A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF TEACHERS

IMPLEMENTING RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

by

Janiese Pauline McKenzie

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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APPROVED BY:

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore and understand the perceptions of teachers as they endure change while implementing restorative practices at the secondary level. The central research question guiding this study asked, "How do secondary level teachers from central North Carolina describe their experiences with restorative practices in the classroom?" I interviewed and discussed the lived experiences of 11 participants, all teachers who have been trained in restorative practices by the International Institute of Restorative Practices and implemented in their classroom for one year in central North Carolina. The theory guiding this study was Michael Fullan's change theory and the exploration of how and why a school reform initiative works. Data was collected in three ways: semi-structured, long interviews; a focus group; and a document review of the International Institute of Restorative Practices training materials. Data were analyzed using coding, clustering of codes, and theme extraction. After a comprehensive analysis of the data, three themes emerged: (a) the influence of student discourse on the culture of the classroom; (b) teacher empowerment through reflection; and (c) the emergence of altruism.

Keywords: restorative practices, restorative justice, restorative circles, transcendental phenomenology, reflection, zero tolerance, change theory, discipline, school reform

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my father, James Paul Ward, Sr. and my father-in-law, Dr. Lawrence John McKenzie. Both men taught me the importance of a strong work ethic. I had moments where I wanted to quit but found the strength to keep going because I knew they would be disappointed if I didn't.

Daddy, since you didn't have the chance to complete your master's degree, I share my degree with you. I know you would have loved to see me graduate and witness my hooding ceremony, but God had other plans. Enjoy your front row view from heaven. I know you are with me in spirit as you have been instrumental in pushing me and encouraging me to persevere. Thank you for your guidance and love through the years. Most importantly, thank you for the legacy you left with those that loved you most.

I love and miss you both more than words can describe. I know you are both proud and beaming from ear to ear.

Acknowledgments

I must first acknowledge my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, without whom, I am nothing. Many times, I held to his promises in Jeremiah 29:11 and Philippians 3:14 to get through the process of researching and writing a dissertation while running a high school during a global pandemic and losing my father.

I sincerely acknowledge the dedication of my husband and soul mate, Aaron. You have been so patient as I described my next adventure and what it would require and never hesitated to let me keep pursuing my dream. You not only stuck by me, but you encouraged the next step. Thank you for your continued support, your belief in me that I could accomplish such a daunting task and tagging along on my next adventure. You are the true recipient of the "Ellie" badge.

To my daughter, Ashton, thank you for sacrificing so much by sharing my time and attention to this work. Thank you for listening when I shared my thoughts and ideas that meant absolutely nothing to you. Forgive me for the times I was totally zoned out when you shared your thoughts with me. I hope in this process I was able to set an example for you of persistence and perseverance that you take with you on your life's journey. Never give up on your dreams. You can do it!

Gratitude is also reserved for my mother, who is the absolute strongest person I know. Your physical, mental, and emotional strength has been such an encouragement to me. If you could single-handedly take care of dad, I can finish writing this thing. Thank you for the gift of my brother and sister who always set an example for me. They each pursued their own path and happiness and modeled what lifelong learning is all about. They have taught me that being educated isn't about the degree you earn, but the impact on people that results from it.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge those educators that have made a lasting impression on my educational leadership journey by mentoring me and pushing me to be the best version of me possible. Thank you, Dr. Cliff Schimmels, June Bowers, Marty Woody, Debra Barham, Dr. Randy Shaver, Kris Vecchione, Noel Keener, William Laine, Travis Ward, Anna Brady, Dr. Meg Sheehan, Pamela Misher, Joe Yeager, and Angela Graves. I am grateful for each of you and your influence on my educational journey.

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Change as Three Steps (CATS)

Educational Research Methodology (ERM)

International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP)

National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)

Organizational Development (OD)

Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS)

Professional Development (PD)

Restorative Practices (RP)

Restorative Justice (RJ)

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

Supportive School Discipline Initiative (SSDI)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Educators across the country are challenged by a profession that expects more than ever before, with increasing responsibilities and insurmountable assignments, as students navigate a more disparate environment and are faced with greater academic expectations (Fitzgerald, Geraci, & Swanson, 2014). As a result, school districts and school leaders are seeking restorative programs, resulting in exponential growth in its implementation over the last five years (Gonzalez, 2012). Implementing a restorative discipline approach for the whole-school seeks to build a community atmosphere throughout the school through meaningful relationships (Harrison, 2007).

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to investigate teachers' perceptions of the change process while implementing restorative practices, as well as the impact of its implementation on school climate. Understanding how teachers deal with change while implementing school reform initiatives will be vital to creating appropriate professional development and subsequent support to ensure long-term success. This study will attempt to comprehend the world of the participating teachers to understand how they make meaning of restorative practices and their experiences with change (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The remainder of this chapter will preface and deliberate on the relevant information relating to the intended qualitative study. Subsequent subsections will include the background, situation to self, problem statement, purpose statement, significance of the study, research questions, and definitions.

Background

Along with the rise of school shootings in the late 1990s, many educational institutions began to employ zero-tolerance policies in school for drugs, alcohol, and violence. However, the

American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force found no improvement in

school climate or safety following zero-tolerance policy implementation (Byer, 2016). After a

decade of research, many studies find that dropout rates continue to rise, academic achievement

has stagnated, learning gaps have widened, and the school-to-prison pipeline has worsened

(Armour, 2016). The zero-tolerance policies have disparately impacted minority students,

specifically those who are African American males or Latino males (Weingarten, 2013). These

policies were created for safety and structure but have failed to serve their purpose and resulted

in negative outcomes for students of color (Weingarten, 2013). Due to this information, many

governing bodies have looked to make changes on a global scale. New Zealand (Van Alphen,

2015), China (Martin & Elliot, 2009), the Netherlands (Verhagen & Ravelli, 2011), Canada

(Rideout, Rolane, Salinitri, & Frey, 2010), and the United Kingdom (McCluskey et al., 2008)

investigated historical and cultural foundations of dealing with conflict and began to initiate

restorative practices as an approach to repair harm and hold an offender accountable (Rideout et

al., 2010).

Historical Context

In the United States, the International Institute for Restorative Practices was formed, in

1999, to combat the punitive consequences given to students and the resulting exclusion from the

school community (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2009). Their work took the philosophy of

restorative justice, utilized by the criminal justice system, and converted it to restorative

practices in the hope of preventing lost instructional time due to suspension. According to

Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel (2009), the philosophy grew out of an academy-structured public

high school in Pennsylvania. The school housed students who were described as unmotivated or

reluctant learners while the instruction focused on giving students real-world experiences

through partnerships with businesses and agencies in the area. The hope created by this approach quickly fleeted as teachers became frustrated over unruly student behaviors. Soon thereafter, the future International Institute for Restorative Practices began working with the teachers in the academy, which also partnered with the Community Service Foundation and Buxmont Academy, organizations that worked with troubled youth in Pennsylvania (Costello et al., 2009).

The term restorative practices originated with the restorative justice ideology, utilized in the criminal justice system, focusing on the practice of mutual respect with the intention of building strong relationships with students and developing a culture of community within a school (Costello et al., 2009). Standing, Fearon, and Dee (2012) described restorative practices as a diverse approach with the intent to alleviate conflict, restore relationships, and bring peace back to the community of learners or school community.

The work of the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) began in southeastern Pennsylvania at a school instituting an academy format for struggling and unmotivated students (Costello et al., 2009). Their work at eight schools and 16 group homes enabled them to create a framework that could be translated to working with public schools (Costello et al., 2009). To change school climate, the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) is now providing professional development in restorative practices, including restorative circles to change the outlook for at-risk students throughout the world (Costello et al., 2009).

The U.S. Department of Education and Justice started the Supportive School Discipline Initiative (SSDI) in 2012 to help schools deviate from suspensions and expulsions and move toward restorative practices (Darling & Monk, 2018). With a greater focus on discipline

disparities and increasing suspension rates, school leaders are expected to tackle student behavior

through a restorative lens, yet teachers, administrators, and lawmakers at the secondary level

have a minimal supply of appropriate discipline interventions available (Gregory, Clawson,

Davis, & Gerewitz, 2016). Unfortunately, there is insufficient research on restorative practices

(Byer, 2016), particularly at the high school level (Gregory et al., 2016).

Social Context

The implementation of restorative practices is intended to improve outcomes for students

and negate the school-to-prison pipeline. Restorative practices attempt to address the following:

accountability and safety for all students, a reduced number of disparities in discipline, a

deviation from the negative outcomes of zero-tolerance policies, and a decrease in the interaction

between law enforcement and students (Passarella, 2017). Previous studies also report that

restorative practices implementation is associated with better student-teacher relationships, more

equitable distributions of discipline (Gregory et al., 2016), reduced bullying encounters, and

improved teacher-teacher relationships. Implementation also builds the socialization capacity of

students (Kehoe, Bourke-Taylor & Broderick, 2018). With more students having positive school

experiences and being less prone to dropping out, more students will graduate with the ability to

be productive citizens in society.

Restorative practices focus on building community through the implementation of circles,

a practice extracted from the customs of indigenous peoples and Native American tribes (High,

2017). Circles facilitate communication that initiates and allows for respect by designating a

speaker through the passing of an object, like a feather, from participant to participant

(Schumacher, 2014). The only person allowed to speak, while the circle is in session, is the

person holding the symbolic object. All circle participants must give consent to the guidelines of

the circle involving who may speak, when they may speak, speaking honestly, not interrupting, and maintaining confidentiality after the circle has concluded (Schumacher, 2014). These meetings merge the concepts of discipline and care and show improvement in student work, increased engagement in class discussions, as well as bring a sense of peace upon the class (Kaveney & Drewery, 2011). They can address conflict between students by enlisting students in discussion with the purpose of creating a classroom culture that contributes to instruction and student learning (Kecskemeti, 2013). Focusing on the concept of community and the whole child can also support students in becoming good individuals by teaching resilience to societal dilemmas (Hochstrasser Fickel, Angel, MacFarlane, & MacFarlane, 2017).

Theoretical Context

Educational institutions are faced with change from societal and political influences. These changes can facilitate resistance from the staff and lead to tension within the organization. Therefore, it is important that school leaders seek to understand the fluctuation that change scenarios can generate and to comprehend how the staff will better be able to face the new challenge (Jappinen, 2017). Recent educational reform initiatives have shown that disruption is a motivator for change (Beabout, 2012), and change leadership must include how to alter the behavior of people while considering that most staff will differ in their philosophies as educators and disciplinarians (Blood & Thorsborne, 2006). Schein (1996) noted that learning and change must begin with a type of discomfort or annoyance caused by information that disproves our expectations or beliefs. He concludes that if emotional and intellectual safety is not provided, the discomfort will not be grappled with, and no change can occur.

Lewin's change theory describes human change as a psychological process involving unlearning without losing one's identity while reforming one's perceptions and attitudes (Schein,

1996). Both students and teachers struggle with change, particularly with initiatives that have not garnered relevance or buy-in from stakeholders. Lewin's model provides a change agent with a framework for encouraging people to change with an understanding that the process will only be impactful if those involved embrace the change and are involved in putting it to the test (Morrison, 2014). This concept applies to the implementation of restorative practices in two aspects. In the first, teachers must face discomfort in their personal feelings before they can embrace philosophical change in a classroom disciplinary approach. Secondly, professional development for teachers in restorative practices must take the need for discomfort into account while preparing teachers for change in their classrooms.

Fullan (2007) described change theory as a powerful force for driving reform in education. He stated, "When things are unsettled, we can find new ways to move ahead and to create breakthroughs not possible in stagnant societies" (as cited in Beabout, 2012, p. 15). The state of education in America has certainly been stagnant in recent years, creating a surge in reform initiatives, particularly in discipline disparities and suspension reform.

Situation to Self

As a 22-year veteran in the public school system, I have had numerous opportunities to teach a variety of students with a vast array of abilities, both behaviorally and academically. Teaching biology for 12 years afforded me the chance to expand upon my philosophy of education and recognize that I have a passion for the underdog, underserved, and marginalized student. With that passion as my driving force, I entered the administrative circle, first as a curriculum facilitator, followed by assistant principal, then principal. I am currently serving my fifth year as principal at a comprehensive, traditional high school in central North Carolina in one of the largest urban school districts in the United States.

As a principal, one of my main objectives is to balance what reform strategies are needed as well as the best way to communicate their implementation so that teacher support is established and favorable. One area of need at my school is a school-wide discipline approach that will build community in a rapidly expanding, diverse setting. The information gathered through this study will guide me and other principals in their approach to restorative practices and the utilization of change theory in future reform strategies to facilitate long-term success of the necessary reform. I am cognizant that biases may exist toward restorative practices and their effectiveness, but awareness of that perception should help to alleviate it. Finding and understanding where restorative practices may not have been successful is a critical part of this research.

My experiences as an educator along with my philosophical assumptions drive my desire to conduct this study. Because I believe that all students can learn and deserve to be treated respectfully, I desire to understand the foundations of positive student-teacher relationships and how teachers handle change with school reform initiatives. I will converge this study using an ontological philosophical assumption. Through this, I embrace that an identical experience can be viewed in many ways by those experiencing the phenomenon (Creswell, 2018). The conclusion of this study will provide multiple perspectives derived from themes surrounding teachers' various experiences with restorative practices (Creswell, 2018). Each participant will be given value and their voice expressed in the findings. It will be important for me to attend to my own bias, as a teacher and administrator, while interviewing and analyzing data. I will need to bracket out my personal feelings as other educators describe their individual experiences with restorative practices and how they dealt with the associated change. Acknowledging my own bias, plus that of each participant, will be present, an axiological assumption will be made

(Creswell, 2018). Revising the interview questions as I proceed through the study and understanding the process of research will comply with the methodological assumption (Creswell, 2018). As a principal investigating a whole-school discipline approach, I must acknowledge my relationship with the teachers and their experience through an epistemological assumption (Creswell, 2018). It will be imperative that I seek to see restorative practice implementation through their eyes and in their shoes, so to speak.

Throughout the process of conducting research, I will be using the social constructivism paradigm as a framework as I value each participants' perception of their experience with restorative practices (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). This will be evident as I seek to understand the world in which teachers live and work. Experiencing the secondary school environment daily, it is essential that I embrace and comprehend change theory and the impact of a schoolwide discipline approach that builds relationships and sets expectations. Therefore, it will be my intent to extract the meaning teachers have about restorative practices and how they experience change (Creswell, 2018). Without this understanding, the probability of school reform materializing and benefiting students, as well as the school culture, will drastically decline.

Problem Statement

Zero-tolerance approaches to discipline lack the development of relationships necessary for youth to flourish, resulting in an increase in mental health disorders, lack of academic success, and dropping out (Acosta, 2016). As a result, a greater focus is being placed on approaches to student discipline that have relationships at their epicenter. A relatively new approach to classroom management and school-wide behavioral expectations is restorative practices; however, restorative practices needs additional organized investigation to understand

its undeveloped implementation at the high school level (Gregory et al., 2016). This approach to student discipline is highly influenced by the proficiency, experience, and the temperament of the educator (Lohmeyer, 2017). Kehoe et al. (2018) note that there has been limited research focused on exploring the perspectives of teachers on the use of restorative practices in the classroom. An increasing number of researchers are reporting that high dropout rates, academic failure, and racial disproportionality are being "exacerbated by a lack of teacher preparation in student management" (Armour, 2016, p. 1). There is minimal research giving voice to the perspectives of teachers relating to their lived experience of being trained in and utilizing restorative practices in their classrooms. Teacher perspectives will be critical to the understanding of implementing restorative practices as discipline reform in secondary schools.

The problem of this study is the lived experiences of teachers, undergoing change, while implementing restorative practices as an approach to reform in school discipline. Teachers have more daily contact with students than any other adult. Therefore, it is critical to explore their perceptions of school-wide discipline reform and the impact of change before, during, and after its implementation.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study will be to describe the experiences of secondary classroom teachers with restorative practices in North Carolina. Restorative practices refer to any endeavor in which parties meet with whom they have discord, putting back together the relationship and leaving the table unified on progression through conferences, restorative circles, agreements, and mediations (Lustick, 2017). Documenting the experience of teachers implementing restorative practices could lead to insight into gaps in their classroom management skills and drive improvements in teacher education programs and

professional development on restorative practices. The theory guiding this study is change theory, as presented by Fullan, and its relationship to the success of school reform initiatives. Change theory is a driving force behind school reform initiatives if those in charge operate with an understanding of the dynamics that can foster results (Fullan, 2007).

<div align="center">**Significance of the Study**</div>

Studying the impact of restorative practices on school discipline reform as well as how teachers adapt to change can lead to informed decisions by school administrators on the best ways to implement and train teachers.

Empirical

Reading the descriptions of teachers' lived experiences while implementing restorative practices will hopefully provide insight for school leaders in search of an effective approach to discipline reform that empowers educators and leads to equitable practices while changing school culture (Stewart Kline, 2016). The insight will also provide school leaders with strategies to minimize the impact of change and lead to reflective practice. In turn, these practices will positively influence disciplinary practices and ameliorate disparities in discipline data and punitive practices by reducing lost instructional days, reducing the dropout rate, and increasing the number of students who graduate from high school, college and are career ready.

Theoretical

Van Alphen (2014) considered theoretical implications on punishment and provided several points to consider that he believed are currently being overlooked. He noted, "the restorative approach provides a practical strategy that allows both offenders and their victims to gain insight in to each other's experience, to understand the consequences of their behavior and to find ways to ensure that the damage is repaired" (Van Alphen, 2014, p. 190).

This study will add to the change theory and professional practice of school leaders and teachers, providing additional understanding of how adults are impacted by change in schools due to reform initiatives. The impact of change on teachers is relevant in this case. Jones and Doolittle (2017) noted that we must consider the role of teachers in school-based interventions related to student behavior.

Practical

Because educators, schools, and school districts are searching for ways to reduce gaps in discipline disparities, this study will provide insight into a possible solution to reduce punitive approaches to school discipline. Secondary schools across the country are searching for school-wide discipline approaches that can reduce lost days of instruction due to suspensions, focusing on reducing gender and racial inequities in teacher referrals and administratively issued punitive consequences. Documenting the experience of teachers implementing restorative practices could lead to insight into gaps in their classroom management skills, drive improvements in teacher education programs, and lead to modifications in professional development, resulting in school reform.

Research Questions

Research questions serve as guard rails for qualitative studies. The research questions guiding this study include one central question, followed by three sub-questions as listed below:

Central Research Question

How do secondary-level teachers from central North Carolina describe their experiences with restorative practices in the classroom? Restorative practices needs further study to comprehend its potentiality at the high school level (Gregory et al., 2016).

Research Sub-Question One

How do teachers describe how their teaching has taken on a new dimension as a result of restorative practice implementation? Zulkey proposes teachers trained in restorative practices spend more time on instruction and less on managing behavior problems when their students display strong social-emotional traits in the classroom (as cited in Silverman & Mee, 2018, p. 131).

Research Sub-Question Two

How do teachers describe how they have changed, as an educator, after implementing restorative practices? Kehoe et al. (2018) suggest that future research in restorative practices includes long-term studies to measure the lasting impact of restorative practices on individuals, including teachers, and the whole-school community, specifically the outcome of the use of restorative practices on punitive discipline in the classroom.

Research Sub-Question Three

How do teachers describe how their relationships with others have changed after implementing restorative practices? Currently no research has investigated the connection between restorative practices and students' relationships with the teacher (Gregory et al., 2016). Sandwick, Hahn, & Hassoun Ayoub (2019) emphasize how their study calls attention to the need for restorative cultures to traverse the intersection of identity, power, and privilege to develop staff and student lives inside and beyond the classroom.

<div align="center">

Definitions

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1. *Restorative conferences* –Restorative conferences unite one who has caused harm with those to whom they have caused harm (Wachtel, 2013).

2. *Restorative practices* – Restorative practices includes formal and informal interactions that follow an offense and focuses on restoring relationships and building community to further prevent offenses (Wachtel, 2013).

3. *Restorative justice* – Restorative justice consists of formal or informal reactions to a crime or other offense after it has taken place (Wachtel, 2013).

4. *Restorative circles* – Restorative circles allow offenders and victims to conference and evaluate how all parties have been impacted by the offense and develop a resolution to repair the broken relationships (Wachtel, 2013).

Summary

The first chapter has introduced the proposed qualitative research study. An overview followed by background information has demonstrated the expansion of restorative practices as a discipline reform measure in schools and noted a gap in the literature around teacher preparation. The significance of the study to the researcher was articulated, as well as the paradigm, assumption, and attention to bias. The second chapter will provide a blueprint for the theoretical framework and related literature supporting this study. The third chapter will describe the research design, research questions, setting, participants, procedures, role of the researcher, data collection, and data analysis procedures for the intended research study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Educational reform has been an issue at the forefront of political debates and historical

discussion for the past few decades. After the release of *A Nation at Risk Report* in 1983, the

media began noting our decline in national test results when compared with the performance of

students from other countries (Vollmer, 2010). The competitive nature of Americans

subsequently rose to the surface driving the urgency behind school reform to maintain a sense of

superiority within our educational system. The public declared the critical necessity to compete

economically in the global market, education being the yellow brick road on which to do so, yet

no notable plan for improvement grew out of the 1983 report (Fullan, 2014). The public outcry

demanded the need for change or we, as a country, would be unable to maintain our status as a

world economic power (Papa & English, 2011). Chubb and Moe (1991) argued that the political

agenda toward public schools became a substantial obstacle to the potential for effective school

reform (McAdams, 1997).

Recently, great attention has been placed on school discipline reform. Whole-school

discipline programs have been a hot topic for the past 50 or 60 years, beginning with the

Dreikur's model in the 50s, Canter's model in the 70s, and PBIS in the 90s (Rainbolt, Sutton-

Fowler, & Cumings-Mansfield, 2019). Policymakers are reacting to apprehensions about the

safety and security of schools, as classroom interruptions have escalated to severe bullying and

deadly school shootings, by implementing more stringent discipline policies, resulting in a rise in

out-of-school suspensions and expulsions (Skiba & Losen, 2015). This focus on discipline

reform escalated in the mid-1990s leading to the widespread implementation of zero-tolerance

policies, primarily for the possession of firearms, weapons, drugs, or alcohol, ultimately expanding to other, more minor offenses (Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008).

Educational organizations are progressively confronted with the changing needs of society, politicians, the economy, and evolving technologies (Jappinen, 2017) demanding reform. The visible evidence of reform typically does not manifest for three to five years if it is inclusive of a constant evaluation of the plan to address problems as they arise, once implementation has started (Lemke & Sabelli, 2008). Many school reform initiatives fizzle out during the strategic planning phase, not because of lack of trying, but those impacted by the change innately resist the reform due to their ideas of how school should work (Vollmer, 2010). A key factor to educational reform is the teacher that is asked to implement the change and their potential resistance. There is minimal research available to help comprehend the ways teachers interact with reform initiatives, largely influenced by their receptiveness to vulnerability with using new resources with greater expectations (Lasky, 2005). There is also limited information available on the impact of external pressures on the changes inside an organization and how the resulting tension manifests itself (Jappinen, 2017). Garnett et al. (2019) notes:

> Although RP is gaining momentum as an effective support mechanism for K-12 schools, without standardized and reliable needs-based assessments to identify opportunities and challenges related to implementation, individuals, schools, school districts, community partners, and legislatures could end up spinning their wheels creating resistance in advertently and ultimately ineffective implementation efforts (p. 11).

