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RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRACTICES IN EDUCATION: A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF SUSPENSION RATES AT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL

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A Project

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

in

Counseling and Guidance

_____

by

Barbara Katic

June 2017

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ABSTRACT

The negative effects of retributive disciplinary measures in school settings are well documented. Exclusionary practices, such as suspensions, position students on the school-to-prison pipeline, perpetuating a cycle of failure. Restorative justice practices in educational settings provide an alternative to the retributive approach to student discipline. In this research study, a middle school in California was examined for its implementation of restorative justice practices. Numerical data pertaining to a five-year suspension history report for the school were utilized for the quantitative analyses, and four individual chi-square goodness of fit tests were conducted. The results demonstrated that the implementation of restorative justice played a significant role in the declining student suspensions across school years. It was found that the introduction of restorative practices to the middle school played a role in creating an inclusive school environment, with student suspensions having been applied to a lower proportion of African American and Hispanic students from pre-implementation of restorative justice to post-implementation. Through the use of a restorative framework, students may learn how to solve problems and repair relationships in school and life events, rather than being placed on the school-to-prison pipeline.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Restorative Justice as an Alternative to Retributive Justice

Restorative justice provides an alternative framework to the traditional American criminal justice system for resolving conflict. The current criminal justice system is built upon retributive justice, which focuses on determining the appropriate punishment for those who have committed the offense. Offenders are dealt with in courts, where "dispassionate third parties" (individuals considered free of bias and emotion for the situation at hand) make decisions on how to move forward based on a standard set of laws and regulations (Drewery, 2004, p. 334). The individuals involved in the decision-making process are considered to be detached from the situation itself. The harm done is considered as an offense against the state, or in this case the school, and each unique case is held against a uniform standard to ensure "fairness" (Drewery, 2004, p. 334). Although the criminal justice system seeks to be fair, there is the perception that it "consistently fails to take into account the needs of offenders, victims, and their communities" (Ward & Langlands, 2009, p.205).

Some of the key differences between traditional criminal justice and restorative justice include: (1) restorative justice views crime as a violation of people and relationships, rather than a violation of the law and state; (2) these violations create obligations, rather than guilt; and (3) criminal justice aims to

determine who is at fault with a punishment to follow, while restorative justice

aims to repair the harm done by actively including victims, offenders, and the

community (Zehr et al., 2015, p.32). Howard Zehr emphasizes differences

between the retributive understanding of justice and the restorative

understanding of justice in his book, *Changing Lenses: Restorative Justice for

our Times* (Zehr, 2015). He explains that a shift towards restorative justice not

only involves a change in laws and regulations, but it requires a complete shift in

how we view and perceive crime as human beings. Zehr argues that we need to

change the *lens* through which we view crime and justice, and that this lens is "a

particular construction of reality, a paradigm" (Zehr, 2015, p. 97). A paradigm

shift is thus needed in order to move towards restorative practices. In order to

change the lens through which we view crime and justice, it is critical to examine

how a restorative lens differs from a retributive one.

Viewing crime and justice through a retributive lens means that we would

seek to place blame on individuals, particularly onto the offenders. These

individuals should be required to assuage their guilt by paying in some way for

their misdeeds. If we were shift our lens to a restorative view on crime, we would

shift away from "blame-fixing", and move towards "problem-solving" (Zehr, 2015,

p.212). One way the restorative justice process does this is through the focus on

repairing human relationships. Restoring relationships is a key focus of

restorative justice (Saulnier & Sivasubramaniam, 2015). In the criminal justice

system, there is the perception that the needs of those affected by the situation

are not given an adequate voice (Ward & Langlands, 2009, p.205). Rather than focus on the needs of the victim, criminal justice focuses on the punishment of the offender (Zehr, 2015, p.212). The criminal justice system is in this way centralized on distributing blame and assigning consequences to the offenders involved (Zehr, 2015). Alternatively, restorative justice focuses on offenses as damaging relationships more than as an affront to the rules laid down by the authorities. Restorative justice aims to address the needs of victims, offenders, and communities, through the rebuilding and transforming of relationships – not only between the offender and victim – but also within the community that was harmed. Restorative justice provides a response to conflict that "sets out to heal fractured communities rather than simply punishing and dispatching offenders to prisons" (Ward & Langlands, 2009, p.206).

Restorative justice is more future-oriented (with a focus on healing communities), while retributive justice tends to be past-oriented (with a focus on punishment for past actions) (Zehr, 2015, p.212). For example, suspending a student from school, a retributive approach, focuses on their past behaviors, with punishment being distributed for his/her future. A restorative approach would take into consideration the relationships that have been harmed (whether it be with teachers or peers), how to put things right, and would aim to include the student in the school community during the process. While the past is not ignored, an orientation towards the future opens up a pathway for the student

(the offender, in this case) to be accepted back into the school community,

therefore increasing his/her chances at success in the future.

In educational settings, the retributive approach to discipline is often

applied to student misconduct. For example, in K-12 schools in California, a

student may be suspended from school after engaging in an act that broke a set

of rules, and/or caused some type of harm to the school community. An off-

campus suspension would mean that the student would be excluded from the

school community for a particular set amount of time. Alternatively, a restorative

approach would aim to include students in the school community, even after

harm was done. A transformation towards restorative justice would shift schools

away from "social control" towards "social engagement" (Payne & Welch, 2015,

p. 558). The school community would learn to communicate the needs of those

involved, and the offender would be encouraged to take accountability for harm

caused (Evans & Vaandering, 2016, p.10).

<center>Restorative Justice in Education</center>

Across the United States, various K-12 schools are beginning to shift

away from a retributive approach to discipline, towards a more restorative one

(Gonzalez, 2012). However, data on the success of restorative justice programs

in education, particularly in the state of California, is limited. In order for

restorative justice to be successfully implemented into school districts, the

process of restorative justice must be seen as a philosophy to be adopted by the

<center>4</center>

educational system as a whole, rather than a set of techniques used to modify delinquent behavior (Payne & Welch, 2015). Evans & Vaandering (2016) define *restorative justice in education* as, "Facilitating learning communities that nurture the capacity of people to engage with one another and their environment in a manner that supports and respects the inherent dignity and worth of all" (p. 8).

There are three necessary components to creating restorative school cultures: (1) creating just and equitable learning environments, (2) nurturing healthy relationships, and (3) repairing harm and transforming conflict (Evans & Vaandering, 2016, p. 9-10). First, creating just and equitable learning environments may be linked to Howard Zehr's conceptualization of restorative justice, as he emphasized that the restorative practices must be inclusive (Zehr, 2015). In order to create an inclusive school environment, each student and/or member of the school community must be treated with respect, regardless of race, gender, religion, and so forth. Secondly, restoring relationships is a key factor in the restorative justice process. Within a school setting, these relationships may include student-student, teacher-student, or parent-teacher relationships. And third, repairing harm and transforming conflict within school communities are central to the concept of restorative justice in education. Rather than exclude students from the community after conflict occurs, restorative practices give voice to all parties involved, with the intent of fostering relationships and repairing harm that was done.

Personal Interest

During my counseling fieldwork at K-12 schools within the Coachella Valley, California, I became familiar with the disciplinary measures taken in response to harm done by students in the school community. Common examples of student misconduct included physical fighting, cyberbullying, and truancy. At the middle school level, I've sat with many students in the administration office during disciplinary meetings. While each student came in with a unique story, and the type of misconduct varied among them, there was a one-size-fits-all disciplinary response to misconduct: out-of-school suspensions.

After reflecting on these experiences, I struggled with understanding the benefit of suspending a student, particularly when the suspension is off-campus. The geographic location of this middle school was isolated from other cities within the desert which presented a concern. Moreover, preventing access to educational resources and social support are not typically beneficial for students. In addition, numerous students came from poverty. They struggled to have their basic needs met, and the school provided them with assistance with necessities (such as free or cost-reduced meals). Restricting students from accessing the school may not only undermine their academic success, but it may also impede their nutritional health.

