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# Teacher Agency and the Implementation of Restorative Justice

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Teacher Agency and the Implementation of Restorative Justice

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by

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## Abstract

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine the implementation of Restorative Justice in an urban central California high school through the lens of administrators, and teacher perceptions of agency, campus climate, and impact of the implementation. The participating school in this study defined their implementation of Restorative Justice as Restorative Practices. The Quality Implementation Framework (Durlak, Meyers, & Wandersman, 2012) guided the development of the literature review and created the framework for the study. This mixed-methods sequential explanatory study examined the relationship between teacher perceptions of agency, school climate, and the implementation of Restorative Practices. Teachers at the participating school completed a survey to measure perceptions of agency, campus climate, and the implementation of Restorative Practices. Additionally, the study included interviews with the principal, Restorative Practices Counselor, and ten teachers. Correlations were used to determine the relationship of teacher perceptions of agency to their perceptions of campus climate and Restorative Practices implementation.

Correlations revealed a strong relationship between teacher perceptions of agency and campus climate. Additionally, correlations revealed a strong relationship between teacher perceptions of agency and Restorative Practices implementation. Teacher interviews revealed that perceptions of Restorative Practices on campus remained consistent over the three years between implementation and the time of the study. Data from the ten teacher interviews suggested that greater than 50% of all teachers disapproved of the implementation of Restorative Practices. The level of disapproval remained consistent over the past three years. Finally, interviews described the implementation process of Restorative Practices.

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## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to Memita, Devon, and Leilah.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Fresno County lies within the central San Joaquin Valley of California. It is home to both urban and rural student populations because of prominent agricultural and service industries. According to DataQuest, California's online student information portal, Fresno County schools combined urban, rural, and suburban student populations to total 204,000 students in 2018. Hispanic students represented the largest racial-ethnic student group consisting of nearly 65% of students. African-American students represented 4.9% Fresno County's enrolled student population in 2018. The disproportionate number of suspensions of African-American students and students with disabilities has brought negative attention to multiple school districts in Fresno County, both urban and rural. Proficiency and academic progress data for students who missed significant days of school for disciplinary reasons showed deficiency in elementary school and slower progress through high school academic requirements (Blume, 2015). These findings created implications for both student learning outcomes and high school graduation rates.

Multiple school districts in central California reacted to discipline statistics and their accompanying scrutiny by implementing targeted approaches to improve campus climate. A growing number of policy makers and student interest organizations called for behavior intervention measures that stem from the development of caring communities of learners (Hantzopoulos, 2013). Sullivan (2007) proposed policies to create positive school environments and support the emotional and behavioral development of students. Hughes and Kwok (2007) asserted policies to improve campus climate should seek to enhance student-teacher relationships because strengthening these relationships was tied to higher student academic outcomes, particularly among African-American and Latino students. From these and similar findings,

many Fresno County schools began exploring campus climate innovations. Restorative Justice Practices was one of several innovations implemented in central California schools.

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine the implementation of Restorative Justice Practices in an urban central California high school through the lens of administrators, teacher perceptions of agency, campus climate, and the impact of the implementation. The participating school in this study defined their implementation of Restorative Justice as Restorative Practices. This sequential explanatory study utilized a teacher survey, teacher interviews, and administrator interviews to examine relationships between teacher perceptions of agency, campus climate, and the state of implementation of Restorative Practices on the high school campus. The findings from this study may be applied toward the improved practice of implementing innovations in schools; with an emphasis on increasing teacher agency. The literature review included the analysis of existing literature to describe employee agency, campus climate, and the implementation of innovations through the sequence of the Quality Implementation Framework (Durlak et al., 2012). Restorative Practices is an innovation that schools have explored to increase the abilities to meet the needs of students on their campuses, particularly historically underperforming student groups. This study finds significance as the researcher coached in schools that implemented campus climate initiatives while struggling to articulate the role of measurable teacher perceptions of the innovation and engagement in the implementation process. The findings of this study will determine if relationships exist between teacher perceptions of agency and the implementation of Restorative Practices on their campus. Results of the study may inform the practice of applying teacher agency to the implementation of campus climate innovations.

This study took place during the Spring semester of 2018, while the researcher was employed as a principal coach for the office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools. As a principal coach, the researcher provided coaching and support to school administrative teams as they implemented and maintained school improvement initiatives. The primary leadership coaching methodology used for principal professional development was Cognitive Coaching, a methodology in which listening and strategic questioning are used to promote thoughtful planning and decisions.

### **Problem Statement**

The driving problem for this study was schools in and adjacent to Fresno County did not consistently consider both measurable teacher perceptions of campus climate and teacher agency when implementing campus climate improvement initiatives. School leaders within the researcher's coaching scope consistently referenced student behavior outcomes when rationalizing the adoption of campus climate initiatives. The identified scope of the problem for this study was limited to school sites where the researcher provided coaching and professional development throughout two school years that preceded the study. Local, state, and federal accountability measures assessed campus climate with student behavior outcomes. State and local accountability outcomes were limited to cumulative and disaggregated student suspension and expulsion data. Although local accountability required schools to assess teacher perceptions of climate, outcome reporting only required schools to indicate that they attempted stakeholder engagement. Accountability fell short of requiring schools to report actionable perception data analysis with improvement targets.

Fresno area school leaders were faced with student discipline outcome data revealing disproportionate numbers of African-American student suspensions. Although African-American

students represented 5.1% of students enrolled in Fresno County schools during the 2016-17 school year, they represented 16.5% of students suspended in Fresno County (CDE DataQuest, 2017). The disproportionate numbers of African-American students suspended in California received national attention. In 2014, the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights released student discipline data indicating African-American students were suspended and expelled at rates up to three times the rate of Caucasian students. In their 2014 Data Snapshot, the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights reported Black students were suspended and expelled at a rate three times greater than white students. On average, 5% of White students were suspended, compared to 16% of Black students. Student subgroup suspension rates varied by district but disproportionate suspensions of African-American students were a near consistent phenomenon (CDE DataQuest, 2018). A report from the Civil Rights Project at UCLA (2012) also documented racial disparities in California's school disciplinary practices.

The participating school in this study had a schoolwide suspension rate of about 8% in the 2016-17 school year, an increase from 7% in 2015-16 (CDE, 2017). For African-American students at the school, the suspension rate during the 2016-17 school year was 20%, which was an increase from 12% in 2015-16. By comparison, a similar Fresno County urban high school had a schoolwide suspension rate of 7.5% during the 2016-17 school year, while the rate for African-American students was 14.2% for the same period (CDE, 2017). African-American students in the participating school represented 8% of the student population but accounted for more than 20% of students suspended. Student expulsions in Fresno Unified School District, the largest district in Fresno County, decreased from 175 students in 2015-16 to 167 students in 2016-17. While African-American students represented 8.5% of students enrolled in Fresno

Unified School District, they represented 31.2% of Fresno Unified School District expulsions during the 2016-17 school year. Student demographics and discipline outcomes for the participating school in this study were modified slightly and proportionately to protect the identity of the school and study participants. Responsive local school leaders responded to this phenomenon through the equitable application of human and financial resources.

The California legislature responded to disproportional student behavior outcomes by passing Assembly Bill 420 in 2014. Assembly Bill 420 prohibited schools from expelling any student for willful defiance (LegInfo, 2014). Assembly Bill 420 prohibited schools from suspending students in grades three or below for willful defiance. This legislation and interventions by school districts coincided with varying changes in the number of suspensions between 2013 and 2015 (CDE, 2017). The suspension rate for students in Fresno County increased from 5.5% to 5.6% between the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years. For the same period, the suspension rate for African-American students in Fresno County declined from 15.3% to 14.5% (CDE, 2017). The expulsion rate for African American students in Fresno County declined from 0.70% to 0.66% of African American students enrolled. The expulsion rate of all students enrolled in Fresno County declined from 0.18% to 0.17% over the same two years.

In 2015, the United States Congress passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) as a reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. President Barack Obama signed the bill into law in December 2015. The law sought to build on the intent and progress of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The No Child Left Behind Act emphasized accountability for student proficiency for all students and student groups. The Every Student Succeeds Act called for educational programs to prepare students for college and

careers. The law also established four pillars for promoting the success of all students: higher-order skills, multiple measures of progress, resource equity, and research-based interventions (Cook-Harvey et al., 2016). The latter two pillars encouraged states to develop and implement interventions equitably to address the needs of all students. Equity-based planning called for schools to identify barriers for educational success and apply resources to those barriers.

In 2016, the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration developed the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL). These standards were designed to create a set of student-driven standards for educational leadership, particularly principals and vice-principals (Hutton, 2016). The newly adopted PSELs promoted a shift in educational leadership from purely academic outcomes towards equitable applications of resources and interventions to support student learning while enhancing human relationships. The standards were developed using input from research and educational partners and a review of empirical research to identify gaps in the 2008 national educational leadership standards. The new standards recognized the central importance of human relationships in educational leadership as well as teaching and student learning (Hutton, 2016).

The shift in federal educational policy from No Child Left Behind to Every Student Succeeds Act, as well as the evolution of national instructional leadership standards called for more equitable attention and resources to students with the greatest needs. Multiple Fresno area school leaders adopted Restorative Practices as a tool to equitably meet the needs of students and improve campus climates. In the participating school district for this study, the decision to adopt Restorative Practices was initiated and executed at the district level. The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine teacher agency and the implementation of Restorative Practices on the central California high school campus.



## **Restorative Justice Practices**

Restorative Justice Practices was one of multiple innovations adopted by Fresno County schools to improve campus climates and student behavior outcomes. The International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP) defines Restorative Practices as a tool to implement in schools to build communities of learners (IIRP, 2017). Restorative Practices increases social capital while reducing the impact of poor student behavior. Restorative practices, when implemented with fidelity in schools seeking to address conflicts, should lead to decreased antisocial behavior, repair harm, strengthen relationships, and restore relationships on school campuses.

Restorative Practices is based on the principles of Restorative Justice and victim-offender reconciliation in the criminal justice system. Victim-offender reconciliation enables crime victims and offenders to participate in structured dialogue intended to address the needs of the victim. The discussion of the offense is the harm done to the victim and not the violations of rules or laws. The primary goal is to restore human relationships by healing damage caused by offenses (Mulligan, 2009).

Restorative Justice is a shift from retributive systems of justice that depersonalize offenses. Retributive systems address crime based on a relationship between the offender and the law. Restorative systems address crime based on a three-way relationship between the offender, victim, and community. Restorative Justice, when implemented with fidelity attends to broken relationships between the offender, victim, and community (Armour & Umbreit, 2010). The measure of harm is expanded beyond the rule of law to the impact on the victim and relationships within the community. The damage from offenses is identified and assessed by all parties collectively through structured dialogue. The parties then work to find a resolution that will bring healing through emotional and material reparation.

Competing narratives exist about the origins of restorative justice; including regions and timelines. One narrative traced the roots of Restorative Justice to the United Kingdom in the late 1970's (Leibmann, 2007). Other theorists traced Restorative Justice practices back to early human civilizations where restorative strategies may have been used to solve conflicts within and between ancient clans (Weitekamp, 1999). The work of restorative practices in United States schools emerged in the early 1980's to teach students conflict resolution strategies, promote relationship building, and promote peaceful climates in schools (Leibmann, 2007).

Three core principles of Restorative Justice are: (1) repair harm, (2) reduce risk, and (3) empower community (Pavelka, 2013). These principles are shared between Restorative Justice and Restorative Practices. In Restorative Practices, practitioners attempt to identify, assess, and repair harm through structured communication between the offender and victim. Communication during restorative conferences emphasizes harm between individuals; not rule violations. Restorative conferences are an important component of Restorative Practices on school campuses (IIRP, 2017). Restorative Practices, when executed with fidelity, reduces risk to involved parties through learned problem-solving mechanisms. Schools train staff members to implement community-building structures and processes to involve the education community in the problem-solving process. In many instances, including the participating school in this study, training is provided for teachers to implement community-building structures in their classrooms. School leaders may require the execution of community-building activities in classrooms during Restorative Practices implementation.

Student perception studies in schools utilizing Restorative Practices revealed encouraging results. Restorative Practices led to student perceptions of a humane environment with a culture of respect, tolerance, and democracy (Hantzopoulos, 2013). This same study found that students

who experienced previous disengagement from school felt a sense of refuge and acceptance conducive to success after the implementation of Restorative Practices. Studies like Hantzopoulos (2013) assumed decisions by school districts to implement Restorative Practices were to improve campus climate, a common application of Restorative Practices. The implementation of Restorative Practices at the participating school was an effort to improve campus climates in the district, particularly for student groups with disproportionate suspensions and expulsions.

The Restorative Justice Council identified six principles to consider in the application of Restorative Justice Practices (2015). The six principles of restorative practice are: *restoration, voluntarism, neutrality, safety, accessibility, and respect*. When applied with fidelity, Restorative Practices is a safe, fair, and unbiased process that enables informed participants to voluntarily address and repair harm. Organizational leaders must implement structures to promote safe and respectful interactions between process participants, especially those impacted by the harmful behavior (2018). These principles may be applied in any family, group, or organization with leadership committed to the process.

Restorative Practices is an alternative to traditional punitive school discipline systems (Claassen & Claassen, 2017). It emphasizes mutual respect and a commitment to building relationships rather than strictly focusing on misbehavior (Macready, 2009). The successful implementation of Restorative Practices requires a shift from a culture of punishment to one of teaching and learning. School leaders, support staff, teachers, and students learn to respond to behavior offenses in a restorative manner, so incidents of student behavior are recognized as threats to human relationships as opposed to violations of rules (Claassen & Claassen, 2017).

The most extensive contact between students and schools occurs in classrooms between students and teachers. Because of the extensive contact, teachers are important participants in the successful implementation of student learning and behavior innovations on school campuses. The transition from traditional punishment to Restorative Practices involves the consideration of practices from all departments in school operations. The absence of broad consideration and implementation of practices results in inconsistent implementation. This study examined teacher perceptions of their own agency, campus climate, and their school's implementation of Restorative Practices. Teachers are the primary source of perception data for this study as they serve as the primary point of contact between students and schools.

### **Teacher Agency**

Teacher agency for this study was the perceived capacity of teachers to influence their current reality. This study applied teacher perceptions of their own agency to the implementation of Restorative Practices at an urban central California high school. To be an agent is to influence intentionally one's functioning and life circumstances (Bandura, 1987). Across organizational contexts where agency exists, stakeholders are participants in the operations of organizations, as opposed to onlookers or bystanders. Agency is the feeling of being a participant in one's current reality. When stakeholders have a say in solving problems, their level of ownership increases (Calvert, 2016). An example of teacher agency is when a teacher shares the vision for the implementation of Restorative Practices on campus. Principals can support teacher agency by ensuring teachers participate throughout the implementation and maintenance of the innovation. The maintenance process includes ongoing implementation; including process analysis, data collection, and data-driven decision making. School principals can further promote agency by ensuring adequate training and resources to manage classroom implementation. Classroom

implementation may include data collection, analysis, modification of practice based on data, and professional learning opportunities to enhance implementation.