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework gives a portal through which one's research should be examined. The purpose of this framework is to analyze the impact of change on the experiences

of teachers implementing restorative practices. Organizational leaders guiding a group through change must be aware of the effects on its stakeholders. Fullan (1993) stated that stress, difficulty, anxiety, and fear are part of all change processes, particularly at the beginning. People won't embrace change without acknowledgement that difficulty is an obstacle on the path to change (Fullan, 1993). If people are not willing to tackle the fear, stress, and anxiety, change will not occur (Fullan, 1993). Without recognizing the strategies that promote the freedom to change, organizations will fail to implement the needed change, resulting in a lack of vision and failed transformation. Jeff Kluger, a senior editor and writer for *Time*, provided examples of "why simple things become complex" and "how complex things can be made simple" while explaining how to find productive solutions to organizational problems through the definition of a term he created, known as simplexity (Fullan, 2015, p. 27). Simplexity is the act of taking a difficult concept and choosing the fewest steps to make a significant change (Fullan, 2015). Attachment to the comfortable can become a limitation that impedes individuals and organizations from maximizing their potential, thus trapping us in a culture that prevents change (Morgan, 2006). While tackling educational reform and change, one must be aware that those in opposition will be vehement, while those supporting will be submissive and diffident (Fullan, 2014). Successful implementation of educational reform requires competence with change theory and its impact on those required to implement the change.

Change Theory

Kurt Lewin is considered the "father of social change theories" (Huarng & Mas-Tur, 2016, p. 4725), the "founding father of change management" (Cummings, Bridgman, & Brown, 2015, p. 34), and the generator of the "academic study of organizational change" (Burnes, 2012, p. 15) due to the expansion of modern models of change built upon his work (Huarng & Mas-

Tur, 2016). Lewin became interested in Gestalt psychology while studying under Carl Stumpf, while also persuaded by Kofka, Kohler, and Wertheimer (Bargal, 2012). His initial interest in the work setting and the psychology of laborers was documented in his first essay, written in 1919 (Marrow, 1969). His second paper, a discussion of Frederick Taylor's system of organization, focused on the ability of a person to work giving meaning to their survival (Marrow, 1969).

Whenever change occurs in a work setting, employees, familiar with how things have been, become agitated and when left to tackle the challenge independently, find ways to deal with the change in their own way (Schultz, 2011). According to Malone (2009), Lewin was asked to study worker productivity at Harwood, an industrial plant in Virginia, where employees were significantly less productive than a sister plant in the Northeast. In his study with this plant, he concluded that it is simpler to change the group than it is to alter the individuals that comprise the group (Malone, 2009). The greatest concern at Harwood arose when employees were moved from jobs they had mastered to new ones requiring subsequent skill development, leading to resistance from the workers; this caused frustration for the employees and their supervisors (Marrow, 1969). Interviews with the employees revealed resistance to change was attributed to problems with motivation (Marrow, 1969).

Three core beliefs served as a framework to Lewin's approach: "Change must be voluntary and participative. Change is a learning process. Change must focus on the group rather than the individual or the organization" (Burnes, 2012). Planned organizational change consists of four elements: field theory, group dynamics, action research, and the three-step model (Burnes, 2012). Lewin's three-step model of organizational change consists of: unfreezing, changing, and refreezing (Cummings et al., 2015). This process, known as change as three steps

or CATS model (Tanner, 2019), became the building block for change theory and change management to date (Cummings et al., 2015). His approach provides a structured framework for an organizational leader/change agent to facilitate change with care and consideration for the subjects (Morrison, 2014). The key to Lewin's theory involved "unlearning without loss of ego identity and difficult relearning as one cognitively attempted to restructure one's thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and attitudes" (Schein, 1996, p. 59). The work of Lewin led to the understanding that a move toward organizational change frequently resulted in a subsequent resistance to the change (Schein, 1996) and his approach through CATS to manage change has been added to and exceeded (Cummings et al., 2015). The Lewin change theory model can support a leader to do the following: make profound change, diminish the interruption of the organization's operations, and ensure that the change is maintained for good (Morrison, 2014). As a result of this work, the management of employees in large companies, including schools, has the same purpose to coordinate the behavior of the employees while finding ways to get the people to maximize their potential and meet employer expectations (Marrow, 1969).

As a student of Lewin's work, Schein (1996) described the process of initiating change after one identifies the system in need of change. Isolating diagnosis of the issue away from the intervention to address it is a flaw that Schein learned from Lewin. To avoid the error, Lewin incorporated "action research" (Schein, 1996). Derived from this idea, Lewin's idea of action research is critical when working with organizational systems consisting of humans as this is a critical component of training for change agents. Adelman (1993) described Lewin's action research as a process that gives stock to the progression of the dynamism of self-reflection, conversation, resolution, and response by normal people after a progression of practicable experiences.

Argyris worked in conjunction with Sheen to conclude that if we desire for educators to comprehend decisions organizational leaders have come to, the ladder of inference must be revealed (Wiggins, 2009). Argyris (1985) described the ladder of inference as a process people go through to make meaning of their surroundings in order to change. Ross (1994) admonished that leadership communication can be improved through reflection and utilizing the ladder of inference. This is best accomplished by becoming more cognizant of your own rationale through reflection, making your rationale more transparent to others, and examining the thinking of others (Ross, 1994).

The explanations organizational leaders use to handle employees and issues can concurrently lead to positive and negative outcomes (Argyris, 1982). This carries great weight in the potential success or failure of the reform. Therefore, awareness of change theory is critical for change agents when addressing an organizational transition. "Weiss (1995) defined a theory of change quite simply and elegantly as a theory of how and why initiative works" (Connell & Kubish, 1998). Utilizing change theory in the development of school reform increases the chance that participants will have a clear understanding of outcomes, steps to achieve the outcomes, and contingent influences that can alter the outcomes (Connell & Kubisch, 1998). Prior to rolling out the change, the change leader must "unpack" the reform initiative to empower the participants (Connell & Kubisch, 1998).

Innovation and change in organizations.

Persuading large groups of teachers to embrace a critical reform initiative is time-intensive and inundated with challenges of various types (McAdams, 1997). The magnitude of such projects can be difficult to accept, as well as overcome. As a result, 70% of school

reform/change initiatives are unsuccessful, heavily influenced by three primary reasons (Blood &
Thorsborne, 2006):

- Change agents introduce the change and consider that enough for it to be fully
  implemented.

- Concerns of educators implementing are not shared or heard.

- Those implementing the change are not part of the process.

Successful change must be "strategic, well-planned, incrementally implemented and take
into consideration how to change the behavior of people" while tackling innovation (Blood &
Thorsborne, 2006, p. 3). Innovation is anything new to the one experiencing it and more
technically defined as "an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or
other unit of adoption" (Rogers, 1995, p. 11). Rosabeth Moss Kanter, with the Harvard
Leadership Institute, studied the organizational structures of innovation-producing systems,
focusing on identifying what facilitated and deterred innovation in the organization (Kouzes &
Posner, 2017). Kanter interpreted innovation as change and stated that "change requires
leadership…. a 'prime mover' to push for implementation of strategic decisions" (Kouzes &
Posner, 2017, p. 148).

Rogers (2003) explained that managing innovation includes two stages, initiation of an
initiative and the implementation of that initiative (Blood & Thorsborne, 2006). Initiation of an
initiative stems on the recognition of a problem or need (Rogers, 1995) and results in the setting
of an agenda (Blood & Thorsborne, 2006). The second component of the first stage includes
aligning the problem with innovation (Blood & Thorsborne, 2006) along with a thorough
investigation with basic and applied research (Rogers, 1995). The implementation of the
initiative begins with modifying the innovation to fit the school or organization, clarifying the

relationship between the school and the innovation, and integrating the innovation into the organization's routines and structures (Blood & Thorsborne, 2006).

Blood and Thorsborne (2005) concluded that the application of a conscientiously thought-out reform initiative is critical and requires the awareness that it will include organizational and cultural change. They note that strong implementation is reliant on strong, excellent, and ardent leadership within the organization (2005). Kouzes and Posner (2017) established five principles that empower leaders to accomplish incredible feats and change the culture of the school or workplace. These principles include challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, modeling the way, and encouraging the heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Blood and Thorsborne (2005) expanded on these leadership ideas and integrated them into the work of Rogers' stages of innovation, creating five stages of implementation for culture change. These include gaining commitment, developing a shared vision, developing responsive and effective practice, developing a whole-school approach, and establishing professional relationships (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005).

Gaining commitment.

Gaining commitment includes making the case for change by supporting the reform initiative with quantitative and qualitative data collected through a comprehensive, methodical attitude (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005). Input by teachers is part of school climate that has been shown to be a predictor of teacher commitment (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2011). Establishing buy-in seals the deal, so to speak, when data is shared and restorative practices research is provided with all involved with school discipline (Blood & Thorsborne, 2006). Without relevant information about the need for change, how the initiative will solve the problem, and the long-

term impacts, stakeholders will make assumptions for themselves and sabotage the reform before it has the chance to succeed.

Developing a shared vision.

It is critical that the school community knows the "why" of the reform and the plan to reach the implementation goal. This is accomplished through inspiring a shared vision. It requires engaging the entire school community in goal setting, both short- and long-term, and establishing the goals in research-based best practices (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005). Kouzes and Posner (2017) stated, "You can't command commitment; you have to inspire it" (p. 15). While developing a shared vision, the leader must help the constituents align the desired outcomes with the vision, create structures for achieving the vision, and establish language that will guide the practice (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005).

Developing responsive and effective practice.

Integrating effective and appropriate practice requires impactful professional development. Commitment to school change must include enough resources and continued, sustainable conversation and program training (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005). Professional development requires regular assessments of effectiveness, consistent planning that is based on feedback and data from participants, and alignment with the beliefs and attitudes of the staff (Garnett et al., 2019). To encourage continued growth and implementation, classroom and program monitoring must be included and demonstrated with fidelity (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005).

Developing a whole-school approach.

Restorative practices have proven to be more effective when taken on by the whole-school (Garnett et al., 2019). While putting it all together, school practices and policies must be adjusted to align with the restorative practices philosophy (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005). This will include an evaluation by a core leadership group, such as a school improvement team or leadership team. The transition should be managed with caution. Consistency throughout the school is a great factor in successful implementation. For restorative practices to be impactful, everyone must be a participant, followed by continuous reminders to staff to keep working at it (Short, Case, & McKenzie, 2018). However, whole-school approaches integrate numerous factors, including staff turnover; therefore, strong support and consistent coaching are vital for ongoing sustainability and success (Acosta, 2019). A transition timeline should be created, including recognition for milestones and met goals as these serve as indicators of change (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005). The entire community of stakeholders must be involved to ensure that the restorative approach can be understood and implemented by all.

Professional relationships.

Relationships within the realm of school leadership, while leading reform, focus on the awareness that educators have personal lives, and relationships with the educators help maintain focus during times of transition (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). One of the most difficult challenges in changing the culture of an organization is changing the mindsets and beliefs of the staff (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005). Papa and English (2011) claimed that as human constructions, schools must be reformed by changing what goes on inside of them, which is best accomplished by "changing what is going on inside the heads of the human beings in them" (p. 19). Altan and Lane (2018) claimed that teachers are the change agents throughout society, having the greatest influence on student achievement. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) suggested

that a group is far more influential than an individual in systemic and educational change. Trust within the school and interpersonal relationships have great influence over the climate and culture of the school (Gregory, 2017). We must address and influence the hearts and minds of those on the front lines of school reform before it has a chance of taking root and flourishing.

Change theory and school reform.

Sarason (1990) acknowledged change theory as a component of school reform and declared that the audacity of the school to thwart change meant that teachers must be a chief concern for professional development and teachers must lead the reform initiative or it would have no chance for success (Papa & English, 2011). Sarason's requirements for school reform were interpreted by Tharp, who studied failed school reform in the United States and stated that reform must inspect the assumptions of schools that students should be passive participants, aligned in linear rows, and responding in unison to a teacher's question (Papa & English, 2011).

Fullan (2007) referenced Sarason's work of implementation failure in the 1970s. He also noted that change theory can be dynamic in advising education reform strategies, garnering results, although only effective under the leadership of those with a deep understanding of how the influences at stake operate for specified outcomes. Argyris built on Lewin's idea of action research and constructed the term "theories-in-use" (Fullan, 2007). Argyris (1985) expanded on these theories of action, designating the one being used as one's theory-in-use, as opposed to the one they believe they use. Fullan has scrutinized major school reform initiatives from the 1960s through 1990s and developed some conclusive findings about the essence of reform in schools (McAdams, 1997). The theory of action for change must be clarified in its relationship to the chosen outcomes and a connection easily identified (Fullan, 2007). Fullan (2007) claimed theories of action must strongly relate to the actual events taking place in schools and

classrooms. In his adaptation of change theory for school reform, he noted that school leaders must utilize seven critical premises that undergird school reform.

Theory of action.

After analyzing multiple school reform strategies, Fullan identified the best approaches to implement a theory of action. Fullan (2007) attested that change knowledge is supported by these seven core principles:

- A focus on motivation

- Capacity building with a focus on results

- Learning in context

- Changing context

- A bias for reflective action

- Tri-level engagement

- Persistence and flexibility in staying the course

Motivation.

Motivation is the driving force behind all other principles. If the strategy of a school leader does not encompass motivation, it will not be successful (Fullan, 2007). Fullan stated that "ultimately it comes down to what is going on in one's head, but the stimulation comes from new experiences that give us something new to think and learn about" (2007, p. 39). Purpose creates motivation, giving stamina to those enduring change (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

Capacity building.

A school reform leader must incorporate capacity-building opportunities for stakeholders to build new skills, create transparency, and continue to foster motivation (Fullan, 2016). For

large-scale reform, a two-pronged approach is needed that includes pressure and support (Fullan, 2007). Capacity building with a focus on results encapsulates both ideas. Fullan (2007) stated that "our theory of action says that nothing will count unless people develop new capacities, and that indeed, new capacities are a route to motivation" (p. 33). The difficulty of capacity building is frequently overlooked by lawmakers and participants of change (Floden, Goertz, & O'Day, 1995) resulting in most reforms falling short because they lack a focus on capacity building (Fullan, 2007). Capacity building is supported by empowerment which requires meeting, sharing ideas, socializing, and action-step planning for the desired change, thus requiring participant interaction (Rogers & Singhal, 2016).

Learning.

Learning in context implies learning the appropriate things in the environment in which one works (Fullan, 2007). Teachers should be engaging in observations in the context in which they work daily, including being observed by teachers experiencing similar issues (Fullan, 2007). Professional development for teachers should be grounded in adult learning theory; therefore, knowing how teachers seek knowledge can give insight to strategies that will boost their learning (Papa & English, 2011). One such strategy, modeling, should be used to clarify current expectations and will be critical to learning new knowledge in the context of change theory (Fullan, 2007).

Reflective Action.

Dewey proposed that we do not learn by doing, but that we learn by thinking about what we do (Fullan, 2007). Taylor, Rudolph, and Foldy (2007) focused on the first component of action research proposed by Lewin: reflective practice. Dating back to ancient cultures,

reflective practice has been a critical component of change, including admonitions to know oneself and conducting "first-person research" (Taylor et al., 2007).

The Harvard Business School has emphasized that once a person has rehearsed or gained experience with an act, reflection on that experience is more valuable than additional practice without utilizing reflection (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2018). Reflective practice can be discussed in three stages. The first stage is comprehending the social development of one's reality (Taylor et al., 2007). If you're not willing to think about the impact of your perception of things on those you are working with, you won't be able to maximize your leadership capacity and identify areas in which one is vulnerable (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). People's awareness of reality is altered by innate likenesses, and those internal images regulate how one acts; thus, it is crucial that one helps participants see how these internal experiences influence their practices (Taylor et al., 2007). This is extremely important in education reform where teachers can grapple with their approach to student relationships as well as teaching and learning.

The second stage is for participants to understand how the internal images they have contribute to their response in a situation instead of casting blame on others for their problems (Taylor et al., 2007). Kegan and Lahey (2001) refer to this as competing commitments or framing one's fears, to replace the idea of resisting change (Taylor et al. 2007).

The final stage is acting to change how we shape our own reality (Taylor et al., 2007). Merely recognizing our implicit frames doesn't always result in a change of behavior due to those images having been our reality for such an extended length of time (Taylor et al., 2007).

These stages of reflective practices provide a lens through which change leaders can view potential organizational change. Organizations tackling change or reform initiatives will succeed

because of an understanding that the internal (images) and external environments of an organization and its stakeholders are connected (Senge, Hamilton, & Kania, 2015).

Tri-level engagement.

Tri-level engagement is essential for school reform as it connects school and community with the district and the state (Fullan, 2007). Connecting and engaging with other schools and districts leads to interactivity across all levels, known as permeable connectivity (Fullan, 2007). Working together diverts the focus from a large-scale endeavor to a committed team, combining skills and knowledge that can create a culture where adults are intertwined and impact how they work with students (Darling & Monk, 2018).

Persistence.

Stability within a school to foster reform is a critical component of successful implementation (McAdams, 1997). Without the drive to keep going when implementation becomes challenging, the outcomes will never come to fruition (Fullan, 2007). School reform is a shift in culture, a process that requires a slow evolution (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015).

The implementation dip is a concern for school reform processes, as it is a period where morale and capacity slip because of stress from dealing with unforeseen obstacles (McAdams, 1997). "Educational change depends on what teachers do and think – it's as simple and as complex as that" (Fullan, 2016, p. 97). The premise of teacher changes ties back to the three stages of reflective practice. If one is unable to embrace reflection and be open to change, educational change won't happen. The reality of school reform is that organizations will only change when the stakeholders are willing to do so (McAdams, 1997).

Why change is difficult.

Pascale (1990) described educational change as a process that floats between overcontrol and chaos (Fullan, 1993). Although school leaders naturally want to lead change through control, ultimately that approach is rarely successful, as change is very difficult and can feel like an uncontrollable concept. The best approach to leading change is to come up with better ways to think about the process (Fullan, 1993). Fullan recognized the difficulty of thinking about educational change processes and developed eight lessons that emerged from his new paradigm of change (Fullan, 1993). Fullan (1993) outlined the eight basic lessons that leaders need to utilize for thinking that contradict their normal thought process and include the following: (a) school leaders can't mandate what matters; (b) change is a journey, not a blueprint; (c) problems are our friends; (d) vision and strategic planning come later; (e) individualism and collectivism must have equal power; (f) neither centralization nor decentralization works; (g) connection with the wider environment is critical for success; and (h) every person is a change agent. Change is a struggle because it requires navigation between overcontrol and chaos as well as the willingness to work with an opposing force (Fullan, 1993).

Leadership and school reform.

School leaders are required to do more and be masters of many school-related tasks. Over the last few decades, leading change or serving as a change agent is one of the most difficult, yet increasingly asked, challenges as greater attention has been placed on discipline reform in schools. The job of a school leader in creating conditions conducive to change in their organization has received increasing consideration in the past decade (Da'as, 2018). Current literature notes that the effectiveness of school reform is in the implementation process, which seldomly is implemented as planned and intended (Ganon-Shilon & Chen, 2019). Incorporating new ways of instructing and dealing with student behavior requires a transformation in an

educator's cultural views; these changes are often the most challenging components of change (Wong, 2019).

Sense-making processes help principals and teachers give new purpose to their practices when undergoing school reform (Ganon-Shilon & Chen, 2019). To change the way one practices, one must consider the deep beliefs that drive the way one currently practices (Wong, 2019). Not much is known about the skills of principals related to school reform or how principals persuade educators and disseminate steps to encourage desired outcomes during reform (Da'as, 2018). This leaves the relationship between the skill set of principals and skill flexibility of teachers underexplored (Da'as, 2018). One approach to filling this gap in information is to explore sense-making as a collaborative structure, describing the work between principals and their teachers via dialogue as they tackle the reform to improve their school (Ganon-Shilon & Chen, 2019).

Related Literature

Public schools exclude around three and a half million students each year (Black, 2016) As a result, discipline disparity gaps continue to be problematic, bringing attention to the necessity to adjust one's approach in student conflict mediations, dealing with rule violations, and helping students with re-entry plans after a rule violation has occurred (Gregory et al., 2016). Restorative practices is a model of school discipline that focuses on prevention while attempting to transform school discipline, focusing on improving relationships between students and staff, and intending to reduce the implementation of punitive practices (Passarella, 2017). Restorative practices seeks to build meaningful relationships, reduce the number of repeat offenders, promote social responsibility, and re-establish the community concept in schools (Costello et al., 2009). Over the past 20 years, researchers have analyzed the impact of restorative practices in

schools, mostly resulting in non-peer reviewed articles or books (Evans & Lester, 2018). To provide supporting empirical data that restorative practices is, in fact, a viable approach to school discipline, additional research is needed, particularly at the high school level (Gregory et al., 2016). Few existing studies have investigated the connection between restorative practices and the relationships marginalized students have with their teachers (Gregory et al., 2016). The work of restorative practices presents a framework for whole-school change, concurrently requiring the engagement of all stakeholders (Costello et al., 2009).

The Need for Discipline Reform

For more than a century, educational researchers and administrators have considered the value of school suspensions and expulsions and the long-term effect on students having experienced exclusion from school. In 1938, the NASSP (National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin) published an article submitted by a high school principal reporting that detention and suspension were not generating the outcome hoped for (Wiley et al., 2018). Since then, constitutional approaches to school discipline contradict current zero-tolerance practices, policies that depend heavily on expulsions and suspensions (Evans & Lester, 2018). The Federal Department of Education and Department of Justice sent out a statement in January of 2014 communicating their ambition to limit school discipline resulting in exclusion (Deakin & Kupchik, 2016). A plethora of research has shown that zero-tolerance policies are ineffective and alternative approaches are needed (Advancement Project, 2010; American Psychological Association, 2008). Noticing that zero-tolerance policies are posing challenges to educating students, particularly those already marginalized, Armour (2016) provided an overview of restorative justice and its roadblock to the school-to-prison pipeline. She acknowledged the unintended effects of these policies include the criminalization of students through punitive

measures, ultimately leading to dropping out or an escalation of students ending up in prison.

She also noted that inconsistencies in administered discipline have exacerbated discrepancies in

disciplinary referrals and suspensions, which also includes the rate at which discipline is given,

as well as the length of suspensions. Many schools continue to target students considered

troublemakers and focus on their bad behavior by suspending or expelling them (Standing,

Fearon, & Dee, 2012). Acosta (2016) stated that discipline policies emphasizing zero tolerance

have a greater impact on marginalized youth in America's public schools. Every African

American student entering a high school has a 25% chance of being suspended in a single school

year (Black, 2016). When exclusion, due to suspension, denies students the ability to fully

engage in school activities, involvement becomes a focus for equity and inclusion (Wang, 2018).

Racial discipline gaps have emerged from the closer look at secondary school discipline

practices, assumed to be a result of the underdeveloped relationships between educators and

minority students (Gregory, Huang, Anyon, Greer, & Downing, 2018). Suspensions from school

have been correlated to lower academic achievement, lack of school and community

engagement, absenteeism, risky behaviors, dropping out of school, and a higher propensity to be

incarcerated (Mansfield, Fowler, & Rainbolt, 2018). Therefore, school leaders, predominately

those in urban areas, are under great pressure, if not threatened with federal investigations, to

reform discipline to include non-punitive measures, such as restorative practices (Lustick, 2017).

Restorative practices as a discipline reform.

Restorative practices provides a structure for initiating change through a framework for

driving school-wide cultural change (Costello et al., 2009) as well as a structure for confronting

student behavior through a perspective of valuing and honoring relationships when working with

students (Oliver, 2016). Change can be at the macro or micro level, from the whole-school to

individual classrooms, but the vision must come from the building supervisor (Costello et al., 2009). The use of restorative practices in an educational institution might be a more complete approach to prevention and attend to the intricacy of youth development and behavior (Acosta et al., 2016). It also teaches youth how to reconcile relationships that have been damaged by conflict and provides teachers with an alternative approach to dealing with problematic behaviors instead of punishing the student (Hochstrasser Fickel, Nieto Angel, MacFarlane, & Hikairo MacFarlane, 2017). To maintain behaviors that keep students from being suspended, students must be held responsible for their choices and practice solving problems for themselves (Standing et al., 2012).

