavior. When students are observed behaving appropriately they are to rewarded in a variety of ways. Even at the high school level, PBIS is a regular compliment to RJ interventions. Patrick, a discipline administrator, noted how no single

program can fix everything at a school. He was concerned with people who believed becoming an RJ school was all that was needed to address discipline. His concern was echoed by nearly all of the participants in this study. Stakeholders in the school community believe RJ is a way to solve all of the problems associated with student discipline, while the participants are weary of this perception.

Themes

Based on the data from the interviews, documentation and archival records three significant themes emerged defining the essential components of RJ programs in California High Schools. All of these themes were present in multiple sources of the data collected for this study. The three themes support the purpose of the study, which is to provide support for educational practitioners adopting alternative disciplinary programs. They also assist in developing a more complete answer to each of the research questions. Schools seeking to implement RJ practices as alternatives to punitive discipline should understand the concepts of communication, community, and universal expectations as they relate to RJ.

Communication

All of the participants stated that communication was one of the most essential aspects of implementing RJ at their school. However, different school site groups identified different aspects of communication as being most important to them.

The codes associated with this theme were found in both the interview process as well as the documents examined in the data analysis phase of the study. The codes that resulted in the identification of this theme included “provide clarity,” “communication,” “inform everyone”, “need to know,” and “transparency.” When aggregated into a simple umbrella concept, the theme of communication was identified. This theme includes the need to provide information to

a variety of different stakeholders to ensure nobody is surprised by the announced implementation of RJ. Communication is also critical to define RJ and set an expectation for the school's response to pupil misbehavior.

Counselors felt communication with families was most beneficial in working in an RJ environment. Laurie noted how parents "have a right to know what to expect" from their schools. The only way for families to have a full awareness of the happenings at their schools is through the use of frequent messages being sent home through a variety of mechanisms. This commitment to parent communication was verified by the documents discovered in the data collection process. Letters home, parent handbooks, discipline forms all went to great lengths to explain what RJ is and how it has been implemented at the school.

The principal participants were more concerned about their communication with the community at large and the Board of Trustees. Dean, one of the principals, was most concerned with ensuring the Trustees were aware of the steps the school had taken to develop RJ. Brian felt like communicating with the consortium of community officials was paramount for his site's RJ success. They were both referring to the group who was applying pressure to the school site to adopt RJ. The pressure to communicate with these groups was exemplified by multiple presentations made to the Board of Trustees. These presentations were often made at service club and consortium meetings after the Trustees had seen them. By working feverishly to inform a variety of community groups support for the RJ could develop both in and out of the campus.

For disciplinary administrators, they were concerned about communication with students, teachers, and other staff members. They felt there was a need to ensure all of the stakeholders understand what constitutes a violation of the rules, who will address the violations, and when students would be excluded from the campus. Paul felt like his staff would not be disappointed

with his actions if they had a clear understanding of the consequences they should anticipate for specific instances of student misbehavior. Staff handbooks were used to provide guidance to teachers so they would develop a full awareness of the discipline program once RJ was implemented. Student handbooks also defined behavioral expectations and the resulting discipline students should anticipate for a variety of violations.

All of the participants welcomed the use of a variety of mechanisms to communicate with parents. This includes the use of community open houses, websites, mailed documents, presentations to the community, and small group meetings at the school sites. Scott, a school site principal, talked of his desire to use social media to help inform others of the RJ program. He was also successful in using a student letter writing campaign to the local newspaper to explain their experience with RJ at the high school campus. Participants also agreed communication needed to be consistent and timely to be effective in preventing a backlash against RJ. Annual notices provided one mechanism to communicate, however regular reminders about RJ need to be sent out more frequently than once a year. Participants universally agreed that students should be reminded of the behavioral expectations and possible consequences at least twice per year. Agendas of student meetings indicated this process was being followed at each of the schools.

Clear communication help to establish the policies and procedures a school will use when addressing misbehavior. By making the policies and procedures available to all of the stakeholders for their review and input, there was no reason for anyone to be upset when their pupils were found to be in violation of the rules. According to two principals, Brian and Scott, policies could be modified during the course of the school year if they were seen as detrimental

to the goal of student success. If the rules did change, communicating these changes to the students, their families, teachers, and staff members became an essential priority for the school.

The purpose of focusing on communication is to develop a sense of trust. This sense of trust needs to permeate the school community. The greater the level of trust between teachers, administrators, students and parents the more powerful positive relationships became within the school community. On the other hand, when a lack of communication exists, the result is mistrust of the school by the community. Amy believed this type of mistrust undermines the very existence of the school. When parents no longer have faith the school is acting in the best interest of their children then the effectiveness of the school comes into question. This belief was shared by counselors like Amy as well as principals and discipline administrators. Such a significant shift in practice as moving away from punitive practices to RJ programs requires a great deal of communication to protect the relative position of the school within the community.

In order to help facilitate communication and provide opportunities for monitoring and feedback, schools established disciplinary committees. These committees provide an opportunity for an exchange of ideas and concerns about RJ. This group also acts as a steering committee to direct the RJ program, professional development of staff members, and to preview public presentations. This group is central to the process of communication on every level within the school community.

Community

Each of the school sites involved in the study had developed a sense of community support for RJ consistent with the degree to which the community was involved in the development of the program prior to implementation. As Dean, one of the principals, noted, you cannot force people to get engaged in their school, however you should be willing to accept their

engagement when it is offered. This idea was shared by a majority of the participants. To varying degrees the participants felt the development of community was important to their RJ program. Similar to the view of the various participants regarding communication, each of the participant groups proved to have a different perception of community consistent with their position at the school site.

The frequent use of the terms “inclusion,” “retention,” “public support,” “staff support,” and “it takes a village” provide the basis for this theme. The identified codes all relate to concept of the school being part of a larger whole. Instead of banishing misbehaved students to alternative schools or home supervision, the students should find support from a variety of sources. The support should obviously come from the school, but may also come from the victim, community groups, district level interventionists, and organizations outside of the traditional campus community.

The concept of community is a basic principle of RJ and focuses on the need for everyone, including the rules violators, to feel like they are an important part of the school. The contribution of every individual is important for students, and by extension the school, to be successful. RJ tries to address incidents of misbehavior by keeping the individuals in the school and teaching them more effective social and emotional skills. This idea of inclusion runs in direct contrast to the premise of exclusion central to the idea of punitive discipline. Community takes many forms and can also be developed by including various stakeholders in the planning and implementing process of RJ.

When the culture of the school becomes saturated with the principles of RJ the effect will expand into other areas of the school community. Understanding the different perceptions of the concept community is important for those seeking to adopt RJ. Only by addressing the various

levels of community can a full transformation take place. Until the metamorphosis is complete, the adoption of RJ will seem like another program the school is trying to implement. Once the cultural change takes place and is accepted by the different facets of the community RJ will become the way things are done.

For principal participants the community relationship focused on non-governmental organizations, religious groups, and other components of the society as a whole. Brian, a principal, said he made great efforts to listen to the community when they began the journey to implement RJ to ensure outsiders felt like they were a significant part of the transformation at the school. By allowing these external voices to be heard inside the school walls Brian made certain the school had the community's support when RJ was being introduced on the campus. The community's desire to participate in these discussions at Brian's school became apparent when a community consortium approached the school and Board of Trustees voicing their desire for the school to change how they approached student discipline. For all of the principal participants, the idea of community expanded beyond the school and those with a personal connection to the campus. Each principal communicated with their Board of Trustees and others in the community consistently throughout the year to share the progress and challenges associated with RJ.

The discipline administrators did not espouse such a broad definition of community. They limited the scope of community to those with actual interest in the school. More specifically they were concerned with the relationships between the administrative team and teachers, teachers and students, and between students and the disciplinary administrator. Patrick believed his RJ program was only as successful as his teachers allowed it to be. Making them understand the ways RJ can hold a student responsible for their actions without suspending them was critical to the program's success. Paul also believed the development of a community needed to focus

on those who worked at the school. When these individuals had faith in the new disciplinary model only then could the program begin to permeate the school culture.

