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How Teachers Who Use Restorative Approaches Come to Adopt a Restorative Justice Mindset: a Phenomenological Study of Process

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HOW TEACHERS WHO USE RESTORATIVE APPROACHES COME TO ADOPT A
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE MINDSET: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF PROCESS

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Presented to the Faculty of the
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“HOW TEACHERS WHO USE RESTORATIVE APPROACHES COME TO ADOPT A RESTORATIVE JUSTICE MINDSET: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF PROCESS,” a Doctoral research project prepared by TIMOTHY L. LOOMER in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership.

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ABSTRACT

Zero tolerance policies and exclusionary practices that involve punitive responses to student misbehavior often result in undesirable outcomes for students and schools. In response, some schools and districts have adopted and implemented a behavior management program based on restorative justice called Restorative Approaches. The educational literature contains initial findings that show restorative approaches have promise for reducing exclusions, creating community, improving the teacher-student relationship, and more. Teachers whose schools use restorative approaches may go through a process to adopt and implement aligned approaches in their classrooms. The goal of this phenomenological study was to identify the process through which a restorative justice philosophy was adopted and aligned practices put to use in the classroom. This study examined the experiences of six teachers who worked at a high school in a district that implemented a restorative justice program and supported its use. The themes identified from the individual interviews provide insight into the process participants experienced in adopting and implementing the use of restorative approaches in their classrooms. The results have implications for district-wide implementation because they identify beliefs that may be common to adopters of a restorative justice philosophy, describe the process of adopting aligned practices, and establish the importance of relationships when applying restorative justice approaches.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation and accompanying doctoral program was a significant departure from normalcy. The past two summers my family spent weeks on the campus of George Fox. I took classes and my family explored Oregon. This summer was a blur of reading and writing (having decided on qualitative research, the arithmetic was strangely absent). Through this, I have grown substantially in my knowledge and understanding of education and certainly hope my ability to communicate cogently has also increased. And for that we have sacrificed. At the end of the day, I'm glad it is finished, glad to have done it, and glad to not do it again (any time soon, at least).

I am deeply grateful to my wife and kids who put up with me during this endeavor. I think they found some joy along the way. Jen specifically kept me on track and took on extra burdens to allow this thing to be birthed. Her patience with me and the process were monumental. Thanks to Nate and Cora who smiled through it all. I hope it has been a good example for them and that, perhaps, I'm a better father for it at the end. One can only hope.

I am grateful to Dr. Ginny Birky for her guidance through the dissertation. Her encouragement and support along the way kept me going. Her tireless and dedicated editing and her thoughtful comments and suggestions greatly improved this dissertation. Her thoughtful direction and clarifying questions made the crooked path a bit straighter. Without Ginny, I think I would be years away from completing this project. I am also grateful to Dr. Susanna Thornhill and Dr. Patrick Allen who served on my committee. They both provided guidance and encouragement that I needed and appreciated.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“I’m seeing changes and making some really deep relationships, but I’m spending all night writing discipline reports and documenting the restorative conversations from my day. I just can’t get everything done.” This statement came at the close of a conversation with a friend who was teaching English in a local junior high school. She had just explained the new discipline process introduced by the local district called Restorative Approaches (RA) and was headed off to an evening of work. A veteran teacher who had recently rejoined the district, she resigned her position mid-year only a few months after our conversation, burned out from the work-load and stress. The new disciplinary process was a significant part of her decision.

As a newly-minted administrator, student discipline was a significant focus of my first position at a large, comprehensive public high school. With about one thousand students under my care and counsel, some days were quite busy. At the end of the craziest day of the year, I had written expulsion recommendations for five of my students. Three had arrived at school with knives, another was caught on video waving gang signs, and the fifth was found in possession of drugs with the intent to sell. Zero-tolerance policies established by the state and district mandated these recommendations and all five were eventually expelled. I remember it being an entire day of parent meetings, paperwork, and head shaking. While the Student Resource Officer (SRO) and I had several significant conversations with students and parents about decisions and their consequences, on the drive home I remember wondering, “Did I make a difference today?”

Zig Ziglar (n.d.) said, “We need to understand the difference between discipline and punishment. Punishment is what you do to someone; discipline is what you do for someone.” McCold and Wachtel (2003) adapted the work of Glaser to create the Social Discipline Window

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which emphasizes the words: *To* and *With* (p. 1). Punishment is done *to* someone, while discipline is done *with* someone. In one the participant is passive and in the other engaged. In their paper presented at the XIII World Congress on Criminology, McCold and Wachtel said, “Until recently, Western societies have relied on punishment, usually perceived as the only effective way to discipline those who misbehave or commit crimes” (p. 1). Rules and laws. Punishments and sentences. These seem to be ingrained parts of American life and American education. We have a strong ‘do a crime, serve your time’ streak in America and back that with the highest incarceration rate of any nation in the world (Lee, 2015). Teachers, parents, and educational leaders, however, are questioning this traditional approach to discipline and for good reason.

Zero-tolerance laws and policies, which were introduced in the 1980s and 1990s, caused a spike in incarceration. The zero-tolerance idea quickly transitioned from the legal realm into schools. Not only were new rules and policies put in place, but campus security, surveillance cameras, police presence, metal detectors, drug-sniffing dogs, and strict dress codes suddenly became priorities. This led some authors to compare school campuses to prisons (e.g., González, 2012) and to, what Payne and Welch (2010) called, the “prisonization of schools” (p. 1020). The purpose of these policies and practices was to protect students and campuses from gangs, drugs, violence, and the highly publicized school incidents such as Columbine and Sandy Hook (González, 2012; Kang-Brown, Trone, Fratello, & Daftary-Kapur, 2013; Skiba, 2000; Teske, 2011). Now that we are a few years down the road, many argue these harshly punitive practices and policies do not make campuses safer, reduce recidivism, or rehabilitate offenders but result in clogged juvenile justice systems and young adults being fast-tracked to prison (American Psychological Association, 2008). While the report written by the American Psychological

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Association did not recommend an abandonment of these policies and practices, the authors clearly called for change in the management and maintenance of discipline on campuses across the United States. Educators and parents are asking for the introduction of new policies and practices that will bring about positive outcomes and result in open doors of opportunity rather than the locked doors of prison.

Since the introduction of zero-tolerance policies, new approaches to student discipline have proliferated. Some of these include Positive Discipline, Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS), the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, Comprehensive Positive Youth Development (C-PYD), Conflict Resolution Education (CRE), and Response to Intervention (RTI) to name a few (Acosta, Chinman, Ebener, Phillips, & Malone, 2016; Davidson, 2014; Kang-Brown et al., 2013; Nelsen, Lott, & Glenn, 1993; Reimer, 2011). PBIS and others take a behaviorist approach to discipline. Through a variety of means, these attempt to modify student behavior by providing encouragement or discouragement depending on the desired outcome and program (Bradshaw, 2013; Bradshaw, Pas, Debnam, & Johnson, 2015). Zero-tolerance policies can also be viewed as behaviorist in nature as they attempt to discourage undesired outcomes through the promise of punishment.

Restorative Approaches (RA) also emerged since zero-tolerance policies came to education, both through the criminal justice system (Zehr, 2003). Restorative approaches are based on a restorative justice philosophy. Criminal behavior is addressed through a community approach that involves the victim, offender, and others affected by the crime. The restorative justice process seeks to heal the community and restore the offender to right relationship with those impacted by his or her actions. Restorative approaches used in schools, then, take a humanistic bent to student discipline, relying on the belief that through a reflective process

involving the teacher and peers, a student can choose to change (Anyon et al., 2016). Some described RA as in alignment with principles of social learning, personal development, intrinsic motivation, and a constructivist mindset (Gregory, Clawson, Davis, & Gerewitz, 2016). RA differs in philosophy from the behaviorist approaches described earlier which seek to control behaviors through a blend of punishments and rewards and so has an appeal that some find preferable to the approaches that emphasize conformity and control.

Schools across the globe have adopted and used restorative approaches. Articles touting its philosophy and outcomes have filled journals and newspapers (e.g., Crone, 2016; Watanabe & Blume, 2015). Yet for all the positive headlines, solid research based evidence of the impact and efficacy of these programs is still needed. After a review of the RA literature, Fronious, Persson, Guckenburg, Hurley, and Petrosino (2016) acknowledged much of the published work was of a philosophical nature and lacked “rigorous scientific evidence” (p. 12) of the benefit of RA. While schools and districts that adopted restorative approaches reported favorable results (see for example González, 2012), implementation of these practices had not been done in a way that controlled other influencing factors. So, the positive outcomes were not directly attributable to RA (Fronius et al., 2016).

Despite the lack of research-based findings about restorative approaches, adoption continues. From the behemoth district of Los Angeles Unified to small schools like Brennan-Rogers School of Communications and Humanities Preparatory Academy in New York, restorative approaches have been adopted and put to work in districts, schools, and classrooms across the states (Dubin, 2015; Hantzopoulos, 2013; Watanabe & Blume, 2015). The current literature indicates successful implementation of a restorative approach program depends on several factors including faculty and staff adoption of the philosophy of RA and the proper use of

aligned classroom strategies (Anyon et al., 2016; Fronius et al., 2016; Martin, 2015), successful and ongoing professional development (Cavanagh, Vigil, & Garcia, 2014; Mayworm, Sharkey, Hunnicutt, & Schiedel, 2016; McCluskey, Lloyd, Kane et al., 2008; Mirsky, 2007), and programmatic and financial support from school leaders (McCluskey, Lloyd, Stead et al., 2008; Reimer, 2011; Vaandering, 2014; Watanabe & Blume, 2015). Multiple organizations, such as the International Institute for Restorative Justice (IIRP) and the Institute for Restorative Justice and Restorative Dialogue (IRJRD), offer professional development and consulting services to schools adopting restorative approaches. While schools that have used these services have been grateful and found the help beneficial (Armour, 2015; Mirsky, 2007), after reviewing RA literature published through 2014, Fronius et al. (2016) stated, “The impact of this type of professional development has not, to our knowledge, been the subject of research” (p. 13), indicating a lack of published substantiation of the efficacy of professional development programs that train teachers in the theory of restorative justice and the use of aligned approaches. While evaluation of professional development (PD) programs or the efficient implementation of RA policies was not the purpose of this study, the findings may well benefit those planning PD experiences and those implementing new RA programs.

The purpose of this phenomenological research was to study process. In undertaking this, I interviewed six high school teachers who agreed with the restorative justice philosophy, used aligned approaches in their classrooms, and fit a set of criteria (listed in chapter 3). In the interviews the teachers shared their thoughts, experiences, and stories related to RA and adoption of its policies. Through analysis of transcripts created from the interviews, I identified themes that emerged. In chapter 4 of this dissertation I report the findings from this analysis and in chapter 5 discuss the findings.

Statement of the Problem

As schools and districts work to curb the volume of suspensions and expulsions and find more humane and equitable disciplinary processes, restorative justice and aligned approaches have been implemented in schools and districts across America. The published research on Restorative Approaches has identified the importance of faculty and staff buy-in and the value of targeted and informed professional development for the successful implementation of these programs. However, the literature reviewed for this dissertation was largely silent on the process teachers go through to adopt a restorative justice philosophy and how they come to use aligned practices and approaches in their classrooms and schools. To fill this gap in the literature, I studied the experiences of teachers who have come to practice restorative justice in their classrooms, exploring their process of adoption of this philosophy and approaches. Through analysis of individual interviews conducted with six high school teachers who used restorative approaches and met a predetermined set of criteria, findings related to how they conceptualized and articulated restorative approaches and the process through which they came to adopt the philosophy of restorative justice and implement aligned practices are discussed.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological research was to discover the process through which teachers come to hold a restorative justice philosophy and the process through which they come to use approaches and practices that are aligned with that philosophy. Through the study and analysis of the self-reported experiences of teachers who have adopted a restorative justice philosophy, essences and themes describing this process emerged. These essences and themes may benefit teachers newly introduced to restorative justice, school leaders implementing restorative justice based programs, professional development coordinators training teachers in

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restorative approaches, board members considering new approaches to effective student discipline, and others who may engage in restorative justice and aligned approaches in their work, school, or district.

Research Question

The research question and three sub-questions provided the focus for this phenomenological study:

Primary Research Question

What experiences shape and guide the process through which teachers come to adopt and implement restorative justice and approaches in their work?

Research Sub-question #1

How do teachers define and conceptualize restorative justice and what do they self-report about how their understanding of restorative justice and approaches has changed over time?

Research Sub-question #2

Through what process do teachers come to hold a belief in the value and efficacy of restorative justice and approaches? How do specific experiences with restorative justice or approaches affect this process?

Research Sub-question #3

As teachers come to adopt a restorative philosophy, how has their enactment of restorative justice in their classrooms changed or remained the same?

Key Terms

The following key terms are defined to provide clarity and background for the definitions of a set of key words and phrases specific to restorative justice and approaches that are used

within this dissertation. Citations and references are provided to the source or sources for the definition. These words and phrases are commonly used in the literature and language of restorative justice and approaches.

Restorative justice (RJ): A philosophy which holds that a community-based response to crime which involves the victim, offender, and others impacted by the incident is the most effective and humane way to heal harm, reduce crime, and promote social connectedness. Fundamental to restorative justice is the premise that damaged relationships are the primary effect of crime. The theory suggests this harm is best mended through a community-based meeting which may involve the victim, offender, and other affected people. By involving the community, healing can result for all members and the offender can be reintegrated (Zehr, 2003). RJ is an alternative to the philosophy that has dominated the American justice system which relies on punishment and retribution as the primary deterrents to crime (Braithwaite, 1989).

Restorative approaches (RA): Approaches, processes, strategies, or practices used in a school setting by a teacher, administrator, or other district employee that align with a restorative justice philosophy. A restorative approach may be used reactively, after an incident, or proactively, to build community or diffuse arising conflict. Restorative approaches can be used to heal a damaged relationship or prevent a relationship from being damaged. RA seeks to repair and renew relationships and community (Wachtel, 2009). The literature contains a myriad of restorative approaches including affective statements, restorative dialogue, proactive and responsive circles, restorative circle, reintegration meetings, and victim-offender mediation among others (Clifford, 2013; Drewery & Kecskemeti, 2010; Gregory et al., 2016; Kaveney & Drewery, 2011; Kline, 2016). Some authors in the literature use the phrases restorative practices (RP) or restorative interventions (RI) instead of restorative approaches.

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Communitarianism: A philosophy which emphasizes community over individual and holds that an individual finds both meaning and identity within a community in contrast to philosophies which emphasize the autonomous agency of the individual (Dixon, Dogan, & Sanderson, 2005; Etzioni, 2015). Braithwaite provides further clarification of the term in stating, “Individuals are more susceptible to shaming when they are enmeshed in multiple relationships of interdependency; societies shame more effectively when they are communitarian” (1989, p. 14).

Reintegrative shaming: A type of shaming described by Braithwaite (1989) as “expressions of community disapproval, which may range from mild rebuke to degradation ceremonies ... followed by gestures of reacceptance into the community of law-abiding citizens” (p. 55). In Braithwaite’s theory, reintegrative shaming is the key to restorative justice and provides the impetus for compliance to social norms. Braithwaite recognizes shame, used improperly, can negatively impact society and calls this disintegrative shame. Disintegrative shame pushes people out of community and can result in the creation of subcultures which hold values that differ from the dominant culture. Peer-pressure could be considered a form of reintegrative shaming. Labeling, such as assigning the phrase ‘pot-head’ to a student found smoking marijuana, could be a form of disintegrated shaming.

Zero-tolerance policy: A rule or policy mandated by the state or freely adopted by a school or district that prescribes a sanction or punishment for a specific action or behavior. In most cases the agent in authority is not allowed to deviate from the consequence called out in the policy and must ignore mitigating circumstances, seriousness of the incident, or contextual factors (Reynolds et al., 2008).

Exclusion: The decision and resulting action by a teacher, administrator, or other empowered school employee which results in the removal of a student from the learning environment (Fronius et al., 2016). In the literature, exclusion subsumes a wide range of disciplinary action including expulsion, suspension, in-school suspension, referral to the office, and others. For this dissertation, exclusion will specifically refer to expulsion or suspension, including both in- and out-of-school suspension.

Essence: A term used in phenomenological research that describes a core idea, construct, or form identified by a researcher within a set of lived experiences. Essences are used to identify a structure within the phenomenon (Lin, 2013). Theme is a reasonable synonym for the word essence and will also be used in this dissertation when describing the goal of the research.

Limitations and Delimitations

In this study, I conducted six individual interviews of high school teachers who have adopted the restorative justice philosophy and use aligned approaches in their classrooms and work. These interviews provided detailed and rich accounts of teachers' experiences. The teachers work in a district that has adopted and implemented a unique blend of restorative approaches (RA) and traditional disciplinary standards. The participants were identified and recruited through a purposeful, criteria-based, non-probability selection process. The purposeful selection ensured the teachers experienced the same phenomenon—adopting a restorative justice philosophy—and could contribute to themes within the area of research. Because of the criterion-based sampling, the experiences of these teachers may not be representative of the experiences of teachers at other schools in the district, other schools in the state, or other schools beyond. Two of the participating teachers recognized the potentially unique nature of their experience with restorative justice at their school. For example, Participant #6 said, “I think

some other school sites rolled it out much better,” indicating a lack of surety of the program at his site in comparison to the program at other sites in the district.

Scholarly studies of RA indicate the way in which these approaches are implemented and developed result in unique programs that vary widely based on the school, district, and community (Fronius et al., 2016; McCluskey, Lloyd, Stead et al., 2008). As a result, each school or district may have its own unique blend of policies, expectations, and outcomes which may lead to completely different experiences for students and teachers from site to site, district to district, and so on (Fronius et al., 2016; McCluskey, Lloyd, Stead et al., 2008). These factors limit generalization and replication of this study.

The unique nature of implementation was experienced by the participants. For example, the district of study sent a group of teachers to observe the RA program within the Denver Public School System. Participant #5 accompanied the group. In the interview he commented, “In Denver they had a guy that ... that was what he did all day (RA). We just didn’t have the resources to do that district wide, which would have made this whole policy you know, just a lot more beneficial.” Participant #5 recognized the RA program in his district was not the same as the RA program he observed in Denver.

The purpose of this study was to learn from teachers who have adopted a restorative philosophy and practices. In selecting participants, I only chose teachers who agreed with RA. The participants described teachers on their campus who remained unconvinced of the restorative justice (RJ) philosophy. Further, the participants provided multiple descriptions of the perceptions of these teachers. Their comments were second hand at best and so cannot be assumed to accurately represent the experiences of these non-adopters. Thus, the results of the

study did not identify themes or essences common to teachers who, for whatever reason, remain unconvinced of the philosophy underlying or the effective use of restorative approaches.

This phenomenological study did not generate any quantitative data and so does not provide generalizable evidence of the impact of restorative justice and approaches. However, what I learned from this study may provide results that could be transferable to similar settings. While the participating teachers broadly agreed that RA has positively affected their classes, students, and the campus, this theme does not provide empirical evidence of the impact of RA on any aspect of the school. As a result, this study does not add what Fronius et al. (2016) concluded is needed: “rigorous trials ... that will perhaps provide the evidence necessary to make stronger claims about the impact of RJ” (p. 27).

While the small sample size in this study limits some aspects of this research, the use of six participants was intentional. This small group allowed me the opportunity to collect more data with more depth; the length of the interview was not a constraint and allowed teachers the freedom to richly describe their experiences. Thus the small sample provided a rich yet manageable set of data that allowed me to go deep in the analysis phase. In the end, my analysis yielded a clear set of themes about the opportunities and challenges associated with restorative justice approaches.

Finally, several authors in the field commented on the influence of culture when adopting and implementing a restorative justice based program. Zehr (2003) said of restorative justice, “There is no ‘pure’ model that can be seen as ideal or simply implemented in any community ... all models are to some extent culture-bound” (p. 8-9). This has been borne out in educational settings. For example, McCluskey, Lloyd, Stead et al. (2008) indicated the RJ approach developed in Scotland fits the “distinctive social history and educational priorities” (p. 209) of

that country. Reimer (2011) noted restorative justice fit with the values of the native community in the local area but not the “culture of retribution found in the society at large” (p. 34). Further complicating implementation, the approaches and practices used in the classroom may be “cultural-bound” as well. Kaveney and Drewery (2011) stated each circle meeting held at Midway High School in New Zealand “begins with a reflection or karakia (prayer)” (p. 7), a practice that would not transfer to schools in America. So culture influences the adoption, implementation, and practice of restorative justice. As this study was conducted in a small public school district on the West Coast of the United States, the findings are further limited to the cultural context of that region and country. Additionally, findings and conclusions from the literature reviewed for this dissertation may not be predictive of outcomes from implementation at this school because of the unique history, culture, and heritage of this region and country. As it relates to this study, the findings herein may not transfer to schools in other communities or countries with dissimilar cultural experiences and norms.

Conclusion

Zero-tolerance policies and the increased reliance on exclusion from school as the primary means used to discourage and control misbehavior has failed to make a positive impact on student behavior in the classroom or to result in personal growth for the offender (Kang-Brown et al., 2013). Restorative approaches offer a positive, humanistic, attractive alternative to more behaviorist based practices. When implementing a restorative justice (RJ) approach, teacher adoption of the philosophy and use of aligned approaches will be critical to the success of the program. Understanding how this adoption takes place will be valuable for the teacher, administrator, and educational leader. The goal of this phenomenological research was to study the experiences of teachers who have come to agree with the restorative justice philosophy and

use related practices in their work. More specifically, the goal of analyzing the data was to identify common essences or themes within the shared stories and experiences of these teachers to provide an understanding of the process they went through to adopt a RJ philosophy and to come to use aligned approaches in their classrooms.

The next chapter provides an in-depth review of the literature on restorative justice and includes a discussion of zero tolerance and exclusionary discipline, the philosophy of restorative justice, current findings from research done at schools implementing restorative approaches, and an articulation of the need and value of this study. The goal of this literature review was to more deeply describe the field of RJ and point to the need, importance, and value of this study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Restorative justice (RJ) was introduced through the criminology literature as an alternative approach to the traditional crime and punishment process that has dominated the Western criminal justice system (Braithwaite, 1989). With incarceration rates climbing, the RJ theory and philosophy struck a chord in a system deluged with offenders, gained momentum, and spread to other disciplines. Educators recognized that restorative justice and aligned approaches could be used to resolve student misbehavior and encourage positive conduct and personal development of students on school campuses (Mayworm et al., 2016). Because restorative justice came from criminology, educators changed parts of the vocabulary of the theory preferring the phrase restorative approaches (RA) to leave justice to the court system (McCluskey, Lloyd, Kane et al., 2008). In general, restorative justice refers to the original philosophy of how to address crime from the field of criminology and restorative approaches refers to the implementation of this philosophy in various settings, including education.