Restorative practices shows hope as an effective means of discipline reform because it is a two-year intervention, theoretically supported, easily integrated into the school environment, and has a research-based backing (Acosta et al., 2016). Although minimal research is available, some successes have been published. Most of the available research is in the form of evaluation or institutional reports outside of a substantial amount of information relating to criminology (Evans & Lester, 2018).

Because of restorative practice implementation, educators can develop meaningful relationships with students and are better able to understand and respond to student behaviors (Armour, 2016). As a result of relationships, students engage in the school community, and positive outcomes are more likely to occur. With the onset of high-stakes accountability measures, new challenges for school leaders with a social justice focus have emerged (Wang, 2018). Restorative practices, as a means of discipline reform, gives teachers, students, and families a schoolwide disciplinary approach that will create a positive culture and is grounded in hope for positive outcomes for all students (Armour, 2016). The social-emotional framework of

restorative practices sways its application from a control measure of discipline to a culture of involvement, growth, and principle for the people and the schools (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012).

History of Restorative Practices

The root of restorative practices, as practices in modern day schools, stems from restorative justice. Restorative justice originated in Canada after a series of vandalism events took place in Ontario, leading to the Kitchener Victim Offender Reconciliation Program, a model for victim/offender discourse (Kohli, Montano, & Fisher, 2019). This model was founded in the 1970s by the probation officer who, attempting to reconcile the two teens with their victims, inadvertently created the reconciliation program (Wachtel, 2013). Restorative justice encourages an open dialogue between a criminal and the victim of the crime (Van Camp, 2017). The concept relies on the idea that we are all linked, like a chain, through relationships, and when one of those relationships has been violated, a link is broken (Stewart Kline, 2016). The early, positive impact of restorative justice initiatives showed a decline in recidivism and improved relationships in families and the community (Vaandering, 2014).

The foundation of restorative practices can be linked to indigenous communities in North America, New Zealand, Japan, and Africa (Rideout et al., 2010). The first educational occurrence of a restorative conference was at a high school in Australia in 1994, after an assault at a school dance (Standing et al., 2012) culminating in the original school-based conference (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005). Restorative practices became more commonplace in 1998 in a public high school in Pennsylvania when frustrated teachers were implementing failing, ineffective strategies for discipline (Costello et al., 2009).

Defining Restorative Practices

Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel (2009) referred to restorative practices as a method of change for schools that is not a one-size-fits-all approach. It is also not a "cookie-cutter program that can be purchased; rather, it is a philosophical framework that provides a different way of responding to challenging student behavior in our school communities" (Oliver, 2016, p. 31). It can be better understood to bolster safe school communities, fixed in the idea that humans need relationships and will flourish in social accountability rather than control (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). Colette Kimball interviewed Ted Wachtel, founder of the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP), to reiterate the relationship between restorative practices and restorative justice (2013), providing a framework for building trust and restoring it when lost (Smith, Frey, & Fisher, 2018). Restorative practices has a focus on intervention and interruption, seeking to change how educators and students connect with each other, resulting in a more positive school climate (Gregory et al., 2016) while improving behavior, reducing exclusionary discipline, and maintaining a safe learning environment (Standing, Fearon, & Dee, 2012). Wachtel emphasized that the relationship between students and those in authority must be about collaboration and not doing things to or for students (Kimball, 2013). Kimball (2013) gave her own account of the two by comparing restorative justice to an intervention-based approach and restorative practices to a more prevention-based approach. Stewart Kline (2016) described restorative practices as an "umbrella of tools that educators can use to establish positive relationships with all students and stakeholders" (p. 98). O'Callaghan (2005) claimed restorative practices is a way to support teachers, students, and families to locate productive ways of building relationships in school, home, and at work (Rideout et al., 2010).

Essential elements of restorative practices.

The IIRP created interventions as a continuum of practices that includes formal and informal strategies. Part of their training of teachers includes the 11 "essential elements" (Acosta et al., 2016). The most informal element on the continuum is affective statements, used to bring attention to success, working hard, or any other desirable behavior (Costello et al., 2009). The second essential practice includes restorative questions, utilized during conferences, to allow the facilitator to encourage the offender to reflect on their choice and how it impacted the victim. These questions include (Kehoe et al., 2018):

- Can you explain what happened?

- Who do you think has been affected by this? And how were they affected?

- What needs to happen to make things right?

- If the same situation happens again, what could you do differently?

Small impromptu conferences, the third element, take place immediately after an incident to repair harm, and to utilize affective statements and the restorative questions to significantly increase the effectiveness of RP (Acosta et al., 2016). Circles are the fourth essential element and a key component of restorative practice's philosophy. Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel (2010) provide insight to the relevance and establishment of restorative circles as part of the International Institute for Restorative Practices implementation of restorative practices. Sitting in circles has been a culturally and historically relevant tradition, centered upon a common point of origin. The IIRP founders highlight the circle as a symbol of connectedness between themselves and their community. The instructional setup of most classrooms consisting of rows eliminates the sense of connectedness of students to their teachers and classmates. Circles can be used proactively or responsively (Acosta et al., 2016). Proactive circles make up 80% of the circles managed at schools and are utilized to set behavioral expectations; and responsive circles

comprise 20% of the circles conducted and are used in response to behavior affecting a group of

students or the whole class (Acosta et al., 2019). Circles provide an opportunity for students to

give voice to a conflict or wrongdoing and actively listen to their classmates in a safe place

(Wachtel, 2013). Maisha Winn (2018) describes circles as a way of expressing the importance

of commitment and acceptance, where facilitators support students while asking an array of

questions that help participants navigate humanity and see themselves as contributors to the

world. The facilitator can be the adult or a student leader that must engage in the conversation

but not dominate (Evanovich, Martinez, Kern, & Haynes, 2020). There are five components of a

circle, including an opening to gain the participants' attention and recognize the participants'

efforts; expectations that are made clear about participation and circle behavior; utilization of an

object to signify who is speaking; a circle facilitator who encourages participation and maintains

order in the circle; and when the circle makes a decision, it is done so by group consensus

(Stewart Kline, 2016). The seventh element, fair process, gives students an opportunity to share

input about decisions impacting them (Acosta et al., 2016), allowing the person in authority to do

things in collaboration with the students (Wachtel, 2013). Shame plays a large part in human

behavior and is given special regard as the eighth element (Wachtel, 2013). Shame is a critical

component of restorative practices by promoting the avoidance of denouncing the offender

(Acosta et al., 2016) and recognizing that shame causes withdrawal, putting oneself down,

avoiding, and attacking others (Wachtel, 2013). Restorative elements don't solely apply to

students and their behavior. The ninth element is restorative staff community where RPs are

used to settle staff disagreements and reestablish community among the staff (Acosta et al.,

2019). Restorative approaches with families, the tenth element, includes valuing the family of

the impacted student(s) and relying on their knowledge and expertise (Gardella, 2015) for

improved behavior and academic achievement (Acosta et al., 2019). Finally, the fundamental hypothesis understandings are the twelfth element and serve as the cornerstone of restorative practices by noting that implementing consistency in student expectations in conjunction with those in authority doing things with, not to or for students, is necessary for positive behavioral outcomes (Mansfield et al., 2018).

Recommendations for Implementation

Restorative practices implementation has emerged so rapidly that the number of schools practicing has surpassed the rate of research (Gregory et al., 2018). As a result, critics are requesting more research to grasp factors affiliated with utilizing restorative practices with devotion (Green et al., 2019). What is already clear is that successful implementation of school discipline practices requires substantial support for teachers and schools through training and resources (Skiba & Losen, 2016). Restorative practices in school will not change the culture of a school community if the entire school is not subject to acceptable training and sustained support (Winn, 2018).

Professional development.

Research on the quality of teacher education programs, focusing on restorative practices, will be beneficial for teachers to understand their roles in the process of implementation; ongoing professional development is critical to the success of any educational reform, yet there is little to no attention in the literature about professional development for teachers in schools using restorative practices (Mayworm, 2016). Those educating future teachers have the burden to investigate and explain the history of restorative practices for aspiring teachers (Kohli et al., 2019). Because teachers spend the greatest amount of time interfacing with students, their

training and development in restorative practice implementation is key to the reform strategies'

potential for success. Therefore, teachers require professional development centered upon

implementing the key elements as well as facilitating restorative circles with continued

monitoring of teacher-student relationships, peer relationships, social competency, bullying,

academic achievement, and disciplinary referrals (Acosta et al., 2016). Quality professional

development and coaching are essential to change the culture of discipline in public schools and

to support approaches that promote appropriate behavior and address disruptions from students

(Noltmeyer & Ward, 2015). Teachers not receiving sustainable professional development and

follow-up support stopped implementing the practice (Mayworm, 2016). Skiba and Losen

(2015) noted educators need support through professional development and technical assistance,

administrative support, access to discipline data, collaboration with community agencies, codes

of conduct that support alternative discipline strategies, parental help with understanding the new

approach, and improved access to mental health and support personnel in the school. To rethink

the necessary professional development, Mayworm et al. (2016) developed a framework for

teacher training that is specific to restorative practice implementation. The approach includes the

seven steps required to implement, review, and evaluate professional development for restorative

practices. The steps include three tiers, each of which is more targeted to the teacher. The first

tier includes the school leadership determining and justifying the need to move to restorative

practices for the individual school, followed by school-wide professional development. Once the

initial professional development has taken place and data has been collected, the initial

implementation phase begins. After the implementation phase commences, data and surveys

collected during progress monitoring can help designate teachers in need of additional support

through group or one-on-one consultation. These teachers will then progress into tiers two and three based on the type of consultation necessary.

   Teacher attitudes and dispositions.

   The relationship between teachers and students has undergone extensive study and been declared to be a critical component of student success in schools (Buckmaster, 2016). Unfortunately, most research on school discipline programs focuses on the student impact and seldom defines how the adults navigate the work (Greenberg, 2017). Restorative practices in the classroom are greatly influenced by the abilities, experience (Lohmeyer, 2017), and attitudes of teachers, requiring a one- to three-year process to transform (Passarella, 2017). This can create challenges with consistency among teachers, which can drastically impact the success of restorative practices implementation (Short et al., 2018). Educators can inadvertently hurt marginalized students because of a failure to self-reflect on their own philosophies about student discipline (Carter Andrews & Gutwein, 2020). Most teachers view suspension and expulsion as a vital part of school discipline, even though they view it as a regrettable conclusion (Deakin & Kupchik, 2016). According to Vaandering (2014), professional development "explicitly placed the opportunity for change in the hands of educators, rather than policy makers or department consultants" (p. 517). Research indicates that restorative practices is most impactful when teachers reflect on the process and acknowledge their values (McCluskey et al., 2008). Most of the current research from schools centers on the theory of control, particularly that maintained by the adults, and the importance of the adults, and the power they hold while interacting with students in school is overlooked (Greenberg, 2017). The best professional development can be unsuccessful in changing teacher attitudes and practice thus impacting student outcomes, if follow-up support is not sustainable (Mayworm, 2016). Therefore, the core of restorative

practices could lie within the humanity and mentality of those who are charged with its

enforcement (Buckmaster, 2016).

Barriers to consider.

School reform measures and changes are riddled with obstacles to overcome. Barriers to

the social justice agenda through approaches like restorative practices include staff attitudes and

convictions, privileged parental expectations, negative mindsets regarding marginalized groups,

and the difficulty or hardship for school leaders driving school change (Wang, 2018). Teachers

are historically exhausted from the demands of the job and feel as though they are getting

nowhere; others are disillusioned with previous reform strategies that failed; many lacked

support in the past, and others will continue to do the bare minimum just to get by (Blood &

Thorsborne, 2006). Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) stated "there are always going to be teachers

in your school who are emotionally invested in the past and therefore resistant to change" (p.

149). Barriers can range from logistical to philosophical, where individuals disagree on what

student accountability looks like; levels of challenges include the individual, interpersonal trust,

corporate, and intellectual (Sandwick et al., 2019). These obstacles must be considered and

addressed as school leaders hope to achieve equity in discipline practices through school reform.

Staff must be ready for the change, and leadership must be clear and flexible about delivering the

purpose of the new approach to discipline, placing the burden of successful implementation on

quality professional development and school leadership (McCluskey et al., 2008).

Implementation needs time from the staff, a shared vision, training (Passarella, 2017),

support, and resources so that schools have what they require to manage classrooms and their

schools (Weingarten, 2016). For greatest success, consistency throughout the school is

necessary yet difficult to achieve due to frequent teacher turnover, pressures from formal testing,

and time to implement restorative meetings (Short, Case, & McKenzie, 2018). Additional barriers are a lack of urgency, negative staff attitudes and mores, parental expectations, and lack of expectations for marginalized student groups (Wang, 2018).

Morris (2016) noted that one major issue when implementing school reform is lack of persistence, when people think change should happen more quickly than it can realistically happen (Mansfield et al., 2018).

The Effects of Restorative Practices

Restorative practices implementation is optimistically regarded as an effective approach to disciplinary interventions (Gregory et al., 2016). Educators working with restorative practices have expressed that this approach to discipline provides a greater perspective on fulfillment and purpose to life (Bevington, 2015). Districts, schools, and administrators have been encouraged to disrupt the pattern of violence by building nonviolent school communities (Skiba, 2000). The current research concludes that implementation at secondary schools provides limited information extracted from student and teacher interviews or surveys (Kehoe et al., 2018). Varying approaches to whole-school discipline exist among secondary schools (McCluskey et al., 2008). In schools where a culture of community is already strong, staff deeply embrace the practices and delve into greater discussion of their values and what is important to their school's climate, while others need extra motivation and see it as just another strategy to manage a class (McCluskey et al., 2008). Schools implementing restorative practices have indicated that it is more than a standard behavior management system; it drives a philosophy of life with deeper meaning tied to student-teacher relationships (Bevington, 2015).

The literature is inconclusive in terms of the effectiveness of restorative practices. Because restorative practices is still new to educators, there is no consistent course of implementation outside of the IIRP professional development or engaging in their master's level program. Training of staff on culture-building and community development within schools and slowly implementing changes provides a greater opportunity for sustainability.

Most existing studies have been based on the impacts to whole-school or thousands of students. Standing, Fearon, and Dee (2011) conducted a study on a single boy at a secondary school and found no change in behavior due to inconsistent teacher buy-in. They also recommended future studies with a small group of students. Grant High School in Portland, Oregon, found restorative practices implementation resulted in a decrease of teacher written discipline referrals from 992 to 408, and RP is now a part of the school culture (Jessell, 2012). At Lyons Community School in Brooklyn, New York, restorative practice implementation and training by the IIRP led to impactful circles and mediations, reducing suspensions by 25% (Dignity in Schools Campaign – New York, 2013). Pottstown, Pennsylvania's Pottstown High School was having a difficult time with fights, which were reduced by more than 50% and out-of-school suspensions reduced from 140 to 108 (Lewis, 2009).

Lohmeyer (2017) summarizes the emergence of restorative practices as a theoretical practice in educational settings. He makes note of the power differential in the relationships between students, teachers, and administrators and the impact this can have on the culture in an educational setting. He theorizes the power differential between education professionals and the young people they serve through restorative practices is leveled. When engagement, explanation, and clear expectations are areas of attention for educators, students are more apt to trust and work within the limitations of educational systems (Lohmeyer, 2017).

Summary

Inequities in approaches to student discipline have become a global issue in recent decades. To ameliorate these disparities, school and district leadership must evaluate punitive and zero-tolerance practices. Understanding the impact of exclusion on student achievement, self-esteem, and community engagement will be vital to shifting the outcomes of students of color and other marginalized groups. Restorative practices is showing promise in addressing the social-emotional deficits of students and is better preparing educators to meet the needs of students in repairing harm and establishing meaningful relationships with adults. These relationships are driven by the Ecosystem theory. School leaders moving toward restorative practices implementation must consider the appropriate timeline and purpose to address change theory risks. Chapter 2 has surveyed the history, the needs, and the effects of restorative practices on a global scale.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

Discipline disparity gaps continue to widen in schools, bringing attention to the necessity to adjust one's approach to student behavior management (Armour, 2016). Armour (2016) claimed the problem was amplified with the rise of school shootings in the late 1990s; after which, many institutions began to employ zero-tolerance policies in schools for drugs, alcohol, and violence. One approach to classroom management and school behavioral expectations is restorative practices; however, restorative practices needs additional organized investigation to understand its undeveloped implementation at the high school level (Gregory et al., 2016). Kehoe, et al. (2018) noted there has been limited research focused on exploring the perspectives of teachers on the use of restorative practices in the classroom. An increasing number of researchers are reporting that high dropout rates, academic failure, and racial disproportionality are being "exacerbated by a lack of teacher preparation in student management" (Armour, 2016, p. 1). There is limited research giving voice to the perspectives of teachers relating to their lived experience of being trained in and utilizing restorative practices in their classrooms. Teacher perspectives will be critical to the understanding of restorative practices as a means of discipline reform in secondary schools.

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study will be to describe the experiences of secondary classroom teachers with restorative practices in North Carolina. Restorative practices seeks to build meaningful relationships, reduce the number of repeat offenders, promote social responsibility, and re-establish the community concept in schools (Costello et al., 2009). Documenting the experience of teachers implementing restorative practices could lead to insight into gaps in their classroom management skills, drive

improvements in teacher education programs, and provide insight for school administrators looking to implement discipline reform in their schools.

Chapter Three will provide a blueprint for how the study's purpose was achieved, starting with a description of the design of the study and a list of the research questions. Following the blueprint, sites, participants, and procedures will be introduced, including a description of the role of the researcher. The modes for data collection will be thoroughly discussed, as well as the steps utilized to ensure trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

Design

This qualitative research study will use a phenomenological design. This study is qualitative because a "problem or issue needs to be explored" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 45), preferably in a natural setting, usually where the phenomenon of interest naturally occurs (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). In this study, the problem to be explored is the lived experience of teachers while implementing restorative practices as an approach to reform in school discipline. Phenomenological studies investigate the meaning of the lived experience, focusing on the unique phenomenon for a group of people (Patton, 2015), in this case, teachers. Patton (2015) described a phenomenology as requiring "methodologically, carefully, and thoroughly describing how people experience some phenomenon – how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others" (p. 115). I selected this design to give voice to teachers and make sense of how they experience change while implementing restorative practices.

The approach will be a transcendental phenomenology. Moustakas (1994) provided an in-depth description of transcendental phenomenology as it relates to the behavioral and social sciences. Throughout his description, he acknowledged the work of Edmund Husserl and sought

to portray Husserl's love for philosophy through defining the elaborate terms associated with the research design (p. 25). He elaborated on the differences between other methods of qualitative studies and that of transcendental phenomenology:

> The researcher following a transcendental phenomenological approach engages in disciplined and systematic efforts to set aside prejudgments regarding the phenomenon being investigated (known as the *Epoche* process) in order to launch the study as far as possible free of preconceptions, beliefs, and knowledge of the phenomenon from prior experience and professional studies – to be completely open, receptive, and naïve in listening to and hearing research participants describe their experience of the phenomenon being investigated. (p. 22)

A transcendental phenomenological design is appropriate for my research topic as I seek to understand how teachers perceive the implementation of restorative practices in the secondary classroom. As a high school principal, I would like to address barriers to implementation before adopting restorative practices as a means of discipline reform at my school. Having a deep understanding of a sample group of teachers can be a valuable tool for school administrators considering change through school reform initiatives.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study include one central question, followed by three sub-questions as listed below:

Central Research Question

How do secondary-level teachers from central North Carolina describe their experiences with restorative practices in the classroom?

Research Sub-Question One

How do teachers describe how their teaching has taken on a new dimension after restorative practice implementation?

Research Sub-Question Two

How do teachers describe how they have changed, as an educator, after implementing restorative practices?

Research Sub-Question Three

How do teachers describe how their relationships with others have changed after implementing restorative practices?

<p align="center">Setting</p>

This study will be conducted in one of the largest school districts in North Carolina and the 47th largest in the nation. The district, located in central North Carolina, contains 28 high schools, 15 of which are traditional, comprehensive high schools, and 22 middle schools. Many of the schools have gradually implemented restorative practices after being charged with addressing discipline disparities and lost days of instruction due to suspensions. Options of discipline reform given by district leadership include *Capturing Kids' Hearts*, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and restorative practices. The district partnered with the International Institute for Restorative Practices to train selected teachers in groups of approximately 40, only allowing up to 5 staff members from each school to attend training as it became available. Because trained teachers are not allowed to train others, a policy upheld by the International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP), full implementation across the district has been incrementally slow but will speed up as additional staff are certified through the IIRP's master-level certification track. Over the last three years, several district-level staff have received these training credentials through the IIRP and can now train staff throughout the

district without the $17,000.00 per training session fee. Due to this slow rollout, very few secondary schools have undergone whole-school implementation, but there are small pockets of classrooms where teachers are fully trained and practicing. The district consists of 1,153 middle and high school teachers who interact with a diverse population of students: African-American – 40.85%; Hispanic/Latino – 16.40%; White – 31.24%; Multiracial – 4.30%; Asian – 6.68%; American Indian – 0.39%; and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander - 0.14% (School District Public Schools, 2018a). The district serves nearly 72,000 students, 64.7% of which qualify for Free and/or Reduced Lunch (SDPS, 2018a).

I selected this school district because of its mandate that every secondary school select a mode of discipline reform, one of which is restorative practices. IIRP training is available and comes without any additional cost to schools or teachers, yet it can be challenging to schedule two full days of professional development in an already challenging profession with limited days for preparation and grading. District-level staff are trained and certified to work with individuals and schools as needed for consistency and sustainability. Therefore, this district was chosen because its secondary teachers will be experiencing the common phenomenon that is the focus of this study. Information from this study can be utilized by school leaders and district-level staff to support future implementation.

The school district is led by its Board of Education consisting of nine members, one elected at-large representative and eight representatives elected within districts designated regionally across the county. The superintendent works with the board and has a council consisting of nine Chiefs (School District Public Schools, 2018b). Under the direction of the Chief Student Services Officer, an executive director of equity in student achievement works with an executive director of equity and inclusion (SDPS, 2018b). This department has certified

IIRP presenters and leads restorative practices training and support throughout the district, making them a valuable resource in partnering with this study.

Participants

A purposeful sample of teachers will be taken from each school site who has shared the phenomenon of implementing restorative practices in a secondary classroom for one year. Patton (2015) noted that purposeful sampling pinpoints information-abundant participants whose study will spotlight the research question under investigation. Barbour (2001) defined purposeful sampling as "aiming to capture the diversity within a population" (Patton, 2015, p. 265). Within the purposeful sampling, I will utilize a maximum variation sample to include diversity in gender, race, and experience-level of teaching. Maximum variation, also known as heterogeneity sampling, serves two purposes: (a) to evidence diversity and (b) to locate patterns and themes common across the diversity in the sample (Patton, 2015).