State and federal educational policies contributed to this problem of practice; where school leaders did not consistently consider measurable teacher perceptions of agency, campus climate, and the implementation of campus climate innovations. In California, the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and accompanying Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) require stakeholder engagement in school district expenditures of supplemental and targeted state funds. The LCAP requires school districts to report performance data to local stakeholders and solicit their input in the development of improvement plans. LCFF accountability declares stakeholder engagement a measure of completion and not a measure to improve, further supporting the identification of the problem of practice in this study. There are no requirements for defining metrics to improve stakeholder engagement in the development of the plan. Accountability simply requires schools to document completion of stakeholder engagement. Public policy falls short of supporting teacher agency in the implementation of innovations on school campuses.

### **Climate**

School Climate was defined by the National School Climate Center (NSCC) as, “the quality and character of school life. School Climate is based on patterns of students’, parents’, and school personnel’s experience of school life and reflect norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures” (National School Climate Center, 2017, p. 1). A sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing, and satisfying life in a democratic society (National School Climate Center, 2017). The NSCC describes four essential dimensions of focus when exploring positive school climate: safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and

institutional environment. Perception data collection and analysis are essential to accurately and completely assess organizational climate. Safety, relationships, and teaching, three of the four essential focus dimensions of school climate, are measured with both quantitative and qualitative perception data.

Many schools in Fresno County adopted the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) as a campus climate measure. The CHKS was developed and published by WestEd. WestEd is a national educational research and development organization that uses research to develop educational innovations. WestEd describes the CHKS as an instrument for schools to accurately identify campus climate strengths and opportunities for growth. The instrument provides components to assess student perceptions of safety, engagement, substance-abuse, connectedness, and other variables related to students' school experiences (WestEd, 2017). Schools are encouraged to apply survey findings to school improvement efforts. The application of survey findings is not a component of Local Control Funding Formula compliance requirements. Along with disproportionate suspensions of African-American students and students with disabilities, campus climate metrics contributed to the adoption and implementation of Restorative Practices at the participating school.

### **Five Dimensions of a Problem of Practice**

Campus climate, teacher agency, and innovation implementation contribute to the problem of practice in this study, The University of Arkansas's Educational Leadership Program has identified five dimensions applicable to the assessment of potential problems of practice. Initial considerations for potential problems of practice may arise from classroom observations, data analysis, stakeholder focus groups, surveys, or other data collection and analysis mechanisms. The dimensions assess the extent a problem impacts teaching and learning within

school operations. Additionally, the dimensions assess the extent the problem of practice focuses on instruction or systemic issues, is directly observable, is actionable, connects to broader strategies for improvement, and is high leverage. Practitioners can use the five dimensions to justify efforts to engage the problem for improved teaching and learning outcomes.

### **Focuses on Instructional or Systemic Issues**

Instructional or systemic issues are problems that involve the interactions of teachers, students, and content. Instructional or systemic issues may also involve the interactions of system leaders, schools, and communities. In either situation, the problem relates to school or system performance or community well-being (University of Arkansas, 2017). Campus climate is an important component of successful schools (Shannon, 2017). Researchers at the State of Washington Department of Education performed a meta-analysis of school improvement research and identified a supportive learning environment as one of nine characteristics of high-quality schools (Shannon, 2017). The meta-analysis defined campus climate as a safe, civil, healthy, and intellectually stimulating learning environment. Additionally, measures of campus climate included the extent students felt respected, connected to staff members, and engaged in learning. Benbenishty, Astor, Roziner, and Wrabel (2016) identified interrelationships between stakeholder perceptions of campus climate and student learning. Although a causal relationship may not exist between positive perceptions of campus climate and student performance, studies of successful schools noted decreased violence and improved perceptions of school climate (Benbenishty et al., 2016).

### **Is Directly Observable**

Evidence of the effective implementation of a schoolwide campus climate initiative can be observed through quantitative and qualitative data collection. Stakeholder interviews may

render qualitative implementation data. Interview methods may include individual conversations, the observation of focus groups, or the facilitation of focus groups. Quantitative data collection may include surveys, campus climate walks, student discipline outcomes, and classroom observations (Ravitch & Karl, 2016).

The researcher observed evidence of the problem of practice for this study; teacher perceptions of agency and the implementation of campus climate innovations, using classroom observations, teacher conversations during training, and analyses of school improvement plans. Teachers' perceptions of student behavior conditions on their campuses and necessary interventions often contrasted those of site leaders. Classroom management training sessions contained instances of individual teacher resistance as the innovation proposed alternative approaches to behavior intervention. When teachers possess a sense of agency, they monitor their own attitudes, actions, outcomes, and progress towards desired outcomes.

Campus climate initiatives may have observable signage, instructional practices, routines, or procedures. Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) is a campus climate initiative implemented in schools throughout the United States. PBIS implementation includes signage, uniform incident documentation, data collection, and analysis. A trained observer can visit a PBIS campus and easily determine the quality of implementation of PBIS. Although PBIS may be a schoolwide adoption, implementation fidelity depends on teacher engagement. In *Discipline that Restores*, a campus climate innovation modeled after Restorative Justice, teachers and students develop a classroom respect agreement (Claassen & Claassen, 2008). The agreement allows students and teachers to collaboratively establish classroom expectations. This agreement is posted in the classroom and referenced by the teacher as a behavior intervention



(Claassen & Claassen, 2008). Respect agreements promote student agency and are observable evidence of the implementation of the innovation.

For two years preceding this study evidence suggested a lack of teacher agency in the implementation of campus climate initiatives. The researcher coached administrators, observed classrooms, conversed with high school teachers, and followed local news stories to verify the existence of the problem of practice for this study. Classroom observations with administrators and subsequent coaching conversations commonly revealed a gap between principal assumptions of implementation and actual teacher implementation of innovations. When asked about teacher perceptions of innovations or the implementation process, responses commonly revealed uncertainty. Principals struggled to clearly articulate the role of teachers in the implementation and monitoring of the adopted campus climate innovations.

During the 2015-2016 school year, the researcher coached two high school administrators through a regional accreditation process. Both schools, representing different central California districts, received unfavorable accreditation visits prior to the 2015-2015 school year. California high schools are required to be accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). Accreditation includes a detailed self-evaluation every six years. The evaluation concludes with a visit from an independent team of reviewers. Both schools required rapid and intense intervention to complete a quality self-evaluation and prepare for a successful visit. Prior to coaching, neither school implemented adequate strategies to gather stakeholder perceptions of campus climate, curriculum, instruction, leadership, or other school components. Both schools implemented schoolwide improvement plans in previous years without an assessment of teacher perceptions. Subsequent coaching practice with the two school leaders required reminders of the importance of frequent and formative perception monitoring. After applying perception data to

inform structures to promote teacher agency, along with other schoolwide interventions, both schools completed successful accreditation visits.

Along with the two high schools successfully accredited during the 2015-2016 school year, observations in other schools around Fresno County provided evidence of inconsistent classroom implementation of campus climate innovations. DuPre and Durlak (2008) concluded that the level of implementation affected outcomes of innovations. Implementation fidelity, particularly on school campuses, depends on teachers engaged in the implementation process. For campus climate innovations implemented in central California schools, innovations are commonly assessed by student discipline statistics.

Schools use student information systems to collect student behavior data for reporting. The California Department of Education (CDE) accountability model requires schools to improve suspension and expulsion rates (2018). State accountability for improvement includes continuous reductions in both schoolwide and subgroup suspension and expulsion rates. Subgroups include racial-ethnic groups, students with disabilities, homeless and foster youth, English learners, and students who qualify for free or reduced priced meals. The accountability system also requires districts to use locally adopted instruments to measure stakeholder perceptions of campus climate. Schools utilize a variety of instruments to assess stakeholder perceptions of campus climate. State accountability for stakeholder perception data defines compliance as documented stakeholder engagement attempts. Therefore, schools must be locally prompted to apply perception data to improvement plans. Interested individuals can review a school district's Local Control Accountability Plan to determine the impact of stakeholder input on the implementation of initiatives. The accountability structure allows school districts to

implement innovations and policy changes to reduce student suspensions and expulsions without efforts to engage teachers as agents.

### **Is Actionable**

A problem is actionable if it can be improved in real time (University of Arkansas, 2017). The current problem of practice is actionable as practices contributing to the problem can be improved in real time. School leaders may address the current problem of practice by exploring and applying best practices in implementation. This study presents a research-based model for innovation implementation through the Quality Implementation Framework (Durlak, Meyers, & Wandersman, 2012).

According to Akey (2006), schools have improved campus climate by implementing targeted climate initiatives with fidelity. Of selected strategies used by school leaders to improve student learning, many involved specific efforts to improve campus climate. Moreover, in schools where academic achievement improved, students felt safe and treated fairly.

Teachers are important contributors to school success and improvement (Marzano, 2009). School districts in Fresno County often employ consultants to improve student performance and campus climate. Teachers frequently possess a firmer grasp on local contexts and community needs than outside consultants. According to Leana (2013), outside consultants, researchers, and experts often lack applicable experience in public school systems. Leana (2013) asserts that “Encouraging professionals to participate in school leadership alters the perception of ownership in that the feeling of ownership increases when teachers become part of the decision-making process” (p. 31). Teachers may contribute significantly to improvement efforts if given the opportunity from the beginning of an innovation implementation. When school leaders fail to

formatively assess teacher perceptions of campus climate, they cannot completely describe the impact of implementation of schoolwide campus climate initiatives on those perceptions.

According to California school accountability (2018), stakeholder perception is an important component of a campus climate assessment. Limiting improvement efforts to solely reduce discipline outcomes may produce desired outcomes but may also decrease employee satisfaction. Interventions in Fresno Unified School District resulted in declining suspensions and expulsions between 2013 and 2017. During the 2016-2017 school year, 70 out of 85 teachers at one of the district's high schools signed a petition to address campus climate (Mays, 2016). The petition requested consistent discipline and increased input in student discipline outcomes. Petition signers cited unsafe classrooms for students and teachers. They also cited poor communication between teachers and administrators who responded to student discipline incidents. Additionally, the petition cited an absence of a defined student discipline plan. Similar incidents of expressed teacher dissatisfaction with campus climate innovation implementation were documented around the United States including Chicago, Illinois and Des Moines, Iowa (Felton, 2017).

### **Connects to a Broader Strategy of Improvement**

The California Local Control Funding Formula (2018) established eight priorities for public school districts. Districts are required to gather stakeholder input to develop their Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) to address the eight priorities. The priorities include a broad view of school improvement beyond the scope of student test scores. The priorities include: basic school services, implementing state standards, course access for all students, student achievement, student engagement, parent involvement, and school climate, and additional

student outcomes. Districts were required to consult with all stakeholders to develop a plan to meet the eight priorities.

Priority *six* requires schools to ensure campuses are safe and engaging for students. State accountability metrics defined campus safety by student suspension and expulsion rates. Students who felt safe at school were more likely to have higher grade point averages (Clark & Russell, 2009). Clark and Russell (2009) also found when students felt safe at school, they were more likely to aspire for college. State accountability requires detailed reporting of student suspension and expulsion rates. However, stakeholder engagement improvement metrics are not state requirement.

The researcher observed evidence of limited stakeholder engagement in nine central California schools between 2015 and 2017. The researcher, as a principal coach, encouraged two high school principals in this group to conduct stakeholder surveys. Upon survey analysis, both principals recognized they had established policies and implemented systems based on insufficient data. They previously implemented campus safety initiatives informed by conduct referrals, fights, suspensions, expulsions, and district office recommendations. After carefully analyzing perception data, the principals adjusted initial campus climate plans. New disaggregated perception data revealed previously undiscovered campus climate dynamics.

### **Is High Leverage**

Improved campus climate was an important characteristic of schools where student learning outcomes improved (Sparks, 2011). There exist implications beyond school for students most often suspended, expelled, restrained, and isolated by school discipline systems. The Forum on Public Policy (2009) theorized the existence of a school-to-prison pipeline by suggesting school discipline policies indirectly support the growth of prison populations. The same study

reported that forty percent of students expelled from school for any amount of time eventually dropped out. Khatiwada, McLaughlin, and Sum (2009), in a study of labor market participation, incarceration, and education attainment, found among African-American males, the student group most often suspended and expelled from central California schools, one of four students who dropped out of school had been incarcerated (Khatiwada, et al., 2009).

Four commonly implemented campus climate initiatives in Fresno County schools promoted the possibility of improved campus climates when implemented with fidelity. Initiatives also provided an optimal implementation process. The implementation plans did not call for schools to assess teacher perceptions of campus climate. The implementation plans also failed to promote teacher agency. Implementation plans included timelines, templates, processes, and procedures, but no structures to promote teacher agency within the research and implementation processes. The current problem of practice suggests schools have not applied teacher perceptions of agency or campus climate to implementation plans for campus climate improvement initiatives.

Developers of the Quality Implementation Framework, in a meta-analysis of implementation studies, identified a fourteen-step process for organizations to implement improvement innovations (Durlak et al., 2012). The meta-analysis divided the fourteen steps into four phases. Schools may achieve desired outcomes by introducing and supporting the application of this process. Observations and teacher feedback shared with the researcher suggest central California schools have implemented initiatives without an optimal approach to implementation, namely omitting teacher agency.

## **Research Questions**

Through an examination of the implementation of Restorative Justice Practices on a central California high school campus, the goal of this study was to improve the implementation of campus climate innovations. Leaders without proper training have applied the leadership practices of those that led them, at times limiting stakeholder participation when adopting solutions (Calvert, 2016). When teachers have a say in solving problems, their level of agency increases (Calvert, 2016). Three research questions were developed to examine teacher agency and the implementation of Restorative Practices:

1. To what extent do teachers consider themselves agents in the implementation of Restorative Practices?
  - a. What relationship exists between teacher perceptions of agency and campus climate?
  - b. What relationship exists between teacher perceptions of agency and the implementation of Restorative Justice practices?
2. Do differences exist between teacher expectations for the implementation of Restorative Practices and the current state of implementation?
  - a. What were the perceptions of teachers prior to implementation?
  - b. What are the perceptions of the current reality of implementation?
3. What process did leaders used when implementing Restorative Practices?

## **Overview of Methodology**

This mixed-methods sequential explanatory study examined the relationship between teacher perceptions of agency, school climate, and the implementation of Restorative Practices in an urban central California high school. The study used a teacher survey to measure perceptions

of agency, campus climate, and the implementation of Restorative Practices on their campus. Additionally, the study included interviews with the principal, Restorative Practices counselor, and ten teachers. Semi-structured interviews explored teacher perceptions of Restorative Practices before and after implementation while examining the implementation process. The principal and Restorative Practices counselor interviews provided details about the implementation on campus. The study revealed teacher perceptions of agency, their role in the implementation of Restorative Practices on their campus, and relationships between agency and implementation. The analysis of survey and interview data evaluated the relationship between agency, campus climate, and Restorative Practices implementation. Chapter three of this study provides further details of this study's methodology.

### **Positionality**

Positionality is the role of the researcher as a participant observer and describes the researcher's relationship with participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). During the research and data collection phase of this study, the researcher was employed as a Systems and Leadership Coach for the office of the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools, providing support to school administrative teams as they implemented school improvement innovations. Districts contracted with the county Superintendent to support administrative teams through the implementation process of school improvement initiatives. The researcher specialized in K-12 instructional and campus climate systems and initiatives, providing classroom management and climate training to school staff members. While some school districts contract with the county Superintendent's office, others adopt campus climate approaches or implement scripted innovations on their own. Regardless of the source of the innovation, the researcher supported administrative teams through Cognitive and Transformational Coaching to build internal



capacity within leadership teams. During the 2016-2017 school year, the researcher's coaching assignments included nine administrative teams within four districts.