The literature review highlights critical areas germane to the study of the experiences of teachers who have adopted the use of restorative approaches in their classrooms. The review begins with a brief summary of the history that led to the emergence of Restorative Approaches: the era of zero-tolerance policies and inequitable outcomes. A description of the theory of restorative justice (RJ) based on the works of two key founders is followed by a description of the transition of RJ to education. Finally, findings from research in the field are provided. Two key points emerge from the literature review: authors have a positive view of the use and efficacy of restorative approaches and further research in the field is needed. Absent from the literature are descriptions of how teachers come to adopt a restorative justice philosophy. Thus,

this study of the experiences of teachers who have adopted the philosophy of restorative justice and who utilize the approaches in their classrooms has potential to add understanding to this specific area of restorative justice and may be of value to teachers, educational leaders and practitioners.

Zero Tolerance and Exclusionary Practices

For some currently in working in education, punishment and exclusionary practices were an ingrained part of the discipline policy of schools they attended while children: send disruptive students to the principal's office, assign detention to tardy students, suspend students who fight, and expel students who bring a weapon to campus. To some, these consequences feel not only appropriate, but justified. Justice must be served; it is the American way. Literature in the field paints a similar picture with the rise of zero-tolerance policies emerging in the early 1980s. This section takes a close look at zero-tolerance policies and exclusionary practices and their place in education.

The rise of school exclusion. In 2000, Skiba and Peterson wrote an article suggesting that the combination of zero-tolerance policies and the heavy use of suspension and expulsion had failed. Campuses were not safer and the policies did not promote academic or personal growth. The authors recommended schools adopt an "early response" approach to discipline and described this as a "comprehensive" plan that utilized a number of disciplinary strategies used in concert (Skiba & Peterson, 2000, p. 341). This early article in the literature on zero-tolerance policies voiced a growing opinion: disciplinary systems and practices in place during the late 1980s and 1990s needed to change. What gave rise to these practices that were perceived to be failing?

Most authors point to the war on drugs that began during the Reagan presidency as the birthplace of zero-tolerance legislation (Skiba, 2000). These policies, birthed in the 1980's, communicated criminal behavior would not be tolerated, infractions would be punished, sentences would be harsh, and judges would not be allowed to show leniency; they were designed to scare people straight and remove offenders from neighborhoods and communities. The policies aligned with the 'Broken Window' theory of crime which also gained prominence in the early 1980's (Kelling & Wilson, 1982). The theory suggested unchecked criminal behavior, no matter how insignificant, would encourage more criminal behavior from citizens normally inclined to be law-abiding; when some people see others get away with crime they choose to engage in similar activities. The phrase 'broken window' describes a belief about a fundamental human behavior. A single broken window left unrepaired, attracts the attention of people walking past. Eventually one or two of these conclude no one cares about the building and it must be acceptable to break windows. Rocks are thrown. More windows are broken. Soon what started as a small blemish, a single broken window, has resulted in a run down, slum-like community that promotes further blight and lawlessness. The broken window philosophy encouraged law enforcement to shift their focus from major crimes such as murder and rape, to smaller, more prevalent crimes such as drug use, vandalism, and public intoxication. This philosophy fits with the crime-control model offered by Herbert Packer (1964):

“The repression of criminal conduct is by far the most important function to be performed by the criminal process. The failure of law enforcement to bring criminal conduct under tight control is viewed as leading to the breakdown of public order and thence to the disappearance of an important condition of human freedom.” (p. 9)

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Broken windows lead to blight; that blight has both a physical and societal impact. To maintain a peaceful and lawful republic, every window breaker should be caught and punished. In doing so, a law-abiding populace deterred from crime through its absence and the surety of punishment will emerge and windows will no longer be broken.

Bill Bratton implemented the broken window theory when he was hired as police chief of New York City in 1994 (Fagan, Zimring, & Kim, 1998; Kelling & Bratton, 1998). He directed beat officers to arrest subway turnstile jumpers, haul in people drinking in public, and crack down on small crimes committed across the city. Under Bratton's watch, the crime rate in New York City declined; the total number of petty and major crimes fell. Bratton's new broken window approach was branded a success and the reduction in crime provided initial validation of this theory. Soon the perceived efficacy of the approach spread.

As with restorative justice, which began as a theory in criminology, the broken window theory—closely policed communities and intolerance of small crime—quickly transitioned into education; 'if it worked in New York City, it should work in our school' seemed logical. In the same year Chief Bratton took on New York City crime, then President Bill Clinton signed into law the Gun Free Schools Act of 1994 (Cerrone, 1999). The legislation mandated that states write and pass laws requiring schools and school districts to expel any student found to be in possession of a weapon on a public school campus. In the wake of the Columbine school shootings, the war on drugs, and nationwide spikes in crime, and with a desire to receive federal funds for education, states and districts quickly complied. To some in education, the broken window was analogous to small, disruptive behaviors that interrupted the class. One unpunished disruption would communicate the act was acceptable and result in further disruptive behavior. These behaviors detracted from instructional time and a focus on learning and resulted in

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educational blight. Districts expanded the zero-tolerance philosophy that initially focused on weapons to a wide range of other misconduct including drug and alcohol use, gang behavior, bullying, defiance, disrespect, overt racism, swearing, and more (Skiba, 2000; Teske, 2011). As a result, exclusionary rates climbed (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Across America, parents, teachers, and administrators put their trust in the broken window philosophy. Believing tightly policed campuses would result in safe, orderly classrooms and schools focused on academic preparation, this broken window mentality may have helped pave the way for the high-stakes academic testing of No Child Left Behind that entered education soon after the election of President Bush in the early 2000's.

History confirms the best of intentions and early positive results are no guarantee of long-term success. As crime rates in the United States decreased between 1991 and 1998, the total number of prisoners and rate of incarceration rose sharply, by 59% and 47% respectively (Gainsborough & Mauer, 2000). This rise of incarceration in the criminal justice system coincided with a rise in exclusionary punishments handed out by school administrators and teachers. When the number of suspensions and expulsions in 1972 - 1973 was compared to those in 2009 - 2010, exclusion in elementary schools was shown to almost double; exclusion in secondary schools rose just over 40% (Losen & Martinez, 2013). Exclusion, which was once rarely used, was now being used with much greater regularity.

While some still debate the cause and effect relationship between incarceration and crime, at least in the 1990's the two were correlated in a way that was good for the community. As incarceration rose, crime fell. Scholars in education do not report the same logical correlation for exclusionary sanctions and positive outcomes. As exclusion rose, positive outcomes such as student safety, improved attendance, and learning did not improve (American Psychological

Association, 2008; Cerrone, 1999). Instead, researchers showed suspension was positively correlated with a whole host of undesirable outcomes including future suspension or expulsion, failure to graduate on time, retention, dropping-out, and drug use (American Psychological Association, 2008; Mendez, 2003). To make matters worse, through disaggregation of disciplinary data, the statistics showed students of color, students of low socio-economic status, male students, and children with special needs were all being excluded at rates much higher than their counterparts (Drewery & Kecskemeti, 2010; Kang-Brown et al., 2013; Losen & Martinez, 2013; Mendez, 2003; Payne & Welch, 2010). Some called the exclusionary practices inequitable and unjust (American Psychological Association, 2008; Reynolds et al., 2008). Some described it as a system in which “students suffer deprivations of human rights” (Sanneh & Jacobs, 2008, p. 47). A change was needed.

Critiques. Beyond the rates of exclusion and the inequitable outcomes, critics of zero-tolerance policies and exclusionary practices gave several fundamental reasons for the need for change. What follows were the four most common critiques of zero-tolerance policies indicated in the literature.

In the language of *with* and *to* from McCold and Wachtel (2003, p. 1), chief among the critiques was that in punitive systems, punishment is done *to* students. This presents two problems. First, the student is a passive participant and may or may not engage in the process. This can easily result in the student failing to learn from the incident. Nelsen, Lott, and Glenn (1993) described this as, “When we tell instead of ask, we discourage students from developing their judgment skills, consequential skills, and accountability skills” (p. 116). Second, when discipline is done *to* students, there is little to no opportunity for relational development. Ritzer (2013) said, “Dehumanization takes place when prefabricated interactions take the place of

authentic human relationships” (p. 136). When an administrator simply follows the steps of a district or state mandated policy, a student may be dehumanized. By doing things *to* students an opportunity to learn and develop relationships is missed; doing things *with* students results in an opportunity to learn and develop.

Second, the threat of punishment does not automatically produce compliant behavior. Teske (2011) calls most misbehavior in schools “normative immaturity” (p. 90) and views it as a normal part of adolescence. This conclusion is supported by a combination of brain and behavioral research. Because of the late development of the prefrontal cortex and early development of the subcortical regions, Leshem (2016) wrote, “This makes it difficult for adolescents to impose constraints on stimulus-driven behaviors, and reduces their capacity for reasoning, judgement, and impulse control” (p. 2). In summarizing findings from behavioral research, Scott and Steinberg (2008) said,

Teens tend to lack what developmentalists call “future orientation.” That is, compared with adults, adolescents are more likely to focus on the here-and-now and less likely to think about the long-term consequences of their choices or actions— and when they do, they are inclined to assign less weight to future consequences than to immediate risks and benefits. Over a period of years between mid-adolescence and early adulthood, individuals become more future oriented. (p. 20)

The youthful and adult brain differ in their capacity to recognize the potentially deleterious consequences of poor decisions and misbehavior. While the promise of punishment may result in deterrence for an adult, some youth do not readily connect action and consequence. An independent study conducted by the American Psychological Association (2008) came to a

similar conclusion; zero-tolerance policies are not appropriate for the developmental stages of primary and secondary children.

Third, suspension and expulsion have a high cost to the student. Exclusion may lead a student to fall behind academically and miss out on some of the positive benefits that come from being a part of the school community. While missing class and time with friends may seem inconsequential, these are related to some negative outcomes. Excluded students are more likely to be held back, fail to complete school on time, and drop out (Mizel et al., 2016; Reynolds et al., 2008). Buckmaster (2016) said loss of social connection due to absence from school can lead to feelings of isolation, which are “an accelerator and motivator for school violence and promotes rampages at school” (p. 2).

Finally, some of the behaviors that resulted in exclusion were actually valued and encouraged by some communities within the American culture. Townsend (2000) suggested the African American style of raising children tended to emphasize boisterous and frequent social interaction and encouraged the child to engage in multiple activities simultaneously. This home life resulted in students who did not fit the expectations of their teachers, who desired quiet, teacher-directed, focused learning environments. African American students who displayed behaviors learned at home may have been disciplined for not conforming to the school culture. Ogbu (1982) called this gap between the background of the student and the culture of the school a “cultural discontinuity” (p. 290). This cultural discontinuity still persists. Wadhwa (2010) identified a disparity between the culture of the family and that of the school as part of what led to higher suspension and expulsion rates for students of color. More recently Cavanagh, Vigil, and Garcia (2014) undertook a qualitative study of parents, administrators, and teachers in a Denver school with a high rate of Hispanic students and families. In the study, the researchers

concluded there was a need to “create an umbrella for guiding the school into a future where Latino/Hispanic students can flourish in a learning community that allow them to be who they are” (p. 574) implying something in the school culture prevented the students from embracing their true identity. In some instances, when the culture of the family differed from the culture of the school, students of color end up on the wrong end of the zero-tolerance stick.

In light of the exclusionary data and these critiques, some reflective educators desired new methods and approaches to student discipline that resulted in more equitable and educationally sound outcomes, practices that lead all students to flourish. As mentioned in chapter 1, a number of different approaches to traditional student discipline procedures have emerged. Restorative justice offered promise as it provided a different philosophical approach to some of the student discipline approaches viewed as more behaviorist in principle and RJ avoided some of the identified weaknesses of zero-tolerance policies and exclusionary practices.

Restorative Justice

With researchers reporting the inefficacy of zero tolerance and exclusionary practices, educational leaders looked for alternative disciplinary approaches to more effectively and humanely handle student misbehavior. As already mentioned, a number of programs such as PBIS and others, as well as articles that described these approaches and their efficacy emerged in the literature. One program, showing great promise, came from the field of criminology: restorative justice. The next section of this literature review presents the history and theoretical underpinnings of restorative justice.

A brief history. Anyon et al. (2016) state, RJ has “historical roots in a range of diverse cultures” (p. 1666) indicating the approach is not new. As crime and incarceration rates rose and the punitive nature of the American justice system was in full swing, Howard Zehr (1990) and

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John Braithwaite (1989) offered restorative justice as an alternative approach and suggested it would lead to reduced rates of crime and recidivism (Gainsborough & Mauer, 2000).

Braithwaite's book *Crime, Shame and Reintegration* and Zehr's book *Changing Lenses: A New Focus on Crime and Justice* ignited a discussion in criminology that resulted in the development of new approaches to address juvenile delinquency and eventually percolated into other fields including education.

The writings of Braithwaite, Zehr, and others, and the positive results from restorative justice programs used in the criminal justice system encouraged educators to give restorative justice a try (Brazemore & Umbreit, 1997). Because of the importance of the teacher-student relationship and the value of a strong classroom community, many who supported restorative justice thought it well suited for education (Payne & Welch, 2015; Zehr, 2003). Additionally, concerned by the number of juveniles flooding the court system, the rise in youthful incarceration, and the overrepresentation of people of color in these outcomes, communities questioned the status quo and wondered if restorative justice could turn the tide (Poe-Yamagata & Jones, 2000). The pump was primed for restorative justice to flow into education.

Recognized by most as the first use of restorative justice in a modern educational setting, in 1994 administrators at a secondary school in Queensland, Australia, used a restorative conference to help resolve a disagreement that arose at a school dance (Cameron & Thorsborne, 1999; Fronius et al., 2016; Gregory et al., 2016; Standing, Fearon, & Dee, 2012). The success of this first use prompted other schools in New Zealand and Australia to consider, and eventually implement, Restorative Approaches programs on their campuses. Quickly the promising program spread to other countries including the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States (McCluskey, Lloyd, Stead et al., 2008).

A new approach is needed when an old approach is not successful. The spread and adoption of restorative approaches in schools was a response to a disciplinary system that floundered. Zero-tolerance policies and exclusionary practices that prescribed punishment for misbehavior did not produce the positive outcomes schools and communities expected—a safe campus, with students who behaved, and an environment in which all learned—and instead lead to the host of negative outcomes already discussed (Kang-Brown et al., 2013; Reynolds et al., 2008; Skiba, 2000). And so restorative justice continued to spread in educational communities.

Theoretical underpinnings. Restorative justice emerged within the field of criminology. As with all theories and philosophies, the efficacy of a restorative justice approach relies on basic assumptions about the nature of man and the structural bonds of society. Prior to discussing the outcomes reported from schools that have adopted programs and policies based on restorative justice, a review of the theoretical underpinnings of restorative justice provides an understanding of the foundation on which the processes, approaches, and practices that have emerged over the last twenty-five years are built. This section provides a brief overview of the theory of restorative justice.

While multiple authors have contributed to the theory of restorative justice, the names Howard Zehr (1990) and John Braithwaite (1989) pepper articles in the field. Braithwaite believed a society which used a community approach to justice—a restorative approach to justice— would have a lower crime rate and experience less fracturing of community than a society that relied on punishment. He said, “In short, societies which replace much of their punitive social control with shaming and reintegrative appeals to the better nature of people will be societies with less crime” (p. 80). Zehr (2003) argued restorative justice provided a more holistic approach to dealing with crime. He said, “Restorative justice is done first of all because

it is the right thing to do: victims' needs *should* be addressed, offenders *should* be encouraged to take responsibility, those affected by an offense *should* be involved in the process” (p. 8).

In the traditional Western approach to criminology, a crime is viewed as an offense against the state; in a restorative justice approach to criminology, a crime is a violation of the relationship that exists between the offender, offended, and the community (Braithwaite, 1989). In the traditional Western approach, the damage caused to the state is repaid through things like a prison sentence and restitution for damages. Restorative justice seeks to repair the harm caused to the victim, the community, and offender. While incarceration and restitution may emerge from a restorative process, to repair, restore, and heal the victim and community are the desired outcomes. Using the words of McCold and Wachtel (2003), in restorative justice the community works *with* the offender and the victim to bring resolution to an offense in contrast to a Western approach in which the state issues a sentence *to* the offender and the victim may continue to feel like a victim—unhealed by the justice process.

A restorative process seeks to repair the harm done, ensure participation of the victim and offender, and bring restoration and healing to the community, victim, and offender (McCluskey, Lloyd, Kane et al., 2008). Morrison and Vaandering (2012) summarize this approach using three R words: “*restitution, resolution, and reconciliation*” (p. 140). In contrast, the Western approach emphasizes a determination of guilt and assignment of punishment. In the next section two further philosophical differences will be discussed which will provide deeper understanding for why Braithwaite believes a restorative approach will create a society with less crime.

Shame and communitarianism. In Western thought punishment is the primary deterrence to crime. Described by Matthews and Agnew (2008), “Deterrence theory is based on the simple commonsensical idea that the threat of legal sanction deters crime. This idea is

widely shared among the general public and is at the foundation of our criminal justice system” (p. 91). In Braithwaite’s (1989) conception of restorative justice, communal shame serves as the central force to discourage and rehabilitate the offender. He said, “For adolescents and adults, conscience is a much more powerful weapon to control misbehavior than punishment” (p. 71). While Braithwaite recognized that shame which does not seek to reintegrate can result in “stigmatization” (p. 99) and eventual alienation, his theory rests on the power and proper use of shame within an interconnected communitarian society. Braithwaite encouraged the use of “reintegrative” (p. 72) shame in which the offender is shamed by the community in a way that resulted in “personal satisfaction in seeing the character of the offender restored” (p. 73). He believed reintegrative shame was preferable to punishment and said punishment “erects barriers between the offender and punisher through transforming the relationship into one of power assertion and inquiry” (p. 73). The offender can be returned to community through use of reintegrative shame; punishment can result in ostracized individuals and broken communities. The traditional system relies on punishment to deter crime; restorative justice relies on shame to deter crime.

In the traditional Western approach, the individual is accountable to the state. Deterrence theory fits the individualistic mindset of American culture; the threat of punishment discourages the individual from making a choice he or she may regret (Matthews & Agnew, 2008). A second foundation of restorative justice theory is the important role of community in influencing and controlling behavior of individuals. For Braithwaite (1989) the interdependencies within a communitarian society are critical and create a sense of responsibility in the individual and prompt him or her to follow or conform to group norms. A crime brings shame to the individual

and harm to the community. The web of strong relationships within the community discourage criminal activity and deviant behavior.

Shame and communitarianism are central to Braithwaite's conception of restorative justice theory just as punishment and individualism are central to the historical Western approach to justice. As restorative justice transitioned from criminology to education, the principles of the philosophy were carefully considered and discussed (Benade, 2014). Shame may indeed be a strong influence in deterring misbehavior. But the regular use of shame did not fit within education. The next section addresses shame and education more thoroughly.

Shame and education. In the theory of restorative justice, explained here primarily through a discussion of Braithwaite's ideas but also reflected in the work of Zehr, shame has a central role in discouraging misbehavior. Yet teachers are not encouraged to use shame to promote compliant behavior (Monroe, 2008). Because of the important role of shame in Braithwaite's conception of restorative justice (RJ), describing how the use of shame transitioned from this theory in criminology into educational practice sheds light on how restorative approaches are enacted in education.

As indicated by the title of Braithwaite's (1989) book, *Crime, shame, and reintegration*, shame holds a central role in his theory. From the outset, he clearly states shame can be used either "judiciously" or "injudiciously" (p. 1) and, when the latter predominates, can lead to negative labels, the formation of harmful subcultures, and additional crime. Braithwaite differentiates between "reintegrative shaming," in which a community communicates dissatisfaction with the act but then forgives and reintegrates the person, and "disintegrative shaming," in which the offender is harshly treated by the community, perhaps labeled, and even shunned (Braithwaite, 1989, p. 55). Zehr (2003) also recognized the important role and

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reintegrative potential of shame when he said, “Shame may be ‘reintegrative’ when it denounces the offense but not the offender and opportunities are provided for the shame to be removed or transformed” (p. 15).

Despite the emphasis on shame in the foundational works of Braithwaite and Zehr, reintegrative shame was not readily adopted into educational policies or practice when restorative justice transitioned from criminology into schools. Zehr (2003) indicated there will be differences in the implementation of restorative justice in criminal justice and educational settings. He said, “While there are some similarities to restorative justice programs for criminal cases, the approaches used in an educational setting must necessarily be shaped to fit that context” (p. 45). After careful consideration, McCluskey, Lloyd, Stead et al. (2008) wrote shame “seems out of step with much current educational research about the structural causes of disruptive behavior” (p. 206). Acosta et al. (2016) also discouraged schools from the use of shame. Most of the literature reviewed for this dissertation was silent on shame: 86% of the articles reviewed did not include the word shame and most of the 14% only mentioned it in passing.

This absence of shame in the educational literature is indicative of the unfavorable opinion of shame in American culture. In a historical piece on the use of shame in American schools, Stearns and Stearns (2017) described shame, while once a favored and commonly used disciplinary approach in America, as now viewed unfavorably in “western psychology” (p. 58). Lewis, Taki-Kawakami, Kawakami, and Sullivan (2010) identified key differences between American and Japanese socialization practices that created differences in the cultural acceptance of shame. The authors agreed with Stearns and Stearns, suggesting American culture holds an unfavorable view of shame. While some authors agreed with Braithwaite (1989) that shame

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could be a powerful tool to promote good citizenship, many argued against the use of shame and indicated the potential negative effects for the shamed individual were not worth the risk (Mills, Arbeau, Lall, & De Jaeger, 2010; Monroe, 2008). The use of shame as a tool to shape the behaviors of students was not recommended in the literature and was not in line with current cultural values of Americans. As a result, the use of shame was largely absent from the literature on restorative approaches.

While the use of reintegrative shaming has not been broadly accepted in educational settings, restorative justice theory and aligned approaches has still appealed to schools and districts looking for an alternative to the punishment based approaches to student discipline. As noted earlier, 1994 marks the first use of restorative approaches in an educational setting; adoption and use of these approaches continues today. Had the use of restorative approaches been unsuccessful in schools, expansion of RA programs would not have continued. Before a review of some of these successes, the next section considers whether a restorative justice system that relies on relationships rather than shame can deter misbehavior and promote desirable outcomes in the classroom.