Counselors shared the narrowest view of the school community. One of the counselors, Amy, explained her view of community consisted of pupils and their families interacting with school officials. All three of the counselor participants believed the additional time needed to cultivate a positive sense of community was worth the investment. Anna, a counselor, noted how students who feel like they understand the school's policies are more likely to be supportive support them, even when the pupil is in trouble for violating the policies. When the discipline practices appear even handed parents tend to support the actions of the school as well according to Amy. Counselors felt the development of community should not begin when a student is facing disciplinary action, they believed the development of strong relationships should be an ongoing process. This ongoing process would eventually lead to the development of a sense of community.

It is important for schools to recognize the need to develop community relationships for RJ to be successful. It is equally important to understand the varied definition of the concept of community as it was observed during the course of data collection. The complete nature of community involvement has a wide reaching definition and failure to address the concept of community in a relative manner can prove disastrous.

In an effort to address the various levels of community within the influence of a school several steps were taken. This was seen in the documentation and archival records gathered as part of the data collection for this study. The use of parent notifications, staff meetings, and presentations to community groups indicates the degree to which the participants have recognized, and addressed, the various aspects of community within their schools.

Universal Expectations

The third theme that emerged from the data was the importance to establish and enforce universal expectations for disciplinary actions. The expectations of students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community members as it relates to a school's reaction to misbehavior should be the same. No single groups associated with the school should have an expectation which is different than the expectations of the others.

The codes, such as "consistency" and "uniformity," were found in a variety sources. Interviews often mentioned these ideas, along with "fairness" and "equity" as it relates to a school's response to misbehavior. Notes from public presentations also confirmed the importance of this theme. Schools should not ignore wrongdoing, but they should attempt to treat each student in a similar matter when the same infractions have occurred. This is particularly important as it relates to discipline policies which punish inadvertently punish students in a disproportionate manner. RJ programs are designed to minimize the impacts of disproportionality however, this goal can only be accomplished if the program can deliver universal expectations through the application of the discipline code.

In this one area there was widespread agreement by all of the participants without any tolerance for variation. Principals, disciplinary administrators, and counselors all agreed that every segment of the school should share a clear understanding of how the RJ program should work. The failure to provide a well defined set of anticipated results for specific actions of misbehavior, according to Brian, one of the principals, will only result in confusion, frustration, and distrust of RJ and the principles associated with it. Marty, a disciplinary administrator, expressed the need for consistency in disciplinary decision making. He felt a shared sense of

expectation helped to establish his authority as an administrator. This authority could easily be lost if he began making decisions that were perceived as inconsistent from student to student.

Not only was this theme of universal expectations well established in the interview process, but the desire to establish a consistent set of policies was seen in other areas of the data as well. This included the widespread distribution of a student behavioral matrix. This document was found in parent, student, and faculty handbooks. Posters at the school sites also advertised the behavioral expectations and the anticipated consequences for student wrongdoing. The general public was made aware of the matrices as part of the annual review the Board of Trustees participated in as part of their review of discipline issues.

Research Questions

Research Question 1 Types of RJ Practices Implemented

The RJ programs at each school were slightly different, but certain common aspects were observed. The most significant commonality was the use of mediation and peace circles as the most widely used intervention for significant disciplinary infractions. While different in composition, these are both intended to accomplish the same goal, deescalating conflict and repairing relationships. One significant goal of offering mediation was not to simply lower the reported number of disciplinary incidents, it was to provide students with the skills to better manage difficult behavioral situations. It should be noted that reported disciplinary actions were further reduced by the use of BSC's, Saturday school, and other options for discipline designed to avoid suspension or expulsion. Expectations of student behavior, and the accompanying discipline expectations, are well defined and communicated through the use of a discipline matrix at each of the sites as well.

California high schools participating in this study have not taken a broad approach to establishing RJ programs. Instead of adopting all of the possible components of RJ programs, there has been a narrow focus on three to four strategies at each of the sites. The interventions have been strategically adopted to concentrate on the most frequent and problematic behaviors faced by the schools. The school sites continue to actively monitor their RJ programs in an attempt to ensure they are effective in assisting students to change their behavior. The monitoring includes the regular examination of the school's data related to disciplinary incidents to determine what types of supports are needed by the school to further improve their results. During the course of the initial implementation, the narrow focus of the RJ interventions has created a sustainable framework to change the focus of student discipline from punitive measures to a system which redirects student misbehavior. As additional needs of each school site have been identified, these needs have been met through the implementation of additional RJ practices targeting the specific need. Each of the sites began with the use of mediation or peace circles and BSC's to counsel misbehaved students.

Research Question 2 Resources Required for Implementation

All of the sites agreed it takes a great deal of time and patience to successfully implement RJ at a school site. Additional resources identified through the analysis of the data included the use of an outside consultant to provide targeted support to the school, the development of a behavioral matrix, as well as additional staffing to specifically work with students using the RJ strategies. All of these resources require a degree of fiduciary support, and while the source of the funds does not seem to be important, access to a secure funding source is important for a successful implementation. Failure to ensure appropriate resource allocation will result in the inability for RJ strategies to consistently address behavioral issues. This will erode

the base of support for RJ prior to it becoming firmly established. Once support of the program is lost the school will no longer be able to successfully change the school's approach to student discipline.

The development of realistic timelines and resource management are critical to the development of successful RJ programs. For schools, the timeline for implementation ranges from six to nine months. During this time the schools examined their needs, defined the role of a variety of stakeholders, discussed the principles of RJ with staff members, and began to train staff in the specific interventions the school adopted. For individual staff member, they needed multiple opportunities to attend training to begin their induction to RJ and reflect on their concerns as they arise. This training and induction was best achieved through the use of an outside consulting firm. The selection of a consulting firm may extend the timeline to implement RJ. The volume of work that schools must complete prior in anticipation of RJ will take a considerable amount of time to accomplish.

The programmatic timeline is important and should include plans to address individual site needs. These needs include the development of a commitment amongst the staff to changing disciplinary practices. Fabricating a consensus toward change, or the failure to do so, will directly correlate with the success RJ will have the school. It should also be noted that consensus does not mean every individual agrees with the new direction of the school, it means the general will of the staff is committed to making a difference in student outcomes related to discipline. If sites wait until unanimous support develops the program may never get launched.

Also during the implementation phase a secure, long-term, source of funding needs to be identified. The purpose of the funding is to contract with a consulting firm to assist with the adoption and training in RJ strategies and paying for any release time needed for teachers and

staff members to attend these trainings. Future funding needs to also be secured for any additional staff associated with RJ at the school site. The sites involved in this study added at least one additional staff member to initiate RJ strategies for misbehaved students. The hiring of any additional staffing must be carefully considered. The individuals hired into any new positions, especially those hired to actualize RJ strategies, need to be highly skilled in both RJ interventions and inter personal relationships. Some schools have determined this individual needs to be a certificated counselor but others have seen the position as a classified interventionist. Neither approach seems more beneficial than the other, so long as the individual is appropriately skilled.

Research Question 3 Effective Strategies and Improvement of RJ

Changing student behavior was most effectively achieved through the use of mediation and peace circles. These interventions address the most disruptive behavioral issues a school must concentrate on. Lesser offences were adequately addressed through the use of BSC's to provide short term interventions for minor incidents of student misbehavior. In the BSC's students completed activities associated with reparation and reflections, as well as alternative student behaviors which meet the expectations of the school. The participants indicated RJ was not the only mechanism they used to alter the approach to student discipline. Student discipline was also addressed through the use of a more comprehensive approach to student behavior. The use of alternative behavioral programs for violent and substance abuse infractions further provide ways that RJ schools address student discipline issues. While expanding the RJ programs to include other students in observing the disciplinary process as an educational tool represents one avenue to improving the RJ program as a whole, there are risks associated with this approach.

The development of a holistic approach to student success should be a priority for schools examining the use of RJ. For the schools who have established successful programs they have done so in parallel to the development of academic interventions or other behavioral programs. One example of a holistic approach to student behavior includes the implementation of PBIS in parallel to the RJ practices. The symbiotic relationship between the two programs magnifies the impact of each. PBIS provides for explicit instruction in student behavioral expectations, including how to behave in a variety of settings in a number of different situations. Only when the behavioral expectations are violated will students be referred to an RJ practice. This becomes the intervention when students have difficulty exemplifying the behaviors expected at a school site.