Following a suspension, what happens when a student returns to school? Although students may be assigned homework during a suspension, access to teachers and/or tutors during the suspension would be very limited. During my

fieldwork experience, I observed that the more time a student spent away (during the suspension), the more distance was created between the student and school community. The student would be required to catch-up on missed assignments and activities. As a result, a student's academic efforts would decline, while instances of misconduct would increase. There were many cases where a student, who was already struggling academically, would repeatedly be suspended. These exclusionary disciplinary measures seemed to perpetuate a "cycle of failure" (Gonzalez, 2012, p. 2), which will be examined in further detail throughout the literature review.

Throughout these experiences in my counseling fieldwork, and my academic coursework with Dr. John Winslade, I became interested in alternative methods for responding to harm done by students in the school community. During my fieldwork experiences, exclusionary practices did not appear to be beneficial for students, impeding their social and academic success. While learning about narrative therapy throughout my counseling program, I learned to view the problem as the problem, rather than the person as the problem (Morgan, 2000). As opposed to viewing the student as the problem, and excluding the student from the school community, I was inclined to view the problem as an external entity, one that is separate from the student. I am more interested in addressing the externalized problem through inclusionary practices with the student, through fostering relationships through community members. Repairing relationships is a cornerstone of restorative justice practice (Zehr,

2015). I became interested in whether or not it is possible for inclusionary practices, rather than exclusionary ones, to help break this cycle of failure. These experiences and questions led me to further study the effects of restorative justice practices in education.

Purpose of the Project

This project will take a case study approach by examining numeric data for a single middle school in the city of San Bernardino, California. The data for this research study is reflective of a school that has been implementing restorative justice through a multi-tiered system, for a consecutive number of school years. This quantatative research project will conduct chi-square goodness of fit tests between the implementation of restorative justice practices and student suspensions across five school years. The purpose of the project is to discover whether or not the introduction of restorative justice practices have played a significant role in the declining suspension occurrences for middle school students, across a five school-year period, or whether suspensions are declining simply by chance.

Significance of the Project

The use of retributive disciplinary actions, such as zero-tolerance policies, have perpetuated the school-to-prison pipeline (Kim et al., 2010, p.2). This project seeks to bring awareness to inclusionary school practices and the impact

that these practices may have on the school community. It intends to examine alternatives to retributive responses, more specifically restorative justice, at the structural level. Previous research has shown success when restorative justice practices have been implemented into select schools in the United States, across states (Gonzalez, 2012). However, there is very limited research regarding restorative justice practices in California K-12 schools, particularly in the County of San Bernardino. This research intends to acknowledge a school in San Bernardino, California, that has experienced success since its implementation of school-wide restorative justice practices. Providing evidence for the failure or success of such practices may assist school districts in the planning and implementation of school-wide programs that will best serve students. Through these inclusionary programs, school districts may work towards dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline.

<div align="center">Scope of the Project</div>

This particular school was chosen for its implementation of restorative justice practices across years. Prior to its implemtation of restorative justice, the Positive Behavioral Intervention & Support (PBIS) framework was first initiated at the middle school during the 2011-12 school year (personal communication, January 31, 2017). School-wide PBIS consists of evidence-based behavioral interventions that aim to enhance social and academic behavioral outcomes for students (Positive Behavioral Intervention & Support, 2017). In terms of school

discipline, PBIS emphasizes the importance of effective classroom management, while working together with preventive disciplinary measures, in order to create "a positive and safe school climate" (PBIS, 2017). After the implementation of PBIS, the school experienced positive results, but its success reached a plateau (personal communication,October 24, 2016). In response to this, the school shifted focus away from student behavior, towards human relationships. This led to a focus on restorative justice practices at the middle school, and it subsequently became a pilot school for restorative approaches during the 2015-16 year (personal communication, October 24, 2016).

The restorative justice model must be seen as a philosophy to be adopted by the school district as a whole (rather than a set of behavior-modifying techniques) in order to be successfully implemented in school districts (Payne & Welch, 2015). Strong leadership is considered essential by the school administration in terms of implementing restorative justice as a philosophy taken on by the school (personal communication, January 31, 2017). According to administration, the middle school has encouraged staff development by offering leadership retreats focusing on the restorative justice process (personal communication, January 31, 2017). Not only is restorative justice implemented to foster relationships between students, but the school administration has noted that it cultivates relationships between adults (personal communication, January 31, 2017).

The middle school has conducted continuous training exercises for staff members, including counselors and teachers (personal communication, January 31, 2017). The school administration described that forms of restorative justice implementation within the school occur at both the Tier I and Tier II levels (personal communication, January 31, 2017). As per communication, the Tier I level includes relationship building activities within the classroom led by teachers that have been trained to facilitate these exercises. The Tier II level includes restorative circles, re-entry conversations, and anti-bullying teams. The school includes each student in restorative circles, with counselors having been trained to run restorative circles in classrooms.

In 2016, the school was identified as one of the "California Schools to Watch" for high-performing middle schools (California League of Middle Schools, 2017a). The Schools to Watch selection criteria is based upon (1) academic excellence, (2) developmental responsiveness, (3) social equity, and (4) organizational structures and processes (California League of Middle Schools, 2017b). Both social equity and organizational structures and processes may be of particular interest when examining restorative justice practices. The social equity criteria requires that students have equal access to learning opportunities, and that the participation of all school community members is encouraged (California League of Middle Schools, 2017b). A focus on inclusionary practices and the participation of all community members strongly aligns with the restorative justice model. In terms of organizational structures and processes,

the school must establish programs at the structural level in order to "support and sustain their trajectory towards excellence" (California League of Middle Schools, 2017b). By implemeting a school-wide restorative justice framework, all students are supported through inclusive practices (social equity) and changes occur at the structural level (how the school community responds to conflict).

Limitations to the Study

First, while this project solely examines numeric data associated with suspensions, it is important to recognize that there may be alternative factors associated with declining suspension rates. Secondly, the restorative practices implemented at the school site have not been personally observed by the research team during this study. In lieu of on-site observations, personal communication took place between the school administration and research team. The communication confirmed that restorative justice practices have been introduced at a school-wide level during the time frame examined, and that the school was identified as a pilot school for the restorative justice model in 2015-16. Thirdly, there are limits to confidentiality in this study. While there are no individual names linked to the numerical data, it may be possible to identify the school name through further research. However, the school name will be kept confidential throughout the entire research project

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

History of Restorative Justice

Restorative practices have roots in New Zealand, where *The Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act* of 1989 incorporated family group conferencing, an important aspect of restorative justice, into written law (Drewery, 2004, p. 334). Restorative justice involves "repairing the damage caused by crime rather than simply punishing offenders" (Ward & Langlands, 2009, p.205). The harm done is seen as a violation of people and relationships, rather than the state (Drewery, 2004). There is a facilitator rather than a judge, and a greater emphasis placed on the offender taking accountability for the harm done, as well as what can be done to put things right (Drewery, 2004). Rather than have "dispassionate third parties" determine the resolution, those who have been affected by the crime (including victims, offenders, and communities) have a far greater voice in determining the outcome. As opposed to giving a voice to individuals detached from the situation, as in the criminal justice system, the restorative decision-making process involves individuals who have some degree of investment in the outcome of the situation.

Zero Tolerance Policies in Schools

Zero tolerance policies consist of perspectives related to punishment and incapacitation that were originally intended for drug offenses starting in the 1980s (Gonzalez, 2012, p. 3). This war on drugs eventually extended from the streets to schools, where both serious offenses (such as bringing a gun to school) and minor offenses (such as arguing with a teacher) would not to be tolerated on school campuses (Gonzalez, 2012, p. 3). In the 1990s, these policies were implemented in school districts in order to target and prevent violent behavior (Winslade & Williams, 2012, p.5). Both the US and Canada passed legislation in schools that implemented "tough on crime" policies (Evans & Vaandering, 2016). First, the US passed the Gun-Free Schools Act in 1994, and Safe Schools Act followed in Canada, which was passed in 2000 (Evans & Vaandering, 2016). These policies have shaped how school environments respond to harm done within their school communities, mirroring the traditional criminal justice, or retributive, approach (Gonzalez, 2012).