Restorative Approaches

The theory of restorative justice emerged from criminology. The language of crime, victim, and sentence as well the reliance on shame were ideas not embraced in education. As the theory transitioned to education, some of the language changed to fit students and schools. For some the word justice was reminiscent of courts and criminals, so many began referring to restorative justice as Restorative Approaches or Restorative Practices. To confuse matters, the phrase restorative approaches also describes a number of strategies used by teachers and administrators to handle disciplinary issues. The next section of the literature review focuses on

restorative approaches used within education. It starts by evaluating the potential for relationships to be a motivating influence in discouraging misbehavior.

Relationships. If schools are not willing to use shame to motivate adherence to rules, then what can be used to encourage compliance with school norms and discourage aberrant behavior? Restorative justice in criminology and Restorative Approaches in education agree that strong, positive relationships are highly desirable, lead to strong community, and carry weight and significance with individuals (Acosta et al., 2016; Braithwaite, 1989; Cavanagh et al., 2014; Drewery & Kecskemeti, 2010). In the theory of restorative justice, relationships are considered a vital component of communitarianism. Zehr (2003) said, “Interrelationships imply mutual obligations and responsibilities” (p. 18) and Braithwaite (1989) described the importance of “interdependencies” (p. 85) between individuals and said these create community. Both authors recognized shame is a strong, and primary motivating factor for restorative justice. But in the phrase “obligations and responsibilities” (p. 18) and word “interdependencies” (p. 85), both authors also recognized the strong influence of healthy, vibrant relationships. Pull down any handful of books on education from the shelf of a teacher or principal and the importance and value of the teacher-student relationship will be a common theme (e.g., Nelsen et al., 1993; Robbins & Alvy, 2003). Bluestein (2010) sums up advice given to new teachers in saying, “The necessity of positive relationships with students is ... obvious and instinctive to the very nature of teaching” (p. 166). The importance and value of positive teacher-student relationships is presented in educational research literature (e.g., Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2011) and in literature on restorative justice and approaches used in educational settings (e.g., Buckmaster, 2016; Kline, 2016; Rodman, 2007).

Knowing relationships create interdependencies and the teacher-student relationship is highly valued in education, can relationships provide the foundation for a successful student disciplinary system? Roorda et al. (2011) undertook research in the field of teacher-student relationships (TSR). Beginning with 819 published studies on TSR, the authors identified 99 studies that met six specific criteria. Using these studies, the authors conducted a meta-analysis. Results revealed a “medium to large” ($r = 0.32$) positive effect size for both “positive relationships and engagement” and a “medium to large” ($r = -0.31$) negative effect size for “negative relationships and engagement” (p. 510). Smaller effect sizes were found for “positive relationships and achievement” as well as “negative relationships and achievement” ($r = 0.16$ and $r = -0.16$ respectively) (p. 513). While the effect of relationships on discipline was not measured or discussed, the authors reported a focus on discipline and control in the classroom resulted in “less personal and positive TSRs” (p. 517) reported by students indicating a connection between a control approach to discipline and lower TSR scores. The authors concluded positive teacher-student relationships result in positive outcomes while negative relationships have negative outcomes.

Specific to the connection between teacher-student relationships and research on discipline, students who reported a higher level of relationship with their teacher also reported a higher level of “behavioral engagement” (Archambault, Vandenbossche-Makombo, & Fraser, 2017, p. 1) where engagement was measured as the amount of student investment or active participation in the classroom. In another study on discipline and teacher-student relationships, the researchers found when a student and teacher shared a similar, reciprocal positive feeling towards one another, the student displayed “fewer problem behaviors” (Obsuth et al., 2016, p. 1) over the course of the school year. This positive outcome had a lasting, multiple-year, residual

effect on the student. These studies show a positive teacher-student relationship resulted in positive behavioral outcomes.

As described, teacher-student relationships have a significant effect on multiple aspects of student success at school including discipline, achievement, and engagement. Thus, strong teacher-student relationships show promise as the foundational motivating piece of a successful Restorative Approach program; there is evidence that relationships may indeed provide an impactful foundation for restorative approaches to be a successful disciplinary process. With a strong foundation in the teacher-student relationship established, the next section presents research that indicates restorative approaches may indeed be a good replacement of zero-tolerance policies.

Strong teacher-student relationships are valued education and strong relationships are valued in restorative justice. Benade (2014) said, “Braithwaite’s reintegrative shaming theory is not universally adopted in the restorative justice community” and that some “practitioners preferred to emphasise [sic] the value of relationships” (p. 663). Relationships may indeed provide a solid foundation for restorative justice but does the literature suggest this combination results in positive outcomes for students, teachers, and schools? The next section of the literature review reports findings from implementation of restorative justice in schools.

Findings from implementation. In the conclusion of their review of literature written on restorative justice in United States schools, Fronius et al. (2016) said:

In general, the research evidence to support RJ in schools is still in a nascent state.

Despite the exponential growth of RJ in U.S. schools, and some evidence of its effectiveness abroad, the evidence to date is limited and the research that has been published lacks the internal validity necessary to exclusively attribute outcomes to RJ.

However, the preliminary evidence does suggest that RJ may have positive effects across several outcomes related to discipline, attendance and graduation, climate and culture, and various academic outcomes. (p. 26)

In the view of the authors, at the time of publication there was little empirical evidence for the effect of restorative justice, but results from initial studies were very positive. This may be viewed as both discouraging and encouraging. The literature does not contain studies that have isolated the impact of restorative justice through the control of other variables that may impact outcomes. But the literature does report some very positive results that have emerged from schools that have implemented restorative approaches. This section reports on some of these latter findings.

Generally speaking, children who regularly attend school experience positive outcomes. Commitment to school, achievement in class, and participation in extracurricular activities have been shown to protect participating students from delinquency (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001). Exclusion does not lead to positive outcomes for children. High rates of referral to the front office, suspension, and expulsion are predictors of negative outcomes such as poor academic performance, dropping-out, future incarceration, and more (Skiba, 2000). Keeping students in school protects them from some negative outcomes and promotes some positive outcomes.

Authors who studied schools that implemented restorative approaches reported decreases in the number of suspensions and expulsions (Dubin, 2015; González, 2012; Mirsky, 2007). For example, in 2006, the Denver Public Schools implemented a program based on restorative justice. After analyzing data collected between 2006 and 2013, Gonzalez (2015) reported a 50% drop in the overall suspension rate across the district with steady, yearly declines in both the

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percent and total number of students suspended. Cole Middle School (CA) experienced a reduction in suspension rate from 50 per 100 students to only six per 100 after restorative justice was implemented; expulsions were also reported to have decreased (González, 2012). When suspensions and expulsions decreased, the amount of time spent in class and on campus increased.

In addition to fewer exclusions, the literature indicated some schools studied in the RJ literature reported attendance was positively effected as well. At North High School in Denver, students who participated in the school's restorative justice program during the first semester showed improved attendance and fewer tardies in the subsequent semester (González, 2012). Hantazopoulos (2013) told the story of a student at risk of dropping out because of poor attendance who was helped by participating in the "Fairness Committee" (p. 2) process, a restorative justice based program used at Humanities Preparatory Academy (NY). The student gave credit to Fairness for getting him "back into school" (p. 9) and back on track. Some schools that have implemented restorative approaches have reported that daily attendance and timely arrival have increased. This further suggests restorative justice programs may result in more time in class for students who may have been excluded while using different disciplinary approaches.

The literature contained evidence of improved student behavior on campus and in class. Palisades Middle School reported a 41% decrease in fights on campus and significant reductions in disciplinary referrals to the office from the first to the third year of implementing a Restorative Approaches program (Mirsky, 2007). Also reported by Mirsky, Springfield Township High School (PA) saw a significant reduction in incidents of "inappropriate behavior," "disrespect to teachers," and "classroom disruptions" (p. 11). With fewer referrals to the office and classrooms

free of behavioral distractions, it seems reasonable to think students will be in class more and teachers will spend less time on classroom management and discipline.

Positive reports regarding campus community and culture were also present in the literature. Vaandering (2014) noted, “RJ is primarily about building relational cultures” (p. 70). The goals of a restorative process include repairing harm, restoring community, and reintegrating the offender. While isolation, exclusion, and alienation may be outcomes seen in punitive approaches, restorative approaches work to actively neutralize them. Newtown Middle School (PA) reported restorative practices implemented school wide “transformed the school culture to one of mutual support and community building” (González, 2012, p. 317). Studies also report growth in valued relational skills such as empathy and others (Martin, 2015; Reimer, 2011). Use of restorative approaches helps build community.

Relationships are central to building community. Research indicated use of restorative approaches resulted in stronger relationships between teachers and students. After analysis of data collected across eighteen schools participating in the implementation of a Restorative Approaches program, the researchers reported, “In many schools there was a clear positive impact on relationships, seen in the views and actions of staff and pupils” (McCluskey, Lloyd, Kane et al., 2008, p. 415). Gregory, Clawson, Davis, and Gerewitz (2016) analyzed data collected from students by survey at the end of the first year of a restorative justice based program. In their findings, the authors report that “teachers who were perceived by their students as frequently implementing many of the RP [restorative practice] elements tended to have better relationships with their students compared with infrequent implementers of RP” (p. 348). Restorative approaches were linked with better relationships between teacher and student.

Mayworm et al. (2016) recommend that studies of “the impact of rigorously implemented RJ approaches . . . regarding discipline disproportionality” (p. 407) be conducted. While “rigorous” studies verifying the impact of RJ do not exist, some correlational studies reported in the literature report restorative justice may close the discipline gap between racially diverse students. Analysis of data collected at two large high schools on the East Coast showed that for teachers who were identified as “high” (Gregory et al., 2016, p. 341) users of restorative practices (RP) the gap between the combined number of detentions and referrals given to White/Asian and African American/Latino groups was significantly smaller than the gap from teachers identified as “low RP” (p.341) users. This led the authors to state, “RP may be culturally appropriate or culturally congruent with varying groups” (p. 345). Early evidence that restorative justice may close the gap in disciplinary outcomes between White and other minority groups is encouraging.

All of the factors described in this section— reduction in suspensions and expulsions, improved attendance, fewer disciplinary issues, improved culture and relationships, and a narrowed gap in racial disparity for disciplinary outcomes— are very positive indicators that restorative justice based programs have had a positive impact on campuses. But what about student growth and learning?

While none of the studies reported that use of restorative approaches directly increased test scores or other measures of academic learning, some results showed behavioral learning was increased through the use of restorative approaches. In a rare study of restorative justice in a college setting, data collected from disciplinary meetings held on eighteen campuses across the US were analyzed (Karp & Sacks, 2014). Analysis showed restorative justice based hearings had a “greater impact on learning” (p. 169) than the traditional disciplinary hearings. In a second

example, a student at Humanities Preparatory Academy (NY) said he was impacted through the Fairness Committee, a restorative approach used at the school: “I began to learn that even though there is the factor of freedom of speech, and you are liberated, there are boundaries within liberation that have to be understood” (Hantzopoulos, 2013, p. 9). Finally, on a survey administered by Lansing School District (MI), 90% of responding students reported they “learned new skills to solve or avoid conflicts after the restorative justice intervention” (González, 2012, p. 313). These studies described students who participated in restorative approaches as having learned valuable lessons and skills through their participation.

For educational leaders who have identified a need to change the way their schools address behavior, the literature reviewed in this section could be described as hopeful and exciting. With faculty adoption of a restorative justice (RJ) philosophy and effective professional development identified as two critical components of a successful implementation of a RJ program, the positive outcomes described here give further impetus for the value of this study. Identifying themes within the experiences of teachers who come to adopt and use restorative justice and approaches in their classrooms may be a help to teachers and school leaders who go through the process.

An answer to zero tolerance and exclusionary practices. Earlier in this literature review four primary critiques of zero tolerance policies and exclusionary practices were given: the passive role of the offender, increased likelihood of recidivism for the offender, removal from instructional time and the school community, and the failure to align with some of the sub-cultures represented in America today. The research articles reviewed in the last section speak directly to outcomes reported in studies conducted on restorative justice based disciplinary programs. The outcome of several of these articles speak to the ability of restorative justice

programs to positively address these four critiques of zero tolerance policies and exclusionary practices. This section provides a brief look at how the theory of restorative justice addresses these critiques.

As McCold and Wachtel (2003) explain, restorative justice “is a collaborative process” (p. 1) in which the offender is an active participant. Using a restorative approach, the teacher joins the offender and others involved and all participate in the disciplinary process, naturally leading to deeper relationships and community. Thus, restorative justice and aligned approaches are ideally suited for creating better teacher-student relationships.

Through active engagement of the offender, the full potential for personal growth is unlocked. Restorative questions are a key component of the restorative approach. By answering questions like what happened, who was hurt, what was damaged, who is responsible, and what must be done to repair and restore relationships, the offender recognizes the harm, takes responsibility to repair the harm, and can identify ways to avoid creating similar harm in the future. This reflective process emphasizes personal responsibility, encourages the offender to identify the outcome of actions, and provides pause to consider future behavior and how to make better decisions (Claassen, 1999). No disciplinary process can guarantee a fundamental change in the student. But in a restorative justice based process, because the offender is an active participant, the potential for personal growth is greater than that in a punitive process in which the offender is only a passive participant.

By creating community and emphasizing relationships, a restorative justice approach will result in the creation of a highly relational, interdependent community (Braithwaite, 1989). Through the process of reintegration, an offending student is returned to community. Through reparation, a student harmed is healed. This approach can benefit the school community.

Finally, use of restorative approaches seems to support diverse subcultures. As explained earlier, Braithwaite (1989) indicates restorative justice is most effective in a “communitarian culture” (p. 100) which values interdependency and places community over the individual. In their economic study comparing individualism and collectivism, Gorodnichenko and Roland (2012) identified America as scoring in the top three countries globally on measures of individualism. The authors define collectivism as “embeddedness of individuals in a larger group” (p. 2), a definition similar to how Braithwaite describes communitarianism. While the dominant American culture may embrace individualism, some subcultures here in the United States do not. Gorodnichenko and Roland (2012) identified Mexican and Native American subcultures as “more collectivist” (p. 12). The values and expectations of these and other subcultures may be more aligned with those of a community created through a Restorative Approaches program rather than a community governed by a punitive process which focuses on the individual as separate from the community.

Restorative approaches positively address each of the primary critiques raised by the implementation of programs that rely on zero tolerance and exclusionary practices. The last section reported positive results from studies of schools and districts who have adopted the use of restorative approaches. Both the theory and practice seem to align.

The positive findings in the literature speak favorably of restorative justice and approaches. However, in the process of reviewing the literature, two articles that provided evidence counter to this trend stood out. While several articles presented concerns regarding implementation, two articles described settings in which restorative justice programs did not perform as anticipated. The articles are discussed in the next section.

Buyer beware. While the vast majority of literature reviewed for this dissertation positively portrayed restorative justice and approaches, this theme was not universal. Standing, Fearon, and Dee (2012) studied a male student who had a history of disciplinary issues. The boy was carefully selected for a perceived potential to respond favorably to the use of restorative approaches. While the boy willingly participated in all of the restorative meetings and interventions used during the study, his behavior remained unchanged. He continued to make poor decisions regardless of seemingly successful interventions. Prior to the conclusion of the study, he was expelled from his school. The authors concluded, “restorative practices had little overall impact on improving the subject’s behaviour [sic] ... he was unable to make a conscious decision to alter his negative behaviour [sic]” (Standing et al., 2012, p. 354). This student seemed to be unaffected by the use of restorative approaches. Braithwaite (1989) foresaw this potential outcome. He said, “Just as shaming is needed when conscience fails, punishment is needed when offenders are beyond being shamed” (p. 73). This case study serves as a reminder that even the best conceived social theory will not perfectly address the unique needs of each individual and it gives evidence of the wisdom of a blended approach to school discipline, one that has an avenue for punishment should that be the only form of motivation for positive behavior. For whatever reason, the use of restorative approaches failed to bring about a change in this student.

In 2012, Ed White Middle School in San Antonio, Texas partnered with the Institute for Restorative Justice and Restorative Dialogue (IRJRD) to implement a restorative discipline (RD) program on their campus (Armour, 2015). A part-time restorative dialogue specialist was assigned to the site for the first two years of the program and funding for the position was provided by a grant. Many of the positive results reported in this literature review were observed

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in the first two years of the program. These included decreased suspension and truancy, increased state test results, among others. In the third year, these positive gains evaporated, and student behavior and resulting discipline data returned to levels experienced prior to the implementation of the program. While Armour did not directly place blame for the turn in results, she noted several key changes at the school that may have led to the failure of the program. These included the loss of the specialist due to cuts in funding, reduced use of restorative discipline meetings by teachers and administration, teachers continued resistance to the philosophy of restorative discipline, and flawed implementation of aligned procedures and practices. Further compounding these factors, Armour reported, “about 80% of the total student population left or entered the school during the school year” (p. 13). With the high turnover in the student body at Ed White Middle School, the creation of a community that understood and valued the use of restorative approaches was likely impossible. This probably also discouraged the development of strong teacher-student relationships. Given the importance of relationships to restorative approaches and the need to understand the restorative process, the failure at Ed White was almost certain.

These two exceptions in the literature provide exemplars for consideration as teachers, school leadership, and administrators as they consider whether or not to implement restorative justice programs. Factors to address from Ed White Middle School (TX) include teacher buy-in, professional development, financial support, and the need for a strong commitment to community and restorative justice. Even studies in which restorative justice was not successful provide further motivation for understanding the process by which teachers come to adopt the philosophy of restorative justice and implement aligned approaches in their classroom.

While the literature reviewed for this study reported primarily positive results and the restorative justice theory aligns with a strong desire in education to promote and enhance the teacher-student relationship, a few examples where the use of restorative approaches floundered provide additional insight into what may impact implementation efforts. The next section briefly describes a few specific approaches or practices that may be used in restorative justice programs in school settings.

Examples to further understanding. To provide context for the reader, a few approaches or practices that align with the philosophy of restorative justice are described. In a justice-based setting, the main focus of a Restorative Approaches program is to repair harm caused by a crime or indiscretion. In education, restorative approaches may be used proactively to steer students away from misbehavior and reactively to help repair damage caused by misbehavior (Gregory et al., 2016). In the following paragraphs, several restorative approaches will be described.

Ed White Middle School has implemented “Circle-It” (Armour, 2015, p. 46) conferences as a proactive restorative approach. A Circle-It meeting is initiated by a student that perceives a problem on campus is present and needs to be addressed. A student initiates a Circle-It meeting by informing an administrator of the potential problem. The administrator contacts students identified as possible participants and then coordinates and facilitates a Circle-It meeting. This proactive approach is designed to diffuse situations that may result in misbehavior on campus.

Humanities Preparatory Academy has established the “Fairness Committee” (Hantzopoulos, 2013, p. 7) to deal with disciplinary incidents. When a meeting is called, a committee is formed to consider the case. The process involves the grievant, the person that caused the harm, and a teacher and two students uninvolved with the situation. The grievant may

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be a teacher, student, administrator, or other member of the school community who feels a “community norm” (p. 8) has been violated. For example, a teacher may take a habitually truant student to Fairness for showing a lack of respect of the teacher-student relationship. When the committee determines a norm has been violated, they identify the effect and together all five people— three person committee, grievant, and harmed— strategize how to repair the damage and restore the community.

Descriptions of restorative circles vary. In Kline’s (2016) description, all people affected are invited to attend the circle meeting. Specific guidelines for participation are reviewed by a facilitator. A “talking piece” (p. 100) is used to identify which circle member can talk. All participants are allowed to share during the meeting. Prior to concluding, the group comes to a consensus on how the harm will be healed. A reintegrative circle functions similarly but the purpose is to welcome back a student who may have been excluded due to a serious behavior infraction. Parents and community members may be invited to both restorative and reintegrative circles, depending on their involvement in the incident and the resulting harm (Clifford, 2013).

Finally, the simple teacher-student restorative conversation may be held to address minor classroom misbehavior. These conversations may occur inside or outside of the classroom and at any point during the day. Restorative conversations typically focus the offender on questions like, what happened, who was hurt, what damage was done, who is responsible, and how can the harm be repaired (Claassen, 1999).

The purpose and even structure of some of these restorative approaches may be similar to proceedings recommended by other disciplinary approaches. For instance, teachers commonly talk with students who misbehave in class and hope their conversation results in changed behavior. However, these restorative approaches are set apart by what Claassen (1999)

described as a “focus on the human violation” (p. 1) and the efforts that must be made to set things right with the individuals involved in order to restore community.

As described, restorative approaches are collaborative, promote relationships and community, and distribute authority across the community rather than holding it in one person. These are clearly different practices than the traditional approach to classroom management in which the teacher, through various strategies, works to exert control over a group of students. With such a change, many teachers find themselves in uncharted waters. Teacher perspectives on restorative justice and approaches were described in some of the articles reviewed for this dissertation. As this study focused on the experiences of teachers, some of the experiences described in the literature are presented in the next section.

Teacher experiences. As educational leaders initiate new restorative justice programs, teachers often provide feedback on their experiences via surveys, individual interviews, and focus groups. Researchers have collected and reported this type of data. As the focus of this study is on teacher experiences in adopting a restorative justice philosophy and use of aligned approaches, reviewing teacher experiences reported in the literature will help identify themes already identified in the literature as well as gaps that may need to be filled.

In chapter 1, I briefly described a restorative justice project that included eighteen schools in Scotland. As part of their research, McCluskey, Lloyd, Kane et al. (2008) interviewed 48 teachers and collected 627 surveys completed by school staff. Several key findings emerged from analysis of this data including increased staff morale, a more tranquil campus atmosphere, increased use of restorative language, and a continued existence of “a minority of resistant staff” (p. 410) who disagreed with the use of restorative justice. The researchers found implementation efforts at secondary schools differed from those at primary schools; programs at secondary

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schools had more variability in both success and teacher satisfaction. Some of the teachers interviewed recognized the philosophy of restorative practices did not fit with the assertive discipline approach previously adopted by the schools. One staff member said, “We’re not punitive enough, we’re not scary enough” (p. 414) indicating a perception that when using restorative approaches teachers do not have the same level of control of the classroom. The researchers concluded restorative practices positively impacted relationships, reduced misbehavior and exclusion, and was generally successful.