### **Assumptions**

This mixed methods study used surveys and interviews to examine teacher perceptions of agency, campus climate, and the implementation of Restorative Justice Practices at an urban central California high school. Survey results indicated teachers safely and honestly responded to questions. The twelve interview participants experienced the implementation of Restorative Practices on their campus based on their tenures at the school. Teacher participants represented the entire teacher population at the school based on shared interests in school improvement. Teachers represented variable years of experience and academic subject areas. Interview participants provided clarity to survey outcomes. Of twelve interview participants, none withdrew from the process. Three interviewees acknowledged the risk to their confidentiality, job security, or relationships with colleagues. One respondent asked: "I won't get fired for answering, right?" Another asked: "This is just between us, right?" Based on the continuation of the three interviews, all participants engaged both the survey and interviews openly in the interest of continuous school improvement.

Interviews were recorded using a voice memo application when participants granted permission. Interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed. Member checks, or *respondent validation*, were used to confirm assertions and inferences with interview participants from the coded interview transcripts (Carl & Ravitch, 2016). This validation strategy helped to ensure responses were accurately interpreted. Audio files were deleted after the completion of this study.

Survey demographic questions included total years teaching and years of service at the participating school. The two-item demographic inquiry limited data disaggregation but served to support participant confidence. This effort promoted honest and thoughtful responses to survey items.

Participants interested in the study were driven by their desire for school improvement; particularly an improved campus climate. Furthermore, state accountability required continuous improvement for campus climate as measured by suspension and expulsion rates. Beyond the findings of this study, school leaders and teachers were interested in improvement of all eight California Local Control Funding Formula priorities.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

The following terms and subsequent definitions provide an association between the terms, context, research, and connections to this study.

*Agency* is the human capability to exert influence over their functioning and outcomes based on their own actions (Bandura, 2009). According to Bandura, humans exercising agency can construct, evaluate, and modify alternative courses of action to gain valued outcomes while overriding environmental factors. This study applied the study of *agency* to teachers on a central California high school campus.

*Innovations* for this study are initiatives applied to implementation science. *Innovations* in schools are initiatives that include a clear description, clearly described essential functions including operational definitions, and a practical system of assessment of participant performance (Fixsen, Blase, Metz, & Van Dyke, 2013). This study applied *innovations* to initiatives implemented on school campuses; particularly Restorative Justice.

*Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)* was enacted in 2013 and replaced California’s previous education funding model for public schools. The previous funding model existed for forty years. The LCFF established a base amount of funding for every school, while adding equitable targeted funds to schools with students who are limited English proficient, foster youth, homeless, and low-income. Reporting accountability for LCFF is the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP). School districts engage stakeholders to develop a Local Control Accountability Plan. The LCAP is a three-year plan. After each of three years, districts develop an annual update to the plan. This study applies the Local Control Funding Formula and accompanying Local Control Accountability Plan to efforts made by California schools to promote continuous improvement.

*Restorative Justice* is rooted in historical principles of victim-offender reconciliation. In victim-offender reconciliation, crime victims and offenders voluntarily participate in structured dialogue intended to address the needs of the victim. The discussion of the offense is in response to the harm done to the victim, and not in response to violations of rules or laws. The goal is to restore human relationships by healing damage caused by offenses (Mulligan, 2009).

*Restorative Practices* apply the principles of Restorative Justice to a set of processes, procedures, and practices to improve campus climates. The International Institute of Restorative Practices defines Restorative Practices as “a social science that studies how to build social capital and achieve social discipline through participatory learning and decision making (2018).” Furthermore, the use of Restorative Practices helps to increase civility, promote communication, restore relationships, and repair harm done (Wachtel, 2018).

*School climate* is the quality and character of school life based on stakeholder experiences of school life, and reflects norms, goals, values, relationships, teaching and learning

practices, and organizational structures (NSCC, 2017). This study applies school climate as a primary cause of the implementation of Restorative Practices on the central California high school campus.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine teacher agency and the implementation of Restorative Practices in an urban central California high school. The study's findings will support improved implementations of innovations in schools because of the emphasis on increasing teacher agency. This study includes a literature review to provide background information on teacher agency, campus climate, and Restorative Practices through the context of the Quality Implementation Framework (Durlak et al., 2012). Following the Literature Review, the Methodology describes the mixed methods approach to data collection; including the rationale. This study utilized teacher surveys, teacher interviews, and administrator interviews to assess perceptions of agency, campus climate, and the implementation of Restorative Practices on their campus. Chapter four of the study will reveal the results of the survey and interview data collection. Chapter five includes an analysis of findings, conclusions, recommendations for further research, and concluding remarks.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine the implementation of Restorative Justice Practices in an urban central California high school through the lens of administrators, teacher perceptions of agency, campus climate, and impact of the implementation of Restorative Practices. This study finds significance as the researcher coached schools that implemented campus climate innovations unable to describe teacher perceptions of the innovation. Teacher engagement was consistently absent in the research and implementation process of those innovations. This study measured the strength of relationships between teacher agency and campus climate and teacher agency and the implementation of Restorative Practices. Additionally, the study used teacher and administrator interviews to examine the implementation of Restorative Practices.

The University of Arkansas online library portal was used to access scholarly and peer-reviewed resources for this study. The library provided access to EBSCO Academic Search Complete, ProQuest, and the university dissertation and thesis databases with the Quick Search feature. Research filters were used to narrow search results by date, themes, and relevance to the study. The databases provided access to literature and resources to support a deeper examination of applicable topics. Additionally, the Fresno State University library provided access to print resources to support topic exploration, particularly older bound resources related to implementation science, Restorative Justice Practices, and employee agency.

Google Scholar was accessed at times for preliminary research but access to full-text resources was limited. Therefore, Google Scholar was primarily used to provide bibliographical information for resources that contributed to this study

The search for resources for this study included variations in search terms. Search terms for employee agency included variations such as locus of control, teacher engagement, and teacher voice. Search terms for Restorative Justice included variations such as restorative justice practices, restorative practices, and victim-offender reconciliation. Search terms for campus climate included campus climate, campus safety, student safety, and teacher safety. The final broad search topic was implementation science, which included variations such as implementation, improvement, and implementing innovations.

Finally, the California Department of Education's DataQuest site was used to access local, regional, and state educational demographic and campus climate statistics. The data provided a rationale for analyzing the problem of practice. The DataQuest portal revealed school enrollment statistics and showed disproportionate suspension and expulsion data for African-American students in central California schools.

### **Problem Statement**

The driving problem for this study was schools in and adjacent to Fresno County failed to consistently consider both measurable teacher perceptions of campus climate and teacher agency when implementing campus climate improvement initiatives. School leaders within the researcher's coaching scope constantly referenced student behavior outcomes when rationalizing the adoption of campus climate initiatives. The identified scope of the problem for this study was limited to school sites where the researcher provided coaching and professional development throughout two school years that preceded the study. Local, state, and federal accountability measures assessed campus climate with student behavior outcomes. State and local accountability outcomes were limited to cumulative and disaggregated student suspension and expulsion data. Although local accountability required schools to assess teacher perceptions of

climate and engagement, outcome reporting required schools to report *completion* as opposed to actionable data analysis with improvement targets.

### **Review of the Literature**

The following sections represent the categories explored to further understand the relationship between teacher agency, campus climate, and the implementation of Restorative Practices in a central California high school. Studies identified in this review of literature highlight the significance of the effective implementation of innovations in human service initiatives. DuPre and Durlak (2008) found strong empirical evidence to conclude the level of implementation affected outcomes of innovation goals in promotion and prevention programs. Promotion and prevention programs included interventions and pupil service innovations. The participating school in this study implemented Restorative Practices as a promotion and prevention program.

The sequence of this literature review corresponds with the steps of the Quality Implementation Framework (Durlak et al., 2012). Durlak et al. (2012) developed the Quality Implementation Framework (QIF) by synthesizing 25 research-based implementation frameworks. The QIF identified 14 actions essential to the successful implementation of innovations. The synthesis grouped the actions into four phases of implementation. The four phases are:

1. Initial considerations regarding the host setting
2. Creating structures for implementation
3. Ongoing structure once implementation begins
4. Improving Future application

Fixsen et al. (2005) defined implementation as a defined set of activities to put into practice an activity or program of known dimensions. For proper implementation, organizations must outline clear and measurable processes. This is assessed by the ability of an independent observer to determine the level of fidelity. The independent observer must observe the presence and strength of application of the defined components of the program.

The development of the Quality Implementation Framework involved the study of implementation frameworks in service settings such as schools, mental health facilities, healthcare facilities, community-based intervention organizations, and substance abuse prevention organizations. Of the 14 critical steps identified in the framework, nine cite connections to organizational member engagement. The study defined members as those who administered or benefited from the innovation. The study defined implementation as putting a strategy into practice to achieve desired outcomes (Durlak et al. 2012). Other terms used to assess the quality of implementation included fidelity, compliance, integrity, and faithful repetition.

Innovations were developed for many challenges school leaders face in K-12 education. School leaders may allocate substantial resources to adopt school improvement innovations. For example, a district wide implementation of Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS), a campus climate innovation, can require an initial investment of \$69,000 for the first year of implementation. Implementation costs include training, substitutes for staff members away from school sites, materials, planning time, data collection, and data analysis (Horner et al., 2012). Professional development to support the implementation of an innovation can cost as much as \$5,000 per day for training personnel and related expenses. A prominent researcher to speak and provide the rationale for an innovation can cost as much as \$15,000 per day. Fresno Unified



School District, the largest district in Fresno County, allocated \$3.4 million to the implementation of campus climate innovations in the 2017-2018 school year.

## **Four Phases of the Quality Implementation Framework**

### ***Initial Considerations Regarding the Host Setting***

Organizations must put assessment structures in place to consider the readiness of the implementation of new innovations (Durlak et al., 2012). Assessment includes defining the need for the innovation by identifying organizational needs addressed by the innovation. Phase one of the Framework's four stages of implementation is broken into eight stages.

One step of the eight stages of initial considerations regarding the host setting calls for the organization to conduct a needs and resources assessment. Here, organizations ask why they are exploring the innovation, what problems or conditions will be improved by the innovation, and who in the organization will benefit from the innovation (2012). In schools, needs may include student outcomes for racial ethnic groups, students in specific grade levels, students with varying language proficiency, students with special needs, or other identified needs. The timing of the implementation of Restorative Practices in at least three central California schools coincided with increased scrutiny and accountability for student discipline outcomes.

Practitioners must analyze critical aspects of the host setting prior to implementing an innovation. Organizations can begin this process by evaluating an innovation against institutional goals and plans for their attainment (Nordstrum et al., 2017). Organizational leaders may work with implementation teams to determine the organizational mission, vision, progress monitoring mechanisms, and interventions throughout the implementation process. Leaders may work with stakeholders to work through these constructs by utilizing tools such as the *fifteen elements of the innovation delivery framework* (US Education Delivery Institute, 2015). The host setting

assessment phase of quality implementation can take six to eight months including partnership formation, recruiting key leaders, training, and establishing program goals based on an assessment of needs (Nordstrum et al., 2017). Stakeholders are important participants in the implementation process. Involving teachers in the organizational needs assessment and innovation adoption process may give them the opportunity to own the innovation from inception and contribute to implementation as an agent.

To accurately assess needs and resources, leaders must consider the needs and capacity of participating stakeholders. Leaders must determine whether stakeholders feel the need for innovations such as those to improve campus climate. Positive school climates have benefits for school staff members (Bradshaw et al., 2014). When educators work in an environment where they feel supported by administrators, they report higher levels of engagement (O’Brennan & Bradshaw, 2013). Schools where educators openly communicate with one another, feel supported, and establish strong student-educator relationships report better student academic and behavioral outcomes (Brown & Medway, 2007).

With available research and continuous inquiry into links between a positive school climate and academic achievement, employee retention, student satisfaction, and decreased student behavior outcome levels, school leaders must decide whether to expand their rationale for implementing student behavior initiatives. Thus, a school site leader must determine if behavior outcome data alone will drive the implementation. School climates produce student behavior outcome data (Cornell et al., 2011). Schools with an authoritative climate—one containing student support and structure proportionately— had lower numbers of student suspensions and expulsions (Cornell et al., 2011). This same study found that schools with authoritative structures had proportional numbers of suspensions and expulsions between

African-American and White students. Ineffective implementation of student discipline through the frequent use of suspensions and expulsions negatively affected campus climate (Noguera et al., 2010). Up to and including the 2017-2018 school year, central California schools faced questions about the equity of their student support services because of disproportionate suspension figures between African-American and students of other ethnic nationalities.

Lishchinsky and Rosenblatt (2010) conducted a study to examine school climates and teacher voluntary absences and sought to determine if positive school climates contributed to improved senses of affective organizational commitment. They assessed affective organizational commitment using voluntary absences and by combining surveys from 1,016 teachers in 35 Israeli high schools with archived attendance data. With survey and attendance data, they used regression analyses to compare absences to ethical climates defined by two dimensions; caring and formal. Their findings connected caring and formal climates with teacher absences. Their conclusions revealed principals may reduce voluntary absences by creating an ethical climate focused on caring, combined with clear and fair rules and procedures. Affective commitment is akin to agency because both referred to employees' emotional attachment, identification, and involvement with organizational matters (Lishchinsky & Rosenblatt, 2010).

When teachers perceive their organizational climate to be caring, they are likely to feel more secure in their own welfare and more responsible toward others in the school. These reactions produce a bond with the school, which encourages cooperation and attachment, and ultimately leads to greater affective organizational commitment (Lishchinsky & Rosenblatt, 2010).

Throughout the implementation process, stakeholders must be active agents (Durlak et al., 2012). Agency is supported through the process of stakeholders participating in an evaluation

of the host setting. Stakeholders should be involved in assessing the needs of the organization, as well as the appropriateness of the implementation of an innovation such as Restorative Practices.

Agency for this study was the perceived capacity of teachers to influence decision making. To be an agent is to influence intentionally one's functioning and life circumstances (Bandura, 1986). Where agency exists, stakeholders are participants in the operations of organizations, as opposed to onlookers or bystanders. A sense of agency transcends context and organizational management. Agency for teachers is the feeling of being a participant in their own current reality. Bandura (1986) described four core properties of human agency. The core properties were intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflection.

Bandura (1986) used the term intentionality to describe the deliberate and measured planning and action associated with stakeholder agency. Efforts of high-agency stakeholders are increased towards the achievement of desired outcomes shared between the individuals and the organization. Participants in an organization need to address their individual needs in the context of large school change to identify as an agent in the change innovation (Bandura, 2006). For example, as schools initiate an innovation such as Restorative Practices, agency is possible when participants can identify their self-interests in the innovation. School leaders can assess teacher interests in an innovation like Restorative Practices with perception data collection. Restorative Practices is perceived to work best when it is integrated into the school's overall philosophy (Ashley & Burke, 2009).

Forethought is evident by calculated planning by stakeholders; even to the point of developing individual action plans toward the achievement of desired outcomes (Bandura, 2006). As intentionality and forethought contribute to planning and action, self-reactiveness creates the skill and desire to regulate effort and emotional investment in achieving desired outcomes.