Various research studies suggest that punitive discipline policies in schools both exclude students from educational opportunities and fail to make schools safer (Gonzalez, 2012). In 2008, the American Psychological Association's task force concluded that, not only are zero tolerance policies ineffective in the school environment, but they actually increase disruptive behavior, leading to higher suspension and drop-out rates (Winslade & Williams, 2008). Further, students have a greater chance of becoming part of the juvenile

justice system when zero tolerance policies disconnect them from their school communities (Gonzalez, 2012, p. 4).

Racism in Educational Settings

Schools with a higher proportion of Black students are less likely to implement restorative justice practices (Payne & Welch, 2015). An explanation for this includes the *racial threat perspective*, which explains that a higher percentage of Black students will result in a greater level of social control (Payne & Welch, 2015). Research has shown that a higher number of Black students receive disciplinary measures that are increasingly harsh in nature and exclusionary in practice (Welch & Payne, 2015). Subsequently, these efforts prove to be counter-productive by "pushing out" the most vulnerable students from their schools (Kim et al., 2010, p.9). Monique Morris describes how this "pushout" has been applied specifically to African American female students (Morris, 2016). She states that when education is taken away from them, African American girls are more likely to become exposed to violence and have a greater chance of being victimized and/or exploited, subsequently leading them towards a pathway of incarceration (Morris, 2016, p. 179).

The School-to-Prison Pipeline

Having students, particularly African American students, positioned on the pathway towards incarceration results in detrimental effects. In the public education sector, the school-to-prison pipeline refers to the failure of students social and academic needs being met, particularly within areas of higher poverty

rates and racial isolation (Kim, Losen, & Hewitt, 2010). These under-resourced schools and districts may apply harsher forms of punishment, such as more frequent suspensions and expulsions, in an effort to address these risks (Kim et al., 2010). Harsher punishments for minor offenses have resulted in "a systematic and pervasive pushing out of students from schools and into the school-to-prison pipeline" (Gonzalez, 2012, p. 2). Educational research has shown that exclusionary punishments, such as suspensions and expulsions, compromise the student's educational growth, subsequently "perpetuating a cycle of failure" (Gonzalez, 2012, p. 2). Consequently, the students removed from the school environment experience a decline in academic achievement, increased negative attitudes, and higher dropout rates (Gonzalez, 2012, p. 4).

Theoretical Foundation

An alternative to the traditional criminal justice response (Zehr, 2015, p. 9), restorative justice is used as a framework in various fields, including educational and criminal justice settings. Howard Zehr, recognized as a leading visionary of restorative justice, has provided a theoretical basis for the concept (Calhoun, 2013; Morrison, 2006). Restorative values and principles are necessary to guide restorative practice (Ward & Langlands, 2009, p.206). Zehr's conceptualization of restorative justice provides a foundation upon which restorative justice practices may be built. He identifies three factors, or pillars, central to restorative justice: (1) understanding crime as *harm done* to individuals

16

and communities, (2) addressing the subsequent *obligations* it carries, and (3) promoting *engagement* for those parties affected by the harm caused (Zehr, Stutzman, Amstutz, MacRae,& Pranis, 2015, pp. 33-6). In order for practices to be truly restorative, they must consist of these three critical factors. Each factor is examined in further detail below:

Understanding Crime as Harm Done to Individuals & Communities

By focusing on the harm done, the needs of the victims, offenders, and communities are addressed (Zehr, 2015, p. 235). Addressing harm involves balancing the concerns of all those involved (Zehr et al., 2015, p. 44). The journey towards making things right ultimately lies within the victim, and the solution to put things right may be better seen as a process, rather than a terminus (Zehr et al., 2015, p. 41). In order to address the harm done, the restorative process must also look at the causes of the harm done (Zehr et al., 2015, p. 42). The offenders of the crime have an obligation to address the causes of their actions, but this must be done together with the help of those involved (Zehr et al., 2015, p. 42).

A crime is viewed as not only causing harm to an individual directly affected, but also within the community that the crime occurred. The community at large is an integral part of the restorative justice process; rather than view the crime in isolation between victim and offender, the crime is viewed within a larger social context. In terms of restorative justice, the communities are defined as "communities of care" – or micro communities (Zehr et al., 2015, p. 40). The

17

community at hand should include those individuals that care about those involved and/or the offense (Zehr et al., 2015, p. 40). Once the communities are identified, it is important to incorporate these "communities of care" into the restorative justice process.

Addressing the Obligations It Carries

When the individual responsible for the crime takes accountability for his or her actions, obligations are created and need to be addressed (Zehr, 2015, p. 236). Although the obligation to put things right first belongs to the offender, these obligations are not restricted to those who commit the crime (Zehr et al., 2015, p. 35). The community, as a whole, plays a role in addressing obligations. For example, social forces and certain laws in place may have helped perpetuate the crime. If this is the case, the offender cannot address these obligations in isolation, rather, the community must accept its obligation to help create safer spaces to prevent such crimes from occurring again in the future. It is evident that, throughout the restorative process, addressing the needs of those parties involved will result in responsibilities and obligations in order to promote healing for all (Zehr et al., 2015, p.45).

Promoting Engagement for Those Affected

Community-based restorative justice approaches assert that the community has a very real interest into what is happening to its members (Ryan & Ruddy, 2015, p. 256). Zehr describes those affected by the crime as "stakeholders" in the situation (Zehr et al., 2015, p. 36). When an individual has

a stake in the situation, he or she should be included in the decision making process (Zehr, 2015, p. 236). By including all those with a stake in the situation, restorative practices aim to be inclusive and collaborative (Zehr, 2015, p. 236). It is a process in which outcomes are "mutually agreed upon rather than imposed" (Zehr et al., 2015, p. 38). In order to arrive upon these mutually agreed outcomes, the inclusion of key stakeholders is necessary in the restorative process.

An ideal way to include stakeholders in the process would include their participation in a facilitated, face-to-face meeting, with particular safeguards in place - such as victim offender conferencing or circle processes (Zehr et al., 2015, p.38). Through this meeting, both the victim and offender are able to communicate and negotiate together how to "put things right" (Zehr et al., 2015, p. 38). Depending on the context of the crime committed and/or cultural customs, a direct encounter may not be plausible, however, the restorative process should always encourage "maximum involvement" and "exchange of information" between the stakeholders (Zehr et al., 2015, p. 39).

Working Definition of Restorative Justice

To summarize, in conjunction with the three pillars, Zehr provides a working definition of restorative justice:

Restorative justice is an approach to achieving justice that involves, to the

extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offense or harm to

19

collectively identify and address harms, needs, and obligations in order to

heal and put things as right as possible. (Zehr et al., 2015, p. 50)

Models of Restorative Practice

Victim Offender Conferencing (VOC)

Victim Offender Conferencing (VOC) is a process used within restorative

justice that brings together the victim and offender of a crime, along with a

trained facilitator, to create dialogue around the impact that the crime has had on

those involved (Zehr et al., 2015). VOC provides a "safe and structured setting"

in which both the victim and offender are given the opportunity to speak about

the crime and to personally hear each other's viewpoints (Zehr et al., 2015,

p.123). For the victim, he/she is provided an opportunity to express how the

crime has affected his/her life, and may seek answers to questions that the

traditional criminal justice system hasn't been able to provide (Zehr et al., 2015).

For the offender, he/she is held accountable to the victim and is included in the

upcoming plan for restitution (Zehr et al., 2015).

Family Group Conference

In family group conferencing, both members of the school community and

members of family take part in the restorative process. The aim is to give a voice

to not only the victim and offender, but to others involved (Gonzalez, 2012, p. 3).

The goal of family group conferences is to "empower and value participants,

while building upon the resources of the extended family and community" (Zehr

20

et al., 205, p. 215). The seven guiding principles of the family group conference include: the intent to avoid criminal proceedings, not relying on criminal justice processes for proceedings, strengthening families, including and maintaining offenders in the community, taking age into account, using the least restrictive option available to promote personal development, and considering the victim's interests (Zehr et al., 2015, p. 227). The family group conference has five steps: opening, information sharing, family deliberations, reaching agreement, and closing (Zehr et al., 2015, p. 243).