In a personal narrative article, Martin (2015) recounted his own experiences as he came to adopt a restorative justice philosophy and embraced the use of restorative approaches in his classroom. In his first year at Skinner Middle School (CO), where restorative approaches were part of the disciplinary process, Martin was unimpressed with the program. He did not see a change in the in-class behavior of students who participated in circles and he did not use restorative approaches in class “with fidelity” (p. 15) to the program. Over the summer he participated in a school site “work group” (p. 15) which met to further understand, develop, and expand the Restorative Approaches program. Through this he became a full supporter of the use of restorative approaches and a proponent of the program. Professional development was critical to this change and he described it as including role playing activities that helped develop teacher competencies in leading restorative based classroom sessions. He said students and teachers grew in their empathy for others and reported witnessing the formation of quality relationships, which resulted in the emergence of a strong, positive school culture.

In a qualitative, phenomenological study, Reimer (2011) explored how to “effectively implement restorative justice practices” (p. 8) in a public school in Ontario, Canada. Her research began in the fifth year of a restorative justice program. Only some of the teachers at the

participating school site reported they were trained in the use of restorative approaches. This caused Reimer to conclude implementation of the program was incomplete. In the study, she analyzed data collected from a questionnaire and interviews with one administrator and four teachers. She reported that teachers predominantly supported restorative justice but varied widely in how and when they used the approaches. Teachers expected administration to be the primary school personnel to use the approaches and expressed a belief that the Restorative Approaches (RA) program benefited students and positively affected classrooms and the school. Even though teachers reported the use of RA increased empathy and helped build relationships, almost all teachers interviewed stated it did not “create community” (p. 26). Teachers lamented the amount of time the program took from instruction. They felt strongly supported by their administration, but indicated policies adopted by the school board “discouraged support of the restorative justice program” (p. 27). Reimer concluded teachers were unimpressed with the program overall and said five of the six interviewees thought Restorative Approaches was a “fad” (p. 27) that lacked sustainability. While Reimer reported on the theme “facilitating adoption of new personal practical theories” (p. 19), which sounds similar to the goal of this study, her analysis of how teachers adopt restorative justice was light and experiences related to this theme were not presented in her article.

Palisades High School in Pennsylvania implemented a restorative justice program in “the Academy,” a program created at the school for students who were “struggling” (Mirsky, 2007, p. 6) to succeed academically and behaviorally. After a successful first year, the principal decided to expand the new program into the entire high school. To be strategic, he identified teachers as “believers,” “fence sitters,” and “critics” (p. 7) of restorative practices. In the first year administration focused energy and professional development on the believers. In the second year

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the believers shared success stories in faculty meetings as attention was turned to training and indoctrinating the fence sitters, critics, and new teachers. By the third year, administration reported the staff was on board. Mirsky noted, “Those who had been resistant were less so and many teachers retired” (p. 8). Positive outcomes reported include increased behavioral collaboration amongst teachers, increased sense of community, and positive relationship building. At Palisades High School teachers did not universally accept restorative justice and approaches. The statement, “and many teachers retired,” (p. 8) indicated some retired rather than adjust to the new program.

Three other studies that comment on teacher perspectives related to restorative justice and approaches deserve mentioning. Drewery and Kecksemeti (2010) reported the use of restorative circles led to a reduction in teacher stress around the need to solve student problems. They also reported the use of restorative approaches helped teach self-management skills. Kaveney and Drewery (2011) reported teachers appreciated being participants in the circle process, and valued the forum for the opportunity to share their feelings and experiences with their classes. Teachers also reported that, while at first the circles focused on behavior issues, once these issues were addressed, circles were used later in the year to focus on learning; these positively influenced the academic progress of some students. Finally, Vaandering (2014) conducted a study on the pedagogy of four teachers who taught at a school with a restorative justice program. “Patty,” (p.72), one of the participants, was a new teacher. She was influenced away from the principles of RA and her initial excitement for the program by the opinions of the veteran teachers at her site. Even though Patty initially had a firm understanding of RA and she described herself as “a strong proponent of RJ practices,” (p. 74) over time she resorted to using “hierarchical, authoritarian practices” (p. 74) not aligned with the RJ philosophy. As Vaandering described,

Patty allowed her conception of restorative justice and aligned practices to morph to eventually fit a hierarchical, teacher directed approach that more suited her desires and was in line with what she heard other veteran teachers describe.

Taken as a whole, the reviewed literature indicated teachers were generally positive regarding their experiences with restorative justice and the outcomes from the programs. However, teachers did share concerns. Some described RA as lax and not structured to provide meaningful consequences; some described other teachers as resistant to implementation and not favorable to the restorative justice philosophy; some said use of restorative approaches took time away from instruction; some viewed RA as a fad that would pass; some said professional development and continued administrative and financial support were critical to a successful, long-term implementation. Even with these concerns, the positive results attributed to restorative justice programs remain persuasive. Published studies indicated restorative justice and aligned approaches built teacher-student relationships, improved school community, positively affected classrooms, and taught self-discipline and empathy. Restorative justice and approaches continue to offer promise for schools and districts.

High school focus. Some articles in the literature identified differing levels success for Restorative Approaches programs based on the level of the school: elementary, middle, or high school. For example, eight of the eighteen schools studied by McCluskey, Lloyd, Stead et al. (2008) were classified as either “primary” or “special schools” and seven of these were determined to have made “significant achievement across school” (p. 209). Of the ten secondary schools that participated in the study, only two were given the same rating. In their conclusion, the authors suggest “that the different structures of secondary schools led to a slower pace of change” (p. 411) implying perhaps it takes longer for a restorative justice (RJ) program to take

hold in secondary settings. A difference in the implementation and success of a RJ program based on the age of students seems to be supported by Piaget's (1961) stages of cognitive development and Kohlberg's (1973) theory of moral development. In both of these theories, the age of the student was a key descriptive factor. Based on these two theories, we should expect to find differences in the implementation of and outcomes from restorative justice programs across age levels. As high school students are at a different cognitive and moral developmental stage than elementary students, it stands to reason the experiences of teachers using restorative justice and approaches in high school may differ from the experiences of teachers in elementary school. In fact the answers to the restorative questions, what happened, who was hurt, what was damaged, who is responsible, and what must be done to repair and restore relationships, will likely differ for abstract and concrete thinkers.

Conclusion

This literature review served two primary purposes. First, to impartially and representatively present the theory and research published on restorative justice and approaches. Second, to convince the reader of the value of conducting this phenomenological research. As was shown in the literature review, zero-tolerance policies and exclusionary practices, which focus on punishing students for misbehavior, resulted in a garish disciplinary landscape. It was a scene that was often marred by inequity and failure to promote personal development, provide safer campuses, and encourage positive relationships.

Restorative justice began as a theory in the criminal justice system. It proposes a community-based approach to discipline that relies on reintegrative shaming to motivate positive decisions. Braithwaite (1989) suggests it will be more effective at reducing crime and promoting community than a traditional punitive approach to discipline. This theory quickly spread from

criminology into other fields, including education. While educational researchers and leaders did not embrace the use of shame, a focus on the teacher-student relationship has been emphasized instead. The literature shows the theory and aligned approaches have been successfully adopted by schools and districts globally and in the United States; most studies speak favorably of the approach and outcomes.

There remains clear value in conducting further research in the field of restorative justice and approaches. Chapter 5 provides some recommendations for further research. Schools and districts continue to adopt and implement these practices and will only benefit from additional research in the field. Two reasonably current literature reviews and other articles agree with this recommendation (e.g., Fronius et al., 2016; Kline, 2016). Buckmaster (2016) said, “a major gap in the current restorative literature is the lack of depth regarding problematic issues of implementation” (p. 6) and Mayworm et al. (2016) supported this when they wrote, “Although numerous PD and other trainings on RJ can be found through a Google search, scholarship providing empirical evidence or even conceptual guidance for PD in RJ is rare in peer-reviewed journals” (p. 395).

In searching the literature for phenomenological research articles that studied restorative justice and approaches in education, only three were found. The research of Reimer (2011) related to the restorative justice experience as a whole and did not drill down to teacher experiences with adoption. The other two studies were graduate dissertations. The first researched the experience of high school students taking a class together in which restorative justice and practices were introduced and used (Dedinsky, 2012). The second focused on the experience of college students who participated in a restorative justice process while on their college campus (Meagher, 2009). While Reimer touched on the topic of teacher experiences in

adopting a restorative justice philosophy, her research was conducted in an elementary school in Canada, a significantly different setting than the school of study in this research. None of these studies addressed the research question posited in this endeavor.

The teacher is tantamount to the success of a restorative justice program. Buckmaster (2016) said, “It is important to acknowledge the downfall of training teachers about the nuts and bolts of restorative practices without including the heart” (p. 6). Klein (2016) said,

Successful implementation of restorative practices requires participants to be advocates for social justice, ready for change, willing to reflect on their daily interactions in school, reevaluate their own values, beliefs, and biases, and patient with the process of cultural and systematic change. (p. 102)

In attempting to describe the process by which teachers adopt the restorative justice philosophy and come to implement aligned approaches in their classroom, I tried to get to the heart of the matter with the people who were most directly involved with the implementation: the teachers. If teachers are not willing to adopt or do not fully understand the restorative justice philosophy, then the efforts of many can be easily thwarted. Fullan (2001), who wrote about educational change, recognized this. He said, “Changes in beliefs and understanding (first principles) are the foundation of achieving lasting reform” (p. 45). Discovering more about how teachers come to adopt a restorative justice philosophy and implement aligned practices by studying the experiences of teachers who have experienced the process may help others desirous of significant, lasting, and beneficial change.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

In this chapter I discuss the methods I used in this qualitative, phenomenological study of the experiences of teachers who have adopted a restorative justice philosophy and use aligned approaches in their classrooms. The purpose of this study was to answer the following primary research question and three clarifying sub-questions:

Primary Research Question

What experiences shape and guide the process through which teachers come to adopt and implement restorative justice and approaches in their work?

Research Sub-question #1

How do teachers define and conceptualize restorative justice and what do they self-report about how their understanding of restorative justice and approaches has changed over time?

Research Sub-question #2

Through what process do teachers come to hold a belief in the value and efficacy of restorative justice and approaches? How do specific experiences with restorative justice or approaches affect this process?

Research Sub-question #3

As teachers come to adopt a restorative philosophy, how has their enactment of restorative justice in their classrooms changed or remained the same?

To answer these questions, I employed a phenomenological research method. I conducted a personal interview with six purposefully-selected high school teachers. Through analysis of the recorded interviews and transcripts, a process that included coding, thematic

identification, horizontalization, and reflection, a set of themes and essences emerged (Lin, 2013). These findings are presented in chapter 4. In the remainder of this chapter I provide an in-depth description of the research methodology.

Research Design

To study the experiences of teachers using restorative approaches in their classrooms, I used a phenomenological research design. Phenomenology is a field of qualitative research that studies the shared experiences and stories of a group of people resulting from their living with or experiencing a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). The goal of phenomenology is to identify essences or themes common to the shared experiences of the group. Central to phenomenology is the interview through which descriptions are recorded as participants respond to open-ended questions and dialogue (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology rests on the belief that, while perfectly suited for some research, quantitative approaches are insufficient for discovering the essence or meaning of an experience. Through listening to first-hand accounts of a phenomenon, essences and themes that would not be identified through quantitative methods emerge. In this study, the essences of interest were how teachers come to hold a restorative philosophy, how they experience this adoption process, and whether and to what extent the use of restorative approaches has contributed to this journey. The richness of the data collected from personal interviews and thorough analysis process provided findings that are discussed in chapter 5.

Setting

The six participants all taught at a large comprehensive high school in a unified (K-12) public school district located in coastal Southern California. The district had three comprehensive high schools, each with enrollment of just over 2,100 students and staffed by roughly 120 teachers and administrators. An open enrollment policy in the district allowed

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students the opportunity to apply to the school of their choice. This resulted in schools that were demographically similar. Each high school was home to a few high-quality academies that appealed to students and their parents and resulted in a similar level of reputation for each school. The campus of study was typical for high schools in Southern California—single story buildings, classrooms that open outdoors into spaces where students gathered when not in class. In the 2013 - 2014 school year, the district adopted a set of disciplinary practices they called restorative approaches (RA). These approaches were based on the philosophy of restorative justice. Simultaneous with the adoption, the district implemented a new policy to guide resolution of disciplinary infractions. Since 2013 - 2014, each school in the district was expected to implement the use of restorative approaches and follow the new disciplinary policy.

Basic district and school site data are reported to provide further context for the school and district. All of the following information was obtained from the California Department of Education (CDE) website which was accessible to the public. In the 2015 - 2016 school year, the district of study served just over 15,000 students in grades K - 12. The demographic category “Hispanic or Latino” accounted for the largest portion of students at 59%. “White, not Hispanic” was the second largest group at just over 34%. The remaining 7% of students were a mix of Asian (3%), African American (1%), Native American (0.6%), and other. Each school in the district had its own unique demographic composition. During the 2016 - 2017 school year the high school of study was 54.5% Hispanic/Latino, 38.5% White, 3.7% Asian, and 3.1% a combination of Filipino, African American, and American Indian or Alaska Native. The campus was home to 2,192 students of which 39% qualified for free or reduced lunch. This percent of qualifying students was slightly lower than the district-wide 43% of students who qualified for free or reduced lunch.

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Table 1 reports suspension and expulsion data for the school, district, and state for the most recent available year (2014 - 2015) and the first available year (2011 - 2012).

Year		School	District	State
2011 - 2012	Suspensions	78 (4.3%)	670 (4.4%)	366,629 (5.9%)
	Expulsions	4 (0.22%)	15 (0.10%)	9,553 (0.15%)
	Total Enrollment	1,798	15,326	6,220,993
2014 - 2015	Suspensions	51 (2.4%)	380 (2.4%)	243,603 (3.9%)
	Expulsions	1 (0.05%)	2 (0.01%)	5,692 (0.09%)
	Total Enrollment	2,086	15,593	6,235,520

The suspension and expulsion rates for the school of study were similar to those within the district and slightly lower than those in the state.

Three years ago, the district adopted the use of restorative approaches and rewrote their discipline policy. The district retained zero-tolerance policies for use in incidents that warranted a significant response, such as a weapon on campus. Beyond that, teachers were expected to use restorative approaches when responding to misbehavior in the classroom. The district funded a Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) who specialized in the philosophy of restorative justice and use of aligned approaches. This TOSA supported teachers and administrators across the district in a variety of ways. The district conducted professional development to educate and train teachers on restorative justice and approaches. They also provided teachers with literature containing policies, expectations, and implementation strategies. The extent to which restorative approaches were used similarly across the campuses within the district was not part of this research. During the interviews, several participants commented on the difference between the implementation at their school in contrast to other schools. Participant #6 said, “I think some

school sites have rolled it out much better,” indicating differences in implementation may have existed from site to site. The teacher participants expressed a vague sense that RJ was implemented better elsewhere but there was no evidence presented to support or contradict that statement. In spite of these comments, because there was a district-wide RJ program implementation and because the district planned and provided professional development for all school sites, some strong commonalities most likely existed in implementation at the various school sites within the district.

Participants and Sampling Strategy

Purposeful, criterion-based sampling was used to recruit six full-time teachers from the same school to participate in this study. In purposeful, criterion-based sampling, a set of criteria are established to guide the participant selection process (Creswell, 2013). This sampling strategy allows the researcher to more narrowly define the specific experiences and qualities of the participants. Several criteria were used in this study. Each participant acknowledged meeting the criteria listed below:

1. Works as a teacher at the school site of study.
2. Began teaching in the district prior to implementation of the Restorative Approaches program.
3. Used restorative approaches as part of their classroom disciplinary process.
4. Agreed with the following statement: I think restorative approaches are a good way to resolve disciplinary issues and conflict that arises amongst students and the school community.

Creswell (2013) suggests using between 5 and 25 participants for phenomenological research. Brinkman and Kvale (2015) said, “In common interview studies, the number of

interviews tends to be around 15 +/- 10” (p. 140) which gave further support for the sample size suggested by Creswell. Ten teachers who fit the criteria were identified and invited (by email) to participate in the study. Seven of these agreed to be interviewed. Due to scheduling issues and the start of summer vacation, six teachers were interviewed. This number of participants fell just within the range of participants suggested by both Creswell (2013) and Brinkman and Kvale (2015).

Identification of the ten teachers invited to participate was an organic process. To maintain the anonymity of the teachers, I did not ask the principal for recommendations. Instead, I asked a friend who worked at the school to provide a few names of teachers who she thought might fit the criteria. After initially contacting a few she recommended, the list grew as those I contacted provided a few suggestions of other teachers who might be willing to participate. Two sets of two participants were friends in addition to being colleagues and so each knew the other was interviewed. During the interviews, I did not tell the participants the names of other participants in the study in order to maintain anonymity.

The participants were balanced in teaching experience. The group consisted of three veteran teachers, each with twenty or more years of experience, and three teachers newer to the profession, each having between five and seven years of experience. Three participants were male and three were female. Five participants self-identified as White and one as Hispanic.

Five of the participants had taught at the school of study since before the implementation of the Restorative Approaches program. Two of these had been at the school for more than fifteen years. The other three joined within the last ten years. The sixth participant transferred to the school from one of the other high schools in the district prior to the start of the 2016 - 2017 school year.

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By subject area, three participants taught English, two history, and one mathematics. The teachers' course loads in 2016 - 2017 contained a mix of course levels including Advanced Placement (AP), honors, college prep, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), and Academy for Success courses. (Academy for Success is a program within the district that created a cohort of students identified as at risk of not graduating and assigned the cohort to a set of teachers who remained with the students for three consecutive years.) During the 2016 - 2017 school year, collectively the teachers worked with every grade level, freshman through senior, with no one grade level either over or under represented. None of these were variables controlled for in the selection process.

The principal signed the school site letter of informed consent (Appendix A) and each teacher signed the participant letter of informed consent (Appendix B). Both of these documents called for strict anonymity for the district, school site, and participants. As a result, no names were used in this document. Because the district and school site chose to remain anonymous, when I referred to and quoted from district-created documents, I did not include citations.

During analysis of the transcriptions, I identified a few interesting and unexpected demographic similarities. First, four of the six participants either mentioned having a faith or attending a Christian university. Second, five of the six participants described themselves as rule followers while in school and operated easily within authoritarian, punishment-based classroom environments. (The sixth participant, a math teacher, did not comment on this theme in her interview.) Third, three of the six participants served as either a Restorative Approaches (RA) mentor teacher or an on-site RA Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA). All of the three continued to teach while in these roles and none of the three were currently serving in that role during the school year in which the study took place. While analyzing the transcriptions, a few

additional commonalities of a more philosophical nature emerged; some of these will be discussed in chapter 5. During the interviews and other communications with the teachers, none of them expressed views, articulated beliefs, or displayed behaviors that I would consider to be abnormal or extreme.

Data Collection

Over a twenty-day period, I conducted six personal interviews, one with each of the participants. To simplify this process for the teachers, I volunteered to meet them at the time and location of their choice. Three participants chose to meet on campus. I conducted one interview in a classroom, one in the teacher work room, and a third in the library. The other three participants chose alternate locations. I met one at a coffee shop, one in their home, and one in my home. In both interviews conducted in homes, family members were present but were not in the room and did not distract or interrupt the interviews. All settings were conducive to a recorded interview. Interviews ranged between 42 and 56 minutes; none were cut short by an unexpected interruption. One interview was interrupted by a student and parent needing direction from the teacher. We easily returned to the interview questions once he answered the question. At the conclusion of each interview, participants were given a small gift card to a local restaurant as a token of my appreciation.

During each interview I used a semi-structured approach that focused on the participants' experience with restorative justice and practices (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Harrell & Bradley, 2009). As described by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), a semi-structured interview "attempts to understand themes of the lived everyday world from the subjects' own perspectives" (p. 31) and is a delicate balance between an "open everyday conversation" (p. 31) and a "closed questionnaire" (p. 31). In each interview I asked questions from an interview guide containing

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four primary questions, each with several sub-questions. The interview guide was developed from the primary research question and three sub-questions (see Appendix C). For each interview, I asked every question and sub-question on the interview guide. Based on the response of the participant, I expanded upon the questions to clarify, probe, or gain further understanding.

Prior to the interview, I emailed the personal interview guide (see Appendix C) to the participants and invited them to review the questions. At the interview, four of the six indicated they had reviewed the questions. During the interview, one participant referred to a few notes written prior to our meeting.

I used a recording device and set of ear buds that contained a microphone to record each interview. This resulted in electronic audio files in which the participants were easily heard and understood. I transcribed each interview verbatim, resulting in six documents with word counts ranging from 5,814 to 9,321 words. Interestingly, the average word count for the three veteran teachers (Average = 9,105 words) was much larger than that of the younger teachers (Average = 6,381 words). To improve the readability and clarify the thoughts of the participants, I made slight modifications to passages taken from the transcripts. Repeated words, stutters, common fillers, and other similar distracting utterances were removed when I quoted the participants. When editing these quotes, I took extreme care to preserve the meaning of the statement as I understood it from the context of the interview, audio file, and transcript.

Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2012) recommended writing notes to record initial impressions and reactions with the data. To that end, I took a notebook to each interview and recorded comments related to the setting, interesting thoughts that surfaced during the interview, and responses to a brief set of demographic questions. Following each interview I wrote short

reflections of the meeting and experience in the notebook to capture my initial thoughts of the data, participant, setting, and any other topic that seemed related to the experience. These notes were reviewed during the data analysis process but were not coded or added to the data set.

Prior to conducting the interviews, I collected and reviewed district and school documents that described the Restorative Approaches (RA) program and policies related to student discipline. This included four documents best described as briefs containing summary information of the RA program, two district-published discipline guides, and a student handbook. These documents provided me with a broader understanding of the restorative approaches recommended for use by the district, made me a more informed interviewer, provided me additional insight when analyzing the data, and helped when discussing the findings. In summary, I found the district materials valuable.

Data Analysis

This section contains a description of the steps I followed in analyzing the data collected during the six semi-structured interviews. As described in the previous section, each interview was recorded. I personally made a verbatim transcription of each electronic audio file, retaining all of the common fillers used by the participant during the interview. While time consuming, I found making these transcriptions valuable as they increased my familiarity with the data set.

The transcripts were analyzed following the three-stage analysis process described by Creswell (2013): reading and memoing, coding, and thematic identification. I began by printing a hard copy of each interview. While reading each of these, I took notes in the margin, underlined key passages, and began to identify potential codes, capturing these in the notebook I used during the interviews. After completing this initial read, I identified and refined a set of code descriptions that emerged from the data. Using these codes, I reread the data a second time,

creating a computer file of participant statements that I thought pertained to each identified code. During this process I continued to refine and rephrase the codes to more accurately describe the experiences expressed within the set of quotes collected within each code.