Bandura addressed the propensity of high-agency stakeholders to self-regulate desire and effort during the period of executing components of an innovation. He also addressed the willingness and ability of high-agency stakeholders to self-reflect throughout the implementation process. Self-reflection allows stakeholders to see the effects of their actions in the moment and make appropriate adjustments instantaneously and fluidly (2006).

Social cognitive theory ranks agency high among determinants of human behavior outcomes (Bandura, 1986). Other determinants of human functioning are intrapersonal factors, behavioral factors, and environmental factors. Social cognitive theory holds that learning occurs from participant interactions, environment, and behaviors. Individuals can be immersed in environments imposed on them, self-selected, or self-created (Bussey, 2015). Bussey (2015) posits:

From this perspective, an intervention focusing on altering aggressive behavior in schools, for example, would involve teachers and counselors to modify emotional states and correct faulty beliefs about aggressive behavior (personal factors), improve interpersonal skills and ways of handling interpersonal conflict (behavioral factors), and modify classroom and school structures that contribute to aggressive behavior (environmental factors). (p. 938)

This suggests an approach to behavior intervention that addresses the needs of students, adults, and the campus environment. To apply the principles of social cognitive theory, leaders would need to address student behavior, support alternative responses, and assess environmental factors contributing to maladaptive behavior. Investigations into aggressive student behavior revealed misapplied adult actions as primary stimuli for student aggressive behaviors (Bussey, 2015). As students are participants in teacher led classroom environments, teachers are participants in administrator led school environments.

Organizational leaders are positioned to impact participant behaviors to varying degrees. They can ensure participants are given the opportunity to fully engage in planning and

innovation implementation, as called for during initial considerations of the host setting of the (QIF). They can also ensure capacity building mechanisms are in place where needed.

A capacity building strategy called for in the QIF is staff recruitment and maintenance. The selection process for key role players in an implementation can be complex, but it is vital work (Fixsen et al., 2005). In successful implementation, organizations should employ “effective practitioners, excellent trainers, effective coaches, skilled evaluators, and facilitative administrators” (p. 36). Implementing campus climate initiatives involves the careful identification and selection of key players. Skills should be aligned with assignments in the implementation process (Fixsen et al., 2005). For best results, Restorative Practice implementation requires a trained staff, an invested student body, and an engaged and supportive external community (Pavelka, 2013). School leadership must establish, sustain, and expand restorative practices into the culture of the school (Pavelka, 2013). School staff must possess capacity and resources to successfully fund, implement, and evaluate their Restorative Practices program (Fronius et al., 2016).

In Bandura’s research (1982), there was a positive correlation between agency and self-efficacy. Where high self-efficacy existed, Bandura’s four essential properties of agency existed. Perceptions of efficacy influence thought patterns, actions, and emotional arousal (1982). Emotional arousal is minimal in cases of high self-efficacy because actions are intentional, planned, calculated, and regulated. Organizational managers can elicit increased effort, planning, and execution, while lowering emotional responses to obstacles by initiating steps to increase agency early in the implementation of innovations. Organizational managers promote agency by ensuring mechanisms are in place to ensure the climate is conducive to supporting the actions called for in the implementation and execution of innovations. With Restorative Practices, school

leaders can support teacher agency by ensuring support mechanisms exist to address their ongoing needs as participants in the initiative.

As school leaders pursue organizational paradigm shifts, Fullan (2016) proposes agency can be developed by investing in professional capital. Developing professional capital involves building human, social, and decisional capital. Human capital is professional talent of instructors in the school. Leaders must recruit talented instructors and invest in continuous improvement. School leaders promote social capital by “supporting teacher access to knowledge and information; their sense of expectation, obligation and trust; and their commitment to work together for a common cause” (p. 1). Decisional capital describes necessary teacher expertise to make decisions to affect the educational environment within and beyond the classroom. Leaders must address the three dimensions of professional capital with individual teachers towards the development of collective professional capital in the change process (Fullan, 2016). The impact of high collective social capital outweighs the impact of talented individuals in improving the practice of struggling teachers. Along with developing collective social capital, successful leaders build individual professional capital in the early phases of implementation of innovations.

Moral agency is important for participants in schools where Restorative Practices are utilized (Brewery, 2016). Moral agents determine their own behavior when it affects students’ well-being, and can avoid harming students (Black, 2016). To develop moral agency with Restorative Practices implementation, participants must be rational decision-makers, and meticulously apply the rules of Restorative Practices. Restorative Practices involves teaching problem solving strategies for students and staff. Just as agency is necessary to promote engagement and increased efficacy in academic content, agency promotes necessary skill

development to implement the problem-solving structures of Restorative Practices. School leaders can support the development of moral agency on campus by building staff capacity, modeling problem-solving between adults, and supporting the continual improvement of practices.

### ***Implementation Teams***

An emerging phenomenon related to the implementation of initiatives on school campuses is the use of implementation teams (Higgins et al., 2012). Implementation teams are stakeholder groups strategically developed to lead stakeholders through the steps of quality implementation. Organizational leaders should prioritize the stability of roles on an organization's implementation team to support continuity throughout the implementation (Higgins et al., 2012). Quality implementation teams are the most successful drivers of organizational change at all levels (Katzenback & Smith, 2012).

Effective implementation teams have different management styles than traditional project management models (Nkukwana & Terblanch, 2017). Implementation teams preferred a model of leadership where managers were hands-off, "worked to establish trust, allowed the team to self-analyze assets, and served as coach and facilitator" (p. 9). The use of implementation teams in organizations may require a shift from a leader-driven to a more facilitative management style.

Organizational management and the use of implementation teams were tested in the racial integration efforts of post-Apartheid South Africa. Extensive work was done to create an integrated society both within and outside of organizations. As the integration efforts occurred, researchers examined the dynamics of implementation teams in newly integrated workforces (Hodgson & Zaaiman, 2013). However, change initiatives failed due to resistance and poor



conceptualization and planning, and the lack of proper integration of the people and business dimensions of change.

In a study conducted in schools recently implementing Restorative Practices, participants determined the greatest needs were improved training with ongoing coaching and support, staff buy-in, and an internal expert for accessible support (Guckenberget al., 2016).

Successful implementation of Restorative Practices in schools begins with collaboration (Pavelka, 2013). This involves building connections within and between staff members, students, community members and organizations. Other steps to prepare the organization for the implementation includes the work of fostering relationships within and between staff and students on campus. A climate of caring and mutual compassion lays the groundwork for processes to resolve conflict and restore relationships when conflicts arise. Restorative Justice practices should not be rigidly imposed on a school as a policy but should instead be integrated into the core values of the school community (Hantzopoulos, 2013).

Another important component of the first phase of the Quality Implementation Framework requires schools to assess innovations for organizational fit. Questions in a quality assessment tool assess the extent the innovation matches the organization’s values, mission, vision, priorities, and strategy for growth (Durlak et al., 2012). The participating school district in this study initially implemented Restorative Practices in one of multiple regions in the district. Regional implementation included elementary, middle, and high schools in the high-school attendance area. The district established an LCAP goal to ensure all students stay in school on track to graduate (FCSS, 2017). The district committed one-third of the money allocated to the LCAP goal specifically to Restorative Practices investments, student voice, and relationship-centered schools. This investment included employing Restorative Practices counselors. The

district expanded from one high-school region to three high-school regions between 2015 and 2017. Regions included a comprehensive high school, middle school, and all elementary schools within the high-school boundary. Investments included parent restorative practice modules and training of campus resource officers in restorative practices (FCSS, 2017).

During phase one of the QIF, organizations must determine the extent innovations need to be modified to best fit the host setting. Atkins et al. (2014) examined organizational fit through an examination of the implementation of an evidence-based teen parent program in multiple organizations. Community and school-based organizations participated in the study, along with a city-sponsored summer youth program. Implementation success in their studied varied because of organizational logistics. For example, one organization lacked adequate facilities to implement with fidelity. Successful implementation would have required the organization to change the model of its services from field-based to office-based. Other organizational challenges identified included inconsistent engagement of organizational leaders during planning and training sessions, contributing to a lack of agency. A third challenge highlighted in the study was the inability of organizations to respond to staffing demands of the teen parent initiative. During school-based interventions within the teen parent initiative, school schedules, gender separation, and class size requirements were organizational obstacles to effective implementation. Additionally, a significant cause of failure in the school setting was conflict between data-collection requirements and state data release policies.

The implementation of Restorative Practices has logistical requirements that challenge organizations to adapt site logistics, policies, and personnel to implementation needs. Organizational policy shifts may include the introduction of peer mediation, peer accountability, and transitions away from zero-tolerance discipline policies (Pavelka, 2013). Anyon et al. (2016)

found that variations in implementation of Restorative Practices affected outcomes. Schools implementing practices with consistency found improved results; namely fewer repeated behavior incidents and reduced suspensions. Durlak et al. (2012) pose the following questions in the QIF when considering organizational fit:

- (1) Should the planned innovation be modified in any way to fit the host setting and target group?
- (2) What feedback can the host staff offer regarding how the proposed innovation needs to be changed to make it successful in a new setting and for its intended audience?
- (3) How will changes to the innovation be documented and monitored during implementation? (p. 469)

(2)  
Durlak et al. (2012) suggests organizations closely assess their infrastructure, capital, employees, and resources during the early stages of implementation.

The initial phase of the QIF requests explicit buy-in of critical stakeholders, a supportive organization, and supportive community. The QIF provided guiding questions for leaders to assess the extent to which they obtained buy-in from critical stakeholders. The framework suggests organizations assess explicit innovation buy-in from leadership, front-line participants, and the local community. Organizations should also address all questions, concerns, and resistance to the innovation. During this phase of implementation, the Framework encourages organizations to identify and recruit innovation champions to inspire others to adopt associated practices. Once organizations recruit champions, they must determine how to best support them and maintain buy-in for change (Durlak et al., 2012).

### ***Creating Structures for Implementation***

Phase two of the QIF calls for the creation of structures to ensure proper oversight and management of the implementation process. One approach to meet this need is the development and use of implementation teams. An implementation team is charged with designing and leading the implementation of an organization-wide change strategy (Higgins et al., 2013).

Effective implementation teams mitigate the effects of staff turnover and possible staff indifference through implementation team professional development (Kahn, 1992). Two questions asked in the second phase of the QIF are: “(1) Is there a clear plan for what will happen, and when it should occur; and (2) who will accomplish the different tasks related to delivering the innovation and overseeing its implementation?” (p. 471).

The implementation team should represent critical organizational and community stakeholders (Fixsen et al., 2005). The capacity within this group is essential to successful implementation. The organization must ensure entry-level capacity exists and commit to an ongoing professional development plan to support all roles on the implementation teams. Successful implementations of innovations involve students, parents, educators, and community members as partners in planning, implementation, and evaluation (Elias et al, 2006). The roles of the implementation team are important throughout the implementation, maintenance, and ongoing evaluation of the innovation.

Prior to adopting an innovation, implementation teams should participate in research related to the innovation. Campus climate innovations such as Restorative Practices requiring shifts in mindset along with practices necessitate research and analysis prior to adoption (Bradshaw & Pas, 2011). In a statewide scale of PBIS, officials in Maryland held a conference for implementation teams to examine campus climate innovations. One task was to evaluate the innovation for organizational fit. The implementation process also required a three-year commitment from the team to follow the prescribed implementation blueprint. To assess for organizational fit, implementation teams were to consider the reality of innovation as required part of organizational operations (Domitrovich et al, 2010). Bradshaw and Pas (2011) found a

positive relationship between years of ongoing training in the innovation and quality of implementation.

Over ninety percent of California public school teachers belong to the California Teachers Association, the state's largest teacher union (CTA, 2017). Collective bargaining agreements between teacher unions and districts frequently spell out expectations for member participation in decision-making. Fresno Unified School District is the largest school district in Fresno County, California and the fourth largest school district by student population in California (California Department of Education, 2017). The collective bargaining agreement negotiated between Fresno Unified and the Fresno Teachers Association calls for a School Building Committee consisting of bargaining unit members (Fresno Teachers Association, 2014). They established this committee to ensure collaboration on the implementation of site initiatives. The committee expects the district to facilitate "unit member involvement, as requested by either party, in the school's decision-making process, with final school site action being the responsibility of the principal" (p. 107). The collective bargaining unit calls for mandatory participation in the decision-making process, but engagement goes beyond mandatory participation. A school leader can gain consensus on the need for implementation and still miss critical stages of quality implementation.

### ***Ongoing Structure Once Implementation Begins***

Phases one and two of the QIF must be completed prior to implementation (Durlak et al., 2012). Actual implementation of practice begins in phase three of the QIF. The required tasks in Phase Three of the QIF include: "(1) providing needed ongoing technical assistance to front-line providers; (2) monitoring ongoing implementation; and (3) creating feedback mechanisms so involved parties understand how the implementation process is progressing" (p. 471). Guiding

questions for this phase seek information about the technical assistance plan, ongoing participant capacity, and quality feedback for quick responses.

Phase Three of the QIF also begins the analysis of fidelity. Fidelity is the extent to which specific program components are delivered as prescribed (DuPre & Durlak, 2008). An important consideration of this definition is the absence of measurable outcomes. Educational innovations commonly prescribe guidelines and steps to effective implementation. Because of the lack of research on Restorative Practice implementation models, effective implementation is difficult to quantify. Davis (2014), founder of Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth describes eight steps for schools considering Restorative Justice. Steps one through eight of Davis' prescription closely align with the QIF. First, schools should assess the need for Restorative Justice based on discipline outcome and climate perception data. If data warrants exploration, schools should engage both the campus and community at large. The third step involves the employment of a Restorative Justice coordinator. This individual is tasked with overseeing Restorative Justice activities on campus. As a budgetary alternative, they could be a trained and willing vice principal, dean, or counselor.

Once community considerations and lead staff are in place, Davis proposes schools initiate training with as many staff as possible. Training should prepare the school to implement proactive community building practices throughout the campus. Community-building practices may include classroom meetings, community circles, and team-building structures for students and adults on campus. Beyond schoolwide structures, designated staff and students on campus should be trained to facilitate responsive restorative conferences for incidents to support restorative school responses. The responsive conferences can be facilitated by trained community members as well. As a part of school-wide implementation, Davis (2014) recommends a two-day

introductory training for staff members. This training should include learning restorative listening and conversation stems and promote ongoing modeling. Schoolwide implementation may involve using classroom circles. Circles may be climate check-ins or check-outs daily, or situational responses to harm, grief, or celebrations. Davis encourages the institution of a Restorative Justice class to develop student leaders in Restorative Practices.

The implementation proposed by Davis (2014) involves using Restorative Practices in response to student conflict. Students returning from suspensions, incarcerations, or expulsions should participate in reentry circles including other involved students, parents, and staff. The school's discipline manuals, procedures, and data collection tools should track Restorative Practice interventions. Furthermore, Davis recommended a quarterly analysis of student discipline outcome and climate perception data.

Davis provided a blueprint for the implementation of Restorative Justice in schools. Implementation with fidelity is associated with positive program effects. Of 59 studies of implementations, 76% reported significant positive associations between fidelity and targeted program outcomes (DuPre and Durlak, 2008). The existing body of research on the implementation of Restorative Justice practices is limited to small-scale studies of implementation (Fronius et al., 2016).