Circle Processes

Gathering in a circle, as members of a community, is a way to solve problems and connect with one another (Zehr et al., 2015). Although circle processes are an ancient Native American tradition, they are now beginning to be used as a way to resolve conflicts in Western cultures (Zehr et al., 2015). Circle processes, also known as Peacemaking Circles, acknowledge the presence and dignity of each participant, while emphasizing "the connectedness of all things" (Zehr et al., 2015, p. 289). Within school settings, circles may include those individuals either directly or indirectly affected by the incident – whether they be teachers, parents, coaches, or administrators (Gonzalez, 2012, p. 6). Circles in school settings may be used as a tool for imparting knowledge, providing the opportunity for reflective dialogue, and encouraging peaceful resolutions (Zehr et al., 2015, p. 355).

Restorative Justice and Social Psychology

Restorative justice builds on the "centrality of emotions," incorporating emotions as central to the restorative process (Morrison, 2006, p. 389). As previously mentioned, the restorative process gives a voice to those individuals who are invested in the situation, such as the victim and offender, rather than those individuals who are detached from it. Research has shown that more meaningful interactions take place when there is direct contact between victim and offender (Saulnier & Sivasubramaniam, 2015, p. 384). One of the reasons for this is because there are greater perceptions of offender accountability in these types of interactions (Saulnier & Sivasubramaniam, 2015, p. 384). This research supports the notion that the relationship between the victim and offender is central to the process, one of the foundational principles of restorative justice.

Addressing Shame in the Restorative Justice Process

Addressing offender accountability in the restorative process will likely involve acknowledging shame. The shame management approach asserts that individuals who acknowledge shame and accept responsibility for harm caused will be less likely to offend in the future, because they have considered the harmful consequences associated with it (Ahmed & Brathwaite, 2006, p. 353). Shame management involves both the victim and offender feeling supported and respected, allowing them to focus on moving forward in a way that addresses the harm that was done (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2012). A pathway for justice is

created when both the offender and victim are empowered (Ahmed &

Braithwaite, 2012). In order to undertake this pathway, a sense of "emotional

courage" is required from both victim and offender (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2012).

Ahmed & Braithwaite (2012) provide examples of emotional courage: (1) for the

offender, it may be difficult to admit to any wrongdoing, and (2) for the victim, it

may be challenging to move forward in a constructive manner with the offender.

Connection to Narrative Therapy and Counseling

Narrative therapy originates from the work of Michael White and David

Epston (Morgan, 2000). The narrative approach is distinct from other forms of

therapy in that it centers the client as the expert of his or her own life, and

acknowledges the social pressures that encourage individuals to make

evaluations upon their own lives (Morgan, 2000). A narrative approach provides

a theoretical orientation for counseling that takes into account the social forces at

hand that encourage individuals to compare and evaluate themselves against

societal norms (Winslade & Monk, 2007, p. 31).

A narrative therapist will approach a counseling conversation with the

guiding principles of trust, respect, and curiosity (Winslade & Monk, 2007). The

counselor will acknowledge the client as the expert of his or her life, while

negotiating a partnership that encourages the sharing of knowledge between

counselor and client, a type of co-authorship (Winslade & Monk, 2007). Through

23

this co-authorship between counselor and client, individuals are invited to evaluate the judgments that have been passed onto them (Winslade, 2013).

It is possible to bridge narrative therapy with the restorative justice process in the educational system. Winslade and Williams (2012, pp. 104-107) provide a series of easy-to-follow stages outlining a restorative conversation within a school setting. First, a conversation needs to be initiated in order to identify those individuals that have been affected by what happened. The conversation must also address the stakeholders in the situation being put right. Second, the problem will be identified using externalized language. The problem will be discussed in relational terms, rather than internally located within those who have been affected. Third, the conversation will seek to map the effects of the problem. Not only will this involve the key figures of those involved in the problem, but the inquiry will also be extended to those that have been affected. One of the aims of mapping the effects is for those involved to gain an understanding of how these effects may "ripple outward" (p. 106).

Fourth, the conversation will shift towards putting things right. In order for this to happen, the harm done must be fully addressed by all those involved. Both the victim and offender will be asked for their preferences and ideas towards putting things right. For example, the victim may be asked what they would need for the problem to be put right, while the offender may be asked how they will work towards preventing these actions in the future. In the final step, a plan will be formulated. Once an action is agreed upon in the previous stage, a

24

plan will need to be developed in order to put the action into place. An important

aspect of the final stage involves a follow-up to determine whether the plan is

being met or not.

Narrative practice includes the following: (a) externalization of the

problem; (b) viewing the problem as relational, rather than an internal deficit; (c)

recognizing multiple stories of each individual; (d) deconstruction ;(e) mapping

the effects of the problem; (f) double listening; and (g) developing a counter story

(Winslade & Williams, 2012). Each of these components of narrative practice will

be further examined below.

Externalization of the Problem

One of the foundational aspects of narrative therapy is to view the problem

as separate from the person's identity (Morgan, 2000). In order for externalizing

conversations to take place, the narrative therapist must make adjustments in

how to speak about the problem. For instance, while the individual may come to

the therapist and engage in internalizing conversations about the problem at

hand, the narrative therapist would recognize these internalizing descriptions,

and respond in ways that would discuss the problem as separate from the

individual. One way to do this is to add "the" before the problem name, in order

to situate as a separate entity that is not connected to the person (Morgan, 2000,

p. 19). Engaging in externalizing conversations is beneficial for numerous

reasons: it allows the individual to feel less restricted, it paves the way for skills

and competencies to become more visible, and the problem takes on a less dominating role when it is thought of in relational terms (Morgan, 2000, p. 24).

Problems as Relational, not Internal

Traditional psychology tends to label individuals as having deficits, as seen in the American Psychological Associations' Diagnostic and Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5). Narrative therapy presents an alternative approach to deficit thinking. Just as the lens is adjusted from retributive justice to restorative justice, mental health practitioners, particularly narrative therapists, adjust their lens from viewing problems as internal, to viewing problems as relational. In order for this shift to take place, it is important to recognize the totalizing effect of deficit descriptions on the individual, particularly on young people (Winslade & Williams, 2012). Just as narrative therapy views problems as relational, restorative justice privileges human needs and views the harm done as relational to those involved (Calhoun, 2013, p. 4).

Multiple Stories

In narrative therapy, stories are made up of *events* that are linked in a *sequence*, are *across time*, and according to a *plot* (Morgan, 2000, p. 5). Narrative therapy is based upon the assumption that each individual is made up of multiple narratives (Winslade & Williams, 2012, p. 19). A narrative assumption is that our lives are multistoried, and that there may be different stories told about the same event (Morgan, 2000, p. 8). The ways in which we make sense of these stories occur in our sociocultural context (Morgan, 2000, p.9). Therefore,

recognizing the cultural context in which an individual's story takes place is critical in understanding how the individual makes meaning out of his/her life. Additionally, restorative justice allows for both victims and offenders to "renarrate their stories" (Morrison, 2006, p. 390), the same way narrative therapy understands individuals as made up of multiple stories.

Deconstruction

The narrative perspective views problems as supported by certain beliefs, ideas, and principles (Morgan, 2000, p. 45). Narrative therapy aims to acknowledge these beliefs, ideas, and principles, and to deconstruct them (Morgan, 2000, p. 45). Deconstruction refers to the "taking apart" of a story, in order to better understand the meanings that are driving the story (Winslade & Williams, 2012, p. 22). The "taken-for-granted assumptions" behind the stories are explored and "unpacked" (Monk, Winslade, & Sinclair, 2008, p. 128). These assumptions are known as discourse: a set of patterned meanings, or "cultural ideas", that have a dominating effect on our thoughts and actions (Monk et al., 2008, p.117). In narrative therapy, it is critical to help individuals identify the discourses that are operating on their lives. By doing so, the individual may be freed from any dominating restrictions that the discourses may carry with them, subsequently increasing their range of possibilities for the future.