When I finished this second read of the transcripts, 54 unique codes had emerged from the data. I then went back to the original transcripts and merged all six to create a single data document. From this document, I removed all of the interview prompts, follow-up and clarifying questions, and all additional comments made by me, so that the document consisted of pure participant responses. I read this new document from beginning to end and made notes in the margins where either newly-identified passages supported identified codes or new codes emerged. In this process, one additional code emerged and additional passages were coded. While writing chapter 4 and 5, the transcripts were revisited for further analysis. Through this exhaustive process, the coding process was completed.

Using this word file, I grouped the codes into nine categories which seemed to emerge from prolonged study and reflection. These categories provided the framework for the emergence of global themes. Descriptions of the categories, themes, and codes were written and further refined as the data was re-grouped and re-analyzed and themes emerged. In chapter 4, I report on eight themes that emerged from this process. Five themes directly related to the primary research question and three sub-questions are reported and discussed in chapter 4 and 5. Three themes emerged that describe common beliefs held by the participants and are discussed in chapter 5. In addition to these themes, I report how the participants defined and conceptualized restorative justice and aligned approaches are reported and discussed in chapters 4 and 5 as well.

Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2012) recommend writing notes to record initial impressions and reactions to the data and suggested revisiting these notes during the analysis process as this

may yield important insights and prove to be valuable as the data is analyzed. As I analyzed the data, I revisited my notes to see if any comments there would further clarify or illuminate sections of the interviews. I also used the notebook to record my own thoughts that emerged during analysis as well as quotes and ideas from the literature I reviewed that seemed to relate to themes that surfaced from the data.

While in the analysis phase, I read and referred to the district-created and published documents multiple times. These were not coded. Passages from them were not included in the data. Phenomenology focuses on the experience of the participants. To include these documents as data was not in line with how I interpreted a phenomenological research approach. From the analysis, it was clear the participants were familiar with the thoughts and ideas described in the district-created documents. They described the philosophy, approaches, and disciplinary program using language similar, and at times the same, to that used in the documents.

Throughout the analysis phase, I used a thoughtful, reflective process to allow themes (or essences) common to the experiences of the participants to emerge from their descriptions given in the interviews (Moustakas, 1994). While in this process I focused on engaging the data in a state of epokhe (also spelled epoch). Epokhe is defined as the “suspension or suppression of judgements and the positioning of the researcher with regard to the experiences of the studied phenomenon” (Padilla-Diaz, 2015, p. 102) to allow for objective identification of the themes and essences within the data. Prior to beginning the analysis, I revisited the section of this dissertation entitled Bracketing, contained later in this chapter, to prepare myself to let the participants speak. Through the analysis phase, I worked to suspend and suppress my own personal principles and beliefs that might unduly color the findings and so allow the themes to emerge unstained.

Research Ethics

Being ethical throughout the research process was critical to the integrity of the research. The safety of the participants was of tantamount importance. To ensure both integrity and safety, I conducted this study with intent and care. I secured approval to conduct this research through application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at George Fox University. In that application, a sample instrument containing the interview questions (see Appendix C), and letters of consent from the school site and participants (see Appendix A and Appendix B) were submitted to provide a complete picture of the research I proposed to conduct. A copy of the IRB's signed letter giving permission to conduct research is included in Appendix D of this dissertation.

I secured approval to conduct this research at the school site(s) from the principal. He gave further approval to contact teachers at the site and to invite them to participate. On May, 22nd, 2017 the principal signed and returned to me the School Site Letter of Informed Consent (see Appendix B). The principal desired that he, the school, and the district remain anonymous. As a result, a signed copy of the school site consent form is not included in the dissertation.

As described earlier in this chapter, I identified and recruited six teachers to participate in this study. Prior to the collection of data, each participant read and voluntarily signed a copy of the Participant Letter of Informed Consent (see Appendix B). Participants were not paid for their time but were given a gift card to a local restaurant as a token of appreciation. To minimize the potential for undue influence, names of the participants were not shared with the principal or any other school site or district personnel. Several of the participants desired to remain anonymous and so names and passages which may identify participants were not used in the dissertation. The principal and participants were offered a copy of the final dissertation and the participants

were offered the opportunity to review interview transcripts. None opted to take advantage of these opportunities.

The purpose of the research was to study the experiences of teachers who adopted a restorative justice mindset and implemented aligned approaches in their classrooms. At no time during the interviews did participants seem uncomfortable with a question or response. Nor did any display an emotional response. While some participants expressed disappointment about specific aspects of their experiences with restorative justice or the implementation process, there was no indication of any type of emotional harm caused by their participation. No one declined to answer any of the prompts from the interview guide and no one declined to answer any of the follow-up or clarifying questions. I do not work at the school of study or the district and so I do not have any influence over the principal or participants that might bias their participation or contribution.

I have every reason to believe each participant answered questions both truthfully and accurately. I have no reason to suspect any participant willfully or intentionally misconstrued, covered-up, or beautified their experiences. I have no cause for concern for the veracity of the data; I believe the data collected was a true picture of the experiences of each participant as best they could articulate (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

All research materials, including signed letters of consent, were safely stored in a locked file cabinet and all electronic files were password protected. Following the successful completion of the dissertation, these materials will be securely stored for three years and then destroyed.

Peshkin (1988) wrote about the potential impact of subjectivity on research. In summarizing his thoughts and personal approach he said, “I can create an illuminating,

empowering, personal statement that attunes me to where self and subject are intertwined. I do not thereby exorcise my subjectivity. I do, rather, enable myself to manage it” (p. 20).

Throughout this research project I worked to manage my own subjectivity. In the notebook I recorded my own thoughts, feelings, and reflections as I completed the interviews and analyzed the data. I found my researcher’s notebook helpful to collect and retain reflections and ideas that surfaced as well as process thoughts, ideas and feelings. Upon reflection, I feel I was able to manage my subjectivity related to my own feelings and opinions about restorative justice, discipline, communitarianism, shame, relationships, role of the teacher, role of a student, deterrence, impact of culture, and other underlying aspects of the study. In the next section I provide background on some of my own experiences and philosophies to provide the reader insight into my own beliefs and experiences.

Bracketing

While it is impossible for any researcher to be completely objective when approaching his work, controlling subjectivity is imperative for the qualitative researcher. All researchers come to their work with assumptions. When these are unconscious or unnamed, they may directly color or bias the findings (Ahern, 1999; Creswell, 2013; Peshkin, 1988). Through the process of bracketing, I identified experiences and philosophies that I thought might color my own research in an attempt to name them and so avoid their influence in this study.

I am entering my 23rd year of working in primary and secondary education. The first thirteen years I taught a wide range of mathematics courses, from remedial to honors, at two large, comprehensive public high schools in a unified district in coastal Southern California. Both schools had high levels of racial and socioeconomic diversity. In my fourteenth year I transitioned into administration. I began as an assistant principal of discipline. The following

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year I moved into independent education. All told, I have worked in four different primary and secondary schools: two faith-based and two public. Currently I serve as the Head of a small, Christian elementary/preschool. Over the years, I also had occasion to teach part time at a local junior college and coach multiple levels of a variety of sports.

During my thirteen years as a teacher, my primary instructional style was modeled after Madeline Hunter's eight-step approach which could be described as direct instruction. On occasion I incorporated problem-based learning and collaborative groups but these were not a regular part of my routine. In my second year of teaching, the athletic director told me, "If you want to stick around, don't send students to the office; deal with your discipline problems in your classroom." I took his advice and rarely referred students to the office. Early on I learned the importance of giving students both a voice and choice in the classroom and enjoyed and valued my relationships with them. Broadly speaking, I was a successful teacher, I had good relationships with my students, and contributed positively to my school and community.

As a student, I attended a Christian school grades K - 5 and then public schools for my primary, secondary, and most of my college education. I completed a bachelor's degree in mathematics, a master's degree in statistics, and a second master's degree in educational leadership and policy studies all through public institutions. Additionally, I completed a teaching and administrative credential and am in the process of completing my doctoral work, all done through private institutions. As a student, the majority of my teachers and professors used a teacher-led, lecture style of instruction. I have no first-hand experience with restorative approaches. None of the schools where I have worked have implemented a restorative justice based program.

Clearly I value education. Learner was one of my top five strengths to emerge from the Strengths Finder assessment. As a teacher, I valued instruction and considered academic minutes gold. I focused first on content and instruction believing that what the student learned mattered. Math is a content-driven subject and I am certain that influenced my own feelings on the importance of academics. In my experience both as a teacher and learner, a close relationship between the teacher and student is not required for learning to result. So while I worked to establish and maintain good relationships with all of my students, this was not an explicit objective or goal. I happen to enjoy students.

For over 40 years my father was an American Baptist pastor. I was raised in a Christian home. Protestant, Calvinists, and evangelical, my parents used an authoritative parenting style that emphasized the Protestant work-ethic and the Calvinist value of individualism which can be defined as placing a focus on personal freedom, achievement, and emphasizing the individual as an agent of change. Thus, I have a natural, ingrained proclivity for the agency and accountability of the individual which naturally resists the philosophy of community-based justice; personally, I prefer accountability of the individual to the state over accountability of the individual to the community.

While I believe in the powerful capacity of shame to encourage rule following, I largely disagree with the use of shame in education. I believe some types of shame, such as positive peer pressure, can lead to good outcomes without harming the psyche of the student. But I do not think the teacher-student relationship is strong enough to allow for the use of shame. I generally agree with the power and influence of deterrence and personally choose to abide by some laws simply to avoid the negative consequences that come from breaking those laws. Through my experiences, I have come to believe adolescents do not have the same capacity as

adults to understand or process deterrence. I strongly believe in the power of the teacher-student relationship but question its ability to control behavior to the same level as shame or punishment.

I am a Christian and believe and hold to be true the core tenants of that faith. This includes the belief that people are born inherently sinful and that God gave us a set of laws and truths that transcend humanity. While not all agree, I believe these laws and truths are inherent and not socially constructed. Finally, both punishment and restoration are primary parts of our relationship and experience with God and so are primary parts of human existence.

Potential Contributions to the Field

As indicated in the literature review, schools and districts have desired alternative processes to a traditional, punishment-based approach to student discipline. Most of the literature reviewed for this dissertation spoke positively of the outcomes of restorative justice (RJ) programs. Several critical components present in successful restorative justice programs have been identified in the literature. Adoption of a restorative justice philosophy and successful use of aligned approaches and successful professional development experiences were two of these components. The goal of this qualitative research was to identify themes within the experiences of teachers who adopted a restorative justice philosophy and used the practices in their classrooms. Identification of these themes will give further understanding of the implementation of programs that use restorative approaches, will be informative to school leaders considering the implementation of these practices, and will also help professional development coordinators target their efforts with faculty and staff during professional development trainings.

Conclusion

In this chapter I described the methods I used in this study. I collected a useful set of data through the personal interview of six high school teachers who were purposefully selected using a set of criteria. Through a reflective process that included coding and thematic identification, essences emerged from the experiences of the participating teachers. The analysis of these lived experiences helped further my understanding of the process through which participating teachers came to adopt a restorative philosophy and used restorative approaches in their classrooms. Ultimately, through identification and discussion, these essences and themes led to a deeper knowledge and understanding of restorative justice and approaches. I hope this knowledge and understanding will benefit teachers, administrators, and other educational practitioners.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this phenomenological research was to explore the experiences of teachers who hold a restorative justice philosophy and agree with the efficacy of using restorative approaches in their classroom and school. Through the analysis of teacher experiences and reflections, themes emerged that help describe the process through which they adopted a restorative justice philosophy and came to use restorative approaches in their classroom. Related to these themes I report on how these teachers defined and conceptualized restorative justice to provide clarity for the reader. In this chapter I report findings directly related to the primary research question and sub-questions from this study

In phenomenological research shared experiences of a social phenomenon are analyzed to identify essences that emerge from the descriptions of those who lived the experience (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Creswell, 2013). These essences further our understanding of the phenomenon and provide insight and understanding for those who may also experience the phenomenon. By collecting and coalescing the thoughts and reflections of teachers who have experienced the process of adopting a restorative mindset, I have identified descriptions and themes of the phenomenon.

Chapter 4 presents the emergent findings from this study including descriptions from the teachers. Prior to reporting the findings, a brief summary of the participants, data collection, and description of the analysis are presented. In the findings, I report on how teachers define and conceptualize restorative justice, provide descriptions of themes related to adoption, and share experiences that influenced their adoption process. Each of the topics reported in the findings was directly related to the primary research question or sub-research questions.

Summary of Participants & Interviews

Six teachers participated in this research project. Each satisfied a set of criteria determined prior to contacting the participants. As described in chapter 3, a non-randomized, criterion-based selection process was intentionally utilized to ensure the participants had enough similarity in their backgrounds that they would have experienced restorative justice in a common way. As a result, all of the participants shared some commonalities: all worked at the same school when the study was conducted, all joined the district prior to the implementation of the restorative justice program, all said they agreed with the restorative justice philosophy, and all found the approaches helpful to resolve behavior issues that arose in the classroom.

Beyond these, the teachers were as similar and dissimilar as one would expect of six teachers who work at the same school. In the next few paragraphs I provide a personal profile of each participant and include brief summaries of their views and experiences as teachers and individuals with respect to restorative justice.

Participant #1 had taught in the history department for about six years. He took pride in being very relational. He attended sporting events on campus, was involved with student clubs, said hello to his students on campus, and told stories about practicing with the soccer team after school. He said, "It's very important to insert yourself into the fabric of a school." He admitted veteran teachers influenced his adoption of the use of restorative approaches even though he agreed with the philosophy of restorative justice from the outset. He believed the district implemented the new program to reduce suspensions and expulsions. He called himself a "rebel" for not following all of the steps in the new district discipline policy. Of classroom discipline he said, "I probably run a much looser ship than a lot of teachers" and admitted that,

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“for me restorative approaches hasn’t done much because I don’t really face the issues every day.”

Participant #2 had taught English at the school for five years. Restorative justice (RJ) was introduced at the end of her first year of teaching. She described RJ as “kind of just common sense how to treat people nicely.” She had struggled with feelings that she was perceived as being too soft because of her willingness to look at the big picture rather than just the facts of the situation at hand. She described RJ as “looking at the whole situation in context ... it’s not one size fits all.” She had concern for her students and shared stories of teaching them to be responsible, going above and beyond, and checking up on them when they were no longer in her class. She appreciated that RJ is relational and thought teachers should be involved in the lives of students. She said questions like, “Why are you bringing drugs to school? Why is this happening to you? What’s going on?” should be asked when students misbehave.

Participant #3 had taught English at the school for five years. In her first year teaching she struggled with classroom discipline. As a new teacher she expected that, “students will see that I care about them and I want to be here and they’ll just want to participate and be happy and follow all of my instructions.” She quickly learned this was not the case for all of her students or even a majority. She was grateful for the introduction of restorative justice as it emphasized the importance of relationships and gave her an approach to use with her students. Most of her students were at risk of not graduating and I could tell she had honed her approach to working with them. She said, “I feel like I’m a parent half the time and a teacher half the time.” She pushed her students and took pride in their willingness to give more effort in her class than they would give in their other classes.

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Participant #4 transferred to the math department prior to the start of the school year. She was a twenty-year veteran teacher and taught at one of the other high schools in the district when the restorative justice program was first introduced. The implementation of the restorative justice program emerged as a significant theme in her transcript. She described it as “really top-down, heavy-handed,” “insulting to teachers,” and “made for a pretty horrible environment for staff and faculty.” This experience was not recounted by other participants and may have been a perception of the teachers at the high school in which she worked when the program was implemented. She too thought restorative justice was implemented to reduce suspensions and expulsions. She believed teenagers “need” consequences when they misbehave and said, “Now the consequence is let’s have a conversation.” For all that, she said RA “fit very naturally” with how she interacted with students, she enjoyed her “relationships with my kids,” and lamented the expanded job description of a teacher— “I wasn’t hired to be a counselor!”

Participant #5 had taught history at the school for twenty years. He went into teaching because he wanted to be like the “cool” teachers he had while in high school. I could easily tell he was a relational teacher. Prior to the district implementation of restorative justice, he was selected to visit Denver Public Schools to see RJ first hand and appreciated it right away. He volunteered to be a TOSA the first year of the program and was excited to be involved with the new program. He became frustrated by the lack of direction from the district and explained, “I never really had a job description.” The lack of direction led him to feel like he was superfluous to the implementation process. By the end he said, I “ended up filing papers for a secretary ... you know they were overburdened.” He took some satisfaction in helping a few teachers but continued to be disappointed that RA did not become what he saw in Denver. Despite his

experience as a TOSA, he continued to be a strong supporter of restorative justice and tried his best “to get more teachers involved.”

Participant #6 had taught English at the school for nineteen years. He viewed RA as “a way to really build community” and said, “My classroom is really big on community.” His instructional style involved “a lot of small groups, a little bit of whole class instruction, and a lot more small group instruction.” He shared a story about coaches he had while in school who said things like, “You better go burn your cleats right now and not come back on the field.” He said now coaches have to give a “compliment sandwich” in order to provide critical instruction; he expressed a feeling that times have changed. Participant #6 took pride in his relationships with students and shared stories of being asked for advice and counsel. He tried to create “a low stress environment” and appreciated that RA “teaches you not to be reactive ... more proactive.”

Data Analysis

This section contains a brief description of the steps I followed in collecting and analyzing the data. I transcribed each interview from the electronic audio files created during each interview. I used the transcripts to identify codes and assigned then coded specific passages within each interview. Through a circular and repetitious process of coding, reflecting, summarizing, revisiting the data, and reiteration, themes emerged. I grouped the 54 identified codes into these themes and wrote and refined descriptions of the themes that emerged. These themes described the essences of the experiences the teachers shared in the interviews. The following two sections of chapter 4 contain descriptions of the two themes that emerged from the data directly relating to the primary research question and three sub-questions.

Findings: Participant Definitions and Conceptualization of RA

Research Sub-question #1 asks, “How do teachers define and conceptualize restorative justice and what do they self-report about how their understanding of restorative justice and approaches has changed over time?” Several questions in the interview guide directly addressed this sub-question. As part of the Restorative Approaches (RA) program, the district of study used the phrase “The Foundational 5 R’s of RA” in their documentation on the program and training provided to teachers. These five R words and concepts—relationships, respect, responsibility, repair, and reintegration—surfaced repeatedly in the interviews. Community also came up as a concept teachers associated with RA. The 5 R words and community provided a framework for how teachers defined and conceptualized restorative justice. I hesitate to say these six words describe themes that emerged from the data as they are simply teacher conceptualizations; nevertheless, these findings directly relate to research sub-question #1 and so are reported in the findings.

Relationships. In reviewing the transcripts, I identified 32 distinct passages that either indicated the purpose of using restorative approaches (RA) was to form strong relationships or emphasized the importance of strong teacher-student relationships. There were more passages in the transcripts related to relationships than any other concept teachers used to describe restorative justice. Teachers said the word relationship or relationships 80 times during the interviews and individually each one used the word at least once. For the participants, relationship was a primary aspect of a Restorative Approaches program.

In the statement below, Participant #3 described an experience in which restorative approaches did not seem to “work” with one of her students. The final sentence of this statement typifies the connection the teachers expressed that exists between relationships and RA:

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In my first year or my second year with RA there was a student where something had happened and our relationship was positive, negative, positive, negative; it wasn't consistent. When I tried restorative approaches with him, it didn't work. I felt like [in] that relationship, the student had already decided that relationship wasn't going to work and I wasn't going to be someone he could trust. So, I feel like when the student is resistant to it, it doesn't work. That revealed to me that the relationship aspect of RA is the most important aspect because if I don't have a relationship with that student than I'm not going to be able to talk [about] how we respect each other and how do we repair the situation and restore and all of these different things.

Participant #3 used the word relationship to explain what she sees as “the most important aspect” of Restorative Approaches, indicating the importance of this word in her definition and conceptualization of RA.

Multiple statements from the other participants revealed a similar connection between relationships and RA. Below are a few examples from each participant to provide additional support and further describe relationship and Restorative Approaches:

- Participant #1: RA is very relationship dependent.
- Participant #2: This [RA] feels more up my alley of how I want to build relationships and interact with students.
- Participant #4: The biggest pushout of all this [RA] is that huge, all encompassing, concept of relationships with students ... if you have relationships with your students, the atmosphere in the classroom will be more positive.

- Participant #5: I went into the profession to develop the relationships with students because of the relationships that I had been exposed to. People ask me why I wanted to get into teaching ... I want to be like them [the teachers I had].
- Participant #6: I think teaching is all about building relationships.

Respect. Five of the six teachers directly spoke about respect in 11 passages and the word appeared 28 times in the transcripts. Participant #5 was the only teacher who did not use the word respect during the interview. However, his description of collaboratively creating classroom norms with his students certainly implied he extended respect. Thus, each participant spoke of the importance of respect in their classroom and relationships. The following statement from Participant #4 most clearly and directly connects respect as an aspect of a Restorative Approaches program:

RA is just the way you run your classroom. How you interact with kids. The respect you expect from them but also what you give to them. The caring about their lives and wanting to have conversations and wanting to know what's going on and if they have issues what's causing it.

In this passage, Participant #4 implied respect is a bilateral action critical to a restorative classroom. Further, she used the word "care" which could be an outcome of a respectful relationship.

Below are several passages from participants that provide further description of respect as part of their conceptualization of Restorative Approaches:

- Participant #1: We usually have a whole discussion as to what does it look like to be respected. I include expectations for myself in there [and] not just for what students are expected to do. So, I spend a lot of time on that.

- Participant #2: The teachers I loved, you could tell that they had this (RA) mindset. They loved students. They wanted to build relationships. They wanted to build trust. They wanted to have buy-in. You know, there was respect.
- Participant #4: When we first heard about it [RA], it seemed like a no brainer ... We want to have conversations with our kids and we want to treat them with respect and we want to give them second chances. And of course they are welcome back into the classroom after they messed up in some way.

All of the participants used the word respect and/or described extending respect to their students when they used a restorative justice mindset and aligned approaches in their classrooms, thus respect is a part of their conceptualization of RA.

Responsibility. I identified seven passages in in the transcripts in which the participants directly associated responsibility with restorative approaches. The statement below by Participant #2 directly connects responsibility and RA:

I think it [RA] is teaching them how to take responsibility of their actions and to see how what they do has an impact on a number of people; they might not even realize the impact they're making.