The changes in student behavior reported following the use of RJ interventions focused on better decision making and understanding of the students. The use of mediation or peace circles allowed conflicting individuals to meet with each other to discuss the status of their relationship. The conversations targeted areas of dispute and required each of the participants to reflect on how the other party feels about the interactions which have resulted in the intervention. Both the expected and observed changes in behavior included the development of a mutual understanding of how participants would act towards one another in the future. Through exposure to the restorative process partakers, both students and staff members, could use those same skills when conflicts arise in the future. This behavioral outcome was reported at all of the participating school sites.

The use of alternatives to out of school suspension also resulted in positive changes in student behavior. The use of BSC's, and Saturday school programs forced misbehaved students to reflect on their behavior. A special emphasis is placed on the damage they may have done,

either physical or emotional, through their actions. Participating students are required to complete activities to hold them accountable and eventually repair the damage they have done. These alternatives disciplinary actions may include community service, financial reparations, letters of apology, and discussions about behavioral choices. Students participating in these programs develop a greater sense of empathy, as reported by the participants of this study.

Another alternative to suspension is the use of behavior modification programs. These programs provide brief interventions, lasting anywhere from 1-5 days for students who are involved in specific misbehaviors. Most often the behavior modification programs target violent acts or the use of controlled substances. Student who participate show a greater understanding of the behavioral expectations and ways to change their behavior to prevent future misbehavior. Students who participate in these programs are expected to stop fighting or using drugs while at school. None of the participating schools would speculate if student behavior off campus was significantly changed as a result of the behavioral modification program.

The cycle of continuous improvement is more important to change RJ at each site than a preconceived idea of how to improve, change, and expand it. The failure of sites to provide a long-term plan to alter their RJ program should not be interpreted in a negative way. Instead of directing the RJ program from a committee table based on perceptions that may or may not be true, the program should change in response to the specific needs of the school. This cycle of examining data, making a plan to address identified needs, monitoring the new intervention and reexamining the data allows for a flexible and fast paced response to challenges the RJ program encounters. This type of response helped save the program at one of the high schools in this study by reexamining, and quickly addressing, the need to build a consensus for change. At another site it resulted in the adoption of behavior modification programs specifically addressing

violent and drug related offences. These are examples of the way RJ programs mature over time to meet the individual needs of the specific site where the implementation is taking place.

Research Question 4 Restorative Principles in the School Community

Each of the participating sites embraced a different view of creating a restorative and communal atmosphere. On one extreme was the desire of the school to include the community as a whole into the principles of restoration while the other extreme ignored the community's role for the most part. The third successful program worked diligently to establish an understanding of RJ for all educational stakeholders while discounting the role of the community at large. Even though the approach to creating a communal environment varied greatly, the concept of community engagement had little impact on the effectiveness of RJ at the school sites themselves. Effectiveness in this case relates to the school's personnel self reporting the degree to which the site's goals were achieved through RJ implementation.

On the other hand, it also became apparent during the course of the data collection process, the schools most concerned about the underlying principles of RJ had the greatest degree of inclusion and support of the learning community. It seemed much easier to maintain the shift to RJ when the core principles of RJ were developed and communicated. The support of the community to change disciplinary approaches provided pressure to force staff members who may have been early resisters to begin supporting the implementation of RJ. This same type of community expectation for change developed in proportion to the schools efforts to propagate the RJ principles within the school community and the community as a whole. In other words, implementation became more readily accepted, and essentially easier, when the ideas of restoration and community are cultivated as part of the change process. For the fabric and culture of the school to change, the principles of RJ need to be promoted, however, this is not

necessarily true as it relates to addressing the data driven goals of school districts moving toward RJ practices.

Summary

The participating sites in the study represent a variety of schools located in different regions of the state of California. Combined, the three school sites represent urban, suburban, and rural school locations. These schools all implemented RJ programs and have experienced significant decreases in the number of disciplinary actions they are reporting to the CDE. All of the participating schools believe their program is effective and has resulted in fewer disciplinary suspensions and expulsions.

The cross case synthesis describes the typical RJ implementation, focused on mediation, BSC's, and the use of discipline related transfers. The implementation is always preceded by a long period of planning lasting anywhere from several months to up to a year. During this time the school works with an outside consulting group to provide training and facilitate discussions in an effort to develop a passionate consensus for change at the school site. In addition, the use of unreported exclusionary practices continues to provide options to address student disciplinary issues. Finally, the use of other interventions to support student success, such as PBIS, should not be marginalized as extraneous or trivial.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to examine the adoption and implementation of successful RJ programs in three California high schools. Given the concerns surrounding the use of disciplinary exclusion for student misbehavior and the legislative demands for schools to adopt alternative discipline approaches, this study provides a significant contribution to assist practitioners as they prepare for their own adoption of RJ. The findings and implications of this study will be presented in this chapter. This study pursued answers to the following research questions:

1. Which RJ interventions are being adopted in some California high schools?
2. What resources are required to effectively implement RJ and how were those resources made available?
3. How has the implementation of specific RJ strategies improved student behavior, and how could these strategies be made more impactful, given the school site's experience?
4. How are the principles of a restorative and communal framework reflected in all aspects of school relations?

Summary of Findings

There were a considerable number of similarities between the RJ programs at each of the sites studied in this research project. They allowed for a cross case synthesis and generalization for others to examine, and replicate, in consideration of RJ. This included the use of mediation as one of the primary strategies associated with RJ. The similarities also indicated the need to spend a great deal of time in the planning process and using an outside consultant to develop a consensus for change by all of the stakeholders.

Themes associated with the change to RJ included communication, community and universal expectations. Paying close attention to these ideas assisted greatly in the implementation of RJ strategies and supporting the principles of RJ. By incorporating regular communication in the monitoring process for RJ, schools were able to maintain flexibility of the program to meet the needs of the school. Fostering a sense of community has been considered an essential component for RJ. It became apparent in this study that developing communal relationships and cultivating widespread community support for RJ is helpful, but certainly not crucial for the program's success.

Finally, making an adequate long term commitment to the success of any RJ program requires the allocation of sufficient resources. These resources include the time required for staff training and consensus building. The financial allocations also need to support the employment of additional staff members and the ongoing retention of an outside consultant. These resources are available to schools from a variety of sources, but the origins of the resources are not nearly as important as the sufficiency of them.

Discussion

To understand the relationship between this study and the base of current literature surrounding RJ, the findings will be examined in relation to the commonly held beliefs surrounding RJ. The results of this analysis will be presented in two sections. The first section shows areas of agreement between this study and the current base of knowledge and the second will explore the areas where the literature is challenged by the finding of this study.

Comparison to Current Literature

Current literature has expressed great concern regarding the broad based use of exclusionary and punitive practices to discipline pupils who have misbehaved at school (Payne

& Welch, 2013). Even though studies have shown these techniques are ineffective and result in poor educational outcomes for the students involved they remain the most prevalent strategies to address pupil misbehavior (Allman & Slate, 2011; Gonzalez, 2012). The use of disciplinary exclusion should be viewed as a last resort for dealing with problematic student behavior (Duncan, 2014). Schools should use this understanding as the starting point for examining their approach to student discipline. For several reasons, including legislation approved at the state level, California high schools are committed to making significant changes in their approach to student discipline. As a result, the findings of this study are both timely and important as a failure to make changes in discipline will perpetuate a system wrought with discrimination and disproportionate impacts for students of color and poverty (Duncan, 2014).

The use of RJ as an alternative approach to wrongdoing comes from the criminal justice system where perpetrators are held accountable for their actions. The failure of incarceration to deter criminal behavior is similar to the failure of suspension and expulsion to impact the behavior pattern of students. This has resulted in the adoption of RJ practices as one way to address the concerns of punitive discipline approaches. Regardless of the alternative approach to discipline, it is important to remember student wrongdoing should not be ignored. Nor should the behavioral expectations of students be lowered to allow pupils to become disruptive or defiant to the educational environment. Duncan (2014) identified the need for school officials to have more information about the development of alternative discipline programs. This study has examined the implementation of RJ in three California high schools in an effort to meet this need. The findings of this study, and its implications, are important to several stakeholder groups in education. The results can be used by school administrators, trustees, and employees

to guide their planning and implementation of RJ. The findings should also provide an understanding of the process for those outside of the educational community.