Mapping the Effects of the Problem

Mapping the effects of the externalized problem means that the narrative therapist is curious about the individual is being affected by the conflict itself

(Winslade & Williams, 2012, p. 22). The effects may be spread throughout multiple areas of the individual's life – school, home, work, and so on. Mapping the effects is used paint a clearer picture of how the problem has been influencing the individual's life. When the therapist asks questions regarding the effects of the problem – such as when and where the problem is and isn't present – it provides insight into how the individual has been coping and managing the problem, therefore highlighting their skills and abilities (Morgan, 2000, p. 41).

Double Listening

In narrative conversation, there is both the problem and the alternative story, or counter story. A narrative therapist is acknowledging both of these stories, and hearing each of these stories alongside each other (Winslade & Williams, 2012, p. 20). While the alternative story may not be as easily identifiable as the dominant problem story, a narrative therapist seeks to make the alternative story visible to the client through the acknowledgement of "unique outcome" moments (Morgan, 2000, p. 51). These unique outcomes are events that do not fit or contradict the presenting problem story (Morgan, 2000). Through the acknowledgement and connections of these unique outcomes, individuals are invited to begin a new path (or story) that emphasizes their strengths and capabilities.

Developing an Alternative/Counter Story

Once the unique outcome moments have been identified and acknowledged, the therapist plays an important role in further exploring, or

28

"thickening" the alternative story (Morgan, 2000, p. 74). Restorative justice and narrative practice both acknowledge that the stories of individuals are embedded in interactions that take place within communities (Winslade & Monk, 2007, p.123). In order to thicken the alternative story, those close to the client – whether they be family members, friends, or teammates – may act as witnesses by supporting the client through his/her journey in staying on the path of the new alternative story (Morgan, 2000). Just as in restorative justice practices, all those with a stake in the situation are involved, and have a voice, in moving forward.

Addressing the Gap in Literature

In summary, the history of restorative justice dates back to 1989 with The Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act being incorporated into New Zealand law (Drewery, 2004). There are various models of restorative justice, including VOC, family group conferences, and circle processes. Restorative justice parallels narrative therapy in many aspects, with both models focusing on inclusive communities. By empowering both the offender and victim, a pathway for justice is created through "emotional courage" (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2012).

While restorative justice was first implemented in New Zealand law in the late 1980s, the US and Canada chose a different pathway in responding to harm. In the 1990s/2000s, the US and Canada implemented retributive approaches to justice, particularly on children in educational settings. Zero-tolerance policies in schools led to a higher number of disciplinary measures against students, with

these measures being applied to a higher proportion of African American students, subsequently positioning students on the school-to-prison pipeline.

It has been documented that students who are excluded from the school community experience lower academic achievement, increased negative attitudes, and greater dropout rates (Gonzalez, 2012, p. 4). However, there is limited research regarding the relationship between school-wide restorative justice practices and exclusionary practices, such as suspensions, using quantitative methods. In addition, the impact that restorative justice has on a student's race and ethnicity, more specifically African American and Hispanic students, when examining suspensions across years, has not been identified in previous literature. This study seeks to address the impact that the introduction of the restorative justice model may have on student suspension rates, using chi-square analyses, while taking race and ethnicity into consideration.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Objective

The purpose of this study is to evaluate whether the implementation of

restorative justice practices in San Bernardino City Unified School District

(SBCUSD) have been effective in reducing the amount of office referrals,

particularly suspensions, for middle school students. This study will evaluate

data pertaining to one middle school, consisting of male and female students

from sixth to eigth grade, within SBCUSD. In addition, the total enrollment will be

divided into race and ethnicity sub-groups for African American and Hispanic

students. The specific middle school was chosen for the study due to its school-

wide implementation of restorative justice across years. The study will seek to

address the following research question: has the implementation of restorative

justice practices at the middle school level played a role in decreasing the rate of

suspensions for students?

Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that, when restorative justice practices are implemented

by the middle school, at the school-wide level, the amount of disciplinary and

exclusionary practices, more specifically suspensions for students, will decline.

The implications for these findings will assist in informing future district practices

and policies. Furthermore, the findings may provide insight into the effectiveness of restorative justice practices as an alternative framework to traditional zero-tolerance disciplinary measures taken by schools.

Data Collection and Analysis

This quantative research study involves the study of a five-year suspension history report obtained from the San Bernardino City Unified School District (SBCUSD). The numerical data was collected and stored within a locked filing cabinet during the research process. The suspension history report pertains to a single middle school within the school district, that will not be identified by name. The data includes the total enrollment and number of student suspensions for each school year from 2011-2016. In addition to total enrollment, the data obtained was divided into race and ethnicity sub-groups. For the purposes of this project, the sub-groups examined will be African American students and Hispanic students, supplementing the total enrollment data.

The timeframe for the data starts at the baseline year of 2011-12, the year when Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) was introduced to the school, up until 2015-16, the year when the middle school was considered a pilot school for restorative justice. The timeframe of 2011-2016 was utilized to better understand the suspension rates in alignment with the implementation of restorative justice practices.

The data was used to evaluate differences between the years prior to restorative justice implementation with the years during its implementation, in order to evalute its effects on school disciplinary measures, such as student suspensions. While the total enrollment served has overall declined, the number of students suspended has also been in decline. The research question seeks to address whether or not the implementation of restorative justice practices played a role in the decline of the number of total students suspended since its introduction.

In order to address the research question, four separate chi-square analyses were conducted using the obtained data. Chi-square analyses were used to evaluate whether the declining suspension rates of students, at this particular middle school, were due to the implementation of restorative justice, or if the suspension rates were declining by chance. Dr. Joseph Jesunathadas, a specialist in statistics, was consulted in order to ensure accurate results from the calculations.

The first analysis tested the hypothesis that there are no frequency differences among the total number of students and number of students suspended between five consecutive school years from 2011-2016. In the second analysis, the actual number of suspensions were compared against a hypothesized 10% suspension rate. The third analysis evaluates a 2x2 matrix of the years prior to restorative justice implementation, and the average number of students suspended versus the average number of students not suspended.

And lastly, the fourth analysis collapsed the data for the years prior to restorative justice implementation and the data for the years during its implementation. Over the block of two years, the actual suspensions were compared with the 10% suspension rate estimation.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout this research study, the name of this particular middle school will not be identified for confidentiality purposes. The school will not be given a pseudonym; it will simply be referred to as a middle school within the San Bernardino City Unified School District. Although one may make assumptions as to which particular school the study is referring to, the research team will refrain from releasing the name or other identifiable information of the school.

In addition to holding the school name confidential, measures were taken to ensure that the data does not identify any school staff or student names. The data used in this research study examines only the numerical values associated with student enrollment and suspensions within the middle school. The data and results will refer to large groups of students, represented by numerical values, as opposed to individual students. Thus, it would not be possible for the reader to identify individual students through the data reported in this study.

Permission to obtain the data and conduct the research was approved by the local school district and the university. The request to conduct this research was approved by the Accountability & Educational Technology Department of the

San Bernardino City Unified School District (see Appendix B), as the research request has met the eight district criteria. In addition, the project was granted approval by the Institutional Review Board of California State University, San Bernardino (see Appendix A).

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The data presented here reflects the results of the four separate chi-square analyses that were conducted pertaining to the middle school. Chi-square goodness of fit tests were conducted using data from a five-year suspension report for the middle school. The total number of students at the school were compared with the total number of students suspended for each school year, as seen below in Table 1. The analyses were conducted in order to evaluate whether the implementation of restorative justice had an impact on the number of students suspended across school years.

Table 1. Five Year Suspension Report for Total Enrollment Served.

School Year	Total Enrollment Served	Number of Students Suspended
2011-12	1162	219
2012-13	1065	212
2013-14	1043	203
2014-15	954	106
2015-16	929	115

Considering Race and Ethnicity in Suspension Reports

When examining suspension history reports, it is imperative to consider race and ethnicity in relation to school disciplinary measures. As previously

described, disciplinary measures may be applied to a greater proportion of minority students. Table 2 provides the data for the total enrollment for African American students, and the number of African American students suspended during the five year report. During 2011-12, although African American students comprised approximately 14% of the student population, 31% of African American students were suspended, accounting for approximately 24% of total student suspensions in 2011-12. After the implementation of restorative justice in 2015-16, African American students comprised approximately 11% of the student population, with 25% of African American students being suspended, accounting for approximately 21% of total student suspensions in 2015-16. It should be noted that the amount of African American students suspended decreased from 31% in 2011-12 to 25% in 2015-16. Moreover, the proportion of African American students also decreased from 24% to 21%. The importance of these data is that they suggest that the overall decrease of suspensions was not achieved at the expense of increasing the suspension proportional rate for African American students entering the "pipeline to prison". In fact the opposite was the case.