In this quote, the teacher viewed responsibility as an outcome or by-product of using restorative approaches in the classroom.

Listed below are two additional quotes from participants that highlighted the interrelated nature of responsibility and the use of restorative approaches:

- Participant #1: Really focusing on, 'What happened?' 'Who was responsible?' 'Who does it hurt?' 'How am I responsible?' I think going through those [RA questions] has really helped.

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- Participant #6: Restorative justice is offering students an opportunity to share some responsibility in their actions ... take some responsibility for the things they've done.

In these passages responsibility was described as an outcome of the use of restorative approaches and as an active part of a restorative justice philosophy—to take responsibility for one's actions. Restorative approaches are only useful if the guilty party takes responsibility; an innocent person does not need to be restored.

Repair. Together with several common synonyms for repair including fix, mend, and heal, the concept of repair was mentioned 17 times and appeared as a theme in nine different passages. Participant #3 described the important work done when the damage caused by harm is repaired:

You actually can apologize. You can, you know, take a few minutes to yourself and then come back and offer help in another way and so you can regain that trust and repair that situation and fix things and move forward. And so you are not feeling like you have to hold onto this grudge or that someone is mad at you and that that teacher doesn't like you [or] that the situation was handled and now it's done and you get to move on.

For the participants, the idea of closure was critical to a restorative justice philosophy as it described the state that exists after restoration is complete—"now it's done and you get to move on." For the participants, repair was a critical step for a restorative process.

Below are three additional quotes from participants that highlight the connection between repair and restorative justice:

- Participant #1: Restorative justice is a philosophy. Instead of focusing on action and consequence, it's focused on action and realizing that the action has brought you into some sort of conflict within a relationship. The goal becomes do you then mend that

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relationship. From my perspective, it's kind of like I did something wrong, how do I say I'm sorry and then how do I mend that relationship?

- Participant #2: I had a girl who cheated on a vocab test the first or second year of RA. I remember approaching her about it and asked, 'Well, how are you going to fix this? How are you going to repair this?'

Participant #1 used the synonym mend for repair and recognized part of the restorative justice philosophy requires repair. Similarly, Participant #2 asked one of the restorative questions, "How are you going to repair this?" Repair is a part of how teachers conceptualized a restorative justice philosophy and an important component of aligned approaches.

Reintegration. The concept of reintegration appeared in only four identified passages in the transcripts and the word was used only twice. Thus reintegration is the least represented conception in the data. Yet, four of the six teachers mentioned the concept and reintegration could be considered a synonym for restoration, which is central to restorative justice. The following statement from Participant #1 provided the best example that showed reintegration was a part of his conceptualization of restorative justice:

In restorative justice ideally that's what our justice system is supposed to do as well. You have violated our contract of society and therefore you are going to be removed for that. But the idea is we are supposed to build them up, into a way of reentering society. Yeah, rehabilitation versus punitive I guess.

Here Participant #1 used the words "reentering" and "rehabilitation" to describe how a criminal is reintegrated into the community.

The two additional quotes below provide further examples from other participants in which the word or idea of reintegration is part of their description of the value of restorative approaches:

- Participant #4: We always want to give them a second chance. Welcome them back into the learning environment, repair, and restore relationships.
- Participant #6: To restore the relationships or repair relationships in a way that is healthy and effective. So one's not leaving hurt.

The participants used the word restore in both of these quotes but in the context of the statements, restore is a synonym for reintegration; both of the passages speak of welcoming back and a healthy community.

Community. Community was the final concept teachers used as part of their description of a restorative justice mindset. Participants said the word community twenty-eight times in the transcripts. Analyzing these, eight passages in the transcripts related specifically to community, building community, or descriptions of community. Each of these statements were from the transcripts of the veteran teachers; the newer teachers did not give descriptions of community or talk of the community aspect of Restorative Approaches. The passage below from Participant #4, described her struggle to integrate RA into her math courses:

It's hard to integrate it [RA] into a math classroom, because math doesn't naturally lend to discussions about how we're feeling or behavior. But you don't always want to do it (RA) when there is just something negative. You want it [RA] to be part of the process of us being a unified group. This is our math classroom. This is our learning environment. There's joint ownership in it.

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While Participant #4 did not use the word community in this passage, her use of the words “unified” and “our” express the idea of community and show how for her community is an aspect of RA.

Below are two additional statements from participants that highlight the importance and value of community and the need to establish community to create an environment in which RA will flourish:

- Participant #5: For sure, we focus on building community in the first week. We’ll do circles and student interviews. When we first started it [RA], I was into it for the discipline aspect of it but I then started to incorporate it into the academic part of class.
- Participant #6: One way I would use it [RA] in my classroom is we spend about a week creating an environment. We do a lot of communal activities before we get to working. If you get students to trust you they’re just a lot easier to work with and you have fewer problems later on.

Participant #5 and #6 talked extensively about building community in the first week(s) of class. Both spent time collaborating with students to create class norms. Both intentionally spent class time throughout the course on maintaining community. In these two statements both participants identified a connection between community and Restorative Approaches.

Conclusion. In defining and conceptualizing restorative justice, time and again the participating teachers used six words and concepts: relationships, respect, responsibility, repair, reintegration, and community. Describing how the participants defined and conceptualized restorative justice and approaches provides insight into the program that was implemented at the

school of study. This insight could be valuable for educational leaders as they consider implementation of a restorative justice based program within their school or district.

In the next section I report findings related to the primary research question and provide participant descriptions of the process experienced by teachers in adopting and implementing restorative justice and approaches. Five distinct themes that emerged from the data that directly relate to the primary research question and sub-questions are presented.

Findings: Process by which Teachers Adopted RA

The primary research question was, “What experiences shape and guide the process through which teachers come to adopt and implement restorative justice and approaches in their work?” Understanding how participants define and conceptualize RA provides context for the heart of the research—the adoption process. In the transcripts, the participants described their experiences with the process of adopting a restorative justice philosophy and coming to use aligned approaches in the work. In the three sections that follow, the themes that emerged from the analysis of passages in the transcript related to the adoption process will be presented.

‘I already do this’— Adoption of RA philosophy. To title the strongest theme related to process that emerged from the data, I used a quote from Participant #5: ‘I already do this.’ I identified 26 passages in the transcripts that all articulated the same description of the process teachers experienced to adopt a restorative justice philosophy. That the response appeared in twenty-six passages (second only to relationships in number), with common language, and was described by all six teachers makes this a strong theme: ‘I already do this.’ The following passage from Participant #5 succinctly summed up the sentiment of all six of the teachers: “I had found it (RA) was easy for me because I was like, ‘Ok, whatever this is called or whatever this is, I already do this.’”

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Each of the other five participants articulated their adoption of a restorative justice philosophy in very similar language to that used by Participant #5:

- Participant #1: I often times saw this [RA] as common sense and less of a new philosophy to adopt. And because I saw it as more common sense, I never really thought of it as an issue to adopt.
- Participant #2: I don't know if I had a drastic change from doing one type of discipline practice to switching to this type of discipline practice ... to me it's just like this is how you discipline.
- Participant #3: It wasn't natural for me to just write detentions or give referrals. That wasn't what I wanted to do as a teacher. And so this [RA] feels more up my alley of how I want to build relationships and interact with students.
- Participant #4: I would say it [RA] fit very naturally with how I normally behaved with my students ... for me personally, I feel like it [RA] just flowed along with what I already had done. It was a no brainer.
- Participant #6: I think naturally it [RA] does suit my personality.

“Common sense,” “This is how you discipline,” “Feels more up my alley,” “Fit very naturally with how I normally behaved with my students,” “Flowed along with what I already had done,” and “Naturally it [RA] does suit my personality.” These statements all indicate the participants did not adopt a restorative justice philosophy, but instead the restorative justice philosophy fit their own, preexisting philosophy. The adoption process did not require time, evidence, or argument. Each participant indicated the RA philosophy either naturally fit their approach or fit a pre-existing belief about how best to discipline students. The first theme to emerge from the data was ‘I already do this.’

RA provided me language for my beliefs and practices. Closely related to the ‘I already do this’ theme, a second theme I identified as ‘RA provided me language for my beliefs and practices’ emerged from analysis of the transcripts. The ‘I already do this’ theme’ expresses an alignment between the restorative justice philosophy and a preexisting belief. The ‘RA provided me language’ theme expresses the feeling that the language of the Restorative Approaches program helped teaches to articulate their belief. Participant #5 described this theme the most clearly in the following statement: “I would say it [RA] reinforced what I had already believed in and gave me new language to help adopt the implementation of it. Teaching with a purpose ... I would say RA helps me teach with purpose.” In this passage, Participant #5 distinctly identified each of these two themes. He said, “I would say it [RA] reinforced what I had already believed in” —the ‘I already do this’ theme. He followed with, “and gave me new language to help adopt the implementation of it” —the ‘RA provided me language for my beliefs’ theme. For Participant #5, these are two distinct themes.

Four of the six participants shared statements that indicated RA provided them language to express previously held beliefs. Below are two additional examples from other participants:

- Participant #3: I’m so glad it [RA] came around because I think I realized that I’m going to have to do something different. And I had a sense of what that was but I think restorative approaches laid it out a little bit more for me. And helped me understand the different steps of it [the discipline process].
- Participant #6: I think the biggest thing, as we talked about earlier, [is] giving me words to verbalize what I hoped I’d been doing.

Participant #3 said, “I had a sense of what that was ... restorative approaches laid it out a little bit more for me.” She started with a sense, a feeling that wasn’t articulated, and RA “laid it out” for

her. Participant #6 said RA gave him language “to verbalize.” From the analysis of the transcripts, the theme ‘RA provided me language for my beliefs’ theme emerged from the data.

Introduce, Inform, Implement— The 3 I’s of adoption. The participants described the process of adopting a restorative justice philosophy as it aligned with a preexisting belief. This simple theme was not mirrored in participants’ descriptions of adopting the use of restorative approaches in the classroom; each teacher described a process through which he or she came to use restorative approaches in the classroom. While each participant uniquely described his or her adoption process, in synthesizing their descriptions I titled this theme, ‘Introduce, Inform, Implement—The 3 I’s of adoption.’ Participant #6 most closely described these three steps in the following statement: “The biggest thing, actually putting something in front of you and this is a much better approach. You start to think about it. You start to, hopefully, use it.” In this statement, Participant #6 identified three steps: “putting something in front of you,” “you start to think about it,” and “you start to ... use it.”

The following excerpts from the participants each contain descriptions of the adoption process:

- Participant #1: I guess there was a definition stage and then a ‘here is kind of how it works’ [stage] and then [an] introduction to different strategies [stage]
- Participant #2: I remember we were in the Cafeteria and it was two days’ worth of training and role playing. We had tough conversations about discipline which I found really helpful.
- Participant #3: We heard about it [RA] that first year but didn’t receive training on it until the end of that first year. I think I understood the concept right away but my practice of it has improved and I would say that also comes with just teaching experience. So, the

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more you're using it or the more you face challenging situations or situations where you can intervene and say, 'Hey this is actually a great situation where we can practice some of these things.' That's where it's become easier and I've figured out how to make it a little more effective for me.

- Participant #3: I was bought in ... now I'm bought in and practicing. Before I think I was bought in but I really didn't understand the idea. I didn't really know how to get it [RA] into the classroom effectively and naturally.
- Participant #4: The very initial stages is when we learned the most about it. There was a big pressure to go through the different stages [of discipline]. And as the years went by, I feel like they expected teachers to just kind of know the process and use it [RA] when necessary.
- Participant #4: The initial process of learning what it's [RA] all about and then figuring out what you as a teacher could do yourself; what seemed feasible in the classroom. Over time you just kind of evolved into doing what worked for you.
- Participant #5: I would say that initially the stages in adopting restorative approaches were pretty clear and concrete. I was exposed to this new idea through these workshops and that was great.
- Participant #6: We're going to do this [RA]. Then the whole stage, ok well what is it? How is it going to impact our classroom? How is it going to impact me? Is there stuff I'm going to do outside of school? Inside of school? And then once all those things kind of filter down and settle it became pretty aligned with teaching teachers in general and their ideologies at our school.

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Many of these descriptions contain three steps. Take for example the description from Participant #3, “I was bought in ... now I’m bought in and practicing. Before I think I was bought in but I really didn’t understand the idea.” She identifies three phases: bought in, come to an understanding of “the idea,” and now she is “bought in and practicing.” While each gave a unique description of how they adopted the language and tools or RA in their work, all six indicated there were steps to the process. In looking at the descriptions, the simple phrase Introduce, Inform, and Implement seemed to capture the essence of this process and most accurately described this second theme in the data.

Experiences that affected the adoption process. The second half of research sub-question #2 states, “How do specific experiences with restorative justice or approaches affect this process?” This section presents two themes that emerged from analysis of the descriptions that related to how experiences affected teachers as they adopted the use of restorative approaches in their work.

In the course of the interviews, the participating teachers shared stories and experiences that helped provide a fuller picture of their overall experience with adopting a restorative justice philosophy and aligned approaches. In analyzing the transcripts and reading the district-created documents describing the Restorative Approaches program and the disciplinary process, I came to realize that simultaneous with the introduction of restorative justice, the district implemented a new disciplinary policy. Because these two changes occurred together, most of the participants did not differentiate between the Restorative Approaches program and the discipline policy; most of the teachers saw these as enmeshed. As a result, experiences with one or the other affected their experience of the whole.

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The new discipline policy was a significant departure from the prior policy. Teachers were no longer allowed to refer students directly to administrators. Instead, a three-step process was put in place that required teacher-student meetings, parent notification, behavioral plans, and rigorous documentation at each step. Only when the teacher had properly documented all three steps would the administrator meet with the offending student.

Because of this policy change, participants shared experiences on three processes: adoption of a restorative justice philosophy, adoption of a restorative approaches used in the classroom, and adoption of the district discipline policy.

No significant theme emerged from the data related to experiences that affected the adoption of a restorative justice philosophy. As I described, the theme ‘I already do this’ strongly emerged. Because teachers described holding a preexisting agreement with restorative justice philosophy, they did not have any experiences to share on the adoption of a restorative justice philosophy.

Although no experiences related to the adoption of the philosophy were present, teachers shared formative experiences related to both adoption of restorative approaches and the adoption of the new district policy. These experiences and emerging themes will be described in the next paragraphs.

Several teachers shared experiences that helped move them forward in their adoption and implementation of restorative approaches in the classroom. I described this theme as ‘District and programmatic elements helped me implement restorative approaches in my classroom’ or ‘District and programmatic elements helped me’ for short. In each statement that follows, a participant recounted how a part of the district-implemented program influenced his or her adoption of restorative approaches used in the classroom:

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- Participant #2: I thought that was smart of them to change the language being used at our school. I think in the next few years we're going to see a lot of kids accustomed to using the term restorative or repair or the other ones. Which I think is a good thing. I find myself using those terms when I talk to kids.
- Participant #4: In my prior school there was someone who was ... in charge of the Restorative Approaches and she was very accessible. I used her expertise and her advice because it [RA] wasn't necessarily something that suited me very well. So, there was a learning process for me.
- Participant #5: If you were fortunate enough to go to the conference or workshops it was just a lot easier to understand and buy in and see.
- Participant #6: I volunteered not to go away and be a leader, but to be an on-site, go-to person. If students had a problem or students and a teacher, I could come in and moderate that process. So I did a lot of reading on it [RA], I looked at all the studies that the district gave us, and tried to find ways that I could use it.

In these passages, the participants shared experiences about implementation decisions made by the district that helped them grow in the use of restorative approaches in their classrooms. The district provided teachers restorative language to use with students, a teacher to use as a resource, conferences and workshops to attend for training, and research based articles for study. These resources created encouraging experiences for the participants and emerged as the theme 'District and programmatic elements helped me.'

Participants also shared experiences about the district implementation that negatively influenced their adoption of restorative approaches. The discipline policy implemented with the RA program was specifically called into question by several participants. I called this theme

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‘The new policy is deflating and demoralizing.’ While these experiences did not shake teacher’s beliefs in restorative justice philosophy, they did shake their belief in the value and efficacy of the approach:

- Participant #1: At first I was a little hesitant, and I said, ‘Isn’t it pretty obvious that students aren’t getting suspended as much because you are telling teachers not to suspend them?’ It [the steps of the new discipline policy] frustrated a lot of teachers who felt that discipline was not ever happening and so the relationships weren’t actually being mended. It just seemed like administrators were kicking the can down the road.
- Participant #2: We have all of the different charts, flow charts of intervention, which I never really look at because it’s too much. The one part I can get frustrated with is having to document everything.
- Participant #3: I think when I originally thought of it [RA], the way it was presented ... was like checking off boxes. Did you do the steps? I think we had five steps printed for us and we put them on our window or on the door. It just didn’t feel like that was going to build anything with the student. It felt like the whole idea was you can send the student outside and they can see the questions outside. I don’t want the student outside! So, how do I not send the student outside and still do restorative approaches?
- Participant #4: The way it [RA] was implemented was really top-down, heavy-handed and insulting to teachers to some extent and made for some defensiveness on the teachers’ part. So, I feel like the way it was implemented was pretty harsh and made for a pretty horrible environment for staff and faculty.

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- Participant #4: For the minor things, the restorative approaches of let's have a conversation ...it taught students that you can act out, misbehave, be disrespectful, and the consequence is [to] have a conversation about it. That's where I think things fell apart a little bit.
- Participant #5: So that was a speed bump. That was a spike strip. The lack of guidance [from the district office on implementation].

Each of these quotes describe deflating experiences that stemmed from how district and school site leadership implemented the new program. In each quote the participant expresses frustration with a point of policy or implementation. The participants did not question the theory.

No implementation process is perfect. In the interviews, the participants shared experiences in the adoption process that were positive and experiences that were not. The district created some programmatic components that benefited teachers and helped them become proficient at using RA in their classrooms. The new district discipline policy, seen by some of the participants as designed to eliminate suspensions and expulsions, created negative experiences for some teachers. None of the teachers described experiences that shook their faith in nor sped their adoption of the philosophy of restorative justice. From the experiences, two themes emerged: 'District and programmatic elements helped me' and 'The new policy is deflating and demoralizing.'

Conclusion

This chapter contains descriptions from the participants that relate directly to the research question and sub-questions addressed in this study. To describe how they define and conceptualize restorative justice and aligned approaches, the teachers used six concepts: relationships, respect, responsibility, repair, reintegration, and community. Relationship was the

predominant conception for restorative approaches used by the teachers during the interviews indicating the participants considered relationships to be the most important factor in the Restorative Approach program implemented at the school of study.

The section of this chapter titled *Findings: Process by which Teachers Adopted RA* presented findings related to the primary research question and two of the sub-questions. In all, five themes were identified in this section. The first three themes related directly to process. The first theme I described as ‘I already do this’ and is an amalgam of the participant descriptions of their process in adopting a restorative justice philosophy. The second theme I described as ‘RA provided me language for my beliefs and practices.’ This theme is similar to but distinct from the first theme. The third theme I described as ‘Introduce, Inform, Implement—the 3 I’s of adoption’ which describes the three-step process through which participants came to adopt and use restorative approaches in their work. The final two themes emerged from analyzing experiences teachers shared that affected the adoption process. The fourth theme I described as ‘District and programmatic elements helped me.’ The fifth theme I described as ‘The new policy is deflating and demoralizing.’

Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the findings from this qualitative, phenomenological research project. Discussion of the primary research question and each sub-question will be presented. Additionally, a brief discussion on other themes identified within the data that did not relate directly to the research question and sub-questions will be presented. The chapter will close with recommendations and implications for further study and concluding remarks.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological research was to, through the analysis of shared experiences, identify and describe the process through which teachers come to adopt a restorative justice philosophy and implement aligned approaches in their daily work lives. In completing this research, I conducted six semi-structured interviews with teachers who fit the criteria for participation. Through analysis of the transcripts five themes emerged from the data that were directly related to the primary research question and three sub-questions. In this chapter I will attempt to answer the primary research question and three sub-questions by discussing the identified themes. Due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews and the propensity for teachers to share reflections and stories, some of which were not directly related to the research question, other themes and essences of their experience with restorative justice emerged. Some of these will be discussed in a section of this chapter and others have been included in the discussion of other sections of the dissertation. I conclude with recommendations and implications for future research.

Primary Research Question

The primary research question states, “What experiences shape and guide the process through which teachers come to adopt and implement restorative justice and approaches in their work?” This question has two components that will be discussed. First, what process do teachers go through to adopt a restorative justice philosophy? Second, what process do teachers go through to implement the use of restorative approaches in their work? The first is a matter of philosophy while the second is a matter of practice.

Adopting a restorative justice philosophy. As mentioned in the findings in chapter 4, during analysis of the transcripts I identified 26 statements that related to the theme I described as ‘I already do this.’ The number of statements and strikingly similar descriptions made this a very strong theme that emerged from the research. As a result, this study failed to identify a process through which teachers come to adopt a restorative justice philosophy. The participants all said they came to hold the philosophy quite naturally, it fit a preexisting belief. They did not report or describe any experiences that would indicate they adopted the philosophy over a period of time or through a process.

I did not expect this theme to emerge. During the interviews and again when I transcribed the data, I was surprised to find none of the participants described a process for adopting a restorative justice philosophy. Mirsky (2007) wrote of the RJ implementation at Palisades High School. During the first year of implementation, school leadership sorted teachers into groups they called the “‘believers,’ the ‘fence sitters,’ and the ‘critics’” (p. 7). Administration strategically provided professional development to each group over a two-year period of time. The identification of “‘fence sitters’” and indication that some of these eventually became proponents of RA caused me to anticipate that at least some of the participants in this study would have initially been suspect of the RJ philosophy. This led me to believe that some of the participants in this study would, over a period of time and through some type of process, have come to accept and agree with the philosophy. I assumed I would hear stories that could be described as ‘I converted to RA.’

The lack of participants in the study who reported going through a process to adopt a restorative justice philosophy could result from a combination of a number of factors. Six participants, while a size that fits within the range common for qualitative research (Brinkmann

& Kvale, 2015; Creswell, 2013), is certainly a small sample size. If, from the population of teachers who agreed with the philosophy of restorative justice (RJ), the percent of teachers who were ‘believers’ was high, selection of six ‘believers’ and zero ‘fence-sitters’ was not unlikely. For example, if 80% of teachers who reported holding an RJ philosophy also described themselves as already having held that belief prior to being introduced to RJ, then there is approximately a 26% chance of selecting a sample with no ‘fence sitters.’