Although not intended as part of the primary concerns of this particular study, the efficacy of RJ as it relates to student discipline was reinforced by all of the individuals interviewed during the data collection process. This is consistent with information reported from Duncan (2014), Gonzalez (2013), Payne & Welch (2013), and others. The participating schools reported significantly reduced numbers of disciplinary incidents resulting in suspension or expulsion after their commitment to RJ programs. The use of RJ to provide ways of addressing inappropriate student behavior, with alternatives to exclusion, continues to show promise for schools looking to change how students are treated following acts of wrongdoing.

Two caveats should be noted before labeling RJ as a panacea for the issues surrounding student discipline. First, understand that reported incidents of exclusion only pertain to sanctioned suspension as defined in the Education Code. Prior research has associated the success of RJ with decreases in the number of reportable exclusions for misbehavior (Grossi & Mendes dos Santos, 2008; Rideout et al., 2010). All of the schools in this study utilized in-school options to decrease or eliminate the use of reportable suspensions. The use of BSC's and assignments to behavior modification programs support this perspective as they do not fall with the definition of the reporting requirements. These non-reportable exclusionary practices are new to the lexicon of the discussion. Students are still missing instruction and removed from the traditional educational setting when they are disciplined using these alternative methods. These non-reportable exclusionary practices are different than traditional exclusionary practices. The students are not left unsupervised in an off campus, non-educational, environment returning to school without anyone addressing the cause of their misbehavior. Pupils remain involved with

the school and receive training about appropriate social decision making when they are assigned to BSC's or behavior modification programs. While there are fewer incidents of reported disciplinary action by the school, there may not be the improved behavioral outcomes regarding student behavior asserted by previous studies.

The second concern is the use of disciplinary related transfers. While these voluntary transfers change a student's school assignment, they are not reported as expulsions. The result could be a cosmetic change in the number of disciplinary exclusions, while not really addressing student behavior, or the culture of the school. This possible association runs contrary to the literature as a whole touting the impact RJ can have on student exclusion. Again it should be noted that voluntary disciplinary transfers are not the same as expulsions. Expulsions are the result of unilateral decisions being made by the school, with little regard for the impact on the student. On the other hand, RJ transfers are intended to be the result of a discussion between school officials and the student's family or guardians. The result of the discussion should allow for a placement where both parties agree the student is most likely to find success both socially and academically.

Previous research has illustrated the need for RJ schools to have more resources devoted to school discipline. According to Micail (2011), the ability of a school to change its policies related to discipline is limited by the resources the school has available to it. This study reinforced this idea. Schools looking to adopt RJ need to be able to hire additional personnel and provide training to the school community. Training should include all members of the school's staff according to Duncan (2014) and must also focus on student awareness according to Wong et al. (2011). The interviews of school officials and documentation gathered for this study confirmed both of these previous findings. The failure for a school to provide ongoing support to

staff on multiple levels can jeopardize the mere existence of RJ, let alone the program's success (Choi et al. 2012). One of the school's RJ programs involved in this study barely survived a failure to provide sustained support for the members of their school community validating the findings of previous studies.

One of the most significant findings of this study is the need to provide plenty of time for the schools to develop the specifics of their RJ programs and to develop an attitudinal consensus for change within the school. High schools tend to change very slowly, more so than other types of schools, and patience is required for significant and sustainable change to take place. Previous literature supports this idea about the specific difficulties of changing high schools and the need to allow for more time before implementation milestones can be reached (McCloskey et al., 2008). It should be expected RJ will be met with high levels of resistance within the school if attempts to force school change are made before the school community is prepared. The deep seated emotional nature of school discipline takes time and energy to overcome. There is no way to speed up the process to prepare a school to change their disciplinary policies. Wearmouth, McKinney, & Glenn (2007) alluded to this in their research and this study confirmed their beliefs. It is typical of RJ programs to begin as one-dimensional interventions, according to Gonzalez (2012), but given enough time, these programs can evolve into a comprehensive approach to change a school's culture. This idea of the evolving RJ program is confirmed by this study. All of the RJ programs needed to start with a precise focus before they could grow larger and become more impactful.

The use of RJ is inherently predicated on fulfilling the need for resources to fund additional personnel and provide support and training for members of the school community. This idea is consistent with previous research which indicated the ability of a school to change

their approach to discipline is limited by the resources they have available to them (Michail, 2011). The need for additional staff members is the most obvious form of resource allocation. One of the unseen areas of resource support is in the area of professional development and training. All members of a prospective RJ school staff need significant amounts of professional development (Duncan, 2014). This study validated this point and goes further to indicate the need to include students in the process of adopting RJ. Wong et al. (2011) pointed out the need for students to be involved in an awareness campaign for RJ to be successfully adopted by schools. The focus on communication proves this notion to be true.

This study also confirmed a number of ideas about the composition of RJ programs. The most important of these ideas is the belief that schools should provide safe and caring environments for students. Schools moving toward alternative discipline models have, at times, been labeled as soft on discipline. According to Rideout (2010) students need appropriate learning environments for social and academic success. RJ does provide for an appropriate environment and this study confirms the validity of RJ to support student learning in both a social and academic context. RJ holds students accountable for their actions and provides the mechanisms to maintain the safety of students and staff at the school.

Previous research into RJ showed how the root cause of student misbehavior can be identified and addressed using the appropriate interventions. The flexibility of RJ provides schools the chance to pick which interventions will have the most significant impact on their pupils. Schools addressing the root cause of misbehavior are exhibiting a change in the protocol for student discipline. In the past the efficiency or punitive programs did not provide the school the ability to show concern for the reason behind rule violations. Failing to address the reason for student misbehavior is part of the reason for the failure of punitive practices toward student

discipline (Allman & Slate, 2011). RJ examines why students misbehave, in addition to holding students accountable for misbehavior. Schools using multiple strategies to address pupil wrongdoing through a variety of approaches are the most effective (Micail, 2012). RJ allows school officials to move beyond suspension and expulsion so the most effective intervention can be applied to curb misbehavior in the future.

There is a concern the use of RJ can result in the school losing authority over disciplinary decision making. Just because RJ does not rely on punitive measures, often involving the police, does not mean schools have lost their ability to exercise their authority over students. Schools using RJ need to maintain the respect of their community (Omale, 2006). This study shows how schools are able to discipline students and maintain the respect of the community without relying on suspension and expulsion. Schools that rely on the police to provide authority over misbehaved students are as philosophically flawed as staff members who rely on disciplinary administrators to empower teachers in their classrooms. The use of police at schools should be eliminated whenever possible (Duncan, 2014). To help accomplish this goal, the use of exclusionary practices should also be replaced by RJ practices when practical. All of the schools involved in this study were able to keep their authority by holding students accountable for their actions. Staff members respected the discretion of disciplinary administrators because of their fidelity and consistency in apply RJ strategies when students acted out.

Contrasts of the Current Literature

This study did not validate every aspect of previous research on the topic of RJ. In fact, there were several significant deviations from previous research findings. This study challenges the concept that RJ should only focus on relationships and restoration of harm, as they relate to student behavior. It also questions the need for a complete cultural makeover to incorporate the

principles of RJ for the program to be effective. This study also identified the use of private consulting firms and a school based discipline committee as new facets to successful RJ implementation. Finally, previous literature did not address the very real need for financial resources to be devoted to RJ. The findings of this study not only challenge some of the previously held beliefs regarding the implementation of RJ, but this study also expands the scope of understanding the necessary processes for the successful incorporation of RJ into a high school community.

Hopkins (2004) proposed that institutions seeking to adopt RJ need to view student misbehavior as a violation of the relationship between two parties, not rule breaking. The victim could be a specific individual, the covenant of the school community, or the school organization as a whole. The schools in this study did not view wrongdoing as an affective issue demanding the repair or restitution for damages which may have resulted from a student's actions. The perception of misbehavior at these schools still viewed wrongdoing as a violation of the school's rules. Student expectations were codified in the state's Education Code, the school's discipline code, and the discipline matrix. The different mechanisms defining appropriate student behavior, and the means to which these expectations are communicated with students, makes wrongdoing inextricably tied to rules and regulations. While BSC's may address behavior as more of an issue concerning social contracts and emotional reflection, the school as a whole held fast to the view that violations of behavioral expectations were act of rule breaking. RJ does not need to focus solely on the principles of resolution and future cooperation, as advanced by Johnson & Johnson (2012), the schools can take a firm stance on misbehavior and hold students accountable for their actions as violations of rules. Students, families, and staff members can identify with the absolute nature of rules. Maintaining the relationship of rule violations

resulting in discipline and accountability may in fact ease the transition to RJ for some stakeholders.