Table 2. Five Year Suspension Report for African American Students.

School Year	Total Enrollment for African American Students	Number of African American Students Suspended
2011-12	167	52
2012-13	151	52
2013-14	132	40
2014-15	110	25
2015-16	98	24

Table 2 demonstrates a decrease in suspensions from 2011-12 to 2015-16 for African American students, and the same comparison may be applied to Hispanic students, as seen in the suspension report for Hispanic students in Table 3. In 2011-12, Hispanic students comprised approximately 76% of the student population, with 16% of Hispanic students being suspended. Additionally, Hispanic students accounted for approximately 63% of total student suspensions from 2011-12. During 2015-16, Hispanic students comprised 80% of the total student population, with 10% of Hispanic students being suspended. Hispanic students accounted for approximately 65% of all student suspensions during the 2015-16 school year. The comparison from 2011-12 to 2015-16 presents a decrease in Hispanic student suspensions, and thus a reduced proportion of Hispanic students entering the "pipeline to prison", from 16% to 10%.

Table 3. Five Year Suspension Report for Hispanic Students.

School Year	Total Enrollment for Hispanic Students	Number of Hispanic Students Suspended
2011-12	882	138
2012-13	803	136
2013-14	828	147
2014-15	774	71
2015-16	744	75

Analysis 1

In the first analysis, a chi-square goodness of fit test was conducted comparing the occurrence of suspension rates among total enrollment with no frequency differences among the cells. This test does not examine whether there are differences between the pre-implementation of restorative justice and post-implementation of restorative justice. Rather, it tests the hypothesis that there are no frequency differences across all school years. A total of 5,153 students were examined for each consecutive school year from 2011-12 to 2015-16. The total number of students separated by individual school year is represented in Table 1. No significant deviation from the hypothesized values was found (X^2 (1, $N = 5,153$) = 51.56, p = 1.71 x 10^{-10}).

When comparing the total number of students enrolled with the total number of suspensions, there are no significant differences between each year. As seen in Figure 1, the number of students enrolled ranges from 1162 (2011-12) to 929 (2015-16). The total number of suspensions ranges from 219 (2011-12) to 106 (2014-15). Although no significant deviation from the chi-square analysis

39

was found, the number of suspensions declines with each subsequent school year from 2011-12 to 2014-15. In 2011-12, there were a total of 219 suspensions, and in 2014-15, there were a total of 106 suspensions. In contrast, 2015-16 school year presented a slight increase in suspensions from the year prior, from 106 suspensions in 2014-15, to 115 suspensions in 2015-16.
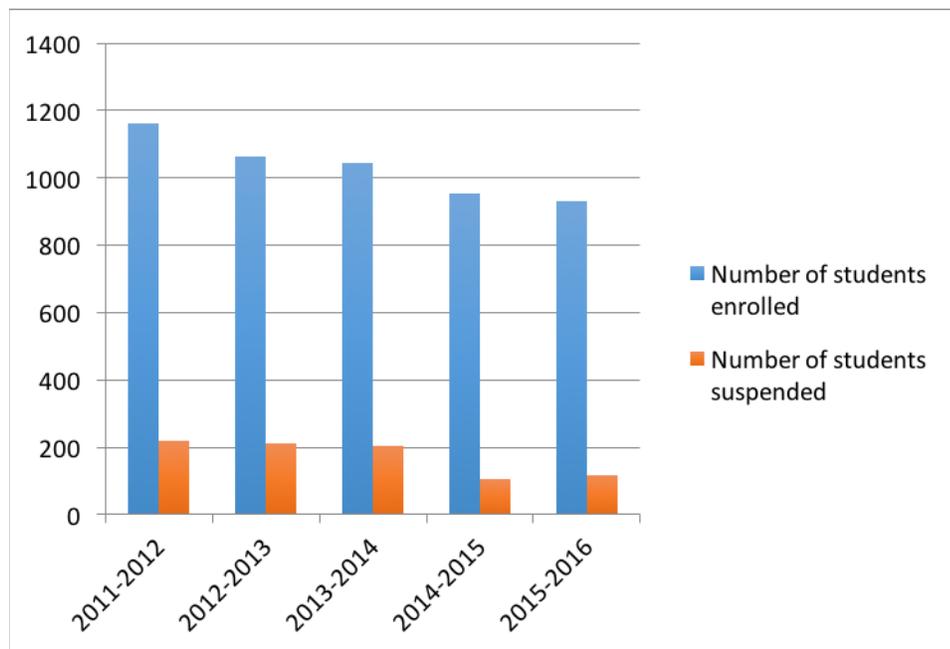

Figure 1. Student Suspensions Across School Years.

Analysis 2

Table 4. Actual Suspensions vs. 10% Estimated Suspension Rate Across School Years.

	2011-2012	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
10% (est.) suspension	116	107	104	95	93
Actual suspension	219	212	203	106	115

In the second analysis, a chi-square goodness of fit test was calculated comparing the occurrence of suspension among total enrollment with a 10% suspension rate, in order to see if there is a difference in frequencies of suspensions within school years. When examining the actual suspensions with the 10% hypothetical suspension rate, across all five school years, the total number of incidents adds to 1,370 (515 hypothetical suspensions and 855 actual suspensions). The raw data representing actual suspensions and the 10% estimated suspension rate, across school years, are presented in Table 4. Although this analysis does not determine whether there are differences across all years, significant deviation from the hypothesized values was found, and the results were statistically significant (X^2 (1, $N = 1,370$) = 17.97, p = 0.001). Most notably, between 2013-14 and 2014-15, there was a decline from 203 actual suspensions to 106 actual suspensions. The results are shown below in Figure 2.
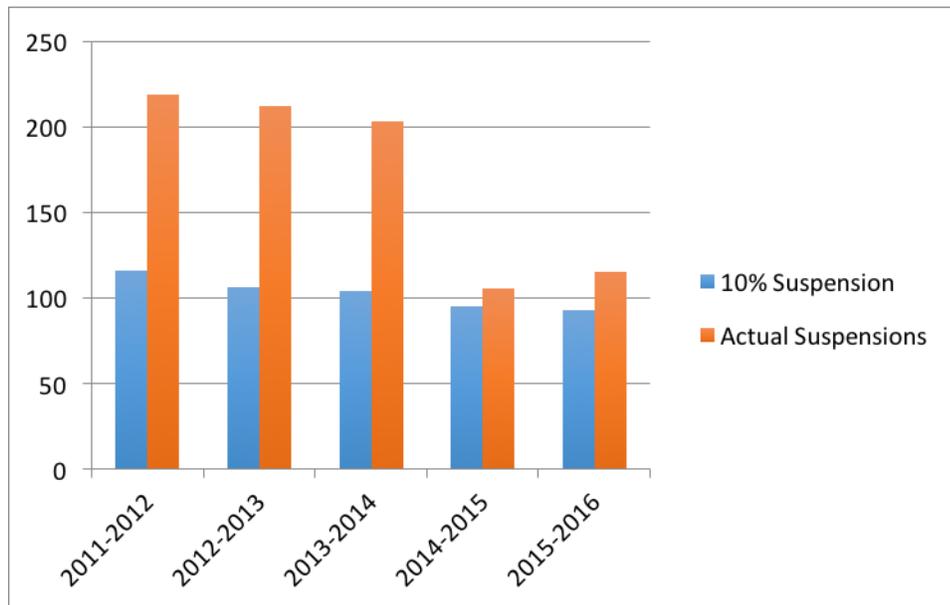
Figure 2. Comparison of Actual Suspensions and 10% Suspension Rate.