A critical final consideration for Phase three of the QIF is the use of program evaluation. Fitzpatrick et al. (2011) defines evaluation as “the identification, clarification, and application of defensible criteria to determine an evaluation object’s value, in relation to these criteria” (p. 7). The purpose of a Restorative Practices program evaluation would be to determine the program’s influence on campus climate indicators, which include student behavior and stakeholder perception data. Because there are generally multiple influences on campus climate data at an

urban high school, a program evaluation enables the implementation team to determine the impact of Restorative Practices on climate data. This determination can be made if a program evaluation assesses implementation fidelity. Fitzpatrick et al., (2011) describe one of their five *direct informational uses of evaluations* as “Examining whether certain program goals or objectives are being achieved at the desired levels” (p. 263).

One such evaluation process described by Fitzpatrick et al., (2011) is the Consumer-Oriented Evaluation Approach. If the participating school was to employ a consumer-oriented program evaluation, its primary purpose would be to judge Restorative Practices for merit or worth. The primary audience would be the staff, students, and families in the school.

A formative evaluation renders results to promote modifications to staff implementation practices based on evaluation results. Ongoing evaluation lends itself to opportunities to reflect and refine practices by participants. It would provide implementation analyses to promote future professional learning and improved practice. The analysis, reflection, and professional learning lends itself to organizational learning related to best practices for serving the student population in the setting (Fitzpatrick et al. 2011).

Program evaluations may include divergent and convergent phases (Fitzpatrick et al. 2011). In the divergent phase of the evaluation process the evaluator collects predominantly qualitative data from stakeholders and participants to guide the development of evaluation questions and criteria. During this phase, the implementation team gathers information from the body of research on campus climate, Restorative Practices program theory and application resources, school faculty, and students. The team assesses and considers perception data, historical and current campus climate data. Including key stakeholders during the planning phase improves progress towards validity and equity (Fitzpatrick, 2011). Validity and equity are



important considerations in the program evaluation process, particularly with the formative nature of frequent evaluations. The goal by the end of the program evaluation is to have stakeholders apply the findings to improved implementation practices.

During the convergent phase of the evaluation process, Fitzpatrick et al. (2011) suggested working with stakeholders to apply learnings during the divergent phase to identify evaluation tools and criteria. They suggest “under no circumstances should the evaluator assume sole responsibility for selecting the questions to be addressed or the evaluative criteria to be applied” (p. 328).

A consideration in evaluating the implementation of Restorative Practices in a large comprehensive school site is the presence of political factors. Campus climate is an issue in which local and state level politicians have voiced opposition to initiatives invest more time in rehabilitating students who have exhibited problematic behavior. This political rift infiltrated schools and recently played out in central California district collective bargaining sessions between teacher and district bargaining units. The potential for growing politicization exists when initiatives such as Restorative Practices call for adult mindset and behavioral changes.

### ***Improving Future Application***

Phase Four of the Quality Implementation Framework requires reflecting on the implementation process. Guiding questions during this phase of implementation involves extrapolating lessons from the implementation process to enhance future implementation efforts. Information gathered during this phase of implementation are critical for scaling implementation to larger contexts.

In 1997 Congress allotted funding for comprehensive school reform as well as processes for schools to replicate best practices in underperforming schools (Desimone, 2002). Researchers

developed policies and practices to support innovation implementation and a framework for scaling (Porter, 1994). Porter identified five necessary attributes to successful implementation of school improvement innovations: *specificity, consistency, authority, power, and stability*. *Specificity* referred to the degree of detail provided in the implementation framework of the innovation. *Consistency* closely related to specificity but tested coherence between the innovation and other programs within the organization. For example, does the innovation align with the organization's mission, vision, and values? *Authority* results from the innovation becoming enforceable policy. *Power* is associated with rewards and sanctions that result from successful scaling of innovations and *stability* represents the consistency of the roles represented by the implementation team.

### ***Scaling Innovations***

McGivney et al. (2016) developed a comprehensive model to scale innovations across organizational contexts. First, organizations should develop a culture of research and development for staff and students. With an innovation like Restorative Justice, Davis (2014) applied a similar principal when recommending schools provide research on student discipline outcomes and their long-term effects on student life outcomes, such as the school-to-prison pipeline. Secondly, McGivney et al. (2016) recommends sharing the innovation through idea hubs such as conferences, webinars, or expositions. Additionally, organizations should incorporate professional development to develop experts in the innovations. This could be the role of an implementation team. Thirdly, Davis (2014) suggests hiring a Restorative Practices counselor or a trained staff member.

The fourth step of scaling innovations proposed by McGivney et al. (2016) is funding sustainability. Innovations like Restorative Practices may be initiated by government funding,

private grants, or fellowships. Innovations risk failure if there is not a budget to sustain after initial implementation funds run out. Any successful attempt to scale innovations must sustain initial users while developing new users (Blase et al., 2017).

The final component of scaling innovations proposed by McGivney et al. (2016) is to measure and learn. This involves detailed data analysis and responding to data. Careful steps must be taken to define variables related to effectiveness and use those variables consistently to measure fidelity of implementation and outcomes. According to Blasé et al. (2017), it is a waste of money to scale ineffective or harmful innovations. As school districts seek to scale innovations beyond initial adopters, there must be a plan to sustain initial adopters while adding new adopters. They must expand data collection systems to avoid losing track of the progress of early adopters.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The implementation of Restorative Practices requires a shift from traditional punishment-based student behavior interventions towards communication-based problem solving. This shift impacts adult responses to student behavior. The QIF provided a systematic approach to implementing innovations such as restorative justice. Along with the application of an implementation framework, organizational change theory must be applied. For schools, the implementation of Restorative Practices may require the implementation of organizational change through the application of organizational change theory. Organizational change theory complements the quality implementation framework because of necessary capital building, individual and collective agency, and actionable progress monitoring. Fullan (2005) proposed seven core premises to sum up successful educational change: motivation, capacity building, results analysis, learning in context, changing context, reflective action, and multi-level

engagement. Social-cognitive theory proposed learning occurs in a social context with a dynamic and reciprocal interaction of the person, environment, and behavior (Bandura, 1986).

Organizational leaders must engage stakeholders through professional capital building towards individual and collective agency early in the implementation process of innovations. Individual and collective agency promote individual and collective goal setting, progress monitoring, adult behavior modifications toward desired collective and individual outcomes.

As a school improvement coach, I supported the implementation of student behavior management innovations. I worked with school leaders who adopted campus climate innovations without consideration of the level of agency among teachers on campus. The combination of stakeholder agency, implementation science, and the emerging body of research on the implementation of Restorative Practices create the framework for this study.

### **Chapter Summary**

This review of the literature used the QIF developed by Durlak et al. (2012) to compile literature for the examination of the implementation of Restorative Practices in a large urban high school. The review discussed the importance of campus climate for maintaining positive work and learning environments. Bandura (1986) suggested the positive impact of organizational participant agency on implementation while emphasizing the benefits of participant agency on implementation and scaling. Fullan (2016) described the importance of professional capital, organizational learning, and individual and collective agency throughout organizational change efforts. Davis (2014) described eight steps to successful implementation of Restorative Justice. As school districts generally follow successful pilot level implementation with districtwide scaling, the review considers Pearlman-Robinson's (2016) suggestions for successfully scaling initiatives from smaller to larger organizational contexts.

Of the fourteen steps in the four phases of the QIF, nine promote the development of stakeholder agency through collaboration, training, data collection, and progress monitoring. This study will apply the principles of the QIF to the implementation of campus climate initiatives, namely Restorative Practices. When stakeholders are agents, they demonstrate ownership of the innovation by monitoring their own progress and initiating modifications to practice (Bandura, 1986). They move beyond innovation participants to become partners in the innovation. Stakeholders as partners are critical to implementation and scaling innovations (Pearlman-Robinson, 2016). Steps one through eight of Davis' (2014) prescription for implementing Restorative Justice closely aligned with the QIF. School team members should first collectively assess the need for the innovation based on school discipline and climate perception data. The purpose of this study, while examining teacher agency and the implementation of Restorative Practices, is to apply these principles to improved implementation of innovations on school campuses.

Chapter three of this dissertation describes the process for conducting the study of teacher agency and the implementation of Restorative Practices at an urban central California high school. Research methods included a survey instrument for teachers and interviews with teachers and administrators on the campus. This study seeks to add to the growing body of literature on the implementation of Restorative Practices in urban high schools.

## CHAPTER 3: INQUIRY METHODS

### Introduction

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine the implementation of Restorative Practices in an urban central California high school through the lens of administrators, teacher perceptions of agency, campus climate, and impact of the implementation of Restorative Practices. This study finds significance as between 2015 and 2017 the researcher coached in schools that implemented campus climate initiatives and could not articulate the role of measurable teacher perceptions of the innovation and engagement in the implementation process. The sequential explanatory design involved the collection of quantitative data through a survey and then followed with qualitative teacher and administrator interviews (Creswell et al., 2006). Interview participants shared personal narratives and helped interpret survey findings. This study's findings determined if relationships existed between teacher perceptions of agency and campus climate; and agency and Restorative Practices implementation on campus.

By examining the implementation of Restorative Practices in an urban central California high school, the goal of the study is to understand ways in which educators might improve the implementation of campus climate innovations. Leaders without knowledge of professional learning best practices tend to lead the way others led them, at times limiting their consideration of stakeholder participation when adopting innovations (Calvert, 2016). When stakeholders have a say in solving problems, the level of ownership increases. This mixed methods sequential explanatory study sought to answer three research questions:

1. To what extent do teachers consider themselves agents in the implementation of Restorative Practices?

- a. What relationship exists between teacher perceptions of agency and campus climate?
  - b. What relationship exists between teacher perceptions of agency and the implementation of Restorative Practices?
2. Do differences exist between teacher expectations for the implementation of Restorative Practices and the current state of implementation?
    - a. What were the perceptions of teachers prior to implementation?
    - b. What are the perceptions of the current reality of implementation?
  3. What process did leaders use when implementing Restorative Practices?

### **Rationale**

In a report on engaging schools, the National Research Council (2017) stressed both teacher engagement and support are equally critical to a positive school climate. School climate is important to attract and retain quality teachers (Futernick, 2007). Additionally, workplace conditions, control over the workload, and perceptions of administrative support are highly correlated to staff attrition rates (National Research Council, 2017). This study of the implementation of Restorative Practices is important as leaders consider the adoption of campus climate innovations in response to increased accountability.

The participating high school was selected for this study because it exists within in a district that sought to improve campus climates by implementing Restorative Practices. The school was in its fourth school year of Restorative Practices implementation at the time of the study.

### **Problem Setting/Context**

The problem of practice suggests schools have not applied teacher perceptions of agency or campus climate to implementation plans for campus climate improvement initiatives. School leaders consistently referenced student behavior outcome data to rationalize the need for campus climate initiatives. The scope of the problem for this study was school sites in central California where the researcher coached. With the implementation of the California Accountability Dashboard in 2016, state accountability metrics for campus climate included suspension and expulsion rates. Local accountability required schools to engage teachers and other stakeholders in the school improvement planning process.

Furthermore, student suspensions were disproportionately high for students of color in central California schools (Adams, 2015). According to Whisman and Hammer (2014), students who received discipline referrals demonstrated consistently lower proficiency rates in mathematics. Student suspensions were found to negatively impact academic performance and increased the likelihood of students dropping out of high school (Mcloughin, 2015). Although African-American students represented 5.1% of students enrolled in Fresno County schools during the 2016-17 school year, they represented 16.5% of students suspended in Fresno County (CDE, 2017). The participating school in this study had a schoolwide suspension rate of about 8% in the 2016-17 school year, an increase from 7% in 2015-16 (CDE, 2017). For African-American students at the school, the suspension rate during the 2016-17 school year was 20%, which was an increase from 12% in 2015-16. By comparison, a similar Fresno County urban high school had a schoolwide suspension rate of 7.5% during the 2016-17 school year, while the rate for African-American students was 14.2% for the same period (CDE, 2017). The English-Language



Arts proficiency rates for African-American students were 10-13% lower than overall student proficiency rates in Fresno Unified School District in 2017.

The participating high school was an urban high school in central California. Enrollment demographics and student outcomes for this study were modified proportionately to protect the identity of the participating school and privacy of study participants. According to California's DataQuest school information portal, enrollment at the participating school was about 2,500 students (2018). Student demographics included: 7% African-American, 0.5% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 22% Asian, 65% Hispanic, 0.5% Pacific Islander, 3% White, and 1% represented two or more races. English Learners at the participating school represented 15% of students. Students with learning disabilities included about 9% of students on campus. Students in poverty, as defined by free-reduced lunch eligibility, represented 92% of the student population.

During the 2016-17 school year, the suspension rate for African-American students was slightly over 20% of the African-American students enrolled. The suspension rate for Hispanic students represented about 10% of Hispanic students enrolled. Hispanic students represented 65% of the 2,500 students enrolled. For White students, the suspension rate was 20% of 100 White students enrolled. The overall suspension rate at the participating high school was 10% of the 2,500 enrolled students (DataQuest, 2018).

The participating school's staff during the 2016-17 school year included 130 teachers, eight administrators, and nine pupil-personnel service professionals (2017). The average years of service for teachers was 12 years. Teacher longevity was important for this study because the survey instrument and interview sampling controlled for teacher longevity.

## **Research Sample and Data Sources**

This study included teachers, the principal, and Restorative Practices counselor at an urban Fresno County high school. The principal emailed the survey link to all 130 teachers on the campus. The survey assessed perceptions of agency, campus climate, and implementation of restorative practices. Thirty-four teachers responded to the survey. To protect the privacy of participants, the survey used multiple-choice ranges for years of service and years teaching at the school. Five survey respondents indicated they taught at the school less than three years, the length of the Restorative Practices implementation. Results from the five respondents were removed from the analysis of results in chapter four of this study.

Purposeful sampling was used to identify possible teachers for interviews. Purposeful sampling was useful because new teachers at the school would have lacked experience-based perceptions of the implementation of Restorative Practices at the participating school site (Tongco, 2007). In addition, teachers with more than three years of experience at the site would likely possess insight on trends related to both campus climate and innovation implementation at the site. Teachers were identified based on their tenure at the school. The researcher sought to interview teachers from various departments in the school. Departments represented by interview participants included English-Language Arts, Physical Education, World Languages, History, and Elective courses. No Mathematics or Science teachers participated in interviews for this study.

## **Data Collection Methods**

Data were collected during the spring semester of the 2017-2018 school year. Prior to collecting data for this study, the University of Arkansas Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the proposed study. Following university approval, the participating school district

Superintendent's office approved the proposed study. The university and school district institutional review processes validated a safe, ethical, and efficient approach to data collection. Additionally, participating district research protocols were observed.

Upon university IRB and district approval, the researcher held a meeting with the participating school principal, Restorative Practices counselor, and the Restorative Practices teacher to address questions and concerns about this study. When all questions and concerns were addressed the principal granted permission for the study to proceed.

The sequential explanatory data collection process began with the researcher delivering introduction letters and participant consent forms to teachers. The Restorative Practices Counselor and principal delivered the letters and consent forms to teachers during a staff meeting. After a two-week period of collecting consent forms, a hyperlink to the Restorative Practices survey was sent to the principal. The principal emailed the survey link to the entire teaching staff.