A second explanation could be there is not a group of ‘fence sitters.’ Each participant spoke of experiences with teachers who could be labeled as critics of restorative justice and who resisted the use of aligned approaches. However, none of the descriptions collected in the interviews fit the phrase ‘fence sitters.’ When describing other teachers, the participants’ descriptions only fit what I classified as adopters or critics. While it is possible a group of fence sitters existed at the school of study, the participants did not describe teachers in a way that caused me to use the label ‘fence sitters,’ did not describe ‘fence sitter’ traits, and did not describe a group of teachers as ‘fence sitters.’

A third explanation could be confusion over the interview questions, lack of understanding, or, in the moment, lack of ability to accurately reflect on their experiences. Perhaps the questions in the interview guide were not clear, the teacher did not understand what was being asked, or the teacher could not identify or articulate the steps and so described adoption as being ‘natural’ because that most easily fit his or her experience or philosophy.

A further possible explanation for this theme could be found in a combination of two interrelated factors. In his book, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, Michael Fullan (2001) addresses the problem he calls “false clarity” which can occur “when change is interpreted in an oversimplified way” (p. 77). In this study, it is possible the philosophy of RA

was communicated to teachers by the district in a simplified manner that led the teachers to feel like ‘I already believe this’ when in fact they do not have a clear or complete understanding of the philosophy. In the descriptions, the teachers’ primary focus of the Restorative Approaches program was to build the teacher-student relationship. While relationships are central to restorative justice, the philosophy as described originally by Braithwaite (1989) and Zehr (2003) relied on communitarianism and the strong influence community can exert on members through the use of shame. Only one teacher shared a story in which he appreciated restorative circles for allowing other students to exert pressure on misbehaving students to change their behavior—appreciation for a mild form of shame. Five of the six teachers said they only used restorative conversations and not circles. (Restorative conversations are conversations between the teacher and student which use the language and questions of RA.) Based on the data collected, the emphasis of the restorative justice program at this high school seemed to be on relationship building and not on community participation in a restorative process.

Further validating the potential for an oversimplified presentation of the RJ philosophy, Participant #2 commented, “To me it’s (RA) kind of like common sense. That’s why I said I am snarky at the beginning, because ... when we got this training I thought, ‘This is just what Westmont did.’” Ironically, I served on an independent advisory board for the credential program at Westmont. At a meeting of the board that directly preceded this research, the professors in the education department discussed adding restorative justice to their curriculum. While the credential program emphasized some of the R’s—relationship, respect, and responsibility to be sure—at the time of the publication of this dissertation, Westmont had not espoused a restorative justice philosophy. Here Participant #2 may have associated RJ with what

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she learned in her credential program and so may have come to a false clarity by quickly aligning two things that were disparate.

The second interrelated factor is the extent to which the teachers actually struggled with or worked to understand the philosophy of RA. Several factors could contribute to this potential pitfall. The training provided by the district could have been ineffective. Participant #3 commented,

I wouldn't say I learned a lot at the training. It was a district-run training and it wasn't an in-depth training where they went through all these different steps about it. We basically got the overview of what it is and why we are using it.

The district did not mandate training for all the teachers. Participant #4 said, "I never actually was formally trained. There definitely was formal training offered and teachers were allowed to sign up. I personally never chose to do that." When questioning administration, teachers were given an oversimplified or uninformed response when clarification was sought. Participant #1 said,

That was a question I asked my assistant principals and RA TOSAs. Do I need to do these peace circles? And they said, 'No, if you have that relationship with students, then don't worry about it. Those are tools for you to use.'

Some of the teachers expressed comfort with a certain level of ambiguity in their understanding of RA. Participant #2 said, "I definitely do not document every 'restorative conversation' with kids because, to me, that happens every day. What do you classify as a restorative conversation? It's hard to define that." Teachers were allowed great latitude in how they implemented RA in response to disciplinary issues in their classrooms. Participant #2 said, "At our site a lot of

responsibility [for discipline] goes to the teacher, which I like. Because I feel as though I'm equipped to handle those situations ... I feel like I can do whatever I want.”

When asked to describe the process by which they came to adopt a restorative justice philosophy, all six of the participants gave descriptions that I described as the first theme, ‘I already do this.’ These experiences can be further articulated by the statement, ‘I held a restorative justice philosophy prior to being introduced to it by the district.’ Thus, none of the teachers described going through a process to adopt a restorative justice philosophy. In this section, several possible reasons for the emergence of this theme were discussed.

Implementing the use of restorative approaches in the classroom. Two themes emerged from the transcript data that related to how teachers came to adopt and use restorative approaches (RA) in their classroom and work. The first of these two themes was described in chapter 4 as ‘RA provided me language for my beliefs.’ While only four participants gave a total of seven statements related to this theme, it is clear from the repeated use of language in district-created defining documents, specifically “The Foundational 5 R’s of RA,” that teachers used the language of RA to both describe and define RA and in their practice of RA in the classroom. In addition to the teacher comments on the language of RA helping them articulate their beliefs, several teachers commented specifically on using the 5 R’s in conversations as well as the “4 basic questions” of RA written by the district. (What happened? Who was harmed/affected? What part are you responsible for? How will the harm be repaired?) Clearly the language of RA helped the teachers articulate and implement the philosophy in their classrooms.

The second emergent theme for how the teachers implemented restorative approaches into their work was the process I described in chapter 4 as ‘Introduce, Inform, Implement— The 3 I’s of adoption.’ By amalgamating the descriptions of the teachers, these three steps emerged.

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Introduce, Inform, Implement provides a simple description of the process through which teachers adopted the use of restorative approaches and practices.

Introduce is a very short step during which teachers were first informed of the restorative justice philosophy and program. While this step may happen in a variety of settings, likely for most it was part of a district or school site meeting or training. Participant #1 articulated this as “the definition stage.” Participant #5 said he was, “exposed to this new idea.” Participant #6 described it as “putting something in front of you.” Participant #6 also used the question, “What is it?” to describe the introduce phase. Each of these passages contain the essence of an introduction, a step in which the teachers learned the ‘what’ of a Restorative Approaches program. The introduce step could be very short and could be coupled with the inform step.

Inform is the second step in the process in which the teachers received vital information that furthered their understanding of a Restorative Approaches (RA) program and gave specific knowledge of how aligned practices would be implemented. Participants did not give a clear indication of the timing of this step. It may have occurred in conjunction with the introduction step, it may have happened at a separate time, or it may be a combination of these in which, over a period of time, teachers were given further information that clarified how RA would be implemented. Most likely the inform step involved professional development. Participant #1 spoke of an “introduction to different strategies” step. Participant #2 described “two days’ worth of training and role playing and we had tough conversations about discipline.” Participant #6 described it as a stage when the following questions were answered: “How is it going to impact our classroom? How is it going to impact me? Is there stuff I’m going to do outside of school? Inside of school?” The inform step occurred when the teacher received professional development or other training that focused on restorative justice and aligned approaches.

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Implement describes the period of time in which teachers further developed their understanding of RA through trial and error; this was the hands-on learning phase of RA.

Participant #3 described this stage in the following statement:

I understood the concept right away. But my practice of it has improved and I would say that comes with teaching experience. The more you're using it, or the more you face challenging situations or situations where you intervene and say, 'Hey this is actually a great situation where we can practice some of these things,' that's where it's become easier. I've figured out how to make it a little more effective for me.

Participant #4 described this phase as “figuring out what you as a teacher could do yourself—what seemed feasible in the classroom. Over time you just kind of evolved into doing what worked for you.” The implement step has no defined length of time and can extend out for years as the teacher continues to use and develop more proficiency with using RA in the classroom.

From the interviews and descriptions of the teachers, clearly a process for adoption of RA practices in the classroom emerged. Through the descriptions, I identified the three general phases as Introduce, Inform, and Implement. This could also be expressed using the three words See, Think, and Use. This simple process is not a ground-breaking finding as it can easily describe any learning process. For example, it could be used to broadly describe the three steps followed in direct instruction—“I do it, we do it, you do it” (Kilbane & Milman, 2014, p. 87). Introduce could easily be described as the “I do” phase in which teachers are told of the program. Inform could be described as the “we do” phase in which teachers engage together in professional development. Implement could be described as the “you do” phase where private practice results in mastery.

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In this section describing the adoption of restorative approaches used in the classroom section, two themes emerged. First, the participants valued the language of RA and indicated the words and phrases the district used to describe RA helped them identify and describe their own beliefs. Further, RA provided them language to use with students in the classroom. Second, the participants described a three-step process in which they adopted the practices of restorative approaches. I assigned these steps the titles Introduce, Information, and Implement.

Research Sub-question #1

Research sub-question #1 states, “How do teachers define and conceptualize restorative justice and what do they self-report about how their understanding of restorative justice and approaches has changed over time?” This sub-question has two components to be discussed. The first relates to teachers’ definition and conceptualization of restorative justice. The second relates to changes in their understanding of restorative justice that occurred over time.

How teachers define and conceptualize restorative justice. In chapter 4, I described how the teachers defined and conceptualized restorative justice using the six words: relationships, respect, responsibility, repair, reintegration, and community. Most of the participating teachers completed district provided inservice training and received district-created posters and documents that contained these words and concepts. So, the frequent use of these keywords in the interviews was not surprising. The teachers spoke using the language they had been trained to use. In fact, it would be surprising if they defined or conceptualized RJ in ways incongruous to what the district espoused.

As identified in chapter 4, relationship emerged from the teacher descriptions as the most frequently used and definitive word conceptualizing restorative justice. Participant #3 provided the following statement exemplifying the RA-relationship connection:

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That revealed to me the relationship is the most ... important aspect. If I don't have a relationship with that student, then I'm not going to be able to talk about how do we respect each other and how do we repair the situation and restore and all of these different things.

For the participants, the best explanation for what restorative justice looked like was teachers establishing and maintaining strong relationships with students.

The literature review in chapter 2 traces the history of restorative justice as it spread from criminology into other fields. As noted in the original theory of restorative justice (RJ), use of communal shame was the primary means suggested to control behaviors of individuals. When RJ spread to education, shame seemed to be removed from the process and replaced with relationships. Shame was specifically discussed by McClusky, Lloyd, Stead et al. (2008). They stated, "This reliance on the notion of shame is so important to many influential writers in the field of restorative justice and underpins much of what has happened in schools as restorative justice develops into restorative practices that it is important to examine it more closely" (p. 205). Following their examination the authors conclude that shame "seems to be out of step with much current educational research" (p. 206) and later state, "In the life of schools relationships are central ... it is clear that notions of shame are not helpful," (p. 206-207) suggesting relationships may provide the foundational piece of a successful RJ program. Clearly, the implementation of RA in this district at this school site was in line with the recommendation of McClusky, Lloyd, Stead et al., the program was based on relationships.

In the interviews, teachers used the word shame or told stories related to shame only three times. In two of these instances shame was spoken of in a negative light. Participant #3 said, "Calling a student out in front of all their peers three times a day is not going to get you

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anywhere with that student.” In this statement, shame is portrayed as having a negative impact on the relationship with the student. Participant #2 said, “They’re going to feel shame and guilt for whatever they did wrong ... I think we are trying to dispel it [shame]. I think we are trying to teach them how to work through those feelings in a healthy manner.” In this statement, shame is portrayed to be unhealthy for the student and something the teacher and student must “work through” together. Shame was used once in a positive light when Participant #5 told of using a restorative circle to address unruly behavior in class: “I think that was super valuable for them to hear ... I was pretty impressed to hear them come out and say, ‘Oh, wasted my time’ ... everybody knows in that circle who we’re talking about but we’re not saying names.” In this story, the offending students were not named directly and so the shame was assigned implicitly, not explicitly. Thus, the offenders were shielded from direct shaming. Based on the interview data, shame was not part of teachers’ conceptualization of restorative justice at this school. Additionally, shame was not mentioned in district-distributed paperwork that described RA, further confirming shame was not an accepted part of the Restorative Approaches program implemented at this site.

The remaining four R’s— respect, responsibility, repair, and reintegration— were used by the teachers as they described restorative justice and aligned approaches, but not nearly to the same extent as relationship. While I identified 32 passages related to relationship, I identified 31 passages related to respect, responsibility, repair, and reintegration combined. Interestingly, reintegration was described in only four passages, by far the fewest of the six descriptors. As reintegration is a synonym for restoration, one would expect reintegration to emerge as a strong theme in how teachers define and conceptualize restorative justice. This was not the case. This paucity of use could be related to aspects of the implementation of RJ. Participant #1 said, “So, I

haven't actually done the official RA process yet. So, I've never had to do an RA circle or a formal RA meeting." Three other participants also said they do not use RA frequently. If the teachers had no need to use RA, they also had no need to reintegrate offenders. The infrequent use of reintegration could be related to the type of restorative approaches used by the teachers when they dealt with disciplinary issues. Most of the participants said they did not use restorative circles and instead only used restorative conferences. Because teachers primarily used RA in one-on-one settings, where the relational damage was likely between student and teacher, there may not have been a need for reintegration. If the teachers were frequent users of restorative circles, perhaps reintegration would have emerged as a stronger descriptor of restorative justice.

Community was the sixth theme within the definition or conceptualization identified from the transcripts. As noted in chapter 4, each of the three veteran teachers referenced community during their interviews. Seven of these eight references spoke directly of the value and importance of "building community" in the classroom. Only one directly connected community with RA. Braithwaite (1989) emphasized the importance of community to the theory of restorative justice. In fact, he said, "Individuals are more susceptible to shaming when they are enmeshed in multiple relationships; societies shame more effectively when they are communitarian" (p. 14). Braithwaite valued the formation of relationships. But unlike the sole focus on the teacher-student relationship in the RA implementation at the school of study, Braithwaite desired individuals to be "enmeshed in multiple relationships." Stated another way, he desired for each individual to be strongly connected in a web of community, a "communitarian" society (p. 14). While the veteran teachers in this study spoke of community, they did not describe the need for community to be a necessary component of the discipline

process nor did they espouse the philosophy of communitarianism. Their comments strictly related to the general value of building a strong community in a classroom. So, while community was a theme that emerged, it did not match the same type of community described by Braithwaite in his theory of restorative justice.

Teachers used “The Foundational 5 R’s of RA” and the concept of community to define and describe a restorative justice philosophy. The importance of relationships was clearly stated. While the concepts of shame and community were both mentioned in the interviews, these were not used in the district-guided implementation in the way described in the theory of restorative justice laid out by Braithwaite (1989). So, while the process the district implemented was called Restorative Approaches and relied on the restorative justice philosophy, it was not the philosophy articulated by Braithwaite and I would describe it as unique to this district and school site. Zehr’s (2003) comment was predictive of this outcome in school implementations:

Like all change efforts, as restorative justice has developed and spread, it has sometimes lost its way. With more and more programs being termed “restorative justice,” its meaning often has been diluted or confused. Under the inevitable pressures of working in the real world, restorative justice has sometimes been subtly co-opted or diverted from its principles. (p. 4)

Change over time in understanding of restorative justice. The second part of Research sub-question #1 asks teachers to describe “how their understanding of restorative justice and approaches has changed over time.” Interview question 1a) addressed this specific part of research sub-question #1: “How has your understanding and/or definition of restorative justice and practices evolved or changed since you were first introduced to it?” Knowing the theme ‘I already do this’ emerged strongly from the experiences of the participants, discovering

that none of the teachers reported their understanding of or agreement with the restorative justice philosophy changed over time should not cause surprise. RJ matched a preexisting belief and the teachers did not report questioning or changing that fundamental belief. Their practice of restorative approaches, however, did change. Participant #4 said, “And so over time, I think we’re four years in, my experience with restorative justice has evolved and in a good way.” Belief in the philosophy remained solid. Practice of the approaches evolved over time.

To summarize, the findings in this study as they relate to research sub-question #1 indicate the teachers relied heavily on district-written and published language when defining and conceptualizing restorative justice. The words relationships, respect, responsibility, repair, reintegration, and community are all used by teachers in their description and definition of RJ. Relationships emerged as the strongest of these words. The concepts of shame and communitarianism, foundational to the theory of restorative justice described by Braithwaite, were largely absent from the teachers’ descriptions indicating the school had implemented a version of RA that was unique to this district and community. Teachers did not indicate there was any change to their understanding of the philosophy of restorative justice over time.

Research Sub-question #2

Research Sub-question #2 states, “Through what process do teachers come to hold a belief in the value and efficacy of restorative justice and approaches? How do specific experiences with restorative justice or approaches affect this process?” This sub-question has two components each of which are addressed in the following two sections.

Process to develop a belief that restorative justice works. The first component of Research Sub-question #2 asks about the process through which teachers come to believe in the value and efficacy of restorative justice and approaches. This sub-question differs slightly from

the overarching research question in that it asks about a process to develop a belief that RJ works, while the overarching research question asks about the process of adoption. As I reported earlier, the teachers described a process by which they adopted the use of restorative approaches in their work. I described this process as ‘Introduce, Inform, Implement—the 3 I’s of adoption.’ Participant #4 said this the most succinctly, “There was a learning process ... for me.” But in statements describing how teachers learned to implement RA effectively, none of the teachers described a change in their belief or in the value and efficacy of restorative justice. None of the teachers waived in their belief that RJ works. Here again, the theme ‘I already do this’ likely derailed significant responses to this research sub-question. Teachers naturally identified with restorative justice. So, their fundamental belief in the philosophy of RJ did not change over time. As RJ matched their beliefs and what they had done in the past and they felt that what they had done in the past was successful, the participants had no reason to doubt restorative approaches would be successful.

Experiences that affected the adoption process. All educators love the “ah-ha” moment—the point when a student makes a leap forward in understanding. If teachers go through a process to adopt a restorative justice philosophy, then it is natural to think there may be specific experiences that served as markers in the adoption process. During the interviews, teachers shared experiences that provided both encouragement and discouragement in their process of adopting restorative approaches in the classroom. This section identifies experiences that impacted the adoption process in either negative or positive ways.

As described in chapter 4, because a new disciplinary program was implemented with restorative justice and aligned approaches teachers could have experienced three adoption processes: adoption of a restorative justice philosophy, adoption of restorative approaches and

practices used in the classroom, and adoption of the new district disciplinary policy. The experiences and reflections teachers shared during the interviews shed light on each of these three adoptive processes.

The participants had no response to questions asking them to describe experiences that influenced their adoption of a restorative justice philosophy. Because ‘I already do this’ was a strong theme that emerged related to the process by which teachers adopted a restorative justice philosophy, the absence of an adoptive process was not surprising. Participants all expressed a pre-existing belief in restorative justice. They had no experiences to share about that philosophy being strengthened, challenged, altered, cast off, or any other similar descriptor. The absence of these experiences adds evidence to the veracity of the pre-existing belief in the philosophy of restorative justice.

Teachers described elements of the restorative justice implementation that helped them in their process of adopting the use of restorative approaches in their classrooms. Participant #6 was invited to assist other teachers with RA. This increased his motivation to read district-provided research and become knowledgeable on the process. Shared leadership motivated him. Most of the participants expressed appreciation for the district-created pamphlets, posters, and guides disseminated to school sites. These documents provided language for the teachers and students to use in their restorative conversations and helped clarify the RA process. Identifying a teacher who became the resident ‘expert’ on RA provided valued support and promoted the development of the restorative justice program on campus. While a few participants shared negative experiences related to professional development, most said the professional development, conferences, and trips to Denver furthered their understanding of a Restorative

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Approaches program. As reported, the theme ‘District and programmatic elements helped me’ emerged from the data.

Teachers also described elements of the restorative justice implementation that made them question the new program. The new district discipline policy was seen as a way to eliminate suspensions and expulsions. The complexity of the new policy and the time-consuming work required to go through all three steps of the policy made some teachers feel like administrators were saying, “Woo-hooo, we’re not dealing with these discipline issues anymore, it’s all on the teachers!” (Quoted from the transcript of Participant #4.) Teachers also felt like the RA program was a front for changing district disciplinary data. Participant #4 said,

One of our administrators said, “Yeah, the numbers (suspension and expulsion) are awesome! Such a huge difference.” Well, that’s because teachers no longer could send a kid out for a minute. Something that was disrespectful in the classroom used to be a class suspension. Teachers were directed to no longer handle situations in that way.

While these feelings did not shake her confidence in the restorative justice philosophy, it certainly made her question the integrity of the program and administration. One hopes, through implementation of a restorative justice program, students will become better people. By students becoming better people, administrators will not need to suspend or expel students. In this study, two of the participants attributed the decline in district suspension and expulsion rates to the discipline policy and not to the effect wrought by the new Restorative Approaches program. None of the participants said the use of restorative approaches in their classroom decreased the number of students they recommended for suspension or expulsion.

In addition to the change in policy that resulted in making a suspension or expulsion next to impossible, a few other implementation decisions frustrated the participants. Two participants

used the phrase “top-down” to indicate a non-collaborative implementation style. This shared experience highlighted the need for district personnel to follow one of the restorative words mentioned earlier—*with*—and to stay away from another—*to*; a few participants felt the district did not work with them in the implementation. Lack of consequences for misbehaving students discouraged some of the teachers who did not view a restorative conversation as punishment. They felt taken advantage of by students who were seemingly not punished for misbehavior. Further, a few felt the lack of a significant consequence led other students to mimic poor behavior because they could ‘get away with it.’ Finally, when leadership does not provide vision or direction for those in mid-level leadership, a resource is wasted and may result in a loss of momentum and commitment to the change effort. As reported, the theme ‘The new policy is deflating and demoralizing’ emerged from the data.

Research Sub-question #3

Research Sub-question #2 states, “As teachers come to adopt a restorative philosophy, how has their enactment of restorative justice in their classrooms changed or remained the same?” This sub-question has a single focus— to identify a change in practice or implementation of restorative approaches. No theme related to this sub-question was discussed in chapter 4 owing to a dearth of evidence. Three of the participants echoed the comments of Participant #1 when he said, “You know, it (my practice of RA) hasn’t changed much. I think it (RA) helped me identify the fact that I have a philosophy.” Participant #5 took the restorative circle and incorporated it into his instructional practice, stating “The more I learned about restorative approaches, the form was all about discussion and talking about things. That was something I was able to implement in my classroom which I thought was pretty cool.” Participant #4 indicated she has grown in her use of RA but did not indicate in what ways. In her

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interview, Participant #3 provided several statements about change in her use of RA in the classroom:

- Participant #3: I feel now that I don't have the issues with the relationships. I don't want to say I have it down because I don't think I do. But, I'm just more creative in figuring out how to establish those relationships and it takes extra work.
- Participant #3: I don't know if I would say I was advanced but I would say I'm bought in. I was bought in but now I'm bought in and practicing. So whereas before I think I was bought in but I really didn't understand [the] idea. But I didn't really know how to get it [RA] into the classroom effectively and naturally.
- Participant #3: In the past I might say, "Seriously, is this all you can do?" Now I try to figure out how I can approach it in a way that's going to get a response that I want. I give a little more compassion and grace and then I can push them a little bit more. They're willing to be pushed. And they understand that, okay yeah, I can do better than what I'm doing.