I will use a small part of the affected population to determine the impact of restorative practices on the entire population of teachers in an urban school district. Each participant will have been trained in and have implemented restorative practices for one year in the secondary classroom. The sample size will be 10 to 15 teachers, preferably 12 that are diverse in age, experience, gender, and race. These 10 to 15 teachers will come from a pool of secondary teachers that have had IIRP-based restorative practices training and have implemented it in their classroom for a minimum of one school year. To date, 10 middle school staffs and two high school staffs have been trained according to IIRP guidelines (E. Gray, personal communication, April 22, 2020), accounting for approximately 650 teachers. An additional 190 individual teachers have received training since 2018 at the secondary level (E. Gray, personal

communication, April 22, 2020). A description of the participants, their pseudonyms, gender, race, and experience-level of teaching follows:

Table 1

Description of Participants

Pseudonym	Age Range	Gender	Race	Subject Area/Level	Years of Experience
Anita	50-59	Female	Black	Mathematics/MS	2
Bernice	50-59	Female	Black	Exceptional Children/MS	11
Carolyn	50-59	Female	White	English/HS	32
Danielle	40-49	Female	Black	Science/HS	20
Ellen	50-59	Female	White	Mathematics/MS	24
Francis	30-39	Female	White	Social Studies/HS	13
Georgette	40-49	Female	Black	Information Technology/MS	5
Hillary	50-59	Female	White	English Language Learners/HS	9
Isabel	20-29	Female	White	English/Science/HS	5
Janice	40-49	Female	White	English/HS	2
Kevin	40-49	Male	Black	Physical Education/HS	21

Procedures

The initial part of this study's procedure was to obtain precursory approval from the leadership of School District Public Schools and the 50 school sites. Concurrently, I submitted the appropriate documentation to receive IRB approval to conduct the research at the designated locations. Once approval was received (Appendix A), I sent a request to the 50 site supervisors

and began participant selection by surveying the staff for willing participants that fit the designated criteria. With principal permission, I sent an email to invite participants to join the study (Appendix B) as well as the consent form (Appendix C). Once Informed Consent Forms were collected, I advanced to the data collection stage. The final part of the research process consisted of the face-to-face interviews. Patton (2015) indicated that the most important mode for qualitative researchers to comprehend the experiences and awareness of people is through thorough interviews and not questionnaires. He also reiterated the use of focus groups and their ability to unify people who share a common experience with a specific topic as well as provide a safe space for participants to immerse themselves in meaningful discourse about the phenomenon the researcher hopes to understand. Each interview and focus group was recorded via digital voice recorders, audio recorders, and annotated by researcher notes. This allowed for a secondary layer of data collection that reduced the risks associated with technological failure and loss of information, as well as gave a format for analyzing body language and facial expressions relevant to the topic of study. A final procedural step was to analyze program records from teacher training on the implementation of restorative practices. According to Patton (2015), "program records can provide a behind-the-scenes look at program processes and how they came into being" (p. 377). This delivered insight into the specific preparation of teachers with their readiness to embrace change along with restorative practice implementation.

The Researcher's Role

As the human instrument in the study, I must be capable of adapting to the numerous realities that will be confronted through research (Lincoln & Guba, 1994). Lincoln and Guba (1994) emphasized that "all instruments interact with respondents and objects but that only the human instrument is capable of grasping and evaluating the meaning of that differential

interaction" (p. 39). Having served as a classroom teacher and priding myself on my ability to build relationships with my students, it is important that I recognize my own biases and presumptions in this study.

Although I serve as a high school principal in the school district, I have not had any previous relationships with the participating schools, approving principals, nor have the participating teachers implemented at my school. I have no background knowledge of how these schools chose to implement restorative practices, which can include principal decision, School Improvement Team decision, or Department Chair approval. I will also have no knowledge of why teachers were selected for training or if they volunteered. However, each teacher has been exclusively trained to implement restorative practices by an IIRP-certified trainer, a pre-qualifying condition for this study.

While conducting this study, I will work under an ontological philosophical assumption. This will require me to accept the idea of various realities (Creswell, 2013). This is illustrated through multiple modes of confirmation in extracted themes utilizing the descriptions of participants and presenting their individual perspectives (Creswell, 2013). My ontological assumption is grounded in the framework of Social Constructivism. Because I will be seeking to understand the phenomenon as it ties to the setting in which I live and work, I will be relying on the lived experiences of the participants in the study (Creswell, 2013).

Before I meet with participants for interviews and focus groups, I will need to take time to pray and reflect to ensure I can set aside my own beliefs and biases, to remove any intentions I may have toward each participant's responses to questions. By utilizing a Qualitative Data Analysis Software, my personal beliefs should not impact the data analysis. However, I will

utilize member checking and a peer reviewer to double-check that I have not unintentionally inserted my own meanings into the data.

Data Collection

Data will not be collected until the Institutional Review Board has approved my request. The School District and each of the proposed research sites will be notified and will grant approval before any teachers are contacted. Moustakas (1994) described the long interview as the primary method of data collection in a phenomenological study. He labeled the process as one involving open-ended questions and comments that can lead to an extensive explanation of the participant's experience with the phenomenon. The interview should target bringing out all facets of the participant's experience with the phenomenon (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Bracketing the questions will be essential to draw out the unique experience of the researcher, the participant, and the participant's discovery of themselves in association with the phenomenon (Gall et al., 2007).

Semi-Structured, Long Interviews

Voluntary and approved teachers will be interviewed after informed consent is signed and received. Individual, in-depth interviews will be conducted with each participant. Patton (2015) described the phenomenological interview as the "capturing of a personal description of a lived experience" (p. 433), by focusing on the details of a specific case as the participant lived it. Interviews will be documented via hand-written notes, digital recorder, and videotape. Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions (Appendix D)

Background Information

1. Please introduce yourself including where you grew up, anything about your family, and your educational background.

2. What kind of educational experiences did you have (elementary through graduate, if applicable)?

3. How did you arrive in your current position?

Experiences with Restorative Practices

4. What changes have you made in your instruction after restorative practices implementation?

5. How have those changes impacted the culture of your classroom?

6. How does your instruction now embody restorative practice principles?

7. What components of your educational philosophy have changed due to restorative practice implementation?

8. What components of restorative practices in your classroom do you still grapple with?

9. What were your initial thoughts about implementing restorative practices?

10. What feelings surfaced during the implementation of restorative practices?

11. How has implementing restorative practices caused you to evaluate your role as an educator?

12. How has restorative practice implementation altered your view of conflict in your classroom/school?

13. How were you able to process the uncertainty of implementing restorative practices?

14. How did restorative practices implementation compare with your initial mindset?

15. How did your experience with restorative practices impact those that are significant in your life?

16. How has implementing restorative practices altered your relationships with students?

17. How do you model restorative practices in your relationships with students, teachers, and administrators?

18. How does your knowledge of a student's background/homelife impact how you work with them?

Questions one through three are intended to build a relationship with the participants and get them to relax. They are background/demographic questions utilized to determine attributes of the person being interviewed (Patton, 2015). These are meant to serve as an opening to discovering how people understand and discuss their history while building rapport. The interviewee needs time to loosen up by responding to some general questions while becoming comfortable talking to the interviewer (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lewin described the actions of people as being rooted in the past when he stated, "judgment, understanding, are perception are impossible without a related background, and the meaning of every event depends directly upon the nature of its background" (p. 145). Making this connection with the teacher will be vital to applying their background to their perception of restorative practice implementation and adaptation to change.

Questions four and 18 are experience/behavior questions designed to bring out an explanation of the person's experiences and create a picture (Patton, 1990) of what the participant experienced during restorative practice implementation. These questions provide a critical gauge to qualitatively describe the understanding of the teachers' experiences with restorative practices and enduring change. They are designed to address how their instruction has taken on a new dimension after the implementation of restorative practices.

Question eight through 10 are feeling questions designed to gather responses from participants about their experiences and thoughts, ideally eliciting adjective responses (Patton,

2015). These questions intentionally encourage the teacher to think about their experiences with restorative practices and how those experiences made them feel, facilitating reflective thought.

Questions five through seven and 11 through 16 are opinion and values questions (Patton, 2015). These questions cause the teachers to reflect deeply on their experiences with restorative practices as well as the impact on their loved ones. These questions are deliberately placed at the end of the interview so that trust could be established earlier, resulting in a thoughtful response to the question, hopefully extracting deeper meaning from the participant. By asking questions that lead to understanding of opinions, beliefs, and perceptions, the interviewer can embrace the intellectual and systematic practice of participants and delineate how they think about their experience (Patton, 2015).

Question 17 is a knowledge question seeking an understanding of the participant's factual information, basically what they know about the program (Patton, 2015).

Focus Group

One focus group will include four to six participants from a combination of the various study sites following the individual interviews. The focus group will allow the participants to elaborate on ideas that derived from the individual interviews. Krueger and Casey (2000) recognized the following as traits of a focus group to include, "a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment" (Gall et al., 2007, p. 244). Participant cooperation influences them to share their feelings and thoughts that they might not otherwise share in an individual interview (Gall et al., 2007). The purpose of the focus group is not about agreement but to extract differing opinions about the phenomenon (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Focus Group Questions (Appendix E)

1. Tell us your name, what you teach, and how long you have been an educator.

2. What have you learned about your instruction through the implementation process of restorative practices?

3. Has anything about your instruction/management changed as a result of implementing restorative practices?

4. What have you learned about yourself, as an educator, through the process of restorative practices implementation?

5. How has your relationship with your students been impacted by restorative practice implementation?

6. How is this different than your relationships with students prior to implementation?

7. If restorative practices were an animal, what animal would it be (Bevington, 2015)?

8. What experiences with restorative practices led you to this response?

Question one is an introductory question designed to engage the participants in the conversation. The purpose of the introductory question is to get the participants thinking about their affiliation with the topic (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Questions two, three, and four are to gain an understanding of how the teacher experienced the change in their instruction, management, and personal life. The remaining questions are opinion and values questions focusing on understanding how the participants interpreted their experience with restorative practices.

Sandwick, Hahn, & Hassoun Ayoub (2019) emphasize how their study calls attention to the need for restorative cultures to traverse the intersection of identity, power, and privilege to develop staff and student lives inside and beyond the classroom.

Document Review

Documents pertaining to the program implementation will be reviewed as well as any additional communication regarding the implementation of restorative practices. I will attend an IIRP sanctioned two-day training for all training documents and keep a journal while present. Specific documents will be primary sources and include all training materials issued during the two-day professional development, a training agenda, written summary of learning each day in a researcher's journal, additional correspondence and coaching information provided by the trainer, professional development surveys/feedback, resource manuals/books, and discipline referrals submitted by participants. An analysis of organizational documents will include the International Institute of Restorative Practices website, resource documents on the site, and charts/graphs relevant to the IIRP. Documents can expose objectives, plans, stressors, links, and choices that are not easily evident through explicit observation (Patton, 2015). To fully understand each document, I will evaluate the context in which it was manufactured, the author's intent, the author's surroundings, the desired audience, and the necessity of the text for the audience (Gall et al., 2007). It will be critical in qualitative research to consider how to make the material extracted from the documents causal for other educators to act (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Historically, documents have been scrutinized as invalid or deceptive (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, as a researcher, I must examine the credibility and validity of every document I analyze and include in this study.

Data Analysis

The process of data analysis will begin during fieldwork (Patton, 2015). Some themes will begin to emerge while interviewing, conducting the focus group, and reviewing documents. All interviews will be transcribed and remain password-protected on my computer and data storage device (Appendix F). The transcripts will also be uploaded into the ATLAS.ti 9

computer program for assistance with analysis. The software program will support storage, access, coding, correlating, and associating (Patton, 2015).

The major components of the transcendental phenomenological design include *Epoche*, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of composite textural and composite structural descriptions.

Epoche

Patton (2015) defined *epoche* as the inward reflection of the researcher to become aware of personal bias and restrict personal engagement with the phenomenon (p. 575). Creswell and Poth (2018) describe *epoche*, or bracketing, where the researcher "takes a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination" (p. 78). Moustakas (1994) reiterated that the *epoche* is the critical starting point for transcendental-phenomenological research as it requires the researcher to withhold judgment and refrain from the normal way of comprehending the phenomenon (p. 33).

Transcendental-Phenomenological Reduction

The next step in the process is the transcendental-phenomenological reduction characterized by extracting each co-researcher's experience in isolation, followed by the phenomenon being described in its collectivity (Moustakas, 1994). Patton (2015) described this analytical process as one where the researcher "brackets" out their perceptions and acknowledges the data in its authentic style (p. 575). After successful bracketing, Moustakas (1994) described the next step as horizonalization, where "each phenomenon has equal value as we seek to disclose its nature and essence" (p. 95). The final step in phenomenological reduction is the creation of a thorough textural account of the experience with the phenomenon by each individual participant (Moustakas, 1994). Creswell and Poth (2018) refer to this as utilizing the

interview responses and emerging themes to write an explanation of what the co-researcher experiences. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) described textural description as "an account of an individual's intuitive, prereflective perceptions of a phenomenon from every angle" (p. 496).

Imaginative Variation

The next step in the transcendental phenomenological research process is imaginative variation. Moustakas (1994) described this as the process of acquiring potential interpretations through imagination (p. 97). Patton (2015) compared it to relocating a statue to view it from multiple positions, allowing the researcher to establish enriched interpretations of the extracted themes (p. 576). The purpose of imaginative variation is to illustrate the critical format of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) described this as a means for "the researcher to extract structural themes from the textural descriptions that have been obtained through phenomenological reduction" (p. 99).

Synthesis of Meaning and Essences

The conclusion of the transcendental phenomenological research process is the creation of an explanation of the essences of the collective encounter with the phenomenon from the individual textural and structural descriptions already gathered (Moustakas, 1994). This essential invariant structure, also known as essence, spotlights the shared experiences of all participants and the phenomenon's hidden format (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

In addition, after transcribing the interviews and focus group responses, I will use Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of analyzing phenomenological data. Through the four-step process, I will identify meanings and the essence of the lived experience of the participants (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) noted that the steps should follow a sequential order: First, one must gather a thorough description of their

own understanding of the phenomenon. Utilizing the precise transcript, analyze each statement

for its implication toward describing the experience. Write down each relevant description from

the participants. List each comment, not repeating or overlapping any remarks. Group the

remaining statements into themes. Create the invariant meaning and themes into a textural

description of the experience with the phenomenon. Using imaginative variation, create a

description of the structures of the experience. Finally, design a textural-structural analysis of

the essences of the experience.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is established through meticulous scrutiny of one's work (Patton, 2015).

The importance of establishing trustworthiness is emphasized in Titus 2: 7-8, which states:

In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show

integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those

who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us (New

International Version).

Credibility

This research study addresses credibility through triangulation of data, member checks,

and peer review. Triangulation of qualitative sources will test for consistency across the various

data sources (Patton, 2015). Triangulating with multiple data sources such as interviews, focus

groups, and document analysis, one can develop credibility in their work if consistency exists at

varied times with the various modes of information collection (Patton, 2015).

Member checking will be completed by the participants. Lincoln and Guba (1985) consider

member checking to be "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" (Creswell, 2013,

p. 252). The participants should play a critical role in judging the researcher's accuracy in portraying their voice (Creswell, 2013).

The peer review will be conducted by a colleague in the Equity and Inclusion Department in the district where I am employed. Their role will be to ask me difficult questions about my methods and understandings of the data (Creswell, 2013).

Dependability and Confirmability

This study will address dependability, formerly considered reliability, by creating an audit trail, keeping a log, keeping accurate records, keeping reflexive notes, having an external audit conducted, and utilizing peer debriefing (Creswell, 2013). Confirmability, opposed to objectivity, is established consistently with dependability (Creswell, 2013).

Transferability

Transferability refers to the ability of a reader to "transfer information to other settings and to determine whether the findings can be transferred (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). By providing an intense, substantial description on what was done along with the findings, the reader can make judgments regarding transferability (Creswell, 2013).

<div align="center">

Ethical Considerations

</div>

Ethical issues can arise at any point in the research process, not just during data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, it is pertinent that the researcher considers all ethical implications while preparing, conducting, and analyzing research.

Prior to collecting data for this study, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, School District approval, and administrative approval from the study sites will be asked for and obtained. Before interviewing voluntary participants, individual informed consent will be acquired and retained. I will have no supervisory role over any of the people being interviewed.

Pseudo-names for the school district, schools, and participants will be used to maintain confidentiality. All digital data will be maintained on a password-protected computer and hand-written notes kept in a locked cabinet. After the study, I will debrief with participants so they can make sure the information is verified and their voice was recorded accurately.

Summary

Chapter three has mapped the research methods utilized in this study. This qualitative research study uses a transcendental-phenomenological approach. Participant interviews, focus groups, and document review will be the primary methods of data collection. Triangulation, member checking, and peer review will support the trustworthiness of this study. Every step in the process will be evaluated according to ethical guidelines to ensure credible work, not only to the reader, but in pleasing my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of secondary classroom teachers with restorative practices in North Carolina. The voluntary participants described their perceptions of implementing restorative practices at the middle and high school levels. The purpose of Chapter Four is to examine the results of this study and answer the following research questions:

Central Research Question: How do secondary-level teachers from central North Carolina describe their experiences with restorative practices in the classroom?

Research Sub-Question One: How do teachers describe how their teaching has taken on a new dimension after restorative practice implementation?

Research Sub-Question Two: How do teachers describe how they have changed, as an educator, after implementing restorative practices?

Research Sub-Question Three: How do teachers describe how their relationships with others have changed after implementing restorative practices?

The study participants are 11 educators with varying years of experience who have received training in restorative practices by a certified International Institute of Restorative Practices trainer and have implemented in their classroom for one school year. This chapter commences with a description of each of the 11 participants. Each participant was recruited by an email (Appendix B) that sought participants that met the required criteria of being trained in restorative practices by the IIRP and having implemented in their classroom for one year. The search began as a purposeful, random sample, evolving into a snowball sample when difficulty arose in finding study participants. When I realized the difficulty in recruiting participants

through the email invitation to participate in the study, participants began to volunteer to recruit

other eligible teachers in their school. This resulted in the recruitment of six study participants.

The study began with a semi-structured, long interview; focus group; and concluded with a

document review of training materials. Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that steps should be

taken to substantiate each source against another and no one source should be scrutinized without

being triangulated. The rest of this chapter will specifically address the research questions

previously noted by focusing on the analysis of the data and the substantial findings.

Participants

The study's participants were all trained in restorative practices by a certified

International Institute of Restorative Practices trainer and have implemented in their classroom

for one year. The participants range in age from 25 to 59 years. Their years of experience range

from two to 32. There are four that teach primarily with middle school students and seven that

teach exclusively at the high school level. They include two mathematics teachers, two English

teachers, two science teachers, one exceptional children's teacher, one social studies teacher, one

information technology teacher, one English-language learner teacher, and one physical

education teacher. The participants were trained in and implemented restorative practices at six

different schools, including four middle schools and two high schools. Only one of the middle

schools represented has implemented as a whole-school. There is only one male participant out

of the 11 interviewees. As noted in Chapter Three, all names of the participants are pseudonyms.

Anita

Anita is an almost 60-year-old, African American female from Charleston, South

Carolina. Growing up, she attended both public and private schools. She moved to her current

town for college and subsequently planted roots and has lived here ever since. Her whole

purpose of becoming an educator in the public-school system was based on her son's experience. She wanted to see if she could change some things he experienced as a minority male. She transitioned to education from state employment followed by a collegiate administration position. She had a lifelong desire to be an educator fueled by her teaching of teddy bears as a child in the back of her house. She has been a middle school educator for two years in the mathematics classroom with degrees in Computer Science and Information Technology. Her plan is to retire next year because she doesn't want the kids running her out the door.

Bernice

Bernice is a 56-year old, African American female who is a long-time educator and lives in one of the larger cities in our county. She credits her success as an educator to her mother who instilled in her to always do her best and to treat people the way she wants to be treated. Although she did not complete her bachelor's degree at a local private university, she still wants to go back and finish. Her specialty area in education lies within the behavioral and emotional support classroom and Willie M. students. She ran the in-school-suspension classroom in a middle school after serving as a teacher assistant at the elementary level. She moved to education after spending several years working as a coordinator of a local housing authority. She expresses that her greatest joy in life comes from working with children and their families. She grew up with five sisters and three brothers through her father.

Carolyn

Carolyn is a white female who has been in education for 32 years. She has two grown children and two rescue dogs. Rescuing animals brings her great peace and a sense of purpose. Although she teaches English now at a private high school, her prior years were in the middle school classroom. In her spare time, she supports her pastor husband as much as she can. She

grew up in Georgia. She officially retired several years back but moved due to her husband's position. When a private school was practically in her back yard at her new home, she determined it was God's way of telling her to go back to teaching. Conveniently, they had a high school English position.

Danielle

Danielle is an African American female and a 19-year-veteran high school teacher hailing from Bermuda. Most of her educational experience as a student was in Bermuda and Canada. Her master's degree brought her to North Carolina. Growing up in Bermuda, most of her education was in the public school system, driven by the United Kingdom's philosophy of educational practice, a strict approach to classroom management, and authoritative teaching. She is now in her early forties and loves teaching teenagers about science. After numerous years in the school district, the opportunity presented itself for her to return home to teach and be closer to family. Her new private school is about to adopt the restorative practice philosophy after sending some of their middle school teachers to be trained by a representative from the International Institute of Restorative Practices. The work at this school branched out of a book study by middle school staff on *Discipline with Dignity*.

Ellen

Ellen is a white female, originally from New York, but grew up outside of the District of Columbia. She has spent more than 20 years as a middle school mathematics teacher. As a child, she played school with her younger sister and of course, she was always the teacher. She is passionate about connecting with middle school students, particularly after student teaching in a second-grade classroom. She attended a very large high school and found little to connect with. That drove her to attend a small college where she felt more comfortable. Most of her

education, prior to college, was just outside of Washington, D.C., in an area with little diversity. Through spending some time abroad, she found her independence and voice to advocate for what she wanted.

Francis

Francis is a white female in her mid-30s, who originates from southern California, where she grew up and attended school. She received a scholarship to attend a local community college, subsequently transferring to the University of California at Riverside. She came to North Carolina approximately fifteen years ago to finish up her education degree and earn her teacher licensure as education programs in California did not provide teaching licensure without a fifth year of coursework. She has taught high school social studies in the school district at three high schools after finally acquiring a teaching position, following a long-term substitute position at a different high school in the district near her home.

Georgette

Georgette is an African American female who earned her business education degree from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, transferring initial, core credits from a community college. After deciding she wanted to teach, she earned her teaching credentials from East Carolina University. She followed her father's footsteps into education as he was a long-time educator in a small-town school system in rural North Carolina. She credits her desire to teach from the teachers she had in middle and high school that poured into students the belief that they must further their education to be successful in life. Her passion for personal finance and business drove her into business education where she currently teaches courses at a local middle school. She credits her success in teaching from raising nine children, both biological

and adopted, with different personalities and academic abilities. She admits that her skills as a

parent translated well into her classroom of diverse students.

Hillary

Hillary is a white female who was born in New Jersey where she lived until she turned

18. She is a second generation American, descending from immigrant grandparents on both

sides of her family. This gave her the ability and desire to travel and appreciate other cultures.

She is fluent in three languages, making her an ideal teacher for English-language learners. Her

original career was a Lutheran pastor, lasting more than 20 years, including four congregations.

She still serves as a part-time chaplain at a local hospital and occasionally preaches, when time

permits. Her passion is rooted in teaching English to foreign international students, a desire that

grew from her willingness to meet different types of people and learn multiple languages. She

pursued a teaching certificate to expand her opportunities in that field. After earning her

master's in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, she began teaching in public

schools.

Isabel

Isabel is a white female, in her late 20s, from Raleigh, North Carolina. She was the first

in her family to attend and graduate from college. She had a multitude of academic opportunities

as a student attending one of the largest school districts in North Carolina, with access to AP and

IB magnet schools, focused on the arts and sciences. She pursued her undergraduate degree

from a local university where she studied secondary education and German language and

literature. She originally taught English until returning to North Carolina after a short time of

living in Colorado. Upon her return, her new principal asked her to teach science, a more

difficult position to fill, which she agreed to do and has been doing for this past school year. She

knew as a middle school student that she wanted to teach and although the subject changed

multiple times, she has always remained firm that she wanted to teach high school. She finds

teenagers interesting and is drawn to the notion that their minds really do expand in ways she

doesn't fully understand, particularly with emotional and social learning.