Analysis 3

In the third analysis, a chi-square goodness-of-fit test (2x2 matrix) was calculated comparing the years prior to restorative justice program implementation with the years during restorative justice program implementation, and the average number of students suspended with the average number of students not suspended. The average number of incidents, totaling 2,032, were examined from pre-implementation in 2011-14 and post-implementation in 2014-16. As seen in Figure 3, the average number of suspensions declines from 211 students from 2011-2014, to 111 students from 2014-2016. Significant deviation

from the hypothesized values was found (X^2 (1, $N = 2,032$) = 22.18, p = 2.48 x

10^{-6}).
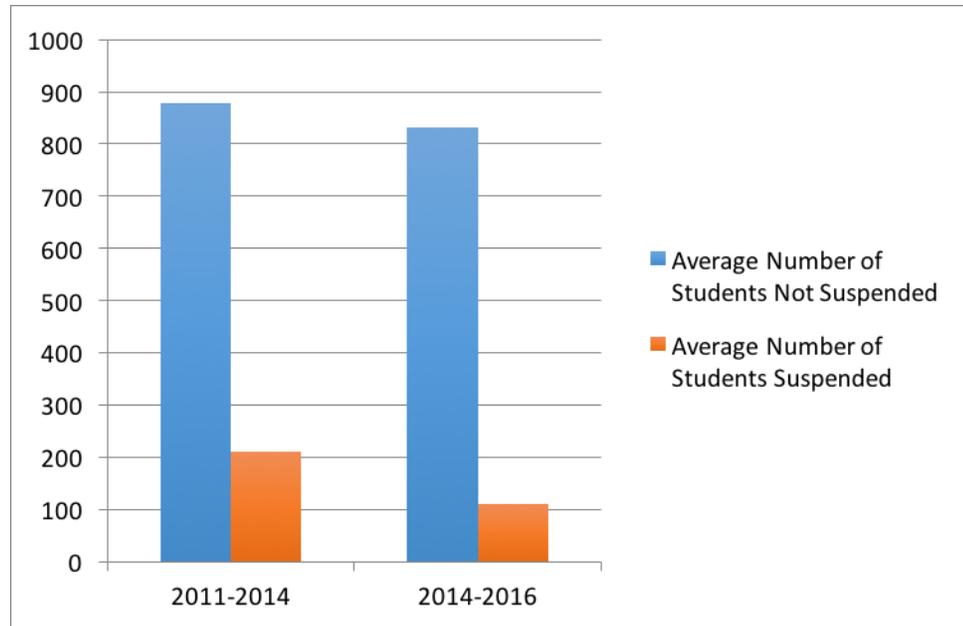
Figure 3. Student Suspensions for Years Prior to Restorative Justice
Implementation vs. During Implementation.

Analysis 4

In the fourth analysis, a chi-square goodness of fit test was calculated

comparing the years prior to implementation of restorative justice with the years

after the implementation of restorative justice. The actual suspensions were

compared against a 10% suspension estimation for the two block years of 2011-

14 (pre-implementation of restorative justice) and 2014-16 (post-implementation

of restorative justice). A total number of 525 incidents, including both actual suspensions (322 total) and a 10% hypothetical suspension rate (203 total), were examined for this analysis. During 2011-14, there were a total of 211 actual suspensions, with a 10% estimation of 109 hypothetical suspensions. During 2014-16, there were a total of 111 actual suspensions, with a 10% estimation of 94 hypothetical suspensions. Significant deviation from the hypothesized values was found (X^2 (1, $N = 525$) = 7.55, p = .006). The results prove to be statistically significant and suggest that the difference in the cell frequencies is not likely to be by chance.

In Figure 4, the bar graph presents a decline in school suspensions from the year prior to restorative justice implementation (2011-14) to the years after its implementation (2014-16). With the 10% suspension estimation, the number of suspensions would decline from 109 incidents in 2011-14 to 94 incidents in 2014-16, accounting for a 13.8 % decrease. However, the actual number of suspensions declined from 211 incidents in 2011-14, to 111 incidents in 2014-16, accounting for a 47.4% decrease in actual suspensions.
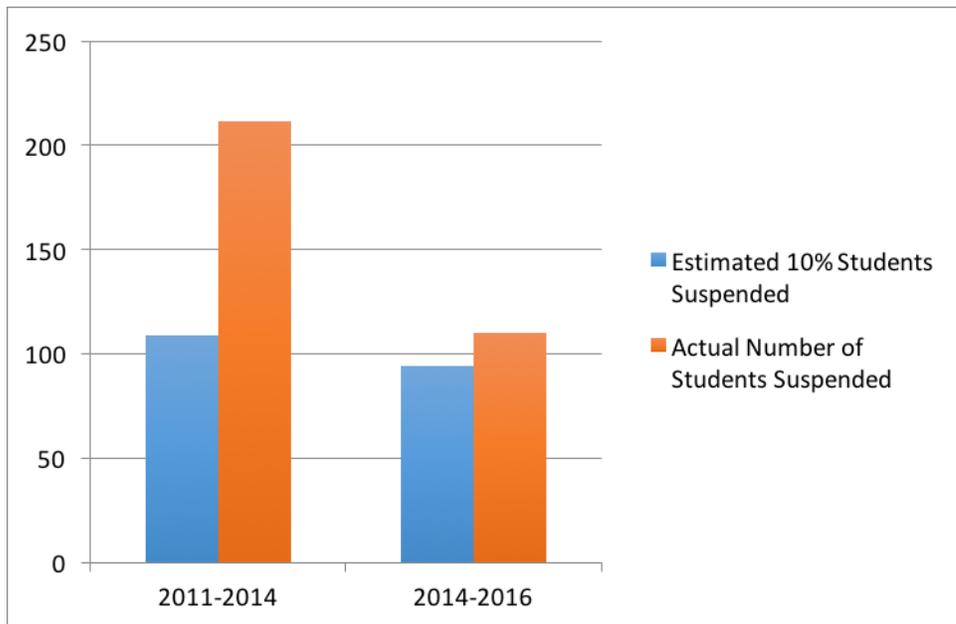
Figure 4. Estimated 10% Suspension Rate and Actual Number of Students Suspended For Baseline Year Compared to Years After Restorative Justice Implementation.

Summary of Findings

When examining the five-year suspension history report, as seen in Table 1, it is important to take into consideration the race and ethnicity of students. The total enrollment and suspensions for each school year from 2011-12 to 2015-16 were separated into two sub-reports: (a) for African American students, presented in Table 2, and (b) for Hispanic students, presented in Table 3. When comparing the years of pre-implementation of restorative justice, 2011-12, to post-implementation, 2015-16, it was found that suspension rates decreased for both African American and Hispanic students: (1) the number of African

American student suspensions decreased from 31% in 2011-12 to 25% in 2015-16, and (2) the number of Hispanic student suspensions decreased from 16% in 2011-12 to 10% in 2015-16.

The four chi-square goodness of fit tests were conducted in order to determine whether the decline in suspensions was a result of the implementation of restorative justice, or whether it was simply due to chance. Although Analysis 1 presented no significant results, Analysis 2, 3, and 4 found significant deviation from the hypothesized values. Analysis 2 demonstrated that there was a significant difference between actual suspensions and the 10% hypothetical suspension rate, with a notable decline in actual suspensions from from 203 suspensions in 2013-14 to 106 suspensions in 2014-15. Analysis 3 collapsed the data for years prior to restorative justice implementation to years post-implementation, comparing the average number of students suspended with the average number of students not suspended. The results of Analysis 3 were statistically significant. Analysis 4 demonstrated that the actual number of suspensions declined from 211 incidents in 2011-14 (pre-implementation), to 111 incidents in 2014-16 (post-implementation), accounting for a 47.4% decrease in actual suspensions. Overall, the reported results of the chi-square analyses suggest that the implementation of restorative justice practices at the middle school play a significant role in the declining suspension rates across school years.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Research Findings

This research study sought to address the following research question: Has the implementation of restorative justice practices at the middle school level played a role in decreasing the number of suspensions for students? The results show that restorative justice had a significant impact on the declining suspensions for students, proving the hypothesis likely to be correct. The fourth chi-square analysis presented a 47.4% decrease in suspensions, compared to a 13.8% decrease for a hypothesized 10% suspension rate, from pre-implementation of restorative justice (2011-2014) to during its implementation (2014-16). These findings emphasize that the actual suspension decrease, during this time frame, was significantly larger than the hypothesized 10% suspension decrease. Therefore, restorative justice played a substantial role in the declining suspensions for students across consecutive years.