To that extent, this study also challenges the notion that RJ requires a complete cultural commitment for RJ to succeed. School culture remains a critical attitudinal barrier to whole school transformations. This notion is partly to blame for the field of education's reputation as slow moving and difficult to alter (Morrison, 2005). Payne and Welch (2013) have indicated the need for an overall communal framework to be adopted to guide all relationships within the school community for RJ to be successful. The literature has created a real concern about the need for the school cultural to transform for the adoption of RJ to truly take place. Pavelka (2013) went so far as to identify the failure to incorporate "restorativeness" into the culture of a school's RJ program categorizes the program as an undeniable failure.

This study does not support these assertions. It is true, developing a complete cultural shift to the acceptance of restorative principles is helpful to gain acceptance of the program. However, the schools where lower levels of cultural acceptance of RJ principles were observed did not exhibit any lesser degree of success in their approach to student discipline. So long as incidents of student misbehavior are addressed in an alternative manner (meaning not using suspension or expulsion) RJ can be effective. Student misbehavior is exhibited by only a small portion of those who attend school. Pupils who are not misbehaved may not have any concern over the principles of the discipline program. Following that same reasoning, the majority of staff members do not suffer from student misbehavior in their classrooms. For the vast majority of teachers, there is little concern about how student matters are addressed. Restorative programs or punitive methods mean little to most members of the school community as they will not be involved in issues of student discipline. This supports the idea that cultural shifts are nice,

but hardly essential for RJ to take root. Despite the fact that only a small percentage of students, families, and staff members will be affected by the implementation of RJ for the purpose of discipline, every individual will still hold a passionate belief about the philosophy and principles supporting their school's approach to student discipline. School officials need to be aware of this fact, but should not use it as an excuse to postpone action.

The idea that a cultural shift from punishment to restoration needs to permeate the school site is broadly promoted in the current literature (Payne & Welch, 2013). The idea that all relationships within the school community should reflect this shift is an assumed quality of RJ. This study did not find this to be true. Only one of the three schools involved in the study was able to demonstrate a full integration of the RJ principles into the school's culture. Despite this, all of the schools were able to show impressive results following the adoption of RJ. The degree to which RJ principles permeated the school culture did not appear to have an impact on the perceived success of the program. What appeared to be more important than complete integration was fidelity to which RJ principles were applied to specific incidents of misbehavior. While the ideal RJ program would incorporate the principles of community and inclusion within the cultural fabric of the school, it is neither essential nor should it deter a school from considering the use of RJ as an alternative means of student discipline. Schools should not concentrate on their cultural issues at the cost of launching the use of RJ practices; they should use the adoption of RJ as a starting point to identify and address inconsistencies within their cultural makeup as the capacity to do so is developed. The use of RJ as the catalyst for cultural change, instead of the product of a changing culture, is new to the literature.

A less important finding that extends the literature is the need of RJ schools to employ outside consultants for the purpose of initial implementation and ongoing support. The current

literature is silent on the specific actions a school must take to provide adequate support for their RJ programs. However, the employment of a consultant by all of the schools examined in this study shows there is a definite need in this area. This component of the implementation process is one aspect of RJ highlighted by this study which is new to the literature. The failure to provide timely, targeted, and accessible professional development creates a perception that RJ is an initiative, not a permanent change to the culture of a school (Choi et al., 2012). To prevent the development of inertia in implementation a continuous cycle of monitoring and support needs to be developed and the use of an outside consultant provides the capacity to address issues of RJ implementation as they arise.

The use of a consultant is both pragmatic and symbolic. It supports the development of the RJ interventions while it also shows a deeply seated conviction to create lasting change by the administration. Consultants also bring in new voices for the staff to hear as they approach the problems associated with change. Adopting the principles of RJ should not become a directive from the administrative team; instead the school staff should cooperate to incorporate RJ with the assistance from an outside expert. The consultant should work as a catalyst for change allowing the participants to work together as a team. The consultant's role should help prevent the development of an adversarial relationship between staff and administration. The literature highlights the importance of training and is consistent with the use of a consultant, but the extension of the consultant as a symbol of support adds to the body of knowledge surrounding RJ as an alternative to punitive disciplinary practices (Wearmouth, 2007). The current body of literature examines the results of RJ but does not address the precise process of implementation. For schools to successfully adopt RJ programs; there is little guidance for practitioners to follow in the form of an implementation plan.

Current literature also fails to address the need to establish an implementation committee at the school site. The discipline committee is an integral part of the process each of the participating schools used to start their RJ programs. The discipline committee should have representatives of various school groups including administration, teachers, and other staff members. The purpose of the committee is to provide monitoring and feedback regarding the RJ interventions. The committee should seek both qualitative and quantitative data from a variety of sources, including statistical data gathered about office referrals and exclusionary events and anecdotal data from students and staff members. Creating an environment of transparent discussion about the success and shortcomings of the RJ program assists in improving and maintaining the attitudinal consensus associated with the change in disciplinary practices.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework presented in this study examines the development of RJ through the lenses of Piaget's stages of development and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, most known for the concepts of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO). The premise of this study's theoretical framework focuses on the participating schools site's possible shift away from Piaget's early emphasis on the developmental stage associated with a safe environment and placing more value on Vygotsky's ZPD and MKO. Examining RJ through this theoretical framework provides a much greater understanding of a successful implementation. Data gathered through interviews, student handbooks and parent meetings all indicate the desire of the school to continue to value student safety, but not through the use of disciplinary exclusion. The participating schools have chosen to improve student behavior by decreasing the incidents of misbehavior. The goal of RJ is to instruct students by

keeping them in the learning environment and explicitly creating opportunities to train students to make better behavioral choices.

The participants in this study showed a preference towards teaching students the appropriate expectation of their behavior. The premise that students who struggle with reading should receive reading interventions should also apply to students who are struggling with their behavior, according to the participants. The adoption of this intervention based philosophy by the participating schools illustrates the degree to which the theoretical framework espoused by Vygotsky has been incorporated into a changing outlook on school discipline. By keeping students in a learning environment and working to improve behavior by interacting with school officials is an exemplary model of the ZPD and MKO framework.

Disciplinary models focused on exclusion often sent student away from school into unsupervised environments. Little time and energy was expended to teach students the skills to change their behavior or provide them with the skills to be more successful in the school environment. These exclusionary practices returned students to the school environment without the improved skills they would need to behave acceptably and succeed in the educational environment. The exclusion of misbehaved students from the mainstream school environment was one way to attempt to make the school safe. Schools who are heavily invested in punitive disciplinary practices removed poorly behaved students in an effort to keep the retained students safe. The long term consequences of this idea resulted in feelings of abandonment and eventually students dropping out of school, as noted previously in the research.

Schools who have adopted RJ still value student safety. They still share the idea that safety is essential for students to learn academically and develop socially. The participating schools' students are not capable of learning in an unsafe environment. The schools try to

achieve the goal of a safe school by teaching students better ways to behave. Educating students with a different set of behavioral skills provides the opportunity for students to deescalate social situations and is a primary step in accomplishing the safe school goal. Addressing the core causes of substance abuse through the use of behavior modification interventions is a way to keep kids in school while keeping drugs and alcohol out. RJ addresses the need for safety while valuing social and emotional education.

The theoretical framework of this study helps to illustrate the changing approach to student discipline. Safety was the guiding principle in the adoption of zero tolerance policies in the 1980's. Removing misbehaved students from the school should result in a safer, more secure, school environment. Safety was considered a paramount objective of the discipline code. As time passed, research has shown the impact of these policies was dreadful for the students who were being disciplined and the punitive practices had little impact on student behavior. The new principles of student behavior are to create an environment of inclusion and intervention. The proven results of the new approach to discipline include improved relationships between misbehaved students and the school, as well as the development of coping skills as a result of intentional instruction to those who are acting out. Longitudinally, this approach should result in safer learning environments for students to experience academic growth.

Implications

The implications of this study are far reaching for practitioners looking to implement RJ and for those stakeholders outside of the educational environment who advocate for its use. The essential components of RJ implementation are outlined so any advocate of the program can set achievable goals for developing RJ interventions. Another important implication of this study is to identify the development of the cultural principles of RJ as ideal but not essential, in contrast

to previous research. These implications will be described in more detail in this section. It should be noted that some of the implications were neither expected nor pursued as part of the primary focus of this study.