Janice

Janice is a white female who grew up in Massachusetts. Her family moved to North

Carolina when she was 16 for a job opportunity for her father. She went to East Carolina

University and earned a degree in Hospitality Management. She worked as a director of

convention services for 14 years and then decided she didn't want to do that anymore. After

spontaneously deciding to quit her hospitality job, within a few weeks, she began working as a

teacher's assistant at a high school within the school district. Shortly thereafter, while attending

a hiring fair, her current principal recognized her and asked her if she would be interested in

joining his staff. Although her first year of teaching was interrupted by the pandemic, she is

persevering and is proud that she now has more virtual teaching experience than face-to-face

instruction.

Kevin

Kevin is an African American male in his mid-40s who has taught for 21 years. He was

born and raised in Arlington, Virginia and moved to North Carolina in 2003. He was so

committed to the principals of restorative practices that he has completed his graduate certificate

in restorative practices through the International Institute of Restorative Practices and is now a

trainer. He was recently hired by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction for his

experience with restorative practices. He credits his ability to embrace the principles of

restorative practices from the experience of failing the fourth grade. He had an impactful teacher

in fifth grade who helped him channel his leadership capacity. Instead of punitively punishing him for his class disruptions, the teacher put him on the school's safety patrol, eventually making him captain. After leaving his physical education position, he became a graduation coach where he found himself practicing restorative ideas and implementing circles in his learning lab with kids who would otherwise never cross paths.

Results

This study was governed by one central research question and three sub-questions with the intent of describing the experiences of secondary classroom teachers with restorative practices in North Carolina. The 11 participants each completed a semi-structured, long interview. Four of the 11 participants were then part of the focus group. The interview, focus group, and document analysis were all focused on answering the central research question and three sub-questions. Following the interview transcription and coding, several themes emerged.

Theme Development

Through the semi-structured, long interviews; focus group; and document analysis of the 11 teachers that participated in this qualitative study, the details of their lived experiences with restorative practices is described. After transcribing the interviews and focus group responses, I utilized Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of analysis of phenomenological data. Through the four-step process, I identified meanings and the essence of the lived experience of the participants (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) noted that the steps should follow a sequential order: First, one must gather a thorough description of their own understanding of the phenomenon. I did this through the interview process and subsequent transcription. Utilizing the precise transcript, I analyzed each statement for its implication toward describing the lived experience. I extracted each relevant description from the

participants' descriptions. I coded each comment using the ATLAS.ti 9 software program for qualitative data analysis, not repeating or overlapping any remarks. A list of codes can be found in Appendix G. I grouped the codes into clusters of meaning, extracting from the remaining statements the three themes. Creating the invariant meaning and themes into a textural description of the experience with the phenomenon followed. Using imaginative variation, I created a description of the structures of the experience. Finally, I was able to design a textural-structural analysis of the essences of the experience.

The three dominant themes that emerged relating to the experiences of secondary classroom teachers with restorative practices in North Carolina are as follows: (a) the influence of student discourse on the culture of the classroom; (b) teacher empowerment through reflection; and (c) the emergence of altruism.

Theme One: The Influence of student discourse on the culture of the classroom

All 11 participants agreed that the culture of their classroom had changed, for the better, after implementing restorative practices. Restorative circles have emerged as a staple component of restorative practices implementation in the secondary classroom, serving as the foundation for student discourse and conversation. Allowing students to meet in a circle, without a beginning or end, ensures all students are participants in the class, void of exclusion (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2010). Circles have been described as occurring spontaneously or planned prior to a lesson, based on the needs of the students. This teacher flexibility highlights the newly acquired skills of the teacher to be able to read a room and utilize intuition to gauge individual student feelings. The circle is a symbol whose shape signifies connection, unity, inclusion, and equality; therefore, seating students in rows limits their connection with classmates and constructs barriers to conversation (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2010). Circles provide the framework for

student discourse, structured with a talking "stick" or instrument to permit only one student to speak at a time. In some circles, every participant must speak and must forfeit the opportunity to pass. All participants described how they changed their instructional design to incorporate student discourse through circles.

Shortly after being trained, Isabel made immediate changes to her classroom to facilitate the implementation of circles and to inspire student conversation. She added:

The immediate changes I made were the way I worded my questions. I make my questions people-first language, really focusing on opening up to student responses rather than assumptive of what responses is. There's a lot more checking in, both in understanding but in emotions. When it comes to my lesson planning with restorative practices, it is based in cultural responsibility and responsiveness. So in the curriculum of science, we're finding ways that issues such as water, resource access are interacting with the communities that my students live in as well as ones that they might not know or identify with, and so I've seen my…my process becoming more intentional in making connections with students rather than just come and get. In terms of behavioral practices, my grading and my approach to any kind of redirection has lost all punitive aspects to it. We look at community values and expectations and really frame the response of students and how I respond to interactions by a community guideline.

Danielle described the importance of adapting her instruction to include student discourse by stating she is "probably having more conversations with students, especially if there is an issue in the class or I feel like I'm not getting cooperation, having more of a discussion rather than being more authoritative, just trying to get to understand why I'm having the resistance and just having more of a dialogue with students." Multiple participants emphasized getting to know

the students at a deeper level and valuing the whole student. Carolyn stated that she became

"more aware of the academic stress on the kids." Anita and Georgette spoke about their

classroom now being a "safe place to express themselves" and a place that where they "allow the

kids to be themselves." Hillary emphasized that incorporating circles "gets kids to think about

their perspective and the other perspectives." She followed that statement by noting that after

circle participation, kids said they "get a chance to be heard, and I can get a breath, and then I

can look at the person that I might have heard a different way." Ellen stated:

> I mean I think I was probably just a little more aware of letting kids speak, of letting kids
>
> guide the conversation a little bit. I'm a math teacher so I'm a control freak as it is,
>
> but...but I think maybe I was just a little more aware of kind of that process of, you know,
>
> it's this person's turn and let them talk without some other kid jumping in or me jumping
>
> in to stop them. So, I think maybe that came out of the whole sharing in the circle.

Kevin added the importance of kids hearing from each other and described his classroom this

way:

> More so my approach with engaging students, getting to know them, increasing the
>
> comfort level in the classroom, but not only them getting to know me, but them getting to
>
> know their peers in the classroom, to create a real environment of caring and support and
>
> structure. And so that's from… that's probably the biggest shift that I made, just being
>
> super intentional about making sure my students were in a good place to learn, to acquire
>
> knowledge, making sure that their basic needs were met.

> Francis began charting conversations, an extension of some previous training she had

experience with while attending professional development with Teaching Tolerance. She credits

this with keeping her from interjecting and reverting to her more natural, authoritative teacher mode. She notes that this teacher task helped her with the following:

> So restorative practices gave me want…the glue to hold all those things together with their, the circles. So, I utilized the circles and I would have my kids circle up and discuss things. I would chart their conversations and then what was fun is…. after you…. my job was to take notes on their conversation so I could reference, you know, who had said what, and then it was fun because a few months into that process, you can start showing/holding up the paper from like their conversation in you know, October to like March, and they're like, oh….more people were engaged. Initially a lot of the conversations…anyone who wanted to speak could speak but they had to have I think we had a little globe stress ball. You had to be holding the talking item to be able to speak. It also…other questions I did. I did softball questions like ones just to make sure everyone could answer, and then we also did some like check-in questions like a set of a writing a ticket out the door, we would have what was…you know, what was one takeaway you had from today? Tell me one question you still have from today and everybody would have to comment on those. So, it really just gave me a forum and method to have conversations/discussion.

After the participants described how and why they implemented the circles, they discussed the outcomes of circles on their students, themselves, and the climate of their classroom. One could see a clear shift in where the focus in the classroom was placed. The focus shifted from content to the well-being of the students. Ellen gave credit to this process for making her "a little more aware of the kids as participants" in her classes. Francis described the restorative classroom as being "far more student-centered." She elaborated by saying:

It allowed me to safely teach my kids… teach my kids how to have a conversation with one another, how to have discord but not necessarily agree. But I also liked that I didn't have to have the answers so that I could throw out questions, eventually, not right away, but we could eventually get to the point of having those very difficult conversations and that my students' perspectives and experiences could answer that.

Janice explained that student discourse "changed the dynamic of a conversation almost instantaneously." Many of the participants described the conversations as a safe place where students could be open, giving the kids the opportunity to talk, share their feelings, and express their opinions. Carolyn commented that "they (the students) have a voice and I think because they have a voice, they feel more cooperative." Georgette reiterated this thought by saying students already "feel like adults don't listen to them."

Kevin has a unique class make-up that mixes gifted, affluent students with the most at-risk of not graduating. He feels the power of student discourse in his class had a tremendous impact on the culture shift and promoting a sense of unity, noting:

I've witnessed, firsthand, kids…again, I've been in…20 years in high schools, one year in middle school. And so I've got a pretty good feel of how high schoolers are, how they engage with each other or not, and so I'm certain when I say the students that I had in my room would not normally talk, converse with each other, hang out with each other just because they're different, socio-economically, race-wise, academic-ability-wise is different on so many different levels, but creating a space for them to hear from each other and hear the similarities or the common things that they had, like each other. It changed the atmosphere of the class. It made them feel very comfortable with each other to the point where they would ask each other for help. When in past classes…with past

classes, I did not have kids just free and willing to ask each other for help. Ask me for help, sure, but not their peers.

Isabel notes a similar experience in her classrooms, also describing variation by grade level, race, and socioeconomic status. She stated:

So, I have a range in my Earth and environmental science and marine biology classes from freshman to seniors. And so the emotional maturity level and responsiveness to certain situations can be a large range and by having community standards that the students have agreed to and using respect as the baseline of our communication, students have been more willing to express concern to other students, not just to me. And frame it in a, you know, "this is how I'm feeling by your actions" not a "you're doing this"…it's not accusatory. And so, the culture of the classroom has become one where we want to collaborate and students want to work with each other, especially now with the pandemic, that kind of environment has been hard to construct. But, by introducing restorative practice guidelines and practices, the students have been more willing to be vulnerable since they haven't had social interactions in an academic setting for about a year now.

Several more participants emphasized that students have a voice in the classroom. Danielle said her students "appreciate that I listen to them, that they have a voice in the classroom. So, if we are having a disagreement about a process or something that they feel that they can voice that and that we can have a discussion about it. So, it creates a warmer environment." Bernice highlighted that the classroom discourse can provide an opportunity for students to "come up with some strategies" to use when they feel emotions or frustration about certain situations. Hillary emphasized that the ability to discuss "gives the kids responsibility."

Theme Two: Teacher Empowerment Through Reflection

The participants all acknowledged that, while implementing restorative practices, they had changed as educators on an instructional and personal level. The principle method for acknowledging this change came through reflection. As noted in Chapter Two, Dewey proposed that we do not learn by doing, but that we learn by thinking about what we do (Fullan, 2007). Dating back to ancient cultures, reflective practice has been a critical component of change, including admonitions to know oneself and conducting "first-person research" (Taylor et al., 2007). The Harvard Business School has emphasized that once a person has rehearsed or gained experience with an act, reflection on that experience is more valuable than additional practice without utilizing reflection (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2018).

Participants were asked about their initial thoughts regarding the implementation of restorative practices, what feelings surfaced while implementing, and how their original mindset compared to their actual experience. Initial thoughts about implementing restorative practices varied widely, ultimately grouped into four categories: reservation, curiosity, misconceptions, and excitement.

Kevin was the only participant that experienced reservation. This tied to his internalizing of past feelings and emotions from an experience in the fourth grade. He stated:

> I can tell you in the beginning what I struggled with, and it was just implementing
> because of my own reservations, because of my own past deficiencies. Again, I
> mentioned I failed the fourth grade. So, whenever I am going to do something new, those
> reservations of will you be successful? Remember you failed? That comes back to mind.
> And so those are…those are things, that if anything, that I grapple with whenever I'm
> doing something new, but I've seen…I've just had so many wonderful, positive,

memorable occasions with restorative practices that I don't grapple with any of it. And so, I would say with anyone starting new, just the newness of it. Teachers are human beings also. They are afraid of failure also, and so just the thought that… how it's going to be received. Sometimes there's enough to deter the adults from moving forward with it.

Danielle and Hillary expressed they were curious about restorative practices. They had heard about it in the restorative justice platform through prison ministry programs or their understanding of social injustices. Hillary was familiar with its use in South Africa in truth commissions and thought translating it to the school setting would be "cool" but was doubtful it would be implemented successfully. She acknowledges it is a "whole paradigm shift." Danielle agrees that the idea made sense to her because of the history and the way certain populations have experienced so much injustice that having the restorative piece available would be important. She states, "I didn't know what it was going to look like or how that was going to translate over to a classroom setting or if it would just seem like there's no discipline." She followed up by noting, "So there were definitely some questions in my head prior to that like well, what will we do to, to make sure the classroom still goes, you know, and stays structured, etc., how does it look?"

Francis, Anita, Janice, and Ellen all described their initial thoughts about restorative practices to be misconceptions. Francis thought, "this is just one more thing they're asking me to do." Anita said, "At first I thought it was gonna be a waste of time." Janice added, "Okay, so if I'm going to be super honest, I went in kind of thinking it was probably lame. I was like, you know hippie, hug trees stuff is what I was thinking." Ellen thought it would be more about a disciplinary style to implement in the classroom, but acknowledged, "It wasn't about that."

Excitement was the initial mindset for Georgette, Isabel, Carolyn, and Bernice. Georgette credits her excitement with a previous experience with restorative practices while student teaching at another school in the district. She felt it was needed at her middle school. Isabel's response was, "Yes. Oh my gosh, that's…everybody needs to be doing this. It was just enthusiasm." Bernice also exclaimed excitement because to her, "it's just real." She concluded her statement by saying, "So that's the reason why I love it, and I wish every school implemented restorative practices." Like Georgette, Carolyn had also previously heard about it through a colleague doing it. She described her initial thoughts by saying:

> And so, I'd heard about it, and I have to tell you I was pretty excited about it because I thought this is one more way that I can find out about the kids, especially when they get in high school. They don't, you know how middle school kids are, they'll tell you anything just about…but high school kids are pretty closed-mouthed about their personal life. Yeah, and so I was excited. I was probably acting a fool there when we had our training because I was so excited about doing it, and I went back and did it the next day after we had a training. So, I was excited about another opportunity to get to know the kids and to get to find out what are you? What are they thinking?

It was through the responses of the participants about their feelings that surfaced during implementation that triggered the reflective portion of them as a restorative practice practitioner. Danielle described it as feeling uneasy in the beginning, like she had lost control of her classroom and the structure was disorderly. Francis noted that she was nervous even though she was a veteran teacher. She then began to anticipate all the things that could go wrong or questions that may arise. However, her anxiety quickly transitioned to enjoyment and looking

forward to having conversations with students. Ellen felt a greater sense of community in her classes. Janice was uncomfortable and described herself with the following statement:

> I'm not one to be totally on board with my emotions or sharing those in any manner. I like that kind of closed off a little bit. So definitely with the "I feel" statements, it's hard for me. And so, I work on that, and I figure if it's hard for me, it's probably hard for my students as well. So, the more they hear it from me, the more comfortable they'll be doing it. But yeah, I'm very, very uncomfortable with the feelings.

Anita noticed she has more empathy and passion for the students and whatever they're feeling and going through. She now sees others as individuals and not just teachers and students.

Bernice was hoping to one day record a session. She felt it would have a huge impact on the students, parents, or teachers that watched it. She stated that, "a lot of times we don't even realize what we're doing until we see ourselves. So, I felt like, in many cases, if this could be recorded, this could really bring light to a whole lot of issues and stuff."

According to Georgette:

> It was kind of one of those pivotal things where the entire community was now, now paying attention to the social and emotional of the kid rather than just focusing straight on the community…on the education. So, I was…I decided that they would have more opportunities, hopefully have more opportunities to be redeemed and restored and, and learn how to communicate what was going on with them."

Hillary had a unique experience with another participant. She was struggling with one specific student and felt like she was juggling too many balls to correctly implement a circle. She recalled:

But when I was doing this, I remember when Kevin was doing this with me and that

student. I remember kind of looking in awe and thinking, wow, you know, could I do

that? That seemed like too hard for me, but now that I've had the training and

understand, and also have the card (see Figure 1), I think I would be better equipped.

Let's put it that way.

As part of the training, each participant received the Restorative Questions Card (Figure 1). It is

referenced for use when dealing with conflict in the classroom or school. The questions are also

referred to as affective questions which are discussed in the first day of training.

Kevin described his feelings as "hard to put into words." He began referencing the nine

affects in the compass of shame as part of restorative practices (see Figure 2). On day two of the

training, the psychology of affect and the compass of shame are discussed. This discussion

helped the participants have a better understanding of why humans act and react in specific ways

and why restorative practices is so effective (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2009). There are

two affects that are positive, one is neutral, and the other six are negative. During training,

Kevin asked the instructor why there couldn't be one above the highest listed, enjoyment and

joy. His explanation to her was:

Figure 1 removed to comply with copyright.

From International Institute of Restorative Practices. (2017). *Restorative questions card* [Image]. Canada_RQ_Cards__79253.1506089616.490.588.jpg (490×588) (bigcommerce.com)

Because it's almost euphoric when children, when you people transform, like when they do something that no one thought they could do, when they express themselves in a way that is almost beyond their years. To me, that's like…that's like so good. It's like beyond joy.

Ultimately, he became so consumed with excitement in his discussion about joy that he needed me to repeat the question. He ultimately concluded that his feelings were, as he described them:

Yeah. Yeah, so it's beyond joy. It's beyond joy that kids, young people are able to articulate, experience feelings of success because we see so much conflict and so much tension. When kids understand okay, there's going to be conflict, but then it can be resolved in a positive way, and then they can move on. They feel so accomplished. They feel so good about themselves. It's a feeling that's hard to put into words. I was able to be a part of that and those who are restorative practitioners, it's a common theme. We talk about it all the time when we get together, the experiences and the stories are very, very similar, but it's really a wonderful feeling.

Carolyn brought a different perspective to the feelings that surfaced by focusing more on what she learned about her students' feelings. She stated:

I never knew that they had this much stress. I never knew that. I never knew that they were grappling with these issues and that they felt stressed like I feel sometimes. I just never…because you look at them and you think, they're so young why in the world are you stressed out? Because you're so young and all this, but it just shocked me with the issues that they have. I never knew that.

Figure 2 removed to comply with copyright.

(adapted from Tomkins, 1962, 1963, 1991)

From International Institute of Restorative Practices. (2016). *The nine affects* [Image]. 4.4. Nine Affects | Defining Restorative | Restorative Practices (iirp.edu)

As participants began describing how restorative practices caused them to evaluate their role as educators, the "know thyself" mantra was able to shine through. One could feel the confidence of each participant exude as they talked about what they learned and how the process

has changed their instruction, their kids, and themselves. The focus group drew out consistent responses by stating they have learned to be flexible and how to listen. Georgette stated:

I've learned to be flexible. I've learned that education cannot be all about content and not about the emotions of the people that you are teaching. And that it is important to recognize, per se, your audience or your clientele or how you know how the atmosphere is and to use restorative practices as an opportunity to kind of with my students so that I know when they're when they're energy has changed. And there's an opportunity for us to kind of, you know, do a circle and figure out what's going on.

Ellen piggybacked on Georgette's response, describing her experience as follows:

I'll piggyback on that because I think there is, there's the reading the room. Like creating your environment in your classroom and reading it and realizing maybe content needs to stop for a minute because there is an emotional or social… and I teach middle school, well, we're all with teenagers. There's a social thing and sometimes the content is not going to get there when the social and emotional stuff is blocking someone, and it may not be the whole class. It's when you start building those relationships with the kids enough to recognize that there is a child that's not going to go any further in your class that day, content-wise, academically, that you just pull back and say, "you know what, let's stop or at least let that child stop."

Francis agreed that she also learned to listen.

Yeah, I've learned to listen. Like I was, and I say like I felt like I was a good listener already when my kids were speaking, but the practice is the strategies. That you know, just simply a fishbowl, right? The different types of strategies and the circles that I used

and incorporated in classroom discussions allowed me… forced me to sit down and be

quiet and not to feel like I had to be the person with all the answers in the room. And I

felt… I feel like I already had that feeling, but this really just gave me, I guess more

confidence in doing that and that I was doing that…like that was like the correct thing to

be doing and it helped give me better tools because I don't like… I don't like silence.

Like I've learned to be okay with productive silence…. kids working, but I don't…I don't,

I've never been good at wait time and this forces you to wait, but gives you tools to do

that, if that makes sense.

Isabel tied all responses together when she gave the following description:

Yeah, likewise flexibility, listening, but I think ultimately what I've gained from the

implementation of restorative practice is that kind of humanity exists. Not just with the

students, but with ourselves and so being able to check where I'm at in the process and

how the students are responding to me as well as how they're responding to each other

and so it's given me a lot of more personal reflection to look at my content and how I

implement that content to better reach my students and bring themselves into what they're

learning because ultimately with my content, it can…they can kind of just be dry. And

so, my approach to it can change just as much as how the student's emotions change

within the class period.

Francis circled back after Isabel's thoughts triggered something for her. She noted:

Like I feel like I have that, that modeling, right, being part of the circle you get to model

for kids being an adult and being vulnerable, being an adult and changing your mind,

being an adult and having discourse rather than us constantly pushing…Oh, you're a kid,

you've got to learn how to do this. Well, what…you don't turn 30 and suddenly,

magically have all the answers, but you know, that's what I was waiting to have happen

and it hasn't so I feel like it really helps model that learning process is continual.

Other participants drew similar conclusions about the process through reflection. Bernice

described her thoughts as follows:

I think sometimes as educators we see things one-sided. And to me with restorative,

using these practices, you're not so much as in a judgment state, you're more open to all

persons regardless of what they are dealing with. But it makes you…I think is more

empathetic, maybe. I'm hoping I'm saying that right. It just makes you more aware of

the students that you're dealing with and to not just lump them all in one category

because what works for one student may not work for that student. You know, you have

to try many different things to be able to reach those students, especially if they're

volatile. So, you have to be willing to, first of all, give them their space and second of

all, validate them for the way they feel and then turn around and say okay, I understand

how you feel. But do you know how it made Miss XXXX feel. You need to hear how

Miss XXXX feel. She wants to share with you how she feels. She's already heard how

you feel and once you both have heard each other. Now. What, what common ground do

you think you guys could come to? What going forward would you do so that Miss

XXXX wouldn't feel that way or you wouldn't feel that way. So, I think when you do

that, it opens, it levels the playing field for everybody to feel validated so we can come to

some solutions.

Anita had a very brief, yet poignant response when she noted, "it makes me think and re-evaluate

how am I teaching the whole student and not just math. I think that's the whole purpose of it."

Ellen had a similar statement by nothing, "I think it goes beyond the…I just teach you math. I teach children." Carolyn mentioned her transition from an authoritative figure to now asking the students about their thoughts on a subject. She said, "I think it's made me more open to getting their opinion of what we're doing. Instead of me just saying we're going to do this, and this is how it's gonna be."

Janice really delved into the self-evaluation component. She gave a thorough description of her experience with reflection:

> Um, honestly like, so I think it has…not as educator but it's more so it goes back to education, but it's kind of made me evaluate myself a little bit. And you know how I view things and how I see certain things and we had this like wheel of… what was it called? Basically, kind of like where you go to when things don't go right and you're defensive or are you… you know sarcastic or that type of deal. And kind of how you are and I was very self-reflective during that part because… and it was actually during one of our conversations, I realized I was like, oh, wow, I really do actually pile it on… my negativity to myself and I didn't realize I was doing that. So as far as like when it comes to the restorative, I have applied it more towards myself in regard to, I'm trying not to be negative towards myself and allowing the kids not to be negative to themselves. So, if they do something wrong, it's never that's "wrong". It's okay, well, why do we look at it this way and see what we could come up with an answer? So, I utilize that with them, so they don't get that negative self-talk going.