The Importance of Inclusionary School Practices

This particular middle school was chosen for the school-wide implementation of restorative justice. The research findings are unique in that they examine suspension rates, in relation to restorative justice implementation, across school years. A decrease in middle school suspension rates is beneficial

to the community for a variety of reasons. When restorative justice is implemented, there is a focus on including the student in the school community and repairing relationships, which may be done through circle processes or victim-offender conferencing (Zehr et al., 2015). Through these processes, students learn essential problem-solving skills that may be translated to future school and life events.

Race and ethnicity were taken into account when examining the five-year suspension history report, by separating the total enrollment into two sub-groups for both African American and Hispanic students. The findings demonstrated that both the total number of suspensions, and also the proportional rate for both African American and Hispanic students, declined from pre-implementation of restorative justice to post-implementation. These results are significant in that they demonstrate progress towards more equitable and just school environments. By learning how to repair relationships and address harm that was done, it is therefore justifiable to claim that students learned how to become responsible members of society. As a result, keeping students actively engaged in the community may have helped prevent them from being pushed into the school-to-prison pipeline.

<p align="center">Limitations to the Findings</p>

This study does not suggest viewing suspension rates in isolation as a predictor for the success of restorative justice practices. Rather, the study

provides evidence that the introduction of restorative justice at the middle school

has played a significant role in the declining suspension rates for students,

across five school years. When examining restorative practices, both individual

narratives and measurable data should be taken into consideration. While this

study focuses on quantitative calculations, it should be taken into consideration

with previous qualitative research, including participant narratives regarding

restorative justice in school settings. Lastly, the findings do not guarantee that

restorative justice practices will be successful when introduced to other schools

in the San Bernardino City Unified School District, or elsewhere. Instead, the

findings demonstrate that a school-wide restorative justice approach have

significantly decreased student suspensions, subsequently creating a more

inclusive school community. The study provides evidence of success for

restorative justice at the middle school level, but does not provide a uniform

guideline for restorative justice to be implemented in schools elsewhere.

Implications for Future Research: Restorative Justice in Educational Settings

Further research is needed regarding the effects of restorative justice

practices for not only middle schools, but across all levels, including elementary

and high schools. As previously mentioned, restorative justice must be seen as

a philosophy to be adopted by the educational system as a whole (Payne &

Welch, 2015). Although the middle school has been implementing the program

for some years, it would be beneficial for the entire educational system to implement restorative justice approaches in K-12 schools. By exploring the effects of restorative justice at all three K-12 levels, school districts may be more likely to implement a district-wide approach to restorative practices in educational settings. This would provide opportunities for school districts to take a more philosophical stance in support of restorative justice, utilizing restorative practice as a preferred response to conflict in schools.

There are many possibilities in regards to examining restorative justice in educational settings from a researcher perspective. When conducting future research regarding restorative justice, both quantitative and qualitative measures should be utilized. Since there are various models of restorative justice practices (for example, circle processes, victim-offender conferencing, family group conferences), the effects of each model may be studied separately. This may be done through qualitative measures, such as through interviews with students and staff who have participated in the process. In addition, quantitative measures, such as pre- and post-tests in the form of scaled self-reports, may be implemented in order to better understand the significant attributes of restorative justice practices.

While this study has signified the success of restorative justice being implemented at a middle school, further research is required on how restorative practices may be maintained in school settings. Viewing restorative justice as a long-term approach may require further longitudinal studies providing support for

the framework in K-12 settings. This study evaluated a five-year suspension report, with restorative justice being introduced in the later years. In order to evaluate its success over longer periods of time, data may need to extend to ten or fifteen years after its implementation. Rather than view restorative justice as a temporary trend, academic literature should emphasize the staying power of restorative justice in education, with evidence-based results to support its success.

APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

February 27, 2017

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Administrative (Exempt) Review
IRB#FY2017-87
Status **: Approved**

Ms. Barbara Katic and Prof. John Winslade
Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation, and Counseling
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Ms. Katic and Prof. Winslade:

Your application to use human subjects, titled, "Restorative Justice Practices at the Middle School Level" has been reviewed and approved by the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of California State University, San Bernardino has determined that your application meets the requirements for exemption from IRB review Federal requirements under 45 CFR 46. As the researcher under the exempt category you do not have to follow the requirements under 45 CFR 46 which requires annual renewal and documentation of written informed consent which are not required for the exempt category. However, exempt status still requires you to attain consent from participants before conducting your research.

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required.

Your responsibilities as the researcher/investigator reporting to the IRB Committee include the following 4 requirements as mandated by the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 listed below. Please note that the protocol change form and renewal form are located on the IRB website under the forms menu. Failure to notify the IRB of the above may result in disciplinary action. You are required to keep copies of the informed consent forms and data for at least three years. Please notify the IRB Research Compliance Officer for any of the following:

- **Submit a protocol change form if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your research prospectus/protocol for review and approval of the IRB before implemented in your research,**
- **If any unanticipated/adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research, and**
- **When your project has ended by emailing the IRB Research Compliance Officer.**

If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the Research Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval identification number (listed at the top) in all correspondence.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Caroline Vickers

Caroline Vickers, Ph.D., IRB Chair
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

CV/MG

APPENDIX B

SCHOOL DISTRICT APPROVAL

Dale Marsden, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Kennon Mitchell, Ph.D.
Assistant Superintendent

March 15, 2017

Research ID: 121-2017

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Dr. John Winslade
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Redlands, CA 92375
jwinslad@csusb.edu

Dear Dr. Winslade and Ms. Katic,

The attached form is in response to the requested information received by Accountability & Educational Technology on February 1, 2017. All eight criteria have been met and SBCUSD approves your project to conduct research.

A final bound copy of your study should be provided to Barbara Richardson in the Accountability & Educational Technology Department prior to publication for review.

If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact the Accountability & Educational Technology Department at (909) 473-2070.

Sincerely,

Kennon Mitchell, Ph.D.
Assistant Superintendent

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES DIVISION
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55

Response to Request to Conduct Research Form

Date: 2/1/17

Project Director: John Winslade and Barbara Katic   **Research ID:**
121-2017

Project Title: Evaluation of the Implementation of Restorative Justice in a Middle School

	Study Proposal and Project Activity Guidelines	Criteria Met	Comments
1	Request to Conduct Form Complete	√	
2	Survey tool included if required (Page 1, b, 1)	√	Not applicable
3	Project approved by the University's Institutional Review Board (page 2, b, 2)	√	University approval has been provided and application meets the requirements for exemption
4	Maintenance of data confidentiality and retention described (Page 3, 3, a)	√	Data on paper will be kept in a locked file cabinet. Electronic data will be kept on a password protected computer. Data will be stored until the project is completed and then immediately destroyed.
5	Evidence that instructional time will be protected	√	
6	Additional teacher duties will not be required	√	
7	Research results will provide benefit and insight to district practices and policy	√	Evaluating the use of restorative practices in one middle school
8	Teacher and/or student identity not linked to data or research results (Pages 2, 1, c and 3, 3, a)	√	No identifiers will be used, student data and school name will be anonymous

Data Requested:

Research Request:
- Number of students suspended from the middle school each year between 2011 and 2017
- Number of students suspended from all SBUCSD middle schools between 2011 and 2017
- Roll numbers for all SBCUSD middle schools between 2011 and 2017
- Disaggregated suspension numbers for different racial groups from the middle school each year between 2011 and 2017 and for all SBUCSD middle schools between 2011 and 2017.

Response to Request for Data:

All 8 district criteria have been met and SBCUSD fully approves your request to conduct research.

A final copy of the complete study should be provided to Barbara Richardson in the Accountability and Educational Technology Department for review prior to publication.

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