Thirty-four of 130 (26%) teachers responded to the survey. Survey respondents answered two demographic questions: total number of years teaching, and the number of years of teaching service at the participating school. Additionally, they indicated the extent to which they agreed with 21 statements related to agency, campus climate, and Restorative Practices implementation on campus. Finally, the survey instrument included questions to assess respondent perceptions of barriers to success, training, and Restorative Practices on campus. Survey analytics determined the average participant spent between three and four minutes on the survey.

Using contact information gathered from consent forms, personal emails were sent to 34 teachers to assess interest and availability for interviews. Thirteen teachers replied with affirmative responses. Eleven interviews were scheduled and ten were conducted. Scheduling

conflicts prevented interviews with three affirmative email respondents. Interviews were conducted in May and June of 2018.

### **Survey Instrument**

The survey for this study was constructed using SurveyMonkey. The survey instrument included 28 questions; two demographic and 26 items to assess participant perceptions of agency, campus climate, and the implementation of Restorative Practices (See Appendix A). Eight survey questions were adapted from an implementation study of Restorative Practices Fronius et al., 2016). Six survey questions were developed to assess Teacher Agency. Finally, seven survey questions were adapted from the California Healthy Kids School Survey (WestEd, 2018). The first two survey questions were demographic and ordinal in nature. The survey instrument utilized a forced bipolar verbal 6-point Likert scale with no midpoint (Dolcinar & Grun, 2013). The absence of a midpoint in the Likert scale increased the ease and clarity of translating results. Midpoints in a Likert rating make definitive interpretation of survey responses difficult (Dolcinar & Grun, 2013). Possible responses to Likert survey prompts were: (1) Strongly Agree, (2) Agree, (3) Somewhat Agree, (4) Somewhat Disagree, (5) Disagree, and (6) Strongly Disagree.

Prior to its use, the survey was piloted with a group of teachers, counselors, and administrators to assess validity and reliability. Selected participants for the pilot implemented Restorative Practices in 2015 and were selected for their knowledge and experience with implementation. Eight educators participated in the survey pilot.

Cronbach's alpha analysis was used as a measure of internal consistency to determine how closely related the set of survey questions fit within the designated categories of agency, campus climate, and implementation. Based on Cronbach's alpha analysis, one proposed survey

item was removed from the *implementation* category to increase internal consistency. Final Cronbach's alphas for the six stakeholder agency items, seven campus climate items, and eight Implementation items were 0.835, 0.742, and 0.725 respectively. These results supported acceptable internal consistency for both overall scale and each subscale. Along with testing for internal consistency, the survey pilot provided space for iterative consultation from pilot participants. In each section of the pilot survey, participants could offer feedback about the survey including terminology, clarity, and applicability. The survey was tested for content validity by school personnel who had experienced Restorative Practices implementation. Feedback was limited to clarification questions. No additional modifications were made to the survey.

### **Staff Interviews**

Following the completion of preliminary survey data analysis, interviews were conducted with 10 teachers, the principal, and Restorative Practices Counselor. The use of purposeful sampling narrowed potential interview participants to teachers with more than three years of service at the school. Purposeful sampling was necessary because interview participants needed to have experienced all phases of the three-year implementation. The researcher contacted potential interview participants by email based on completed consent forms. The email asked for responses from teachers with three or more years of teaching service at the school. Three years was the length of the current implementation of Restorative Practices on the campus. Teachers and administrators with more than three years of experience likely possessed insight on trends related to both campus climate and innovation implementation at the school. Interviews were conducted over a three-week period following preliminary survey data analysis. The objective was to examine the participant lived experiences with campus climate and implementation of

Restorative Practices. Qualitative interviewing is the most natural data collection approach to examine lived experiences (Brinkmann, 2013).

Interview participants determined the most suitable time and location to meet. Interview times included before school, lunch hour, and after school. At the close of each interview, all participants provided a mobile phone number to be reached in case the need for additional information arose. Interviews were conducted separately and privately to prevent peer influence. Individual interviews ranged in duration from 37 to 62 minutes.

Teacher interviews explored perceptions of Restorative Practices, their role as a teacher in implementation, and the current reality of Restorative Practices on their campus. The principal and Restorative Practice counselor interviews explored the information they considered when implementing Restorative Practices. Teacher and administrator interviews were semi-structured in nature. The teacher interview protocol included 13 questions with follow-up questions when needed for depth or clarity (APPENDIX B). The administrator interview protocol included 15 questions with follow-up questions when needed for depth or clarity (APPENDIX C). Interviews were audio-recorded with a digital memo application. Audio-recording the interviews was an initial step to ensure descriptive validity. Recordings were transcribed. Transcriptions were reviewed to establish prevailing categories, trends, or emerging patterns. Respondent validation was used to confirm assertions and summarizations with interview participants from the coded interview transcripts (Carl & Ravitch, 2016).

### **Data Analysis Methods**

The survey data was analyzed to assess staff perceptions of agency, campus climate, and the implementation of Restorative Practices on campus. Research Question 1 required the use of correlations to assess the relationship between agency and campus climate. Correlations were

also used to analyze the relationship between agency and the implementation of Restorative Practices. Artino and Sullivan (2013) explained the possibility of using correlations when Likert items produce ordinal data. Although responses to Likert type survey items generally produce ordinal data, using the sum of individual participant responses for each category is an acceptable approach to creating continuous variables. Continuous variables were needed for the Pearson's correlation used in the analysis discussed in Chapter Four (Artino & Sullivan, 2013).

To address research Question 2, the researcher used interview questions to compare teacher opinions of site perceptions of the Restorative Practices implementation at the onset to the present state of site perceptions of Restorative Practices implementation.

The site principal and Restorative Practices Counselor were interviewed to address research Question 3, describing the process used for the implementation of Restorative Practices. Data from the last five survey questions were also used in the analysis of the implementation process.

### **Trustworthiness**

Data collection for this study was completed at an urban central California high school. Interest for this study centered solely on the implementation of campus climate innovations, particularly Restorative Practices. There was no working relationship between the researcher and participating staff members at the onset of the study. As a Systems & Leadership coach who supported school improvement efforts, the researcher took great interest in the training and implementation of campus climate and student behavior innovations. The researcher's applied coaching and training experience supported privacy, safety, and careful handling of data collected through quantitative and qualitative data collection.

The University of Arkansas IRB played an important role in affirming a safe experience for study participants (Carl & Ravitch, 2016). Institutional Review Boards emerged because of past unregulated and harmful research practices.

A brief letter provided the introduction of the researcher to the participating staff. The letter included a brief introduction to the study, contact information, and a consent form. This provided an opportunity for teachers to familiarize themselves with the study and the researcher's background and interests.

Descriptive items on the teacher survey were limited to number of years taught at the school and overall number of years taught. These descriptors were important because the survey asked for perceptions of agency, campus climate, and the implementation of Restorative Practices on their campus. The participating school was in its fourth year of Restorative Practices implementation and teachers employed at the participating school less than three years had not experienced all aspects of the Restorative Practices implementation process.

The nature of this study created potential ethical concerns. Participants completed surveys online using SurveyMonkey with a variety of computing devices. The study necessitated informed consent because interviews and questionnaires required access to the setting as an outsider (Carl & Ravitch, 2016). Interviewing teachers and two administrators required additional considerations for ethical concerns. The researcher made participants aware of the independent and unbiased nature of the study. Question development aimed to effectively build rapport and address research objectives without fostering tension between teachers and administrators. The researcher alone transcribed, coded, and analyzed data.

Survey data described perceptions of agency, campus climate, and the implementation of Restorative Practices at the participating high school. Teacher surveys and interview data were



organized into data tables to improve accuracy of interpretations. The researcher consulted a data analyst to conduct a peer review for the study. The data analyst scrutinized both survey and interview data collection, and validated interview assertions. Peer data analysts are frequently used in research to build trustworthiness (Carl & Ravitch, 2016).

To support theoretical validity, research questions guided the development of initial and subsequent follow up questions.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

According to Prince and Murnan (2004),

The limitations of the study are those characteristics of design or methodology that impacted or influenced the interpretation of the findings from your research. They are the constraints on generalizability, applications to practice, and/or utility of findings that are the result of the ways in which you initially chose to design the study or the method used to establish internal and external validity or the result of unanticipated challenges that emerged during the study. (p. 66)

As a single school case study, the transferability of results may be limited, but findings will contribute to further inquiry. The unique characteristics of the school site, including student demographics, staff demographics, community dynamics, and district governance structure may limit the broader application of findings. Great caution must be taken if one chooses to apply findings to broader contexts (Carl & Ravitch, 2016).

Only teachers completed the survey; however, survey results and teacher interview results produced consistent data. This potentially strengthened the confirmability of the findings. Additionally, efforts were made to maximize participation from teachers through clear and honest communication of the purpose and goal of the study. To strengthen credibility, survey results from teachers who taught at the school less than three years at the time of the survey administration were eliminated from statistical analysis. Teachers with less than three years of service at the school may have possessed less insight on campus climate and trends related to the

implementation of innovations on campus. For example, they may not have been familiar with the principal's methods of gathering teacher input when implementing initiatives. The researcher controlled for teacher experience through two descriptive survey questions that inquired about teaching experience. The researcher carefully worded emails to teachers to solicit interview participation from teachers with three or more years of experience at the site. Interview participants were limited to teachers who completed consent forms and affirmatively responded to email inquiries.

Research questions and data collection instruments for this study limited findings to teacher perceptions of agency, campus climate, and implementation of Restorative Practices. Although teacher voice is an important ingredient in the successful implementation of initiatives (Bradshaw et al., 2014), further research is necessary to increase application of findings to the implementations of other innovations on the school site.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine the relationship between teacher perceptions of agency, campus climate, and the implementation of Restorative Practices at an urban central California high school. This chapter described data collection tools and methods for this study. It included an overview of the study and review of the purpose statement, research questions, and methodology, with a detailed description of data collection and analysis. Appropriate measures were taken to increase the validity and reliability of the research. This chapter concluded with a description of the ethical considerations and limitations. Chapter four of this study presents the quantitative and qualitative data collected for this study.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

### Introduction

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine the implementation of Restorative Practices in an urban central California high school. The study examined Restorative Practices implementation through the lens of administrators, and teacher perceptions of agency, campus climate, and impact of the implementation of Restorative Practices. Using a sequential explanatory design, the use of quantitative data collection preceded qualitative interviews (Creswell et al., 2006).

This mixed methods sequential explanatory sought to answer three research questions:

1. To what extent do teachers consider themselves agents in the implementation of Restorative Practices?
  - a. What relationship exists between teacher perceptions of agency and campus climate?
  - b. What relationship exists between teacher perceptions of agency and the implementation of Restorative Practices?
2. Do differences exist between teacher expectations for the implementation of Restorative Practices and the current state of implementation?
  - a. What were the perceptions of teachers prior to implementation?
  - b. What are the perceptions of the current reality of implementation?
3. What process did leaders use when implementing Restorative Practices?

Chapter one presented the introduction, context, background, and rationale for this study on teacher agency and the implementation of Restorative Practices. Chapter two provided an examination of the scholarly literature on teacher agency, implementation, scaling innovations,

and Restorative Practices in school settings. Chapter three described procedures used to examine teacher agency and the implementation of Restorative Practices in an urban central California high school.

**Research Question 1**

To answer research Question 1 and sub questions 1a. and 1b., the researcher developed, field tested, refined, and then implemented a 28-item survey using SurveyMonkey. Through two email correspondences between the principal and teachers 34 teachers responded; a response rate of 26%. Of the 34 responses, five were eliminated from analysis because survey responses indicated less than three years of experience at the site, which limited their experience with the Restorative Practices implementation at the site. Table 1 displays survey responses to indicate the respondents’ teaching experience at the site. Of survey respondents 14.7% taught at the school for 3-9 years. Additionally, seventeen respondents, or 50%, indicated they taught at the school for 10 or more years.

Table 1

*Survey Questions 2: How many years have you taught at the site?*

Answer Choice	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
0-2 School Years	5	14.71%
3-4 School Years	6	17.65%
5-9 School Years	6	17.65%
10 or more School Years	17	50%
Total	34	

Table 2 shows the distribution of responses to survey items used to assess teacher agency. Responses for participants with less than three years of experience at the site were removed from this analysis.

Table 2

*Teacher Agency*

Survey Item	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat Agree (3)	Somewhat Disagree (4)	Disagree (5)	Strongly Disagree (6)
I monitor the implementation of Restorative Practices in my classroom.	24.13%	28%	31%	10.34%	3.45%	3.45%
I adjust my use of restorative practices to improve classroom climate.	20.69%	31%	37.93%	6.90%	3.45%	3.45%
I have input in initiatives adopted at my school.	13.80%	31%	31%	6.90%	3.45%	13.80%
I have input in decision-making at my school.	17.24%	34.48%	13.80%	13.80%	6.90%	13.80%
I have time for group reflection about restorative practices	13.80%	20.69%	20.69%	17.24%	24.24%	3.45%

Note. N = 29

The researcher first tested for the existence of a relationship between agency and campus climate using Pearson's correlation. There was a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.796$ ) between

agency and campus climate. The researcher then tested for the existence of a relationship between teacher perceptions of Agency and Restorative Practice Implementation. There was a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.847$ ) between perceptions of agency and Restorative Practices implementation. Although responses to Likert type survey items generally produce ordinal data, using the sum of individual participant responses for each construct is an acceptable approach to creating the continuous variable needed for the Pearson's correlation used in this analysis (Artino & Sullivan, 2013).

Interviews with the principal and teachers both indicated that less than 50% of teachers were optimistic about the potential of implementing Restorative Practices. As survey correlations revealed, there was a strong positive correlation between teacher perceptions of agency and campus climate; and agency and implementation.

Of the eight teachers who rated perception of agency the lowest (mean of all agency questions was greater than or equal to 4), all had negative comments when asked about possible barriers to implementation. Comments included:

“students know they will not be held accountable for some of the actions and choices they choose.”

“It is damaging, not productive”

“If a program is expected to be successful then it needs to be consistent and cannot be put in place or expect students to learn from it in a 5-minute session and put a band aide on the problems and the issues.”

“There is little to no communication from our RP coordinator and teacher. And they seem to think they are too busy to work with teachers directly.”

“Students have the belief there are no severe consequences - they are always allowed to just "talk it out."”

## **Research Question 2**

The second research question asked if differences exist between teacher expectations for the implementation of Restorative Practices and the current state of implementation. Teacher interview questions prompted participants to compare fellow teacher perceptions of Restorative Practices at the time of implementation in 2014-2015 and at the end of the 2017-2018 school year. Teachers participated in interviews using the Teacher Interview Protocol (APPENDIX B). Ten teachers responded to interview questions about teacher perceptions at the onset of implementation and the current reality of teacher perceptions.

### **Sub question 2a: Perceptions of Restorative Practices upon Implementation**

*What were the perceptions of teachers prior to implementation?* Ten teacher interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded to address the comparison of perceptions at the time of implementation to perceptions of the current reality of Restorative Practices on campus. All ten teachers felt negative staff perceptions about Restorative Practices exceeded fifty percent. One interview participant felt only 20% of staff held positive perceptions of Restorative Practices upon implementation three years prior to this study. Examples of negative perceptions were offered. One teacher offered: “Kids were just going to go to the Restorative Practices counselor, get a lollipop, and promise not to misbehave again.” Another teacher reported teachers in their department believed the school wanted to increase the amount of student discipline managed at the classroom level. Four teachers reported the implementation of Restorative Practices at another area high school led to media discussions of an unsafe school and chaotic discipline processes. Two teachers explained negative perceptions prior to implementation were because

they assumed Restorative Practices was a strategy to replace suspensions. One teacher, when recalling perceptions prior to implementation quoted a colleague saying: “If you break a rule I'm going to hug you and talk to you for a long time about it.” Finally, another veteran teacher exclaimed Restorative Practices was “just another initiative that would come and go in the next three years.”