Schools are not able to simply proclaim their intent to adopt an alternative discipline program without taking the time to develop an attitudinal consensus to support the principles behind it. Administrators, trustees, or community members advocating for changes in disciplinary practices need to be cognizant of this reality. In order to create the support needed for success, school leaders will take a considerable amount of time determining which interventions they should adopt, how they will present the shifting focus of discipline to their staff, and detailing expectations for both student behavior and the school's response to wrongdoing. This process takes a considerable amount of time and cannot be rushed. Failure to create a deep seated support for any school initiative will result in eventual failure, but this is even more important when the changes are directed at an emotionally charged issue such as student discipline. Taking the time to create a consensus for change may take several months but it is an essential first step in the process. If stakeholders do not understand why an education agency should consider change, then there will constant resistance to any innovative program designed to alter the current practices.

Previous research has alluded to the importance of developing an atmosphere of community based on the principle of repairing harm as an essential component of any RJ program. This research indicates while these are important concepts, the embodiment of restorative principles in the RJ program is not essential to the program's success. Few schools will be able to embrace their community, non-governmental agencies, the criminal justice system, religious groups, and others into a comprehensive approach to support RJ at the

inception. This obstacle should not deter schools from pursuing RJ. School sites control the degree to which the community collaborates in the implementation of RJ. Involving every aspect of the school's stakeholders will make the process of change easier and provide an additional form of feedback and support to modify the program. However, creating this climate of total inclusion could prove problematic. This is a significant barrier to total implantation, but one that can be addressed as the program proves successful. This step could take years to fully integrate. Concerns about coordinating support for RJ from stakeholders outside of the school community should not deter schools from moving forward with their plans for RJ. This importance of this finding is significant. Removing this expectation from the process of initial implementation should empower more schools to pursue their own RJ programs.

The initial plan to adopt RJ should provide for a flexible framework to adopt a limited number of RJ interventions, with the ability to modify the program as needed. Any modifications, or the adoption of additional interventions, should be selected based upon the needs of the individual schools as determined through the analysis of school site data. This study has shown that mediation and peace circles are initially adopted at RJ schools because of their effectiveness in teaching students the appropriate behavior and the degree to which they target serious student offences. Relational disruption and classroom disruption are both effected by the use of either mediation or peace circles. Because these strategies can be applied in so many different situations as well as their perceived effectiveness by the practitioners, they should receive significant consideration as strategies for initial adoption at all RJ schools. The high schools in this study viewed the use of mediation as an effective tool to address physical altercations as well as verbal disruptions in the educational environment. The determination to

implement this type of program was based on the data of reported incidents of student wrongdoing.

This study has also shown the need to secure financial resources for the successful adoption of RJ. Money is needed to pay for release time to offer training and professional development, additional staffing, and an outside consultant. The source of the funding is not important, in comparison to the long term security and commitment of a funding source. The costs to adopt RJ are real and need to be accounted for in the planning phase. Underestimating the need for financial resources will result in a failure to appropriately train or provide additional personnel for successful RJ implementation. It could also mean there are inadequate personnel to staff BSC's and perform mediations. If training or personnel support are not sufficient, the capacity of the program is compromised and could jeopardize the successful deployment of RJ interventions. A bottleneck of work will undermine the effectiveness of the program as a whole because the immediate accountability for student misbehavior is critical. Mediations taking place days after an incident occurs may allow the situation to escalate beyond the effective range of the intervention.

School administrators need to be the leaders of the RJ movement at their sites. The shift to RJ should not be seen as a top down directive from the district office. It needs to appear to be an organic effort on the part of the school to be fully embraced by the employees at the school site. Deflecting the responsibility of the change in disciplinary practices will undercut the support of the program, which is so vital to the successful implementation. Administrators need to be transparent in the process and through this transparency develop a broad based coalition of supporters. Establishing a committee focused on discipline with representation from a variety of employee groups is the first step in creating the climate for change to RJ. In the current climate

of California's educational funding process, the need to address school culture and climate provides a seamless opportunity to establish a committee such as this. While the initial purpose of the committee may be unclear to the participants, it is the principal's responsibility to provide both the motivation to change and a vision for the committee to attain. A failure to guide the process will result in a fruitless effort to address the needs of the students as they relate to disciplinary issues.

The administration also needs to work closely with their consulting firm so the consultant may act as a catalyst for change and a facilitator for the many discussions that will take place in planning and implementing RJ. The purpose for hiring a consultant is to provide customized staff training. The consultant needs to be prepared to listen to the concerns presented by school administrators. They should also be willing to offer suggestions on how best to address issues as they arise. However, the consultant should not be the decision maker about the next steps in the process of adopting RJ strategies or principles. Outside consultants must be willing to adjust their message, not dictating the next step in the process. The implementation plan needs to be an artifact unique to the school.

During this process or training staff members, the principal should attend every session. This is a major commitment of time and energy by one individual, but then again, so is the commitment to change a school's philosophy of student discipline. The mere presence of the principal acts as a symbol of the importance of the staff development. There are several benefits to being present during the training sessions. Attendance at these in-services provides the chance for the principal to develop relationships with, and hear the authentic concerns of, the participants. Principals will also be able to gauge the effectiveness of the training and ensure the staff members are hearing the message from the consultant as it was designed. The principal is

also able to determine if the consultant is truly acting as an agent of the school, or if they are reverting back to their generic model and message of RJ principles.

Teachers and other school site employees should approach RJ with an open mind. They need to be willing to challenge their preconceived notions about student discipline and examine the evidence showing the negative impacts on students who are affected by the practices of suspension and expulsion. It may have been acceptable to allow student to drop out of school generations ago, but the contemporary economy requires an educated workforce. Retaining students is more important than ever to ensure a qualified workforce exists. Implementing alternatives to punitive disciplinary practices helps keep kids in school. Accepting this idea and adjusting the practices of the school are important steps for schools to take to meet the current needs of their communities in producing graduates who are career ready.

Staff members also need to understand their expectations for punishment may remain unfulfilled when RJ is used to address pupil misbehavior. RJ is not based on the premises of revenge or punishment; it is based on the principles of restoration and repair. As a result, the past practice of automatically expelling, and possibly arresting, a student involved in a fight will need to change. Teachers, parents, and others need to understand how the discipline practice is changing and remain assured that student misbehavior is being addressed. Proactive communication of this change in practice will assist in preventing a backlash against the shift to RJ. Redefining the expectations of the discipline program and communicating these changes was a focus of one of the themes reported in the findings of this study.

A variety of staff members, representing different employee groups, should become active participants on the discipline committee. This is the primary conduit of communication between staff and administration. Actively participating in the process is an important aspect of

successfully implementing RJ. Participation in the discipline committee results in open and honest communication about the direction the school is taking as it relates to student discipline. Administrators need to maintain caution when it comes to the composition of the discipline committee membership. While inviting individuals determined to resist RJ may not be appropriate, so too is having the committee comprised solely of individuals who are unwilling to accept the possible shortcomings of the program. The committee needs to allow for an honest discussion of what is working and what needs to change about the discipline program. Professional dissonance is appropriate in the discipline committee. The discussions of the committee should focus on specific examples, hard data such as office referrals, and the documented experiences of participants. Only through this honest discussion can the program become a successful part of the school's operations. Failing to provide an ongoing mechanism to monitor and adjust the RJ practices to meet the specific needs of the school will result in diminished capacity for change and an unsustainable commitment to the principles of RJ.

Community members who would like to change a school's approach to student discipline need to be patient. There is a significant amount of time needed to properly develop a consensus of support. The schools in this study needed between six and nine months to fully develop an implementation plan and consensus for change. Most schools will need to begin the process of adopting alternative discipline models in January to enact the program in the fall of the following school year. The community needs to realize the failure to build consensus will undermine RJ, or any other alternative disciplinary model. Non-governmental agencies, religious groups, and individuals concerned with social justice should also provide support for RJ by showing a willingness to engage in the restorative process. Examples of this may include participation in the mediation or peace circle process, providing opportunities for restitution activities, or

enrolling students in community service projects as part of their discipline within the school. The inability of a school to develop community partnerships will limit the number of interventions available and the scope of restorativeness the program can develop. It is one thing to advocate for change, it is another to be a full-fledged partner in the process. The collaboration between schools and groups concerned with social justice can become a stumbling block to fully integrate RJ throughout a community. Many groups who desire changes in school discipline are ill-equipped or unwilling to partner with school districts and hold students accountable. Creating an atmosphere of accountability is central to the success of RJ. School officials cannot simply ignore misbehavior. Community groups need to understand punishment and reintegration into the educational environment requires their support and assistance.