Francis responded similarly in the focus group and in the individual interview. She spoke about how restorative practices led her to put herself aside. She stated:

Again, this puts me it put me on the side. Like it really helped push me to be a facilitator because you cannot be a sage… You can't be a direct instructor. You can't be the person standing at the front of the room and, and employ restorative practices. You have to either be a participant in the circle or you need to be an observer of the circle. And so that facilitator… So I feel like it really did push me to commit to being a facilitator and it did change how I do lectures. With the upperclassmen, I do not lecture anymore with 11th graders. I don't lecture. They have expectations of what they have to, have done before class. And then we come in and we discuss it and they're the ones telling me the information and then we discussed the broader scope of things.

Danielle brought a different perspective by describing her role as a social engineer with a focus on the greater good of society. She described her role as follows:

Yeah, I would probably say that was a gradual process for me and in a bunch of other ways as well, but it makes me feel more like…I guess more of a…I guess I wanna say social engineer. I feel like my role is for the greater society, not just looking at the whole picture, not just what's happening in my classroom…that you know, we have a responsibility to help rectify social injustices…like we really…it's just one of the places where that has to take place.

Despite her youth, Isabel is using what she has learned and plans to learn more to have a greater impact on students and teachers. She describes her plan in the following statement:

As an educator, I've always looked at my classroom as a place where students can find refuge and with restorative practice, I've started to kind of say that's not enough. It's not enough to do that within my small, sequestered classroom with these 30 to 90 students

that I see in a year, and it's made me reflect into how can I make this a more impactful

teaching? And so I've actually started the process of going back for my graduate degree

in ERM [Educational Research Methodology] for program evaluation so that I can better

equip teachers in that, in the same practice so that it's not just me addressing the issues

that are in my classroom, putting a band-aid on it, but then more wholistic diagnosis of a

system or a program as a whole. So that's where I have gone because of restorative

practices, is doing it bigger picture.

Kevin closes out the critical aspect of reflection as a restorative practices practitioner when he

notes:

Again, it's constant reflection. So, one of the concepts also, the social discipline window

(see Figure 3), just really addresses how those in positions of authority, which we all are

if you're an educator, you're a parent, how we show up and exert that authority or not.

And so, it has caused me to reflect on a daily basis. Am I? I want to be in the with box

and we believe that people are more successful and positive when people do things with

them rather than to them or for them. So, I'm constantly striving to be in that with box,

right? So, it causes me to constantly reflect on where I am. And if I'm not in the "with"

box and I need to be moving towards the "with" box. So, I need to reflect in order to

really gauge where I am. I hear people say, "show up as your best self." What does that

mean? Right, if you have no gauge, if you have no reflection, how do you know if you're

showing up as your best self? And do you have a north star? Where are you trying to get

to, to be your best self?

Day one of the IIRP's training includes a discussion of the social discipline window. The social

discipline window recommends that any person in authority or an educator can utilize the

greatest assets of both axes in the window and accomplish "high levels of nurturing and support with high levels of expectation and accountability" (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2009, p. 51). This is why Kevin references doing things "with" students instead of "to" or "for" them. He is alluding to the training and working in the optimum realm of a restorative practitioner.

Figure 3 removed to comply with copyright.

From International Institute of Restorative Practices. (2016). *Social Discipline Window* [Image]. https://www.iirp.edu/defining-restorative/social-discipline-window

Theme Three: The Emergence of Altruism

Altruism is a concept introduced in many high school biology classes that emphasizes the acts of an individual or group to protect one of its own, even at their own expense. Bussing, Kerksieck, Gunther, and Baumann (2013) describe altruism as one's desire to help for the sake

of the other in accordance with the Christian concept of agape love. They further elaborate on its

meaning, describing it as committing deliberate acts of love, specifically toward those with a

need. More specifically, they note that good deeds require an inner sense of empathy with the

person with the need. The Biblical story of this type of love is housed in the parable of the Good

Samaritan and the directive in Luke 10:27, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,

and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as

thyself" (King James Version). Love encompasses so many human emotions, but is expressed

through grace, trust, vulnerability, empathy, support, understanding, and respecting everyone.

Francis, Ellen, Isabel, and Georgette spoke at length in the focus group about becoming

vulnerable with their students and themselves. Francis spoke to this notion when she stated, "I

guess learning about myself is that I'm capable of doing it with more grace than I thought." She

continued by saying:

> I mean restorative practices, at least like a lot of the instructional strategies really do
>
> leave a very wide-open door for kids to speak what they want to speak. And it takes a lot
>
> to trust them with that power, so I think I learned to trust my students more, but I also
>
> was able to recognize just how privileged I was and shifting more to empathy rather than
>
> sympathy. I thought I was being empathetic, but I wasn't.

She added the following in a later discussion:

> I just felt like it changed my acceptance of the kids more and recognizing, yeah, the
>
> privilege…that I again….that assumption right because you look a certain way, you talk a
>
> certain way, you know, a lot of those assumptions have helped…been challenged. And
>
> then I think too, the other big thing too that I think has helped with circles is…one of my
>
> biggest hindrances too of actually really building relationships with high schoolers is one.

But I never liked being in their drama like it doesn't appeal to me. Like I did that. I don't want to do that again. But what circles allowed me to do was…we were able to talk through our problems and our stresses and the kids were each other's support, so I didn't have to be in that drama. I got to be there. I got to be aware of it. I could offer advice, but I didn't have to become a friend. I could still maintain my role as the teacher, the instructor and be separated that way, but they still got the support they needed without me having to like get into the mud with them and be part of the drama.

Being a relatively new teacher, Isabel talked about building empathy while using the "I feel" statements. She described the experience as follows:

I think that ultimately like the vulnerability and being able to relate to them I've had for a while, but I was…I saw a huge change in being able to talk with them about their learning, and I say their learning rather than their grades because I have completely overhauled my grading practice. I no longer, I mean I still use numbers and A, B, C, and D because that is the system that we're within, but I was able to talk with students about, you know, process versus product learning. And so, they start to see themselves as not just like I need to turn in so I can get a grade, but being able to see okay, I am making growth. And within science that also has kind of facilitated, you know, they're questioning on larger scales and understanding the onus of like, I don't need to get this done because I need to finish it. I need to get this done because I need to learn, and I want to. And when we talked about, when I looked at, you know, how many missing assignments that were right after we've been in remote learning and interims went out and now we're back in, we're in a hybrid, I was like, "Hey folks, I feel like I'm doing something wrong in…you know, and not giving out, you know, where are you at...are at

right now? And so, I need feedback on what I can do to better help you navigate that
organization skill." Opening up that conversation by starting with those "I" statements of
like how I was feeling, that has changed my relationship with students. They are no
longer fearful ninth graders to talk about their grades and what missing assignments they
have. And that is tremendously different than what would have happened to, you know,
my first and second year.

Ellen talked about her philosophical shift in terms of state accountability with math testing. She
has felt great pressure for quite some time. She described her shift by saying:

I'm like you are not defined by a test score. There's so much more to you. And so, for
the kids to...to hear me try to create that balance of, I need you to do well because I want
you to do well, that's why I need it from you. Do I want you to do well? Of course, but it
needs to come from inside and not so much from me. Because me harping on you is not
going to…. You're a teenager, you're not going to buy into me saying you need to do this.
And so just building that balance of what we need, what they need, and achieving it
together.

Georgette was going to add to the vulnerability discussion, but instead stated, "I was going to say
that. I will say that it did help me to realize that I did have to extend grace. As she (Francis) said
earlier, I can be you know, like I said, I'm always one of those…there's always tomorrow. So,
when you walk in the door tomorrow, whatever happened yesterday is gone." She wrapped up
her point by discussing the importance of knowing each of her students as individuals. She
stated:

I mean just that part right there…just, just being able to connect with them and to take each little part, you know, and I have over 250 students, but just to be able to see them in the hallway and call them by their nickname, or call them by their name. Kids like being individuals in a herd of thousands so that's what it did for me, and I don't know if it changed anything. Like I said, again, because I was relational prior to that but it did give me the okay to be, as someone else said, who I already was.

When the focus group was asked to relate their experience with restorative practices to an animal, Isabel constructed a response relevant to the creation of an altruistic culture in her classroom. After an initial description about an earthworm, she proceeded to her second animal, the otter. She described the following:

I move into the otter. And so, with otters, they are really empathetic creatures, you know, mother otters hold onto their pups as they sleep so they don't end on their stomach and they hold on to each other, so they don't lose each other as they're floating. And so that's kind of that circle practice. You know, that's where we are sharing, that's where we are supportive of one another whether it be our students, of each other and us as colleagues and educators if we participated in our breakdowns in our PD's [professional development].

Georgette chose a chameleon. Her reasoning was different than Isabel's, but what she described was consistent with the formation of an altruistic culture in her classroom. She noted:

Okay, I think I am going next and so, for me, when I think of restorative practices, I think of a chameleon. And the ability to change and to adapt to the environment that it is placed in, the ability to blend in or stand out. I think that restorative practices allows for

both of those, it allows you to…to add a harmony to your classroom, a synchronized harmony to your classroom, that it creates a nurturing environment where all the kids are able to, to learn, not only, not necessarily on a level playing field, but to have an understanding of the people that are in their environment and then, also the ability to stand out and kind of shine. You know, when we did our restorative practice, when I did the, my circles and sometimes when they have that, that cube in their hand and it is their, their moment to speak, that's empowering. It's empowering for everyone in the room to stop and to show you respect and to pay attention to the words that are coming out of your mouth. So many kids don't get that, especially when it deals with adults that we constantly tell them where to go, what to do, how to feel, you know, do this, do that.

Francis struggled a little more with her animal in terms of making the decision. She diverted with her original choice of a bird and ultimately landed on a dog. Her response is as follows:

And then genuinely my own, my other one was a dog because it's like how vulnerable dogs are and how when it's kind of working, right, it in when a dog is like…. It just makes you happy. Well at least me…I'm a dog person. Then lastly like the listening piece again is huge especially in circles and when kids really start to listen to one another, they really begin…the relationship piece from teacher to student is huge. But I also think they've none of it would work if, if the kids didn't build relationships with one another in this process and so it's like in doing…and to me be able to…having a relationship is trust, but it's also listening. And so I just think about how happy I get when a dog…when you know, a dog is listening to you right a flop their ears up and they caught their head to the side and they get like the cutest little look of like, wait, I'm wanting to and wanting to hear you. Am I hearing you right? Like that look of concern and worry is really kind of

awesome to when you see it on kids' faces when you're discussing…when you're genuinely taking time to like just learn about what's going on with one another. What's stressing each other out and how can you support one another? That to me is a dog.

Knowledge of students at an individual level truly opens doors to trust and a commitment to their success. A student's background and homelife are key components to their individuality and help form their personalities. When asked about the impact each student's homelife has on the participants, Hillary stated it is important to "back away from the point of conflict and look at the process and what needs to happen to repair whatever went on." Janice said that "if I can kind of know where they're coming from, I can know alright, so this kid is real tough. We're going to figure out a way to do something different that will work with them." Her final thought was that "it just helps me better customize to that person's needs." Ellen added that knowing and supporting students shouldn't be a yearly thing. She emphasized the important of maintaining a relationship with former students because "we've invested some time in each other. It shouldn't just be for an academic school year. It can extend beyond that."

Others talked about meeting students at an individual level and loving them where they are through empathy. Anita stated:

> I think I didn't, I think I just learned to adapt that to the need of the child as a student because you can't teach a child who's hungry, or we can't teach a child who's tired from being up all night from their parents fighting. You know what I mean? Or somebody doing drugs in the house, somebody stealing everything. You cannot fix…they can't concentrate, and they have a bad attitude, but they're tired. And so, you know, you have to be open-minded and say, "Okay, I understand." You have to have empathy.

Isabel elaborated further about the value of understanding students where they are in a variety of aspects pertaining to their well-being and whole self.

> It's invaluable to my practice to understand my students outside of the classroom for a multitude of reasons; culturally, emotionally, their position in their family structure, because ultimately equity and equality are different, and so I have a more equitable classroom because I understand my students in their personal capacities and I'm able to not only make my class more relatable to their world, but I'm also able to participate in conversations where they're faced with difficult, complex issues, or they feel that there is very little to talk about with their colleagues. But even if I can't relate to them, I can find somebody, or you know connect them with someone who is going to help and understand it and provide the resources they need.

Kevin described the importance of the teacher and the classroom as being a buffer for his students. If he or his students notice someone is struggling with an issue, they can help their classmate through it.

> The more you know about someone…again, empathy is a big word. When someone else is struggling, being able to empathize and…and put yourself in their place, to feel as much as you can, how it would be like to be experiencing what they're experiencing. It just does a tremendous amount in building a relationship with that person, allowing them to see you as someone who can absorb what they're feeling, right? Just not be…having hit the wall and bounce back off, but actually absorb some of their pain. And I think that's what empathy allows the person going through it to feel, like, someone actually…. Kids all the time say, "You feel me, you feel me? Do you really feel me?" So, hearing

them allows you to feel them, in large way. So, knowing as much about another

individual, particularly our young people

Learning about the personal life of a student and how that impacts their performance

academically has been a priority for Carolyn. Gathering a true understanding of the baggage

they bring with them has helped her be a better person and teacher. She stated:

> When you find out, that changes my whole attitude of them. Not that I expect less from
>
> them, but I can understand where they're coming from and I can then relate to them on
>
> that level, instead of expecting them to be middle class, and they have everything we
>
> have, and that kind of thing, because there's a lot of kids who don't. And same thing with
>
> hunger; that's another thing that has hit me with kids that I couldn't believe even at XXX.
>
> When I was at XXX, how many kids were on the backpack thing and seeing that and then
>
> you know, also another thing is dealing with parents…. When you have a crazy parent,
>
> you can understand crazy kids. And those kinds of kids, I think what has changed me
>
> with this…Is I try to give them a stable environment here because I know they go home
>
> to crazy. And so…I think looking at kids from the viewpoint…and I can't stand to hear a
>
> teacher say this…there's no hope for them. Yes, there's lots of hope and when I used to
>
> teach reading, I would have teachers tell me they'll never learn to read, or they'll never be
>
> able…. I don't believe that! Their brains are still developing. Their values are
>
> developing. And so, I don't give up on kids, and I think this has really reinforced that
>
> with me. Don't give up on them.

Research Question Responses

Research questions serve as lane bumpers for qualitative studies. Therefore, while

seeking to understand the lived experiences of teachers implementing restorative practices, this

study includes one central question, followed by three sub-questions. The data from the semi-structured, long interviews; focus group; and document review have provided explanations to these questions. The three overarching themes that surfaced regarding the experiences of the teachers are: (a) the influence of student discourse on the culture of the classroom, (b) teacher empowerment through reflection, and (c) the emergence of altruism.

Central Research Question: How do secondary-level teachers from central North Carolina describe their experiences with restorative practices in the classroom?

The central question investigated the experiences of middle and high school teachers in a school district in central North Carolina. This question has been addressed by the three emanating themes. All participants described a positive experience with restorative practices in their classroom and acknowledged it has caused them to reflect on their role as an educator. Francis was not the only participant that felt she had to step back from the "sage on the stage" and become more of a facilitator and let go of control. When asked to compare her experience to an animal, she described a bird. She said her experience has:

> given me a great deal of reflection, but I think birds also have like a wonderful grace and that was a common word that I've heard as well. Like it does require a lot of grace on…and forgiveness and ease and patience on our parts, but also the kids' part to be able to listen to one another and be empathetic. And I also think about birds like sitting on a line or on a tree, like they're all…they're together and they're all singing together or listening to one another.

Her experience enabled her to evaluate her role as an educator. Her response reiterated:

> Again, this puts me, it put me on the side. Like it really helped push me to be a facilitator because you cannot be a sage… You can't be a direct instructor. You can't be the person

standing at the front of the room and, and employ restorative practices. You have to

either be a participant in the circle, or you need to be an observer of the circle. And so

that facilitator…so I feel like it really did push me to commit to being a facilitator, and it

did change how I do lectures.

All participants described a connection with their students, a process developed by giving their

students a voice through the implementation of circles. Many discussed a feeling of

vulnerability and trust, supported by grace and forgiveness. One participant used the term

"redemption" on multiple occasions. Another participant discussed their experience being

enriched by having an on-site coach to support her through the process and how much that

helped her gain confidence with circles and resolving conflict. All participants discussed their

experiences with circles and the community it creates within a classroom, between teacher and

students as well as student-to-student.

After a thorough textual analysis of the experience with the phenomenon by each

individual participant, the nature and essence of their experience with the phenomenon is the

continual need to adapt in their role as a teacher and a human through deep and meaningful self-

reflection. Their evolution as educators through this process has empowered them to embrace

their discomfort and adapt to the needs of their students.

Research Sub-Question One: How do teachers describe how their teaching has

taken on a new dimension after restorative practice implementation?

Many of the participants referenced the transition from a focus on their content to a focus on the

people they are teaching. Their instruction became student-centered, supported by using

restorative circles. Statements like "flexible," "facilitate," "active listening," and "kids had

issues that sometimes needed to be dealt with before they could actually learn," flooded their

responses, indicating a shift in their mindset pertaining to their role as an educator. They no longer feel an obligation to teach content. Their new dimension is the safety and well-being of their students and understanding their basic needs. If those aren't met, the students can't learn. Several mentioned the "whole student" and others noted that they have become more reflective practitioners and in doing so, they understand the soul of their students. Whereas, in previous years, that did not matter to them, the content dissemination was the priority.

Research Sub-Question Two: How do teachers describe how they have changed, as an educator, after implementing restorative practices?

All participants acknowledged they do things differently and see themselves as having a different purpose in the classroom. Janice had a moment of self-realization and recognized that she needed to change as an educator to better support her kids:

> I was very self-reflective during that part because…and it was actually during one of our conversations, I realized I was like, oh, wow, I really do actually pile it on…my negativity to myself, and I didn't realize I was doing that. So as far as like, when it comes to the restorative, I have applied it more towards myself in regard to I'm trying not to be negative towards myself and allowing the kids not to be negative to themselves. So, if they do something wrong, it's never, "That's 'wrong.'" It's an, "Okay, well, why do we look at it this way and see what we could come up with an answer?"

Ellen and Danielle found themselves focusing on preparing kids for real-life situations. Ellen used the word "citizenship" when stating, "I'm trying to get you ready for some real responsibility and building some really good habits and being able to communicate with others, you know, whether it's peers or adults." Danielle described being a "social engineer" when describing her role by stating, "I feel like my role is for the greater society, not just looking at the

whole picture, not just what's happening in my classroom…that you know, we have a responsibility to help rectify social injustices…like we really…it's just one of the places where that has to take place." Several other participants noted that they now have a greater focus on SEL (social and emotional learning). Hillary described it as "getting back to that same thing of turning on its head that we're not just teachers delivering material or helping students on an individual level."

Anita and Ellen, both math teachers, commented about how they evaluated their role and acknowledged that being an educator isn't about the math. Anita stated, "I am teaching the whole student and not just the math." Isabel found that her role has taken on new meaning. She commented:

> As an educator, I've always looked at my classroom as a place where students can find refuge and with restorative practice, I've started to kind of say that's not enough. It's not enough to do that within my small, sequestered classroom with these 30 to 90 students that I see in a year, and it's made me reflect into how can I make this a more impactful teaching? And so, I've actually started the process of going back for my graduate degree in ERM for program evaluation so that I can better equip teachers in that, in the same practice so that it's not just me addressing the issues that are in my classroom, putting a band-aid on it, but then a more wholistic diagnosis of a system or a program as a whole. So, that's where I have gone because of restorative practices, is doing it bigger picture.

Research Sub-Question Three: How do teachers describe how their relationships with others have changed after implementing restorative practices?

All the participants were adamant that there had been changes in their relationships with significant others, colleagues, administrators, and their students. They all marked improvements

in their relationship with others and described why they think that has happened. Danielle stated, "I catch myself making sure that I'm trying to listen and that I'm actually listening to hear what the person is saying not just to respond." Carolyn responded with, "I have learned to be quiet." Bernice said she realized "I don't have to agree with you, but I have to respect you because first and foremost, you are a human being regardless of your race, creed, color, or socioeconomic status. You are a human being, and you should matter." Kevin stated, "it took me from a person whom they feared to a person they generally respected" and when it came to his family, "my default, a bit authoritative, a bit harsh….I've learned to say I'm sorry when I'm wrong to my kids, to my wife, to anybody." Isabel was very descriptive with the relationships she has at many levels:

> I think it's benefited all of my personal interactions, specifically with my, my partner.
> We've been together for eight years, and we've grown through teenagers to young adults
> and now we're entering our 30s, and our communication has become so much clearer.
> We don't have tiffs about even small things and that you're like, oh we can have, but
> we're able to express our emotions without fear of retribution. And when it comes to my
> family, it definitely, it has improved how I listen to my brothers, who are of different
> mindsets than I am, because I know that…you know, we ultimately…our goal is the
> same. We love each other, but it's no longer a fight of like who has to be right. It's about
> seeing those perspectives. And then on a professional level, it's even helped me with my
> colleagues who haven't had restorative practice training because being able to separate
> tasks conflict issues with whatever task we have at hand versus personal conflict. I, I no
> longer feel that I need to justify like, oh, well, they don't like me personally because they
> questioned my ability to do this or gave me criticism on it. It's, no, this is…I'm able to

compartmentalize and truly see situations for what they are rather than internalizing them, which has really benefited my productivity as well as my communication skills with colleagues and other paraprofessionals in other realms of my life.

Regarding students:

Tremendously. It…I think that every student that comes in my classroom, whether or not they are, you know, fully engaged…it's their favorite subject…they feel seen in there, and I feel like I'm no longer having that moment of like, I don't know who that student is. Where the invisible student kind of piece, where I know that there are, they turn in their work, but everybody has participated into the community as a whole, and so I feel like it has empowered me and my students to have voices with each other and for them to have interactions with colleagues and peers that they did not think that they could have any kind of relationship with, even if it turns into a friendship, but they start to understand the beginnings of what is it going to be like after high school in a professional setting. Like we have standards for each other. And so, I think it has benefited us tremendously.

Other statements include phrases like "we talk about things;" "I'm more purposeful with making time for circles and conversations with my kids;" "it's softened the relationship, and they see me as a person," and it "made it much more whole."

Summary

This chapter portrayed the lived experiences of 11 secondary educators who have been trained in and implemented restorative practices in their classroom for one year. By analyzing responses from interviews, a focus group, and training materials, a description of the participants' experiences was extracted. The three dominant themes that emerged relating to the experiences of secondary classroom teachers with restorative practices in North Carolina were:

(a) the influence of student discourse on the culture of the classroom, (b) teacher empowerment through reflection, and (c) the emergence of altruism.

The study divulged that participants value their experience with restorative practices and that it has changed the way they approach instruction. They talked about the value of restorative circles and the community that they build within the classroom. They talked about how circles create an inclusive classroom where every voice is heard and valued. Conflict is no longer seen as a disruption in the classroom but an opportunity to use their skills in restorative questioning. Their transition to classroom facilitator, active listener, relationship builder, reflective practitioner, flexible teacher, vulnerable human, and change agent has played a powerful role in their experience, giving them the skill and desire to be restorative educators.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to describe the experiences of secondary classroom teachers with restorative practices in North Carolina. This study provides supplemental information to the current literature to better understand how teachers experience restorative practices implementation. Following the overview, the study's findings will be summarized and a response to how each of the four guiding questions are addressed will follow, including the central question and three sub-questions. A discussion of the study's findings and its implications will follow with reference to the theoretical framework as well as theoretical, empirical, and practical implications. The next section will discuss the delimitations and limitations of this study. The chapter will conclude with recommendations for future research and a summary.