When asked about optimism at the onset of Restorative Practices, eight of ten teachers indicated several Restorative Practices strategies were already in place at the school. They described their high school as a caring learning community. They cited activities implemented to promote positive student-teacher relationships prior to Restorative Practices. Three teachers referred to resources established prior to Restorative Practices for students with social-emotional challenges. Resources included guidance counselors, campus safety personnel, and caring teachers. Teachers recalled predicting the supportive role the new Restorative Practices counselor might play during the implementation and beyond. Because she was a former Guidance Counselor, teachers were confident she would be a tremendous asset to kids and fellow staff as the Restorative Practices counselor. Two teachers who expressed personal optimism about the implementation of Restorative Practices based their perceptions on prior experience with Restorative Practices. They were exposed to the strategies through other teaching assignments, personal inquiry, or other life interests involving Restorative Practices.

### **Sub question 2b. Current Reality of Perceptions**

*What are the perceptions of the current reality of implementation?* When asked about the current state of perceptions, seven of ten teachers felt negative perceptions of Restorative Practices still exceeded 50% of teachers at the site. Five teachers stated perceptions have not changed from implementation. When asked to explain, one teacher called it a self-fulfilling



prophecy stating: “because attitudes were negative at the thought of Restorative Practices, teachers were never going to give it a chance to work.” Four teachers felt the principal’s expectations of teacher implementation continuously evolved from the first year of implementation. They described progressively lower expectations of teachers to incorporate Restorative Practice strategies into classroom practices. Finally, one teacher reported an increasing number of fights this year. She stated other teachers in her department have experienced the same.

Two teachers described the importance of the Restorative Practices counselor to addressing student-student and student-teacher conflicts on campus but felt the department was understaffed. “How can 1-2 people find time to address the needs of so many students?” One teacher, optimistic about the current reality of Restorative Practices, asked: “wouldn’t it be better to have a college recruiter’s van in front of the campus as opposed to police cars? That’s why we need Restorative Practices.” An additional optimistic teacher cited feedback from the campus police officer and campus safety staff suggesting the campus is safer and calmer since Restorative Practices implementation.

### **Research Question 3**

*What process did leaders use when implementing Restorative Practices?*

The principal and Restorative Practices counselor participated in interviews using the Administrator Interview Protocol (APPENDIX C). The principal at the site was in place through the entire implementation. The principal’s exact number of years of service was omitted from this composition to protect the identity of the school and principal. The principal described the campus climate as relationship-driven stating: “Relationships are a priority in every staff-student interaction.” This was evident in planned campus spirit activities, and activities to promote and

celebrate the community of learners. Teacher interview participants also referenced climate-building structures and activities on campus. Teacher interview participants confirmed the principal's stated desire to build and maintain a caring learning environment.

Administrators reported that the participating school district in this study initiated the implementation of Restorative Practices in one of multiple regions in the district. Implementation was the result of increasing disproportionate suspension rates among student groups and an effort to increase student problem-solving skills. The district sought to equip students with ability to effectively communicate concerns. The implementation would also equip teachers with tools to anticipate, address, and resolve conflicts with and between students. The implementation included community-building structures to promote positive communication in each classroom and on campus.

Regional implementation of Restorative Practices included elementary, middle, and high schools in the high-school attendance area. The district established a Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) goal to ensure all students remained in school on track to graduate (2017). The district committed one-third of the money allocated to the LCAP goal to Restorative Practice investments, student voice, and relationship-centered schools. Investments included parent Restorative Practice modules and training of campus police officers in Restorative Practices (FCSS, 2017). Other investments included employing Restorative Practice counselors, initial implementation training, and ongoing training. The principal said the Restorative Practices counselor contributed tremendously to positive results. The district expanded Restorative Practices implementation from one to three high-school regions between 2015 and 2017.

The participating high school was identified by the district for implementation of Restorative Practices as a part of a districtwide initiative. Initial training occurred at the district

level through contracted experts. Teachers described one mandatory district wide training and subsequent voluntary training sessions. Participating schools employed Restorative Practice counselors to facilitate conflict resolution circles, but trained teachers to implement structured dialog stems, classroom community-building circles, and other classroom activities to promote positive classroom climates. The principal, counselor, and teachers concurred the implementation was district-mandated. The site principal was tasked with incorporating Restorative Practices into existing strategies to improve campus climate.

School staff members were not involved in the decision to adopt Restorative Practices beyond LCAP stakeholder engagement efforts. Seventy-six percent of teachers surveyed agreed to varying degrees they have input in the initiatives adopted at their school (specifically, 14% strongly agreed, while 31% somewhat agreed). Teachers recalled one day of mandatory training during the first year of implementation. Initial training included an introduction to Restorative Practices and a teacher resource toolkit. Initial implementation requested teachers to conduct classroom circles during advisory periods, utilize communication stems, and other classroom community-building strategies. Additional voluntary training occurred in subsequent years.

From the initial implementation in 2015, the principal gave teachers increasing autonomy to reflect their preferred student engagement strategies in the implementation process. One teacher interviewed incorporated community-building structures throughout her class sections, beyond the advisory period called for in implementation. Another teacher discussed reaching out to the Restorative Practice counselor when students had needs beyond behavior. At least four teachers dismissed required structures soon after implementation. Survey participants were asked their level of agreement with statement: *I adjust my use of Restorative Practices to improve my classroom climate*. Eighty-five percent of teachers at least somewhat agreed; the majority agreed

or strongly agreed. Similarly, 89.62% of survey respondents agreed to some degree they had autonomy to monitor their own implementation of Restorative Practices in their classroom.

Interview responses reflected this level of autonomy.

When asked about successes of the Restorative Practice implementation, the principal, Restorative Practice counselor, and three of the teachers interviewed cited improved relationships on campus. The principal stated: “The kids feel you care about them.”

When asked about the challenges with implementing Restorative Practices, the principal discussed the immediacy of data. He stated “it’s been difficult to measure and communicate the effectiveness of Restorative Practices on campus. Trends were easy to see so we had to be patient and data-driven.” He also needed to clearly communicate intent, not just to reduce suspensions, but for staff and students to learn through incidents. The restorative conferences with the Restorative Practices team would make students more aware of the impact of their behavior on themselves and peers. This learning experience would hopefully reduce repeated negative behavior. The Restorative Practices counselor shared specific instances of students who improved their behavior after participating in restorative circles.

## **Themes**

### **Theme 1: Data**

Results from the 29 valid survey respondents, along with principal, counselor, and teacher interviews indicated the collection and analysis of data were important considerations to studying the effectiveness of implementation. Of ten teacher interviews, none could articulate how the school measured the effectiveness of Restorative Practices. The principal and Restorative Practices counselor described the complicated nature of describing the impact of Restorative Practices, particularly with data points. One teacher exclaimed that “in education

we've been trained to be data-driven but no one is communicating data to show Restorative Practices works." A few participants mentioned fluctuating suspension rates but could not safely articulate a causal relationship between the implementation of Restorative Practices and student suspensions. Four interviewees who expressed optimism in the reality of implementation point to the improved "feel" of the campus. Furthermore, an individual data point to support assertions could not be identified. The principal stated that "it's hard to measure relationships in data points." None of the ten teachers interviewed could describe how Restorative Practice effectiveness data have been shared with them over the past three years. Four individuals recalled suspension data was occasionally shared during staff meetings.

Interviews also revealed inconsistent definitions and unclear goals for Restorative Practices on campus. Metrics were difficult to define for teachers and administrators; thus, effectiveness was difficult to measure. When perceived success was assessed on the survey, 79% of respondents agreed to some extent the overall implementation of Restorative Practices has been effective. When agreement was assessed on whether Restorative Practices improved campus climate, 76% of respondents agreed to some extent. The survey results were based on perceptions; however, interviews revealed an absence of defined metrics for effectiveness.

The teacher interview protocol asked teachers how Restorative Practice data were shared. Teachers and administrator responses were nearly unanimous in their belief that data collection and analysis were growth areas. The principal, counselor, and three teachers shared qualitative individual successes from Restorative Practices. They shared individual student behavior turnaround stories, student-student and student-adult conflicts that were resolved, and stories of students who overcame trauma to succeed in school. One teacher was skeptical about establishing a causal relationship between Restorative Practices and suspension rates. The

Restorative Practices counselor shared stories of students who stopped repeating poor behaviors because of conversations in restorative circles. One teacher stated: “I would love for the Restorative Practices team to be clearer about their mission and what they do.” The same teacher stated, “I’m an optimist,” and “I want to believe in it but there’s not something I can put my hands on.”

Another teacher who expressed frustration with a lack of data stated the following: “We don’t see a lot of data. What’s really going on? Suspensions are down but is it because of Restorative Practices? Is it working? We don’t see data so how do we know it’s working?” Even with the lack of quantitative data, the teacher was encouraged that kids have someone safe to talk to in instances of crises. Two teachers who were admittedly strong supporters of Restorative Practices campus acknowledged that data metrics should be established to assess effectiveness and modify practices. The lack of shared data caused at least three interview participants to question the roles and effectiveness of the Restorative Practices initiative and Restorative Practices team. One of the three recalled instances where students were called out of class by Restorative Practices staff with no immediate or follow-up communication to teachers. Another gave examples of possible metrics: “For example, of 50 students who participated in Restorative Practices conferences, only 13 received another conduct referral during the same semester. Something like that would help us see the impact of Restorative Practices.”

Another teacher, when answering the question about data, added “We’d like to know: How many kids are you seeing? What’s working? What’s not working? Who are you seeing? Who’s being helped? How are they being helped?”

## **Theme 2: What is Restorative Practices?**

Teachers were asked to define Restorative Practices based on their existing knowledge. Ten teachers offered definitions; some related, others not. Teachers offered multiple definitions. Seventeen definitions were offered as statements. Three themes emerged from the definitions offered by teachers. Seven teachers offered multiple definitions. Two teachers explicitly stated they did not know what Restorative Practices was or what it aimed to accomplish.

The most prevailing theme from definitions centered on repairing relationships. Of the seventeen statements offered, twelve addressed the restoring of relationships. Responses to this question indicated teachers had an idea about the intent of Restorative Practices. Although there was not a verbatim definition referenced, teachers centered their definitions on repairing relationships caused by conflicts or poor behavior. All twelve of the definitions offered in the theme of repairing relationships connected the process to a conflict. The twelve definitions spoke to Restorative Practices from a reactive perspective of campus climate improvement. It was viewed as a tool or process to respond to conflicts on campus.

Two respondents offered definitions suggesting Restorative Practices was implemented as an alternative to punishment. The respondents suggested the district implemented Restorative Practices to reduce suspensions and encourage teachers to handle discipline issues in their own classrooms. One respondent in this group stated: “It was communicated to us as an early alternative to suspensions, but suspensions could be used as a backup if it didn’t work.”

Finally, three respondents stated that they were not sure what the implementation of Restorative Practices intended to accomplish. One stated: “I don’t even know why they call it Restorative Practices.” Another added a generalization in response to this question: “As teachers, the district hasn’t given us enough information about Restorative Practices to truly understand it

and what the offerings are.” This was the first reference to Restorative Practices in the context of a menu of offerings. When a follow-up question was asked seeking clarification, the teacher referenced the Restorative Practices counselor and the services provided in the counselor’s office. These three Respondents expressed a lack of knowledge with Restorative Practices and details of the implementation on campus. Teachers attributed the lack of knowledge to both district implementation and a lack of communication from administrators and the Restorative Practices team.

### **Summary**

Chapter four presented data from this mixed-methods study. The chapter presented an analysis of findings from the 28-item teacher survey; and interviews with ten teachers, the principal, and Restorative Practices counselor. Quantitative data analysis identified a significant relationship between perceptions of teacher agency and campus climate. Quantitative data analysis also identified a significant relationship between teacher perceptions of agency and the implementation of Restorative Practices. Teacher interviews described minimal changes between staff perceptions upon implementation of Restorative Practices in 2015 and the current state of staff perceptions of Restorative Practices. Administrator interviews described both the thought process and execution of Restorative Practices implementation on the campus. Both the survey and additional interview questions added information to support primary data used to address the three research questions discussed in the study. Chapter five includes a detailed analysis of findings as they relate to the phases of the Quality Implementation Framework, other literature, conclusions, and recommendations for future research.



## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, CONCLUSION**

Chapter five of this study makes connections between prior research and findings from the mixed methods approach to data collection to reveal conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for further research. The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine teacher agency and the implementation of Restorative Practices in an urban central California high school. The study used a survey and interviews to capture the perceptions of teachers. Additionally, interviews with the principal and Restorative Practices Counselor provided information about the implementation. The survey collected teacher perceptions of agency, campus climate, and the impact of implementation. This study sought to support improved implementations of campus climate innovations in schools with an emphasis on teacher agency.

Chapter two of this study presented research on agency, campus climate, Restorative Practices, and the implementation of innovations through the sequence of the Quality Implementation Framework (Durlak, et al., 2012). Restorative Practices is an innovation multiple Fresno County schools explored to meet the social-emotional needs and address the disproportionality in suspensions of historically underperforming student groups. Chapter three of this study described the sequential explanatory approach to data collection, using a survey followed by teacher and administrator interviews. Chapter four presented tests of correlations between agency, campus climate, and Restorative Practices implementation as well as summaries of interview findings and emerging themes.

### **Problem Statement**

The problem of practice for this study was that schools in and adjacent to Fresno County did not consistently consider measurable teacher perceptions of agency and campus climate when implementing campus climate initiatives. School leaders, when asked, consistently

referenced student behavior outcomes to rationalize the adoption of campus climate initiatives. The scope of the problem was school sites where the researcher coached and trained between 2015 and 2017. State and federal accountability metrics assessed campus climate using student behavior outcomes. Although local accountability required schools to assess teacher perceptions of climate, the California accountability model reported completion of said assessment, as opposed to the actionable analysis of stakeholder perception data with improvement targets.

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent do teachers consider themselves agents in the implementation of Restorative Practices?
  - a. What relationship exists between teacher perceptions of agency and campus climate?
  - b. What relationship exists between teacher perceptions of agency and the implementation of Restorative Practices?
2. Do differences exist between teacher expectations for the implementation of Restorative Practices and the current state of implementation?
  - a. What were the perceptions of teachers prior to implementation?
  - b. What are the perceptions of the current reality of implementation?
3. What process did leaders use when implementing Restorative Practices?

### **Research Methodology**

Following university and district institutional review and approval, data collection began with the distribution of introduction letters, participant consent forms, and ultimately a 28-item survey. Thirty-four teachers responded to the survey. Five survey respondents were eliminated from data analysis because they indicated less than three years of service at the participating

school. Following survey data collection and analysis, interviews were conducted with ten teachers, the principal, and Restorative Practices Counselor. The objective of the interviews was to examine participant experiences with the implementation of Restorative Practices.