Members of each school district's Board of Trustees play an important role in the establishment of RJ programs. They need to support the school's efforts to provide alternatives to suspension or expulsion. This takes many forms, but most importantly is the public advocacy and unwavering commitment to change the manner in which schools address pupil misbehavior. It may be difficult to endure the criticism of disgruntled employees or the expectations of the community regarding the continuation of punitive practices. The Board also needs to monitor the RJ programs and provide forums for schools to publicize the extent, and success, of their programs. The trustees should provide input and ask difficult questions of school officials to develop trust between the various stakeholders and the educational agency. The focus of school discipline needs to remain on keeping campuses safe. School boards needs to promote the principle of addressing unacceptable behavior, not excusing or ignoring it. The idea that schools can eliminate the use of suspension or expulsion is false. These tools are still viable within the context of RJ. In California there are certain behavioral issues which require, as delineated in the

Education Code, full calendar year expulsions for serious acts of misbehavior. No matter what alternative discipline programs may be enacted, the resulting punishment for these offences will result in exclusion. These include bringing a firearm or explosive to school, amongst other acts as defined by section 43915 of the California Education Code.

Recommendations for RJ Implementation

There is no silver bullet to fix the problems associated with school discipline. RJ provides one alternative to the use of traditional punitive disciplinary practices. Governance teams seeking to alter their approach to discipline need to establish within their community what the new philosophy towards student wrongdoing will be. Through a process of public hearings and direct marketing, the public must be educated to create awareness so there are no surprises when issues of discipline arise. The focus of RJ is on the creation of an inclusive environment, where even misbehaved students are allowed the opportunity to remain within the educational environment, once the behavior has been addressed through a process designed to repair any harm the student may have done.

Once the governance team has determined the course of action the site administration should begin the process of gathering support for the new discipline programs. This is best accomplished through the establishment of a discipline committee and the use of an outside consultant. The consultant will work with the staff members to create an understanding of RJ and ensure the needs of the school community are being met through the selection of a limited number of targeted intervention strategies. The consultant and committee can work with the administrative team to raise the awareness of the school community about RJ. Concerns can be addressed and a consensus can be developed as it relates to expectations of student behavior and appropriate consequences.

The timeline to complete the initial phases of implementation will last at least nine months. Twelve months would be even better since there is so much work to do involving emotions, opinions, and the entrenched expectations of a school staff. The shift to RJ takes a great deal of time to fully realize. A failure to take time to develop a philosophical change within a school community will result in RJ being as a directive, not as an alternative approach offering benefits to the entire school community. Changing the way things are done in a systematic way requires an evolution of thought over a long period of time.

Lastly, additional staff and training needs to be arranged. The staffing includes the use of a skilled interventionist to work in the BSC's and possibly more staff to participate in mediations, brief interventions, or other RJ interventions. Training for staff in the philosophy, strategies, and RJ interventions is important as well. These trainings maintain a transparency in the process of adopting RJ. The trainings also allow for gaps in the skill level and understanding of staff to be addressed in a timely and comprehensive manner.

During the adoption it should be noted schools still preserved their right to discipline students using more traditional methods. The RJ schools in this study all had mechanisms in place to transfer students for discipline related offences. Students were still excluded from the traditional educational environment by using BSC's in place of out of school suspension. Assignment to these centers, while not technically a suspension, resulted in a loss of traditional instructional time. The time was spent learning how to behave in a more acceptable manner and still held some value to both the student and the school.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. These limitations will be outlined in more detailed below and they are associated with the study design. The specific participants in the

study provide one area of limitations. This is true of both the school sites participating as well as the individuals interviewed as part of the data collection process. Finally, there are also limits in regards to the sources of data collected for analysis. While these limitations need to be noted, they do not invalidate the findings associated with this research study.

Several aspects of the selection of participants limit the application of this study to every educational environment. It should be noted the schools involved in the study are all high schools with students enrolled in grades 9-12. These high schools are located in a limited geographic area, central and northern California. These are also schools that have self identified as adopting RJ programs within the past few years, and labeled successful by the researcher. Other schools that have unofficially moved toward RJ were not considered in the participating sample. The participating schools' voluntary decision to participate in the study shows a willingness to share information about their experience, and this may taint the sample favoring schools with an extremely positive adoption of RJ. These experiences may not be typical of other schools and district implementing RJ.

Another limitation of the sample involves the individuals participating in the interview process at each school site. Prior to the beginning of data collection, specific officials at each school site were selected to participate in the interview portion of the data collection process. The principal, a disciplinary administrator, and a counselor at each participating school proved to be rich sources of information about the RJ programs, but these individuals were not always the person most knowledgeable about the development of RJ at their schools. At times the information they provided was speculative and could only be validated with other sources of data on an intermittent basis. Allowing school sites to self-select their most knowledgeable individuals may have furthered the quality of the data gathered through the interview process.

Limiting the data collection to school office personnel also limited the scope of information used in the analysis to answer the research questions. Interviewing teachers or students would have provided a different perspective of RJ. These additional interviews would have also provided a different perspective of RJ implementation.

The limitations outlined in this section worked together to provide a focus for the research as a whole. Limiting the research to a specific geographic area and grade levels provided a uniform experience for examination. This same uniformity was reinforced by targeting the interview pool at each site. These limitations help to promote the validity of the findings and minimize the inclusion of outliers into the data analysis. The consistency of data collection and geographic location helped to limit the impact of individual or regional biases. This allowed for the development of themes during the data analysis process which could have been lost if the scope of the research had been broader or the data more convoluted.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study has answered several questions about the implementation of RJ in three California high schools. There are other questions that remain to be answered and should be the subject of future research. The following recommendations for future research are being made at this time:

1. A cost analysis of the implementation to determine if RJ can sustain itself as a result of improved student attendance and retention should be undertaken.
2. Examining the implementation of RJ in other geographic areas both within the state and throughout the country should provide additional information about RJ implementation for practitioners, and account for any localized issue of implementation.

3. Changing the focus of the research from high schools to other educational environments would prove useful to practitioners in alternative, elementary, and middle schools.
4. School sites that have pursued RJ, but failed in their implementation should be identified and examined to determine why these attempts failed.
5. The experience of students and teachers in RJ should be examined to determine if there are other essential components of RJ implementations which can be identified.
6. Schools site RJ programs which do not include the use of mediation or peace circles should be studied to determine if RJ programs reliant on other strategies are as successful as those involved in this study.
7. Examining the strategies used to build partnerships between schools and community groups in order to fully develop comprehensive RJ programs should be pursued.
8. Research analyzing the use of discipline related transfers and BSC's should be undertaken to determine if RJ practices are as effective as previously believed in curbing student misbehavior, or if the success of these programs is more closely related to other aspects of alternative approaches to discipline.
9. Research examining of the impact of discipline related transfers and BSC's on educational outcomes in comparison to traditional exclusionary practices should be performed to evaluate the effectiveness of these alternative interventions

These recommendations for further research will provide additional insight into the implementation, development, use, and efficacy of RJ.

Summary

The traditional punitive approach to school discipline has proven to be ineffective in changing student behavior. Students involved in the exclusionary practices of suspension and

expulsion are at higher risk for dropping out of school, without graduating from high school, and being incarcerated. The need to change the approach to student discipline from punitive to restorative is both a moral and legislative mandate for schools across the country.

The success of the three high schools involved in this study in establishing RJ programs is not entirely entrenched in the principles of community and reparation often associated with RJ. The successful implementation attests to the preparation of the school, with the assistance of an outside consultant, to create a consensus for change during an extended period of time. This consensus is then furthered by the commitment of the school to provide the time, targeted training, and additional personnel to adequately address incidents of student misbehavior. The use of targeted RJ strategies to provide students with additional skills and emotional capacity to improve behavioral choices is an effective alternative to exclusionary disciplinary practices.