Clearly Participant #3 made significant progress in her enactment of restorative justice. Not only did she recognize the growth, she articulated ways in which she grew and admitted she has room for further growth. Through improving her ability to form strong relationships, she felt she was able to push students to a higher level of involvement and engagement.

The lack of a common theme emerging from sub-question #3 is not surprising. A large number of themes could emerge from the sub-question and the small sample size may not have allowed for repeated codes and identifiable themes to emerge. Enacting restorative approaches is a multifaceted undertaking and the experiences through which one teacher grows could be vastly

different from the experiences of another. Additionally, growth requires use. Three teachers said they either don't use or infrequently use RA. None of these teachers shared experiences related to growth in their ability to use restorative approaches in the classroom. Each of the three teachers who shared experiences related to growth in their ability to use RA taught non-honors and non-AP courses. Likely these teachers had much greater need and use for RA as in the study several teachers mentioned differences between college preparatory and honors/AP students. Based on the accounts of the teachers, Participant #3 taught the most 'at-risk' students and her transcript contained the largest number of passages related to growth in her ability to use restorative approaches (six passages). She seemed to engage with RA much more deeply than the other participants. As only three teachers regularly used RA and there are a number of ways in which enactment could change, I was not surprised a theme related to sub-question #3 did not emerge from the data.

Other Themes Identified in the Research

Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) described a semi-structured interview approach as "neither an open everyday conversation nor a closed questionnaire" (p. 31). Likely due to the semi-structured approach, in addition to reflecting on restorative justice and aligned approaches, teachers shared thoughts and experiences on a wide range of educational topics. Several themes not related to the primary research question and three sub-questions emerged from analysis of the data. Some of these themes were already mentioned in other parts of this study. In the next few paragraphs, I briefly identify and discuss a few emergent themes that are germane to the adoption and implementation of a restorative justice philosophy and aligned approaches. I selected themes that describe commonalities among the participants, hoping these may help administrators identify teachers who naturally hold a restorative justice mindset.

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For five of the six participants, teaching academic content was of secondary importance to teaching values, building relational skills, and creating community—outcomes associated with the use of restorative approaches. I describe this theme as ‘Relationships over content.’ The following statement by Participant #1 is indicative of the comments within this theme: “I think skills in relationship building is over content any day.” The participating teachers described non-RA-adopting teachers as differing from them in this. Participant #1 said, “There are some teachers who don’t agree with it [RA] who say, ‘I’m here to teach you. It doesn’t matter if you like me or not.’” Participant #2 said, “It’s an old-school mentality ... this is school, this is what you are supposed to do, it’s only about academics.” Participant #5 said, “The whole reason I went into teaching was because I enjoyed interaction with students. It’s funny, sometimes you see teachers and wonder, ‘Hey, do you even like students?’” Participants placed a high value on teaching things like relational skills and building character and perceived some non-adopters as interested only in academics.

All six of the participants expressed appreciation for the flexibility to make decisions about discipline based on the context and circumstances of the incident. I describe this theme as ‘Context matters.’ Participant #2 said discipline involves, “taking in the whole context and being able to discern what’s going to be most helpful for that student in that moment.” Participant #3 said, “I don’t know if there is a sole disciplinary process. I think you have to be creative with your discipline and figure out what works with that student.” Participant #6 stated,

Just sticking a kid in detention or in Saturday School is not really getting to the root of the problem. It’s just kind of punishment without understanding what’s going on. I’ve had students who have some really horrible things going on in their lives. Through

talking to them you think, ‘Wow, I’m surprised you’re even at school today ... how did you make it to school?’

The participants valued the ability to decide what was best for each student in each situation based on the circumstances. Some of the participating teachers described non-adopting teachers as being more rigid in their discipline. Participant #5 said, “I would say the difference is that I would be a lot more open to dialogue with students. But they are just all about hard-line discipline. Black and white. Get this kid out of my class.” In analyzing the transcripts it is unclear if this desire to have flexibility in discipline pre-existed the implementation of restorative justice or if it has resulted from the implementation. Regardless, participating teachers clearly appreciated the ability to make disciplinary decisions based on context and some described non-adopters as being very “black and white” in their disciplinary approach. For the participants, the theme ‘Context matters’ emerged.

While participating teachers felt consequences to misbehavior are important and that restorative justice must have a punitive component for extreme situations, generally they believed that punishment is not effective for creating change in the student. I describe this third theme as ‘Punishment does not bring about learning.’ Participant #3 said, “My option of assigning you detention or referring you to administration is not going to change your behavior. You’re going to have to go through some steps in order to actually change what you are doing.” Participant #2 shared a story from her own experience as a student, “One time a math teacher gave me a detention for being tardy. And I lost it! To me, it didn’t really teach me anything. It actually made me hate math.” These statements describe the theme ‘Punishment does not bring about learning’ which emerged from the participants.

Three themes emerged from the analysis of the transcripts that are related to a restorative justice philosophy but did not directly relate to the research question and sub-questions. These three themes describe commonalities amongst the participants and may be common amongst all teachers who have adopted a restorative justice philosophy. The participants did not indicate if these beliefs preexisted the implementation of the restorative justice program. The three themes were ‘Relationships over content,’ ‘Context matters,’ and ‘Punishment does not bring about learning.’ Each of these themes express a core principle or belief which I think describe ‘believers’ and do not describe ‘critics’ of restorative justice. Even though they did not help answer the research questions, I included these three themes because I felt the information could be significant for a reader who wants to benefit from the data beyond the research questions I chose for this study. It may be these three themes help describe teachers who naturally hold a restorative justice philosophy or these themes may be present in the teacher culture of a school in which teachers are bought into a restorative justice program.

Implications and Recommendations for Further Study

In the process of conducting this phenomenological research project, I identified areas for further study and conclusions drawn from the analysis. Some of the areas of study pertain directly to this research and others to further research within the area restorative justice and aligned approaches. In this section I first describe the implications that emerged from this study and then make recommendations for others considering research in this field.

Implications from this study. Educational research should benefit educational practitioners. Thus, I will discuss the implications that I believe emerged from this study. I hope these conclusions will be of help to practitioners who want to apply restorative approaches.

Based on the experiences of participants, it is clear some teachers naturally hold a philosophy that aligns with restorative justice. The theme ‘I already do this’ emerged strongly in the analysis. In addition, the teachers appreciated that ‘RA provided me language for my beliefs,’ which also emerged as a theme. Taken together, these indicate some number of teachers will naturally support a restorative justice program at their school. Teachers may not be able to articulate their own personal philosophy, and so might appreciate the language RA provides them. When implementing a restorative justice program, clear communication of the foundational principles related to the restorative justice philosophy on which the program will be based is critical. Seeking out and recruiting those who naturally align with the philosophy will encourage use and acceptance.

The goal of this dissertation was to study process. Because the participants all naturally agreed with restorative justice philosophy, a description of the process for adoption of the philosophy did not emerge. But the teachers did describe an adoption process for the use of restorative approaches. This was summarized in the theme ‘Introduce, Inform, Implement—the 3 I’s of adoption.’ Use of this simple, three-step process may prove beneficial when implementing a restorative justice program.

The participants valued support from co-teachers, the district teacher on special assignment, administration, and others they identified as experienced or knowledgeable in the use of restorative approaches. Ongoing support from experts was critical to the continued growth of the teachers. This research and that of others (e.g., Mayworm et al., 2016) continues to support the need maintain funding for specialists and the restorative justice program.

The manner in which the new discipline policy was implemented at the school of study resulted in the emergence of the theme ‘The new policy is deflating and demoralizing.’ Several

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participants described a top-down implementation style that did not positively influence their experience. While this did not affect their beliefs, it certainly affected them. Participant #3 said of the implementation, “[It] was extremely destructive to faculty morale. Worst in twenty years of teaching. Never had such a horrible, awful experience.” Top-down approaches do not align with a restorative philosophy which emphasizes doing things ‘with’ others as opposed to ‘to’ others. Care should be given to planning and executing the implementation of a restorative justice program. Policies and principles created and used by leadership should align with a restorative justice philosophy.

That five of the six teachers voiced the ‘relationships over content’ theme in their interviews may indicate teachers naturally drawn to restorative justice place a high value in character development. The participants also expressed value in flexibility to interpret rules based on context and believed punishment does not promote personal growth. Ritzer (2013) suggests that real, meaningful experiences are most likely to result when “skilled human beings who practice their crafts relatively unconstrained by external controls” (p. 144) are involved. Teachers have the primary relationship with the student; it is important to provide them with the flexibility to make decisions on content and discipline in their classrooms. This may well result in the best form of restorative justice: one that emphasizes community and humanity.

While not reported as a theme in chapter 4 or 5, restorative justice could be seen to require a shift in who primarily provides discipline on campus. In this study, the participants recognized that the primary role for discipline shifted from the principal to the teachers. Restorative justice theory emphasizes the importance of relationships and community. Shifting the primary responsibility for discipline from the principal to teachers seems to be in line with this theory and may be a theme in studies conducted in other schools and districts.

This section discussed implications arising from the study. There were several conclusions directly related to the primary research question and sub-questions. Some teachers will feel a natural, pre-existent agreement with restorative justice philosophy. Care should be taken to fully articulate the philosophy of restorative justice so teachers do not co-opt the language without embracing the belief. Through analysis a process for implementing restorative practices emerged. School leaders choosing to implement restorative justice programs should carefully and strategically plan prior to initiating the program. Generally top-down approaches are not favorable and do not align with a restorative philosophy. In the next section I present recommendations for further research that came to light while completing this study.

Recommendations based on this study. This study utilized the perspectives of six teachers who agreed with a restorative justice philosophy and met a set of criteria listed in chapter 2. By altering the selection criteria in specific ways to guide further research, fruitful data could result. For example, one limitation of this study was that it included only one math teacher and no science teachers. Replicating this study with a more balanced mix of subject areas could yield a richer data set. My goal was to identify a process by which a restorative justice philosophy was adopted. Because all six participants said restorative justice matched a preexisting belief, an adoption process did not emerge. Establishing a criterion that requires participants to have ‘converted’ to restorative justice would likely result in data that contained a description of the adoption process. After experiencing the interviews, I can imagine that a replication of the study with a combination of more focused questions, more participants, for a shorter amount of time may provide more targeted data that could yield richer evidence and allow for more thoroughly articulated themes.

Recommendations beyond this study. As described in the literature review, multiple authors in this field suggest the exact form of restorative justice will change based on the community and culture in which it is adopted (e.g. Zehr, 2003). I recommend this study be replicated in other settings that may differ in significant ways from the community in which this study was conducted. As America is one of the most individualistic societies in the world, it is unlikely any implementation done here will have a truly communal foundation. The restorative justice implemented in this school relied on relationships and did not use shame to motivate students to choose acceptable behaviors. A school considering this study should reflect on their own community and values when interpreting the findings. When significant or influential cultural differences exist, I recommend a similar study be conducted.

The literature mentions a group of “critics” (Mirsky, 2007, p. 7) who naturally disagree with the philosophy of RJ and resist use of aligned approaches. Each participant in this study mentioned other individuals who broadly fit the “critic” moniker on their campus, giving further support to the existence of this sub-group of teachers. In my review of the literature, little understanding of the defining characteristics of this sub-group was present. Developing further knowledge of critics will be of value to school leaders implementing restorative justice programs. I recommend future research alongside teachers who are less enthusiastic of restorative justice and related approaches.

In line with Fronius et al. (2016) and others, I recommend rigorous quantitative studies be conducted to verify the impact of restorative justice programs on discipline and disciplinary outcomes. From the perspective of teachers in this study, the reduction in suspensions and expulsions at the school site resulted from the change in the district discipline policy and not from the use of restorative approaches in the classroom. Table 1 in chapter 3 reports suspension

and expulsion data for the school of study, district of study, and the state. The restorative justice program was implemented between the two reported years. After implementation, both the suspension and expulsion rates decreased at the school of study and within the district. Because the discipline policy was changed with the introduction of the restorative justice program, the reductions in exclusionary data are most likely not solely attributable to Restorative Approaches program. Further complicating the issue, suspension and expulsion rates in the state also declined. On January 1, 2015, California Assembly Bill 420 went into effect. The bill placed restrictions on schools and districts and was intended to reduce suspensions and expulsions (Frey, 2014). This legislation further confounds the results in the suspension and expulsion data.

To further highlight the need for further rigorous research, a few comments regarding implementation and direct attribution of outcomes to the use of restorative approaches is in order. The literature review included many articles that reported very positive results from schools that had implemented a restorative justice program. In the vast majority of articles, the positive outcome and the restorative justice implementation could be described as correlational and not causal. The restorative justice program cannot be said to have caused the outcome. For example, schools implementing restorative justice programs have reported decreases in suspensions and expulsions. These reductions in exclusions could be caused by the implementation of policies that changed or limited the ability of the teacher or principal to use these consequences. In her study that used a Critical Race Theory approach to research, Wadhwa (2010) reported Denver Public Schools (DPS) hired Joseph Rogers to be “in charge of discipline for the district” (p. 23). Wadhwa later explained the district “recruited Rogers ... with the intention of reducing the number of students who were being suspended and expelled” (p. 23). She went on to quote Rogers as having said, “We as an urban district are pushing far too

many kids out and we can do a better job with them” (p. 23). These statements imply Rogers was hired to reduce suspensions and expulsions and he believed students were excluded too frequently. A district that gives their top disciplinarian a directive to reduce exclusions will likely see a reduction in exclusions regardless of the implementation of a restorative justice program.

In a second example of how restorative justice can be confounded with other factors, reduction in exclusions could be caused by simultaneous implementation of other behavioral programs. Anyon et al. (2016) noted in an effort to change disciplinary outcomes, the Denver Public Schools decided to “increase alternative programs such as RI” (p. 1670). If restorative interventions are one of several approaches implemented concurrently, the positive results reported from school sites cannot be directly attributed to RI.

Another example could be the positive results were caused by changes within the school population that coincided with the implementation of a restorative justice program. As part of an effort to change the culture of their school, “Brennan-Rogers (CT) became a magnet school for technology and communications” (Dubin, 2015, p. 20) and implemented a restorative justice program. The school reported positive results. However, demographic data was not reported in the article describing the turn-around. Adding a technology program could bring a different type of student to the school. This could account for changes in test scores and improved disciplinary data. Mirsky (2007) noted in her article “many teachers retired” (p 8) indicating many of the teachers who were resistant to a restorative justice approach to discipline simply resigned their positions. Retirement and transfer of teachers could easily cause changes in student disciplinary data and lead to positive results.

Finally, the Hawthorne effect could be a part of any change observed in the implementation of a Restorative Approaches program (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1961). In a famous study conducted at a Western Electric factory between 1924 and 1932, researchers determined the productivity of workers increased because participants were being studied (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1961). An increase in productivity resulting from close observation is famously called the Hawthorne effect. By starting a new program, monitoring progress, paying attention to students, and reporting findings, the behavior of students may change simply because of the new level of attention given to their behavior. A positive result may be caused by closer scrutiny rather than the newly implemented disciplinary program. The positive results reported by schools should be carefully examined before they are attributed to a new disciplinary policy. A decrease in suspensions or expulsions may be related to any of the four factors described here. Results should be read with caution and carefully considered.

Conclusion

The results of this qualitative phenomenological research study reveal the experiences of teachers who had adopted a restorative justice (RJ) philosophy and used aligned restorative approaches in their classroom and work. The goal of this research was to study process; specifically, the process by which teachers came to adopt a restorative justice philosophy and the process by which they came to adopt the use of restorative approaches in their classroom. In seeking to articulate these processes, how teachers defined and conceptualized restorative justice, how experiences affected the adoption process, and how their experience with and philosophy of RJ changed over time were also addressed. Six teachers who worked at the same high school and fit a set of criteria shared their experiences with restorative justice as it related to the goal of this study. Five themes emerged from their experiences. I titled the themes, 'I already do this,'

‘RA provided me language for my beliefs and practices,’ ‘Introduce, Inform, Implement—the 3 I’s of Adoption,’ ‘District and programmatic elements helped me implement restorative approaches in my classroom,’ and ‘The new policy is deflating and demoralizing.’ In line with the ‘I already do this’ theme, no process for adoption of a restorative justice philosophy was articulated; all six participants said they naturally agreed with a restorative justice philosophy from the outset. The participants described the adoption process for the use of restorative approaches in their classrooms. Based on their experiences, I articulated the process as having three steps: Introduce, Inform, and Implement. The teacher’s definition and conceptualization of restorative justice largely fit the district adopted slogan “The Foundational 5 R’s of RA” — relationships, respect, responsibility, repair, and reintegration—and a sixth concept, community. In this implementation of restorative justice, relationship was the foundation of the RA program and was a primary focus for all six teachers. A few select experiences that both promoted and discouraged the adoption of restorative approaches were discussed as well as themes outside of the scope of the research. In addition, implications and suggestions for future research were given.

In this study, I sought to identify a process by which teachers came to adopt a restorative justice mindset. In the process, I discovered both more and less than I expected. J.R.R. Tolkien (1966) once wrote, “You certainly usually find something if you look, but it is not always quite the something you were after” (p. 68). In this study, I shared in the experience of many, including the fictional character Bilbo Baggins. In that story, he found goblins and adventure. I found no goblins but certainly had an adventure. Articulation of an adoption process for a restorative justice philosophy was not found, but in the end, I found so much more.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SCHOOL SITE LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Dr. Birky,

This is to inform you that I have reviewed the participant letter of consent and personal interview guide questions designed by Tim Loomer for his doctoral research project. I understand the interview procedures were prepared to maintain the confidentiality of the teachers who will be involved in this study and that the findings from this study will maintain the anonymity of all participants, including the teachers, school site, and district. We look forward to learning the results of the study. I approve Tim Loomer to work on this project with teachers at our school site.

Sincerely,

<Signature of Principal>

Principal

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

Dear <NAME OF PARTICIPANT>,

My name is Tim Loomer and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Leadership at George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon. I am conducting research on the experiences of high school teachers who have come to adopt a restorative justice mindset and use aligned approaches within their classrooms. You are invited to participate in a 45 to 60 minute personal interview regarding your experiences with restorative approaches over the past few years.

While the research will be used to prepare a doctoral dissertation, the findings will add to the overall knowledge of restorative justice as implemented in secondary schools and may be of benefit to other teachers who work in schools and districts adopting programs and policies of this nature. The risks associated with this research are minimal. Your participation is voluntary and during the interview you may decline to answer any question at your discretion. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty or hard feelings.

The results of the study will be used for research purposes and may be presented at professional conferences and/or academic publications. Personal interviews will be audio recorded and later transcribed. Information will be analyzed and presented in an anonymous fashion. No individual participant or school site will be identified by name. I will keep any and all personal information and identities completely confidential. All research materials collected during the research process (i.e., audio recordings, transcriptions, and signed consent forms) will

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be locked in a secure location for a period of no less than three years. I will be the only individual who will have access to these materials. After three years, I will personally destroy all relevant materials and delete the audio recordings.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at 805.320.8830 or you may also reach me by e-mail at tloomer14@georgefox.edu. If you have any further questions, you may contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Ginny Birky, at gbirky@georgefox.edu or 503.554.2854.

Sincerely,

Tim Loomer

George Fox University

Doctoral Candidate

If you understand the use of this research and agree to participate, please sign below.

Participant signature: _____

Researcher signature: _____

APPENDIX C

PERSONAL INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS

1. How do you define, conceptualize, articulate, describe, or explain restorative justice?

What do you think it means or is? What does it mean to you?

- a. How has your understanding and/or definition of restorative justice and practices evolved or changed since you were first introduced to it?
 - b. How do you view restorative approaches? Are these simply a philosophy or another tool in the tool-belt of an effective teacher? Explain.
 - c. Talk about your belief as to whether restorative approaches can be used as the sole disciplinary process or if they must be used in combination with other approaches.
2. What has the process of adoption and implementation of RA been like for you? Can you share some of your experiences with this journey?
 - a. To what extent were you open to restorative practices when you first were introduced to the concept? Did the approach and philosophy seem to fit your natural approach to students and discipline or was there a period of adjusting? Explain.
 - b. To what extent did the opinions or perspectives (verbal or nonverbal) of other teachers or school site personnel influence your adoption of RAs?
 - c. What encouragement or discouragement did you receive or experience while adjusting and becoming accustomed to using restorative approaches? This could be personal, from colleagues, or other sources. Were there any speed bumps or

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spike strips in your journey? Were there any accelerants in your journey?

Explain.

- d. To what extent have you influenced others in using restorative approaches or agreeing with the philosophy?
 - e. Were there any clear, identifiable stages in your adoption process? If you were to give titles to the stages you went through in the adoption process, what would call them and why?
 - f. Have any experiences or distinct periods of time caused you to waiver in your belief in restorative justice or your use of restorative approaches? If yes, what brought you back or what helped you work through that experience or time? Can you identify any specific experiences that helped in the process you have gone through? Were there any “aha” or “water-shed” moments where you made a significant jump in either your understanding of or agreement with restorative justice and approaches? Share.
3. Describe the use of RA in your classroom.
- a. What does RJ look like in your classroom?
 - b. How has using restorative approaches affected your belief in or confidence in the value and efficacy of restorative approaches?
 - c. How has your use of restorative approaches changed or affected your understanding of or agreement with restorative justice or approaches?
4. As we conclude this interview, are there any thoughts, comments, or stories related to restorative justice and approaches you would like to share with me that may further express your beliefs and experiences?

APPENDIX D

IRB APPROVAL FORM



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May 18, 2017

Mr. Tim Loomer
Ed.D. Candidate
George Fox University

Dear Mr. Loomer,

This letter is to inform you that as a representative of the GFU Institutional Review Board I have reviewed your proposal for research investigation entitled "How Teachers Who Use Restorative Approaches Come to Adopt a Restorative Justice Mindset: A Phenomenological Study of Process." The proposed study meets all ethical requirements for research with human participants. The proposal is approved.

Best wishes as you complete your research investigation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terry Huffman".

Terry Huffman, Ph.D.
Professor of Education