Summary of Findings

Research for the study was conducted through a single, semi-structured, long interview; a focus group; and a document review of teacher training materials. After all data was collected, interview and focus group transcripts were transcribed and uploaded into the ATLAS.ti 9 qualitative data analysis software. A modified version of phenomenological analysis, the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen Method was utilized to organize the data (Moustakis, 1994). The data was investigated to assemble codes into developing themes. The themes that emerged from the 32 codes were the influence of student discourse on the culture of the classroom, teacher empowerment through reflection, and the emergence of altruism. A synopsis of the findings is best represented by portraying the themes and analyzing how they answer the central research question and research sub-questions. The findings from this study can provide future researchers

and school administrators a foundation to support teachers with their training and implementation of restorative practices in the secondary classroom.

Central Research Question

The central question of this study asked: "How do secondary-level teachers from central North Carolina describe their experiences with restorative practices in the classroom? All of the participants described their experiences with restorative practices in their classroom at the secondary level as an integral part of their success as teachers. The participants explained how critical the use of circles is in facilitating conversations that fostered trust and community in their classrooms. The participants also described how implementing restorative practices gave them skills with classroom management that supported a more nurturing classroom environment where kids felt safe, and their voices heard. Many of them talked about they had changed their instructional practices regarding homework assignments, lectures, questioning, and class discussions. They also talked about how restorative practices impacted them as people with other professionals and in their personal life. They became active listeners, listening to hear what someone is saying rather than listening to respond, as well as being able to own their personal failures and apologize. They described themselves as educators with terms like flexible, vulnerable, reflective, empathetic and a facilitator. Participants described their experience as transformative for them and their students, with many of them enthusiastic about continuing its use for years to come.

Research Sub-Question One

The first research sub-question asked: "How do teachers describe how their teaching has taken on a new dimension after restorative practice implementation?" The participants all agreed that their teaching has transformed and taken on a new dimension because of restorative

practices implementation, particularly with the use of circles. Multiple participants discussed how they valued the time set aside to allow students to have a voice in the classroom. They began designing questions as part of their lectures, questions that could be used within the circle that tie to their topic or, on some occasions, just to talk. Many began using circles to connect with all students, with one participant even noting that no kid in her class goes unnoticed. Several participants described a great focus on reflection and how that has helped them grow as an educator and become more confident implementing restorative practices.

Research Sub-Question Two

The second research sub-question asked: "How do teachers describe how they have changed, as an educator, after implementing restorative practices?" Most participants described how they now put their content aside to ensure students were emotionally, physically, and socially ready to learn. If they were not, they paused, conducted a circle to reset, and then resumed with instruction. Their focus on the whole child surfaced as well as the use of mercy, grace, and redemption with their students. They described viewing their students now as humans, as unique individuals with separate needs. A new-found ability to "separate the deed from the doer" (Costello, Wachtel & Wachtel, 2009) appeared. A nurturer surfaced, that altruistic protector, like a shepherd over their flock, a characteristic not common with many secondary-level educators.

Research Sub-Question Three

The third sub-question asked: "How do teachers describe how their relationships with others have changed after implementing restorative practices?" All participants noted that their relationships with students were greatly improved with restorative practices. Terms like respect, softened, seeing a whole child, empowered students, have voices, created a bond, moved from

fear to respect, trust, conversational, and redemption were utilized. They started to see their

classroom more as a community than a cluster of students. Several participants talked about how

restorative practices has improved their relationships with their colleagues and other

paraprofessionals. They credited the ability to acknowledge mistakes; prioritize maintaining

relationships; be solution-oriented as opposed to needing to win an argument; be honest,

transparent, and more apologetic; practice actively listening; use newly acquired communication

skills; compartmentalize and not take things personally; end conversations on a positive note;

eliminate the need to blame; and use affective statements. Several participants spoke about how

restorative practices altered their relationships with those that are significant in their lives. They

reiterated that they now listen to hear and not respond, have a renewed sense of empathy by

valuing the other's experiences and what they are feeling, and experience clearer

communication. Participants also said they have learned to stay quiet, to apologize, and to value

the other as a human.

Discussion

The discussion section will incorporate empirical and theoretical evidence extracted from

the literature review in Chapter Two. The theoretical framework was based upon the impact of

change on the experiences of teachers implementing restorative practices. The first segment will

directly address and reinforce Fullan's educational change theory, a construct rooted in the work

of Kurt Lewin, "father of social change theories" (Huarng & Mas-Tur, 2016, p. 4725). The

second segment will discuss how this study contributes to existing literature about restorative

practices and the impact on teachers. For school and district administrators who are considering

implementing restorative practices as a school discipline reform measure, this material might

inform them of steps they can take to support teachers through the training and implementation for a more successful and sustainable initiative.

Theoretical Discussion

The theoretical framework for this study was rooted in Kurt Lewin's change theory. His early interests were in the work setting and the psychology of workers as well as Frederick Taylor's system of organization, which focused on the ability of a person to work, giving meaning to their survival (Marrow, 1969). Change in a work setting can leave employees frustrated, and when left to tackle the challenge independently, they might find ways to deal with the change by going rogue (Schultz, 2011). Lewin developed three core beliefs that served as a framework to his approach: "Change must be voluntary and participative; change is a learning process; and change must focus on the group rather than the individual or the organization" (Burnes, 2012). The Lewin change theory model has been shown to support a leader making profound change, diminish the interruption of the organization's activity, and assure that the change is maintained for the long-term (Morrison, 2014). As a result of this work, the management of employees in large companies, including schools, has the same purpose to coordinate the behavior of the employees while finding ways to get the people to maximize their potential and meet employer expectations (Marrow, 1969). Students of Lewin's theory expanded his work. Schein, Argyris, and Weiss have all made contributions to change theory. "Weiss (1995) defined a theory of change quite simply and elegantly as a theory of how and why initiative works" (Connell & Kubish, 1998). Change theory was noted by Sarason (1990) as an element of school reform, and resistance by the school to change meant that teachers must be a chief concern for professional development. Teachers must lead the reform initiative or it will have no chance for success (Papa & English, 2011). Sarason's requirements for school reform

were interpreted by Tharp, who stated that reform must inspect the assumptions of schools that students should be passive participants, in straight rows, and responding chorally to a teacher's question (Papa & English, 2011).

Fullan (2007) referenced Sarason's work of implementation failure in the 1970s. He also noted that change theory can be impactful in advising education reform strategies, although only effective under the leadership of those with a deep understanding of how outcomes are influenced. Fullan has examined major school reform initiatives between the 1960s and 1990s and developed some conclusive findings about the essence of reform in schools (McAdams, 1997). Fullan (2007) claimed theories of action must strongly relate to the actual events taking place in schools and classrooms. Fullan gave six guidelines for implementing successful change in an educational setting: define closing the gap as the overarching goal; recognize that all successful strategies are socially based and action-oriented – change by doing rather than change by elaborate planning; assume that lack of capacity is the initial problem, and then work on it continuously; stay the course through continuity of good direction by leveraging leadership; build internal accountability linked to external accountability; and establish conditions for the evolution of positive pressure (Fullan, 2016).

Define closing the gap as the overarching goal. Primarily due to the consequences on society, the priority in educational reform should be grounded in closing the gap between high and low achievers, boys and girls, ethnic groups, impoverished and wealthy students, and exceptional children. Fullan (2016) specifically refers to "raising the bar and closing the gap" (p. 47). He emphasizes raising the bar for all (Fullan, 2016). Through the document review of training materials, the concept of being "restorative" means decisions are made with a focus on developing good relationships and restoring the community in a climate riddled with

disconnections (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2009). Ellen responded at one point that she

thought restorative practices were going to "be my disciplinary style," yet it was not about that.

The training materials noted that there is a vast misconception that restorative practices are only

an approach to discipline (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2009). Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel

(2009) noted that the whole purpose of getting students to engage in the classroom and allowing

them to take on responsibility is to improve the nature of teaching and learning. Moreover, they

explain that without relationships and a sense of community, students do not feel a connection to

school and have limited chances to excel. Kevin specifically mentioned in his interview the

impact a restorative practitioner had on turning his experience in school around and took a

disappointing event by failing fourth grade and capitalized on it by making Kevin a safety patrol

leader. Kevin described the event by saying, "It made me feel a part of a greater population of

students and then peers, so he not only told me I was the leader, he gave me an opportunity to

lead in a positive way." He further added that several of his teachers in the 70s and 80s were

very restorative in their nature and that made a great difference in his educational experience.

Anecdotally, restorative practices help students connect with their teachers and peers, leading to

less punitive responses to disruptive behaviors and more time in the classroom. More time in a

classroom, exposed to teaching and learning, can provide greater opportunities for students to

succeed emotionally, socially, and academically.

**Recognize that all successful strategies are socially based and action-oriented –
change by doing rather than change by elaborate planning.** One of the definitions of

restorative practices, as presented in restorative practices training materials, describes it as an

"emerging social science that studies how to strengthen relationships between individuals as well

as social connections within communities" (E. Rainey, personal communication, March 29,

2021). In one of the restorative practices training texts, Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel (2009) emphasize the following:

> We urge administrators, teachers, and other staff to avoid feeling overwhelmed by the big picture by simply trying out what they've learned in the first training and reflecting on that experience. As teachers try out restorative practices in their classes, administrators use them in disciplinary situations, and people begin to share their experiences with one another, everyone will get new ideas, and the small results will begin to build. The cumulative effect of staff making small changes here and there will slowly impact the whole-school culture. The idea is to start where you are do what you can. (p.91)

Danielle specifically mentioned that "there is some benefit to it for the students, for the classroom itself, for society, teaching people how to resolve conflict as well so that there is a long-term goal."

One of the principles of restorative practices is the idea of the social discipline window that integrates the notion of socially based and action-oriented responses from educators. Additional training materials stated, "Human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes in their behavior when those in positions of authority do things with them, rather than to them or for them" (E. Rainey, personal communication, March 29, 2021). The social discipline window (Figure 3) reiterates this principle of restorative practices and demonstrates how this strategy is different from other discipline techniques (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2009).

Kevin added that he has found great success with implementation because he is a part of a group of restorative practitioners that discuss their stories and student accomplishments. He said, "We talk about it all the time when we get together, the experiences and the stories are

very, very similar, but it's really a wonderful feeling." These gatherings give him motivation to continue the work and change lives. Hillary expressed confidence in implementing after watching Kevin do a restorative circle with one of her students. She stated, "I remember kind of looking in awe and thinking, wow, you know, could I do that? That seemed like too hard for me, but now that I've had the training and understand, and also have the card, I think I would be better equipped."

Assume that lack of capacity is the initial problem, and then work on it continuously. Capacity building is supported by empowerment which requires meeting, sharing ideas, socializing, and action-step planning for the desired change, thus requiring participant interaction (Rogers & Singhal, 2016). Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel (2009) noted that most teachers are not comfortable asking their colleagues for help or suggestions when dealing with disruptive students and those hesitant to engage in learning. They seldom share what is working in their classroom with others. The International Institute of Restorative Practices addresses this in their training texts by providing remedies to this problem and addressing lack of capacity (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2009). They state:

> First, most teachers are afraid to admit they need help because they do not want to be seen as ineffective or weak. Leaders have to work to change this belief by making consultation and collaboration a regular part of the business of the school. (p. 92)

Their second suggestion for addressing lack of capacity and working on it continuously is included in the following:

> Secondly, there are typically no systematic opportunities for teachers to sit and talk about these types of classroom issues. Teachers are rarely given the opportunity or a safe forum to discuss student behavior. By making behavioral issues a priority, leaders can

help teachers help each other. Even regularly scheduled discussions, just an hour every

four to six weeks, can go a long way toward opening new lines of communication. (p. 92)

The training text also notes that for the change to be effective, school administrators must

continually provide pressure and support; otherwise, the implementation will fail. This can be

avoided by holding regular meetings with school staff to share what is working and proven to be

effective (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2009).

      Stay the course through continuity of good direction by leveraging leadership. This

means that careful consideration is given to expanding the leadership of others in the school in

the commitment to constancy and reinforcing the change in direction (Fullan, 2016). In the

training text, a central goal of restorative practices is to describe the importance of initiating a

sense of community for participation and cooperation with stakeholders (Costello, Wachtel, &

Wachtel, 2010). It is the responsibility of school leaders to make this happen. Fullan (2016)

states that "Leaders developing other leaders is at the heart of sustainability" (p. 50). The

training text discusses this as "fair process" and consists of three parts: engagement, explanation,

and expectation clarity (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2010). The text further elaborates that

engagement is the act of including stakeholders in decisions that affect them by hearing their

views and fairly considering their opinions – at the teacher and student level (Costello, Wachtel,

& Wachtel, 2010). Explanation includes describing the choice underlying a decision to all who

are involved and affected by the decision, and expectation clarity is ensuring everyone has a

clear understanding of what is expected of them in the future (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel,

2010). A blueprint for developing leaders was found in the training text. It described the

process of working in stages, with the first being those teachers that were the most receptive to

the idea of implementing restorative practices. As they implemented, they supported one

another. During the second year of implementation, those that were a little more hesitant noticed the changes within the first group, piquing their interest. The initial group then served as leaders for the second group, modeling for and supporting the new group. Around the third year, the most resistant teachers saw its importance and began to be less skeptical. Those that were new hires were trained with the third, formerly most resistant, group. This gave the opportunity for early implementers to serve as leaders to others new in their practice.

Hillary commented on several occasions about the importance of having restorative practices leaders in the building to partner with those that are less experienced. When asked how she was able to process the uncertainty of implementing restorative practices, she responded with Mr. XXXXX. I said, "So an expert?" Her response was, "An expert, yes. And this card (Figure 1)." She was referencing Kevin, another teacher in her school, who at that time was a leader in restorative practices implementation. He has now helped develop other staff leaders, one of whom was also interviewed, Isabel. Isabel was so influenced by restorative practices and having solid peer leadership that she has now decided to go back for her graduate degree in Educational Research Methodology.

Building internal accountability linked to external accountability. Restorative practices encompasses accountability with all stakeholders. Fullan (2016) explained that people positively respond to outcomes of accountability when they are in control – when the information enables them and aids them in accomplishing their goal. He also noted that accountability is the firmest foundation because it provides for individual and community responsibility (Fullan, 2016).

Isabel talked about how accountability has helped her and her students with their community, a result of her incorporating an internal structure for accountability. She stated, "My

classroom management has changed drastically from my first year in student teaching to now, in a lab-driven classroom, by having students participate actively in how we hold each other accountable, not just myself." Georgette also spoke about the importance of internal accountability with her students. She described it this way:

> And then also in the fact that you know, they, if they have earned a trust for me, you know, for example, if they say, "Well, I'm going to go to the bathroom." And I explain to them, "I am trusting you." So, you know, if you don't, if you do something that goes against this trust and you lose that right, you haven't lost it because I have made a decision. You've lost it because you made a decision. So we have to, you know, you have to own that decision. So, know that I am trusting you and that trust means a lot and so, you know, and that, and that a lot of times even with kids that, that are…can be challenging, know that you trust them.

Accountability at the teacher level filters into external accountability. Danielle described her feelings of accountability when she stated:

> It makes me feel more like….I guess more of a …I guess I wanna say social engineer. I feel like my role is for the greater society, not just looking at the whole picture, not just what's happening in my classroom…. That you know, we have a responsibility to help rectify social injustices…like we really…. It's just one of the places where that has to take place.

Accountability is also addressed in a training text by describing the statements of a teacher-leader in restorative practices to a resistant group of teachers. She stated, "As teachers here, none of us is in a private practice." According to the IIRP in the training text:

This statement helped the other teachers move toward recognizing their collective responsibility to create a better school culture. Surprising and positive results occur when teachers who may be initially resistant to the idea of restorative practices take risks and try to use them. (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2009, p. 93)

Establish conditions for the evolution of positive pressure. Positive pressure is a motivational factor whose transformation means removing excuses (Fullan, 2016). Fullan (2016) also noted that collaborative school cultures provide support but also encompass dynamic peer pressure. This ties to the comment made by Isabel when she expressed that as a restorative practitioner, she was excited and hopeful that her school could get restorative practices going on a larger scale. She continued with:

I know that as individuals in the school that I work in have that practice. I want to see that holistically implemented so that from my classroom to their second or third block class, there isn't any discrepancies of what the expectations are as a community as a whole, because that's really the…what restorative practice needs to be is a whole community standard.

Isabel's influence would be an example of a positive pressure. It also links to the previously mentioned description of the school that implemented in stages. Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel (2009) wrote one of the training texts and reiterated that the implementing school's administration must provide consistent pressure and support.

Empirical Discussion

The empirical significance of this study was to provide rich descriptions of teachers' lived experiences while implementing restorative practices and the hope that it will provide insight for school leaders in search of an effective approach to discipline reform that empowers

educators and leads to equitable practices while changing school culture (Stewart Kline, 2016). This insight can provide school leaders with strategies to minimize the impact of change on teachers and lead to their reflective practice.

Most existing studies focus on qualitative results and case studies resulting in reductions in suspensions at the high school level. A Google Scholar search resulted in 11 empirical articles with "teachers" as the keyword and inclusive of "restorative practices." Of the 11 articles, none of them presented a phenomenological study of teachers' experiences with restorative practices at the secondary level (inclusive of middle and high school). There were a few at middle schools or elementary schools, but none inclusive of high school which, ironically, is where most of the exclusionary discipline application occurs.

This study has solidified steps that school administrators and district leaders should consider when planning to implement restorative practices in a middle or high school. This study provides insight to the research of restorative practices and what teachers feel prior to implementation, what they struggle with during implementation, and what they learned about themselves through the process, as an educator and human.

Restorative practices implementation has exploded so quickly the rate of research cannot keep up with the number of schools currently practicing (Gregory et al., 2018). Educational researchers and those pushing for disciplinary reform are seeking more research to understand the factors associated with utilizing restorative practices (Green et al., 2019).

The Need for Discipline Reform. The United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights recently reported that the number of suspensions and expulsions in our nation's public schools had dropped 20 percent between 2012 and 2014, likely resulting from a call for our schools to adopt alternative disciplinary strategies (Steinberg & Lacoe, 2017). Restorative

practices have been implemented since the mid-2000s as a counter measure to exclusionary

school discipline and the frequent use of punitive measures to give consequences to students

(Gonzalez, Etow, & De La Vega, 2019). Restorative practices are described as being essential

for creating a positive school climate with safe and productive learning environments because

they prioritize relationships, as well as individual and community growth (Gonzalez, Etow, & De

La Vega, 2019). In a five-year span from 2013 to 2018, 23 school districts changed their

disciplinary policies to include restorative practices ideology (Gonzalez, Etow, & De La Vega,

2019).

Three of the 11 participants in this study specifically mentioned their personal transition,

as educators, from eliminating punitive actions and statements from their classrooms. Two

others specifically mentioned their classrooms becoming more inclusive, and they no longer

removed disruptive students from their classrooms because they now had the skills to address the

issue without having to exclude a child that they now see as "in crisis." All participants

acknowledged that students need to have their basic needs met to learn. They also understood

that, as educators, they play a critical role in recognizing the need and supporting the student in

making sure they are sound physically, socially, and emotionally.

History of Restorative Practices. Restorative practices have roots in indigenous

cultures as far back as 500 CE but began declining in the Middle Ages with the rise of states and

kingdoms, when a king, tribal leader, or elected official had precedence in citizens' affairs

(Gavrielides, 2011). Notwithstanding the deviation from the principles of restorative practices,

the practices' foundations were not forgotten or abandoned and eventually, like most other

things, cycled back (Gavrielides, 2011). The concept of restorative practices remains that we are

all connected, like links in a chain, through fostered relationships, and when a relationship is harmed, a link is broken (Stewart-Kline, 2016).

Relationships are a critical component of restorative practices. Relationships were referred to 100 times in the 11 interview transcripts and the focus group transcript. The training presentation included a quote from Nathanson and Braithwaite that states, "Human beings change their behavior based on their bonds and relationships" (E. Rainey, personal communication, March 29, 2021). At least three participants were familiar with and spoke about the origins of restorative practices and its foundation rooted in global indigenous cultures or referred to its use in prison ministry and the criminal justice system.

Defining Restorative Practices. The term restorative practices emerged from restorative justice, a field in the criminal justice system (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2009). It is defined by the IIRP in its training materials as "an emerging social science that studies how to strengthen relationships between individuals as well as social connections within communities" (E. Rainey, personal communication, March 29, 2021). It is not merely an approach to discipline, but a trend that aims to build good relationships and repair a sense of community in a disjointed world (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2009). Practical applications have been implemented in criminal justice systems, schools, neighborhoods, organizations, families, and on the job (Costello, Wachtel, & Wachtel, 2009). Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel (2009) noted that the participatory strategies in restorative practices have functional applications for educating America's youth to take responsibility for their actions outside of school.

Three participants spoke about their role as educators to prepare their students, even stating that they are "social engineers." Another teacher referred to building a sense of community and "citizenship." All participants referenced the importance of building

relationships and creating classroom community. Ellen even mentioned that she originally thought it was a discipline plan, but admitted she soon found that to be a misconception.

      Recommendations for Implementation. Winn (2018) noted that restorative practices in school will not change the culture of a school community if the entire school is not subject to acceptable training and support. Quality professional development and coaching are critical components to change the culture of discipline and support the appropriate behavior from students and address disruptions (Noltmeyer & Ward, 2015). Further, research indicates that restorative practices are most impactful when teachers reflect on the process and acknowledge their personal values (McCluskey et al., 2008). Therefore, the success of restorative practices lies within the humanity and mentality of those who are charged with its enforcement (Buckmaster, 2016).

      All participants in this study experienced a two-day training with an International Institute of Restorative Practices certified trainer. In doing so, they experienced a consistent message and training materials/texts. These included *The Restorative Practices Handbook* and *Restorative Circles in Schools*. Teachers were given the opportunity to role-play and practice affective statements and circles. One of the first components of training was a section called "Reflect on Current Practice" (E. Rainey, personal communication, March 29, 2021). Other topics presented and on the agenda included the following: (1) connection before content, (2) social discipline window (Figure 3), (3) fair process, (4) psychology of affect and the compass of shame, (5) discussion on responses to shame, (6) restorative practices continuum, (7) affective statements, (8) restorative questions (Figure 1), (9) restorative question partner work, (10) importance of community in your work, (11) purpose of circle process, (12) types of circles, (13) preparing to facilitate restorative circles, (14) circle topics, (15) rituals/talking pieces, (16)

circle situations/planning, and (17) closing circle (E. Rainey, personal communication, March 29, 2021).

One participant was particularly passionate that every implementing school should have an expert on-site. The importance of a coach was previously mentioned. Another participant that worked at the same school noted that restorative practices would be best implemented throughout the entire school as it leads to consistency for the students and teachers speaking the same language. All participants in this study noted that their instructional practices had changed as they re-evaluated their role as an educator, ultimately changing them as people. The term human was mentioned 49 times throughout the interview transcriptions, indicating the importance of seeing others as human and identifying one's own personal values. Their responses indicated that the IIRP training was impactful and prepared them for the challenge of implementation. The sustainable impact will be from on-site coaching or in-house leadership that is leveraged for the long term.

The Effects of Restorative Practices. Research indicates that restorative practices is favored as an effective approach to disciplinary interventions (Gregory et al., 2016). Educators that implement restorative practices have noted that the approach does provide a greater perspective on fulfillment and purpose to life (Bevington, 2015). Kehoe, Bourke-Taylor, and Broderick (2018) note that the current research concludes that implementing restorative practices in secondary schools provides limited information from student and teacher interviews or surveys. Schools that have implemented restorative practices note that is more than a discipline plan; it undergirds a philosophy of life with deeper meaning anchored in the student-teacher relationship (Bevington, 2015).

All participants in this study referenced the value of relationships and how they view their students now through a more humanistic leans and have shuffled their priorities in terms of curriculum versus the whole child. This study provides a steady diet of teacher interview responses from their experiences with restorative practices, all acknowledging success and its impact on changing the culture of their classroom and their personal work experiences. Several participants in this study referenced their migration from an authoritative, dominant figure in the classroom to a more facilitative instructor and listener.