The ability of practitioners to develop and implement plans for RJ programs will be enhanced as a result of this study. School officials should have a better understanding of the need to develop a consensus within the school site as an essential component of their plans. The difficulties associated with developing a community partnership to support RJ should not prevent schools from seeking alternative discipline models. Understanding the need to address attitudinal barriers to RJ should help schools in their effort to make successful transitions in their approach to student discipline. By focusing the energy of schools on the essential aspects of changing student discipline should allow more RJ programs to be successfully implemented. Moving away from punitive practices and adopting restorative principles will improve the educational outcomes of students, families, and communities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Principal Interview Questions

1. What is your role in implementing the RJ program at your site? If you are unsure, what do you think your role is?
2. What disciplinary practices do you identify as being restorative in nature? Are these new programs resulting from RJ implementation, or were they established prior to the school's declaring an official RJ program being in place?
3. What, if any, disciplinary practices exist at your site that can you identify outside of the RJ program?
4. When do you use student disciplinary exclusion such as suspension and expulsion to respond to disciplinary infractions?
5. Which interventions do you use most often to respond to student misbehavior?
6. Are these interventions the most effective or just most often used? Is there a specific instance to illustrate this effectiveness?
7. What type of trainings has been offered to support RJ interventions? Who was included? How many days of training were offered? How were you trained?
8. Who is involved in the application of RJ strategies to influence student behavior? How much time do they spend practicing the RJ strategies?
9. What are the goals of using RJ in response to student behavior?
10. In what ways are the families of students involved in RJ? Are other members of the school community participating in RJ at your school site?
11. Are the RJ strategies used in other facets of dealing with students and families, aside from student discipline?

12. Are teachers trained to use the RJ strategies in their classrooms? If so, to what extent do you observe this taking place? How were they trained to use the strategies?
13. How would you change the RJ program you currently have in place, assuming unlimited resources were available?
14. Is there anything else you would like to share about the implementation or practice of RJ strategies at your school site?

Appendix B: Counselor Interview Questions

1. What is your role in implementing the RJ program at your site? If you are unsure, what do you think your role is?
2. What disciplinary practices do you identify as being restorative in nature? Are these new programs resulting from RJ implementation, or were they established prior to the school's declaring an official RJ program being in place?
3. What, if any, disciplinary practices can you identify at your school site outside of the RJ program?
4. When is the use of disciplinary exclusion such as suspension and expulsion to respond to disciplinary infractions appropriate?
5. Which interventions do you use most often to respond to student misbehavior?
6. Which of the RJ strategies do you view as being most effective? Is there a specific instance to illustrate this effectiveness?
7. What type of trainings has been offered to support RJ interventions? Who was included? How many days of training were offered? Is everyone trained, or just a certain individuals? How were you trained in RJ?
8. Who, based on your perceptions, is involved in the application of RJ strategies to influence student behavior? How much time do they spend practicing the RJ strategies?
9. What are the goals of using RJ in response to student behavior?
10. In what ways are the families of students involved in RJ? Are other members of the school community participating in RJ at your school site?
11. Are the RJ strategies used in other facets of dealing with students and families, aside from student discipline? Can you provide an example of this?

12. Are teachers using RJ strategies in their classrooms? If so, to what extent do you observe this taking place? Were they trained to use the strategies?
13. How would you change the RJ program you currently have in place, assuming unlimited resources were available?
14. Is there anything else you would like to share about the implementation or practice of RJ strategies at your school site?

Appendix C: Discipline Administrator Interview Questions

1. What is your role in implementing the RJ program at your site? If you are unsure, what do you think your role is?
2. What disciplinary practices do you identify as being restorative in nature? Are these new programs resulting from RJ implementation, or were they established prior to the school's declaring an official RJ program being in place?
3. What, if any, disciplinary practices can you identify outside of the RJ program?
4. When do you use student disciplinary exclusion such as suspension and expulsion to respond to disciplinary infractions? Do you use transfer programs as an alternative to expulsion?
5. Do you feel like RJ prevents or compliments the development of a safe school environment?
6. Would the school be better served if suspension and expulsion were used more often? Why or why not?
7. Which RJ interventions do you use most often to respond to student misbehavior?
8. Are there specific interventions you feel are particularly effective? Is there a specific instance to illustrate this effectiveness?
9. What type of trainings has been offered to support RJ interventions? Who was included? How many days of training were offered? What was your training like?
10. Who is involved in the application of RJ strategies to influence student behavior? How much time do these people spend practicing the RJ strategies?
11. What are the goals of using RJ in response to student behavior?

12. In what ways are the families of students involved in RJ? Are other members of the school community participating in RJ at your school site?
13. Are the RJ strategies used in other facets of dealing with students and families, aside from student discipline?
14. Are teachers trained to use the RJ strategies in their classrooms? If so, to what extent do you observe this taking place? How were they trained to use the strategies?
15. How would you change the RJ program you currently have in place, assuming unlimited resources were available?
16. Is there anything else you would like to share about the implementation or practice of RJ strategies at your school site?

Appendix D: Initial Contact Phone Script

Hello my name is Michael Zulfa, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction with the Kern High School District in Bakersfield, California and a doctoral candidate at Liberty University. I am completing my dissertation with a study of schools who have adopted a restorative justice approach to discipline. I would like to ask you to participate in my study. I would like to interview yourself, the administrator on your campus in charge of discipline, and a counselor who works with students to resolve disciplinary matters. These interviews should last less than an hour. I will come to your campus in order to execute the interviews. Following the interviews I will send a transcript to each of the individuals to ensure the accuracy of the responses. That will be the extent of the obligation for you and your staff members. I will work to keep your school site and individual staff members anonymous in reporting my research findings.

The interviews will focus on the restorative interventions adopted by your school, the effectiveness of these interventions, the resources your school has devoted to the development and implementation of restorative justice and the impact restorative justice has had on the culture of your school community.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. I will be contacting you via e-mail with additional information once I have approval from my Institutional Review Board. I will keep you posted on my timeline as I hope to complete my research by the end of June. Once again, thank you for your willingness to assist me, and I will be in touch.

Appendix E: Consent Form

A CASE STUDY EXAMINING THE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRACTICES IMPLEMENTED IN THREE CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOLS

Consent Form
Michael Zulfa
Liberty University
School of Education

You have been chosen to participate in a research study which examines the way high schools develop restorative justice programs. You were selected as a possible participant as a result of your affiliation with the school as a staff member. Please read through this form and ask any clarifying questions before you agree to participate.

This study is being conducted by Michael Zulfa, a doctoral candidate enrolled in Liberty University's School of Education.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to examine how high schools are implementing restorative justice strategies in response to student misbehavior.

Procedures:

You will take part in an interview which will last approximately one hour. The interview will be recorded for the purpose of memorializing the conversation and to provide the opportunity for you to review comments at a later date to ensure accuracy and completeness. I will also be collecting archival documents related to your school site. These documents will include historical records of suspensions and expulsions, parent and student handbooks, discipline codes, minutes from meetings of the Board of Trustees, and accreditation reports. You will not be responsible to provide these documents. I will acquire them through online sources and public records requests.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

There are minimal risks to participating in the study. There are no tangible benefits to participating in the study for participants. The benefits to society, more specifically the educational community, will be vast. Information about the successful adoption of restorative justice programs will serve as a guide to others in the field who are considering the adoption of restorative justice. A better understanding of restorative justice implementation will result in a greater likelihood of successful program adoption. Successful restorative justice programs have been associated with improved attendance, behavior, academic performance, and educational outcomes.

Confidentiality:

The privacy and confidentiality of all participants will be of the utmost importance to the researcher. Any reports or publications associated with this research will not include any identifiable information to ensure the anonymity of the participants.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or your current employer. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw:

Withdrawal from the study may occur at any time. A verbal or written request may be issued at any time during or after the interview process to end your participation. Any recorded data will be deleted and any physical notes will be destroyed once a request is made to end participation.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Michael Zulfa. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to make contact at mzulfa@liberty.edu or 661-747-5684. You may also contact my dissertation committee chair, Dr. James Swezey at jaswezey@liberty.edu or 434-592-4903.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Appendix F: IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

October 14, 2014

Michael Zulfa

IRB Approval 1898.101414: A Case Study Examining the Restorative Justice Practices Implemented in Three California High Schools

Dear Michael,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.
Professor, IRB Chair
Counseling

(434) 592-4054

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