Implications

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to describe the experiences of secondary classroom teachers with restorative practices in North Carolina. The results of this study could provide guidance to future researchers, school administrators, district-level officials, and policymakers. Through an inspection of the perceptions of teachers that have lived the experience, the results of this study supplement the existing literature.

Theoretical Implications

This study was guided by one theory that originated with Kurt Lewin and has been adapted by Michael Fullan to apply specifically to educators dealing with school reform. Weiss (1995) defined change theory as a theory of "how and why initiative works" (Connell & Kubisch, 1998). Utilizing change theory in the implementation of school reform increases the chance that educators will have a clear understanding of expectations, steps to achieve the expectations, and potential influences that can alter the projected outcomes (Connell & Kubisch, 1998). Fullan's change theory for school reform has six components: define closing the gap as the overarching goal; recognize that all successful strategies are socially based and action-oriented – change by doing rather than change by elaborate planning; assume that lack of

capacity is the initial problem and then work on it continuously; stay the course through continuity of good direction by leveraging leadership; build internal accountability linked to external accountability; and establish conditions for the evolution of positive pressure (Fullan, 2016).

The implications of this study show that Fullan's change theory for educational reform gives a powerful approach to scrutinize the data and results of this study. The three overarching themes resulting from this study were extensions of the teacher's ability to adapt to change because of the restorative practices training and support. The themes were: (a) the influence of student discourse on the culture of the classroom, (b) teacher empowerment through reflection, and (c) the emergence of altruism. The design of the IIRP in their restorative practices training will be dependent upon the school administrator or district-level leadership adhering to the guidelines. The ability to utterly understand the needs of the teachers will be instrumental in a sustainable rollout of restorative practices in any school.

The participants in this study were all complimentary of their training, a critical part of their success, with many noting that the initiative would be more impactful if all their colleagues implemented. Of the 11 teachers that participated in this study, only one of them was part of whole-school implementation with a veteran principal, knowledgeable about being a change agent. Two separate groups of four participants were all trained at the same school, although it was not a whole-school implementation. The principals at those schools have garnered enough buy-in from their staff to roll it out in the recommended phases by the IIRP, and one encouraged a staff member to become a certified trainer and now uses him to train new staff. The remaining three participants were all trained at a district-level event and only implemented in their classes in isolation.

Recommendations. This study's findings support the importance of Fullan's change theory when rolling out a reform initiative with educators. Based on the findings in this study, it is recommended that school administrators and district-level administrators utilize the six components of change theory Fullan emphasized when considering introducing any new initiative to teachers. All change agents can benefit from continuing to recognize the difficulty people have with change and provide appropriate supports to facilitate at the school and district level.

Empirical Implications

This study provides support to existing literature. While exploring the lived experiences of teachers implementing restorative practices, it became clear that the training produced by the International Institute of Restorative Practices has prepared the teachers to successfully implement, even in independent conditions, without an on-site coach or support network. However, several participants did reiterate that the initiative would be more successful with an on-site coach and a whole-school approach.

Restorative practices are described as being essential for creating a positive school climate with safe and productive learning environments, because it prioritizes relationships, as well as individual and community growth (Gonzalez, Etow, & De La Vega, 2019). The research in this study has confirmed this idea. The importance of relationship was coded 33 times throughout the 12 transcribed interviews or focus groups. The term "safe," or a synonym of safe, was used 17 times. Therefore, participants reiterated that restorative practices does, in fact, create a positive classroom environment, where students feel and are safe. All participants emphasized the importance of building relationships with students, colleagues, and those in their

personal lives. All participants noted that they had grown in some capacity instructionally, personally, and emotionally.

   Recommendations. This study's findings supported the existing literature by reiterating the effects of restorative practices on students, educators, the school, and the community. As additional secondary schools consider moving to restorative practices implementation, it is important to provide training with a certified IIRP trainer; maintain an on-site coach; develop time for teachers to collaborate, reflect, and discuss their experiences; and train new staff as they are hired. In addition, it is important that school leaders be patient with teachers as effective implementation can take one to three years during which time teachers are grappling with humanity and their own mentality as well as that of their students.

Practical Implications

   The findings in this study can be utilized by any school or district seeking to reduce the number of out-of-school suspensions or expulsions. The findings can also support teachers struggling with classroom management. Through documenting the experiences of teachers implementing restorative practices, one can better understand how to address gaps in classroom management skills, argue for including restorative practices training in teacher education programs, modify professional development, and use change theory as a guide when implementing any type of organizational change.

   Recommendations. This study's findings supported the existing literature and reinforced the need for ongoing support for teachers implementing restorative practices. Restorative practices training should be the first option for any teacher struggling with classroom management, disorderly students, and disengaged students. Schools of education across the globe should consider including restorative practices as part of their curriculum for aspiring

teachers. Professional development should be consistent and supportive of teachers being trained and implementing restorative practices. On-site coaching and professional learning communities should be established for program sustainability. School leaders should utilize the recommendations for implementing change for any new initiative they plan to introduce to their staff.

Delimitations and Limitations

This study was conducted to fill a gap in the current literature by seeking to understand the lived experiences of secondary teachers implementing restorative practices in North Carolina. A transcendental phenomenological study was chosen because it engages the researcher in an analytical and efficient attempt to put aside their assumptions regarding the phenomenon under investigation (Moustakas, 1994). The delimitations included restricting participation to classroom teachers that have been trained in restorative practices by a certified International Institute of Restorative Practices trainer and implemented in their classroom for one school year. All participants, at the time they trained and implemented, were employed by the same school district and implemented in a middle or high school. To be a phenomenological study, all participants must have experienced the phenomenon in question (Creswell, 2013). I utilized purposeful sampling by trying to include a maximum variation sample, accounting for diversity in gender, race, and experience-level of teaching.

There were several limitations in the study. Even though I hoped to include diversity in the group, I struggled finding participants at all due to the pandemic and stress of adapting to teaching in a hybrid format. Many teachers struggled to make the time to participate. There are currently 1,079 (GCS, 2018a) secondary teachers in the district with fewer than 600 that qualified for the study (E. Gray, personal communication, April 22, 2020), many of whom are no

longer with the district or left education all together. However, I do wonder if the demographic breakdown of my study participants matches the overall district demographic make-up of teachers. In addition, the small number of participants, 11, barely meets the minimum criteria for a phenomenological study and can be considered a limitation.

I came into this study with an open mind wanting to hear from the participants and get their perspective on what it means to be a restorative practitioner. Prior to the study, I was familiar with restorative practices and had limited knowledge of its principles and philosophy. After hearing the participants' accounts of implementing restorative practices, I found myself excited about their enthusiasm toward it and what it means for them and their students.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study gave voice to the experiences of secondary classroom teachers that have implemented restorative practices in North Carolina in an exploration of what methods and strategies supported them through implementation, what impact it had on them as a person and an educator, and the impact it had on their students and classroom culture. I was introduced to restorative practices at a leadership institute in 2016 and became interested in the philosophy, how it worked, if/why it worked, and how teachers adjusted to the expectations. This study corroborated much of the existing literature but extended some of it to offer new insights from secondary teachers who have lived the experience. Although it is a singular study from one geographic location, there are a few recommendations for future research.

There need to be additional studies conducted with high school teachers, exclusively, where whole-school implementation has occurred with an on-site coach versus not having one. A long-term study would be impactful to determine the impacts of schoolwide restorative practices on students that experienced the phenomenon all four years and how it impacts them as

adults. A quantitative study would be called for to determine if experiencing restorative practices improves student graduation rates, college attrition, and career stability. Additionally, a study to determine if restorative practice utilization improves teacher retention and longevity would be meaningful.

Summary

In this study, I hoped to describe the lived experience of 11 secondary classroom teachers in North Carolina with restorative practices implementation. Chapter Five began with an overview and a summary of the study's results. The Summary explained how the three themes were extracted consisting of (a) the influence of student discourse on the culture of a classroom, (b) teacher empowerment through reflection, and (c) the emergence of altruism. The central research question and three research sub-questions were then addressed. The subsequent discussion described the study's findings as it connects to the theoretical framework and empirical literature. This chapter then provided an explanation of the theoretical, empirical, and practical implication with recommendations.

What the participants clearly indicated in their responses was that restorative practices are very influential in changing the culture of their classroom to provide students with a safe place to learn, a place where their voice can be heard, and where they now have a village of peer support. They clearly indicated that restorative practices have changed them as people, helping them be active listeners and not always seeking to respond. They claim to be more empathetic as humans and able to see through behaviors and responses to a hurting child in need of love and support. They indicated the need for continued support with an on-site coach and support of colleagues and administrators, who also need to be trained and willing participants. Content can no longer

be the focus of teachers. All participants noted that kids cannot learn until their basic needs are met including the need to be included, loved, and cared for.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

2020-10-22

Janiese McKenzie

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY19-20-379 A Phenomenological Study of Teachers Implementing Restorative Practices

Dear Janiese McKenzie,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:
101(b):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear Teacher:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to describe the experiences of secondary classroom teachers with restorative practices in North Carolina, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants should be teachers that have been trained in restorative practices and implemented in their classroom for one school year. If willing, participants will be asked to participate in an interview. The individual interviews should take approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete. You will have an opportunity to review the interview transcript for accuracy. At the conclusion of the interview, you may be asked to participate in a focus group. This will take an additional 45 minutes at a different time and location. The focus group will consist of 4 to 6 participants from the initial interview group. Throughout this process, names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

In order to participate, contact me at 336-XXX-XXXX or jmckenzie16@liberty.edu for more information or to schedule an interview. Interviews can be conducted through Microsoft Teams or Zoom, if you would prefer.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview.

All participants will receive a $25 Visa gift card at the conclusion of the interview.

Sincerely,

Janiese McKenzie

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Consent

Title of the Project: A Phenomenological Study of Teachers Implementing Restorative Practices

Principal Investigator: Janiese McKenzie, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be a middle or high school teacher who has been trained in and have implemented restorative practices in the classroom for one school year. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to describe the experiences of secondary classroom teachers with restorative practices in North Carolina.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:
1. Participate in an interview for approximately 30-45 minutes. The interview will be recorded by both audio and video.
2. 4-6 participants will be selected on a volunteer basis to participate in a focus group. The focus group will be recorded by both audio and video and will last approximately 45 minutes.
3. A transcript review will be conducted with each participant to ensure what was recorded is accurate.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include a better understanding of what teachers experience while implementing restorative practices.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and in a locked cabinet and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all hard copy records will be shredded.
- Interviews and the focus group will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will be compensated for participating in this study. Participants will receive a $25 Visa gift card. Participants will receive compensation immediately following the interview.

Is study participation voluntary?

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

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Janiese McKenzie. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at 336-442-1754 or jmckenzie16@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Crites, at ltcrites@liberty.edu.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

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., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

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

_____   _____
Printed Subject Name   Signature & Date

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please introduce yourself including where you grew up, anything about your family, and your educational background.

2. What kind of educational experiences did you have (elementary through graduate, if applicable)?

3. How did you arrive in your current position?

4. What changes have you made in your instruction after restorative practices implementation?

5. How have those changes impacted the culture of your classroom?

6. How does your instruction now embody restorative practice principles?

7. What components of your educational philosophy have changed due to restorative practice implementation?

8. What components of restorative practices in your classroom do you still grapple with?

9. What were your initial thoughts about implementing restorative practices?

10. What feelings surfaced during the implementation of restorative practices?

11. How has implementing restorative practices caused you to evaluate your role as an educator?

12. How has restorative practice implementation altered your view of conflict in your classroom/school?

13. How were you able to process the uncertainty of implementing restorative practices?

14. How did restorative practices implementation compare with your initial mindset?

15. How did your experience with restorative practices impact those that are significant in your life?

16. How has implementing restorative practices altered your relationships with students?

17. How do you model restorative practices in your relationships with students, teachers, and administrators?

18. How does your knowledge of a student's background/homelife impact how you work
    them

APPENDIX E: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Tell us your name, what you teach, and how long you have been an educator.

2. What have you learned about your instruction through the implementation process of restorative practices?

3. Has anything about your instruction/management changed as a result of implementing restorative practices?

4. What have you learned about yourself, as an educator, through the process of restorative practices implementation?

5. How has your relationship with your students been impacted by restorative practice implementation?

6. How is this different than your relationships with students prior to implementation?

7. If restorative practices were an animal, what animal would it be (Bevington, 2015)?

8. What experiences with restorative practices led you to this response?

APPENDIX F: SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Speaker 1:   Please introduce yourself including where you grew up, anything about your family, and your educational background.

Speaker 2:   Okay, I grew up in XXX and I've been in education 32 years. I have two grown kids and I have two dogs that are both rescues. I'm really into that… rescues. And well, what else about me? Oh, I taught middle school for like 24 years… something like that. And so now….and then I went back and added in my high school English. So now that's what I do is high school.

Speaker 1:   What kind of educational experiences did you have (elementary through graduate, if applicable)?

Speaker 2:   Okay. I had mainly public, but I did teach two years in a private school down in XXX and I'm at a private school now ….so four years total in private school.

Speaker 1:   How did you arrive in your current position?

Speaker 2:   This is really unbelievable because we moved from XXX. My husband's a pastor and so our house...the school is sitting almost in my backyard. So, when I saw that, I had already retired for a year and I thought...I said I think God wants me to go back to teaching. I mean I can walk up here if I wasn't so lazy. So, they just happened to need an English teacher.

Speaker 1:   What changes have you made in your instruction after restorative practices implementation?

Speaker 2:   Oh, wow! One of the things that I have changed is I have been a lot more aware of the academic stress on the kids. Because… I'm more aware and I ask them…. Okay, what are your tests? Because a lot of times teachers don't have time to get together. So, I ask them, what about this week, this coming week…. Do you have any tests coming up? Do you have any projects coming up? So, if I know that then I can work around that for them. Because one of the things I found out that stresses them out the most is if they have three tests in a day, that kind of thing. So that has really… it has really opened up my eyes to how I schedule things and plan things.

Speaker 1:   How have those changes impacted the culture of your classroom?

Speaker 2:   I think that…. you know, when you teach you need to have a rapport with the kids and some kind of connection and let them know that you care about them. And I think that they can see from me listening to them because they… one of the things

they bring up a lot to me is nobody listens to us. And so…they have a voice and I think because they have a voice, they feel more cooperative when I ask them to do something they really don't want to do. But I see a lot less behavior issues.

Speaker 1:   How does your instruction now embody restorative practice principles?

Speaker 2:   Okay. So, what I try to do is whenever I am ……I'm not one of these that believe no homework, but on the other hand, I don't think we need to bog them down with homework. And so, I think what's changed with me is my whole attitude toward homework. I think that's really changed a lot with me. Also, the kids at my school now…. I can tell you probably 99 percent of them play sports; they play one or more sports. And so, you know how sports is and it… so I try to say okay, when are your games? You know, when is that going on so that I can…. see some of them don't even start practice till 8 o'clock at night. So that's another thing I try to take into consideration. And another thing I've noticed about myself that I'm doing differently, I never would have done in the past is like when I assigned, for instance, I assigned them a project to do for my 10th graders. It's on *Lord of the Flies* and we just finished it and so it's pretty detailed, not really bad, but pretty detailed. And so, two of the kids, my best kids said Ms. XXX, we've got ballgames…. we got this. Can we do it this day, which was only like a day later. So, I said, oh sure. You know, that's what I try to do now with my instruction… I try to ….and another thing is I think that I've really changed a lot of is they don't want to hear me talking all the time and I used to do too much talking. So, from the things I've heard in these circles that we've done, they get bored and as much as I like to hear myself talk, I don't think they like to hear it. So, I've changed that a lot. I have more of their responses, more of them talking to each other about it…. that kind of thing.

Speaker 1:   What components of your educational philosophy have changed due to restorative practice implementation?

Speaker 2:   I think the biggest is the homework because you know, I'm old school. I come from the old school. They got to practice or else. So, I think that's the biggest change with me is homework and realizing that they have more classes than my class and sometimes I think we forget that. But when we have these circles, they remind me, you know that they have these other classes. And so, I think that's really changed with me.

Speaker 1:   What components of restorative practices in your classroom do you still grapple with?

Speaker 2:   Let's see. Let me think for a minute. Okay, one of the things I think that I…that I have to be careful with and struggle with a little bit is I allow the kids to just tell me…. We, I need a circle. That's what they say to me. And you know, when we first… when they first started doing it, I think they thought we were going to have free time in class but see…. I do the circles where nobody can talk but one person

anyway, but as I went through that and saw some of them trying to do that, I realize that I have to go back to practicing the circles and practicing….if you want to call a circle, you have to be the first one to speak and then you have to be…..you can only speak and no one else can speak. So, it's really not free time. And so, I had for a while I had to figure that out. Okay, this is what they're doing. So, I'm going to have to go back and practice. So that's pretty much worked itself out now, but that was an issue at the beginning.

Speaker 1:   What were your initial thoughts about implementing restorative practices?

Speaker 2:   Well, first of all, I have heard about it because I heard about it through XXX doing it. And so, I'd heard about it and I have to tell you I was pretty excited about it because I thought this is one more way that I can find out about the kids, especially when they get in high school. They don't, you know how middle school kids are they'll tell you anything just about…but high school kids are pretty closed mouthed about their personal life. Yeah, and so I was excited. I was probably acting a fool there when we had our training because I was so excited about doing it and I went back and did it the next day after we had a training. So, I was excited about another opportunity to get to know the kids and to get to find out what are you? What are they thinking?

Speaker 1:   What feelings surfaced during the implementation of restorative practices?

Speaker 2:   I never knew that they had this much stress. I never knew that. I never knew that they were grappling with these issues and that they felt stressed like I feel sometimes. I just never…because you look at them and you think they're so young why in the world are you stressed out? Because you're so young and all this but it just shocked me with the issues that they have. I never knew that.

Speaker 1:   How has implementing restorative practices caused you to evaluate your role as an educator?

Speaker 2:   Oh boy…instead of being…. instead of being the authoritative figure that do it, you know you're going to do this, and you may not like it, but you're going to do this…. I'm more open now to okay, so why don't you like this or why… what are your thoughts on this? I tell them always it's okay not to like a book we're reading, or you know, it's not… it's okay if you don't like certain things. So, I think it's made me more open to getting their opinion of what we're doing. Instead of me just saying we're going to do this, and this is how it's gonna be.

Speaker 1:   How has restorative practice implementation altered your view of conflict in your classroom/school?

Speaker 2:   I think really… when I was at when I was at XXXX, there were a few conflicts… a few…now I've never used it as a you know, between kids who are having issues. I've never done that. I've always done it just as a class. But I have …I

remember a kid that was an issue, a behavior issue at XXX and he… during one of the circles, he just cried and cried, and his dad was in prison. And you know, I had no idea that that's where his behavior came from and he was in the 10th grade at the time, and boy, you know that just really floored me. It made me see him in a different light and I think the kids in the room also saw him in a different light.

Speaker 1:   How were you able to process the uncertainty of implementing restorative practices?

Speaker 2:   Okay. So, it's scary when you first start it. I think that's why a lot of teachers don't do it because it's scary. And so, I had to really think about and go back over our materials about okay, how am I going to set this up, how I'm going to start this and how can I deal with my own fears? Because you're just going into the unknown…. Really, when you do this. You don't know what's going to be said. Even if you think you know the kids, you have no idea. I had a girl tell in one of the circles, she was gonna kill herself. I had no idea. But I always…. I think that was one of the fears of the unknown. I think that's the biggest fear… are here's another one…. I'm not a counselor. Well, you don't have to be a counselor to do this. They, in essence, council themselves, really.

Speaker 1:   How did restorative practices implementation compare with your initial mindset?

Speaker 2:   I think I was initially thinking that it was going to be very uncomfortable and I knew it would work because I did some research on it. I knew it would work, but I thought it was going to be very uncomfortable and it was going to be hard to do, but it's really not. So, I found out that it's really not hard to do. Anybody can do it.

Speaker 1:   How did your experience with restorative practices impact those that are significant in your life?

Speaker 2:   Oh, yeah, that's funny. Yeah. It's just me and my husband at home, but I noticed that I went from why did you do that to what were you thinking about when that happened? You know that kind of thing. It's kind of clicked with me now that from doing these circles that you don't…and you keep quiet and that's something that's hard as you do these circles is to keep quiet and not make a face or not do anything. So, I think with my husband I have learned to keep quiet.

Speaker 1:   How has implementing restorative practices altered your relationships with students?

Speaker 2:   I think that it has really created a bond with them. I think that… and I talked to some of my kids when I found out I was talking to you. I talked to some of them about what did they get from it, you know some of the kids I've done it with here.

I think that it shows them that I care, and I think it shows them that I'm willing to listen to what they have to say.

Speaker 1:   How do you model restorative practices in your relationships with students, teachers, and administrators?

Speaker 2:   Okay, I did. How do I model it? You mean when I'm with them or do you mean with them watching me do it?

Okay. So once again, I think more listening than talking and I think that asking the right questions, if that makes any sense about whenever there is something that I'm not sure about. Asking the right questions like again… what are you thinking we should do or that kind of thing bringing them into the conversation letting them have a voice. I think that's the way that I have started using it in relationships.

Speaker 1:   How does your knowledge of a student's background/homelife impact how you work them?

Speaker 2:   Oh, wow, you know when you find out things about kids… like I've had kids in the past who didn't have electricity or you know, these kinds of things. When you find out, that changes my whole attitude of them. Not that I expect less from them, but I can understand where they're coming from and I can then relate to them on that level, instead of expecting them to be middle class and they have everything we have and that kind of thing because there's a lot of kids who don't. And same thing with hunger; that's another thing that has hit me with kids that I couldn't believe even at XXX. When I was at XXX, how many kids were on the backpack thing and seeing that and then you know, also another thing is dealing with parents…. when you have a crazy parent, you can understand crazy kids. And those kinds of kids, I think what has changed me with this ….is I try to give them a stable environment here because I know they go home to crazy. And so…I think looking at kids from the viewpoint…. and I can't stand to hear a teacher say this…. there's no hope for them. Yes, there's lots of hope and when I used to teach reading, I would have teachers tell me they'll never learn to read, or they'll never be able…. I don't believe that. Their brains are still developing. Their values are developing. And so, I don't give up on kids and I think this has really reinforced that with me. Don't give up on them.

APPENDIX G: TABLE OF CODES AND THEMES

Codes (Frequency in parenthesis)	Clusters	Themes
Active listening (10) Classroom culture (28) Community building (17) Conflict resolution (7) Discourse (37) Flexibility (24) Relationships (32) Respect for self and others (13) Student empathy (14) Student engagement (9) Student ownership (7) Valuing student voice (26) Vulnerability (18)	Value of student voice Having student empathy Shift to active listening Community building Teacher and student vulnerability Fostering relationships Respecting self and others	The influence of student discourse on the culture of a classroom
Avoiding punitive measures (5) Commitment (1) Flexibility (24) Instructional design (6) Intuition (8) Lack of confidence in self (1) Lack of confidence in skills (2) Modeling (1) Reflection (7) Social justice engineering (6) Solution oriented (8) Teaching skills (13) Teaching style (14) Vulnerability (18)	Having student empathy Shift to active listening Transforming teaching style Adapting to becoming a classroom facilitator The need for flexibility Teacher and student vulnerability	Teacher empowerment through reflection
Avoiding punitive measures (5) Community building (17) Redemption (6) Relationships (32) Respect for self and others (13) Student empathy (14) Student individuality (28) Student ownership (7) Valuing student voice (26) Vulnerability (18)	Respecting student individuality Having student empathy Community building Understanding the whole child Teacher and student vulnerability Fostering relationships Respecting self and others	The emergence of altruism