Survey data were analyzed to assess staff perceptions of agency, campus climate, and the implementation of restorative practices on campus. Research Question 1 required tests for correlations to determine the strength of the relationship between perceptions of agency and campus climate. Correlations were also tested to determine the strength of the relationship between perceptions of agency and the implementation of Restorative Practices. To address the second research question, responses from two interview questions were used to compare teacher perceptions of Restorative practices upon implementation in 2015 to the present state of site perceptions. The principal and a Restorative Practices Counselor were interviewed to address research Question 3, describing the implementation process of Restorative Practices on the campus. Data from the last five survey questions were also used in the analysis of the implementation process. Interview responses were used to corroborate survey findings.

### **Major Findings from the Study**

#### **Finding 1: Agency, Campus Climate, and Implementation**

Pearson's Correlation in this study found a strong positive correlation between teacher perceptions of agency and campus climate, meaning teachers with positive perceptions of their own agency had a more positive perception of campus climate. Conversely, individual teacher respondents that reported lower perceptions of agency tended to have lower perceptions of campus climate. Narrative responses on the survey by respondents with lower perceptions of agency were generally negative related to campus climate. There was also a strong positive correlation between perceptions of agency and Restorative Practices implementation. Narrative

responses from respondents with higher perceptions of agency tended to report optimism about Restorative Practice implementation.

Four core properties of high-agency employees are intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflection (Bandura, 1986). Individual survey responses were analyzed and then grouped according to their strength of agreement with survey items in the Agency category. Bandura's four properties of high-agency were evident in the subsequent survey responses of the six survey respondents with the highest rated perceptions of agency. Respondents with high ratings of agency nearly unanimously strongly agreed the campus was a supportive and inviting workplace that promotes collegiality. The six respondents with highest also unanimously strongly agreed the campus is safe.

Interviews indicated an increasing amount of teacher autonomy over the first three years of the Restorative Practices implementation. Survey responses from high agency respondents indicated awareness of their ability to monitor and adjust their implementation of practices. Bandura (1986) identified increased efforts of high-agency stakeholders towards the achievement of desired outcomes shared between the individual and organization. As individuals must address their own needs in the context of organizational change, it was important that high-agency teachers felt safe and supported on campus (Bandura, 2006). Survey responses from high-agency respondents indicated a sense of safety and support.

Survey respondents were asked about potential barriers to implementing Restorative Practices on campus. Of the six teachers whose average perception of agency was the highest, narrative comments were optimistic. Two respondents whose Likert ratings reflected positive perceptions of Restorative Practices suggested that mindsets of adults needed an adjustment for Restorative Practices to be more effective. An additional survey respondent with positive

perceptions of Restorative Practices wrote that there are large numbers of students with social-emotional issues and not enough staff members to meet their needs. The responses indicated a belief in the potential of Restorative Practices to render positive outcomes if barriers were addressed. The eight individual survey respondents with the lowest perceptions of agency had negative comments when asked about potential barriers to implementation. As indicated in chapter four of this study, they were generally pessimistic about the implementation of Restorative Practices.

In summary, Pearson's Correlation, Likert ratings, and narrative survey responses combined to determine strong relationships between teacher perceptions of agency and both campus climate and Restorative Practice implementation. Although a causal relationship was not examined by the study, findings suggested that a strong sense of agency was related to positive perceptions of both campus climate and Restorative Practice implementation. As the district continues its implementation of Restorative Practices, consideration must be given to the increase of teacher agency. Hansen, Byrne, and Kiersch (2014) suggested that leaders may increase employee engagement by employing an interpersonal style of leadership. They suggested a leadership style that demonstrates concerns for employee wellbeing, clearly communicates procedures and objectives, explains decisions in an honest, transparent, and timely manner, and adheres to principles of fairness. Employees, particularly teachers, at the participating school were not provided the opportunity to examine Restorative Practices prior to adoption. This was counter-productive to enhancing their level of engagement. Although there was not an effort to engage teachers in the adoption process of Restorative Practices, findings suggested that the school in the past made efforts to increase teacher agency. Although there exists a teacher shortage in central California, the average teacher tenure at the school exceeds

twelve years, which suggests teachers possess a sense of ownership of operations at the school. The principal acknowledged this level of ownership by rapidly increasing autonomy in the classroom implementation of Restorative Practices. School leadership may capitalize on this sense of ownership to engage teachers in all phases of the implementation process when considering initiatives.

### **Finding 2: Perceptions of Restorative Practices Before and after Implementation**

Based on teacher interviews, site perceptions of Restorative Practices remained constant over the three years of implementation. All ten teachers felt negative teacher perceptions on campus exceeded positive perceptions of Restorative Practices in 2015 upon implementation and it remained constant through the time of this study in 2018. Teachers also shared their own initial and current perceptions of Restorative Practices during interviews. Four interview participants optimistic about Restorative Practices in 2015 at the beginning of implementation remained optimistic about the potential of Restorative Practices to positively impact students and campus climate. The six individual participants pessimistic about Restorative Practices in 2015 remained pessimistic throughout the implementation to its current state in 2018. The results of data analysis showed no significant movement in staff perceptions of Restorative Practices.

The findings suggest efforts to improve staff perceptions of Restorative Practices either failed or did not exist. Although there were staff members who approved of Restorative Practices upon implementation, they were not active partners in the research and adoption stages of implementation. Therefore, they were not positioned to formally apply strategies to improve the perceptions of their colleagues. The participating school missed the opportunity to maximize engagement and approval of teachers in initial implementation, Casey and Sieber (2016) suggested that employers improve employee engagement by addressing sustainability and social

responsibility. Teacher interviews in this study revealed teacher perceptions that Restorative Practices would be another initiative that appeared and disappeared in a few years. For teachers who did not agree with the implementation, this belief would inhibit any motivation to acknowledge potential benefits of Restorative Practices.

The school site may improve perceptions by documenting and disseminating individual and collective student success stories from the implementation of Restorative Practices. Because Restorative Practices was a district initiative, it is important for school leadership to both demonstrate and justify a commitment to the innovation for the foreseeable future. As the absence of data and need for measurable objectives were unexpected findings in this study, school leadership may consider recruiting teachers for the development of a continuous improvement process for Restorative Practices. This team could then realistically address the needs of teachers with low perceptions of agency, campus climate, and Restorative Practices on campus.

### **Finding 3: Considerations When Implementing Restorative Practices**

Phase one of the Quality Implementation Framework called for organizations to first assess the host setting for innovation readiness. Organizations must put assessment structures in place to consider the readiness for the implementation of new innovations (Durlak et al. 2012). Assessment includes defining the need for the innovation including identifying organizational needs addressed by the innovation. At the participating high school, the decision to implement Restorative Practices was a district initiative. The district was faced with disproportionate suspensions of African-American students and students with disabilities, which was one possible reason for their decision to implement Restorative Practices throughout the participating high school region. Regional implementation included elementary and middle school campuses in the

high school attendance area. The principal worked with the site's campus climate team, Restorative Practices counselor, and Restorative Practices teacher to support implementation on campus.

Beyond site logistical readiness, staff recruitment and maintenance are important to the early stages of implementing an innovation (Fixsen et al., 2005). The selection process for key players in an implementation can be complex but is vital work. Fixsen et al. (2005) suggested organizations should employ "effective practitioners, excellent trainers, effective coaches, skilled evaluators, and facilitative administrators" (p. 36). For best results, Restorative Practices implementation requires a trained staff comfortable with adopted strategies, an invested student body, and an engaged and supportive learning community (Pavelka, 2013). The participating school employed a Restorative Practices counselor and teacher to support implementation and facilitate conflict resolution circles, among other student interventions. The principal and six teachers spoke about the value of the Restorative Practices team in meeting the diverse needs of students. Three teachers referenced specific instances when they communicated directly with the Restorative Practices Counselor for urgent student intervention. The principal indicated that the Restorative Practices counselor contributed tremendously to the success of the initiative on campus.

Survey and interview responses indicated the principal applied a facilitative style of management to Restorative Practices implementation. Restorative Justice practices should not be rigidly imposed on a school as a policy but should instead be integrated into the core values of the school community (Hantzopoulos, 2013). Smith (2003) defined facilitative management as a people-centered, quality and results driven process of developing and supporting a culture in the workplace that facilitates goal achievement through effective relational processes. Teachers



indicated the existence of increasing autonomy to manage classroom implementation of Restorative Practices over the three years of implementation. Teachers who supported the implementation of Restorative Practices were able to voluntarily attend additional training to support classroom Restorative Practices interventions. Teachers who did not support the implementation of Restorative Practices were able to opt out of classroom Restorative Practices activities and additional training.

Two teachers expressed a lack of clarity with the specific roles of the Restorative Practice team members. This, according to one teacher, was the result of a policy change that required the vice principals to coordinate student intervention. The new policy required concerned teachers to refer students to their vice principal. The vice principal was to determine the next step in intervention by applying a menu of possible interventions. In addition to Restorative Practices as a possible intervention, other options included suspension from school, detention, or referral to the campus social worker. During interviews three teachers expressed concerns with the inability to refer students directly to the Restorative Practices counselor. They expressed confidence in the Restorative Practices counselor's ability to meet the unique needs of students, while expressing disappointment with other interventions. Between the principal and Restorative Practices counselor, survey and interview results indicated the district assigned capable individuals to support the implementation of Restorative Practices.

Durlak et al. (2012) expressed the importance of stakeholder agency throughout the implementation process of innovations. Nine survey respondents disagreed to some extent that they have input in initiatives adopted at their site. Interview results indicated although respondents may not have input in adopting initiatives, they have autonomy to monitor and adjust their own actions related to implementation. Teachers were confident in their ability to

determine the extent they implemented Restorative Practices in their classrooms. This was evidenced by the variety of explanations offered to describe the implementation of Restorative Practices on campus.

Although teachers communicated a lack of involvement with the adoption of Restorative Practices, they were provided initial and follow-up training to support implementation. The district required one day of training upon implementation and optional training in subsequent years. Teachers who wanted to learn more about Restorative Practice implementation had an opportunity to extend learning and receive support to enhance practice. Teachers not interested in implementing Restorative Practices were not required to participate in training beyond the first day.

The required tasks in Phase three of the Quality Implementation Framework (Durlak et al., 2012) included: “(1) providing needed ongoing technical assistance to front-line providers; (2) monitoring ongoing implementation; and (3) creating feedback mechanisms so involved parties understand how the implementation process is progressing” (p. 471). Part of monitoring ongoing implementation was an analysis of fidelity; the extent to which specific program components are delivered as prescribed (DuPre & Durlak, 2008). Important considerations in the measurement of fidelity are the collection and use of measurable outcomes.

Because of the lack of existing research on Restorative Practices implementation models at the time of this study, and undefined metrics with benchmarks to assess progress, effective implementation on the participating campus was difficult to quantify. Survey and interview responses revealed the absence of a clear purpose for Restorative Practices and clearly defined indicators of success. This indicates the need for a program evaluation, a critical final consideration for phase three of the Quality Implementation Framework. The purpose of a

Restorative Practices program evaluation would be to determine the program's effect on campus climate indicators, which may include student behavior and stakeholder perception data. Because there are generally multiple influences on campus climate data at a large urban high school, a program evaluation would enable the implementation team to determine the impact of Restorative Practices on climate data. This determination could be made if a program evaluation assesses implementation fidelity. Fitzpatrick et al., (2011) describe one of their five direct informational uses of evaluations as "Examining whether certain program goals or objectives are being achieved at the desired levels" (p. 263).

Based on interview and survey outcomes, teachers in the school possessed near total autonomy in their implementation of Restorative Practices. The level of autonomy made classroom implementation difficult to assess. This was evident in the responses to the question: "What does Restorative Practices look like on your campus?" The responses centered on the work of the Restorative Practices counselor and Restorative Practices teacher. There was consensus between teachers on the level of training, but there lacked evidence of consistent implementation in the classrooms based on interview responses. The perceived positive impact of the Restorative Practices team was repeated throughout interviews for this study, but the measures of effectiveness that contributed to perceptions varied and were generally qualitative in nature.

### **Conclusion**

Evidence of the problem of practice that drove this study (teacher perceptions of agency and campus in the implementation of campus climate innovations) was collected through classroom observations, teacher conversations, professional development sessions, and reviews of school site improvement plans between 2015 and 2017. Teachers views on campus climate

and appropriate student behavior strategies contrasted those of their site leaders. The researcher's classroom management professional development sessions were met with instances of individual teacher resistance because the innovation proposed alternative strategies to their preferred approach. When teachers possessed a sense of agency, they monitored their own attitudes, actions, outcomes, and progress towards desired outcomes (Bandura, 1986). Teachers in schools that created the context for this study expressed concern about initiatives implemented without their input. Data collection during this study revealed similar concerns.

Evidence of the problem of practice existed at the participating school. Restorative Practices was a district adopted initiative. Site leadership was tasked with implementation. Teachers had no role in the adoption phase of Restorative Practices but upon implementation were tasked with implementing classroom structures. The site principal provided rapidly increasing autonomy for teachers in their classroom implementation of Restorative Practices. An attempt to roll back implementation to the adoption phase for the purposes of teacher engagement might be detrimental to the presence of the innovation on the participating campus. The school site might consider using their campus climate team, including teachers, to reset implementation by identifying the problem on campus that may have prompted the implementation of Restorative Practices. Once the problem is identified, the team must establish measurable goals for Restorative Practices on the campus. Measurable goals could then be used to inform data driven practice.

When compared to Phase one of the Quality Implementation Framework; *initial considerations regarding the host setting*, interviews and survey responses revealed three missed opportunities when considering the host setting Restorative Practices implementation. First, the participating school did not establish clear and measurable objectives with stakeholders,

particularly teachers. Secondly, interviews demonstrated the participating school did not communicate the rationale for Restorative Practices implementation to stakeholders. Finally, the implementation lacked frequent communication of formative and summative outcomes with stakeholders. Interview and survey responses revealed an absence of clear goals for Restorative Practices and defined metrics to assess effectiveness. Because of this absence, it was difficult to provide effectiveness data, thus limiting the ability to periodically and strategically adjust practices.

When employees are agents, they monitor their own actions and modify practice towards the achievement of shared desired outcomes. The lack of involvement of teachers in the adoption of Restorative Practices at the participating school likely made it difficult to engage the efforts of more than half of the site's teachers. Because of the existing general sense of agency amongst most teachers, the initiative was not met with much resistance. The QIF recommends implementers position management structures to continually monitor, support, and adjust implementation efforts ongoing. Teachers participated in the implementation process and 80% agreed to some extent the implementation was successful. However, without clear and measurable objectives and formative data sharing, success of the initiative will continue to be measured by perceptions, limiting the ability to strategically adjust practices and processes to improve outcomes.

Phase two of the Quality Implementation Framework (Durlak et al., (2012) calls for the creation of structures to ensure proper oversight and management of the implementation process. During interviews, teachers were asked to describe Restorative Practices on the campus. The emphasis was on building and repairing relationships. The Restorative Practices team at the school intervened in student behavior issues, student-student conflicts, and student-staff

conflicts. Because over 91% of survey respondents agreed the campus is safe, a sense of need for Restorative Practices may not have been established with teachers, which ideally would've happened in the early stages of implementation. A lack of need for the innovation may contribute to a lack of attention to the details of implementation.

The implementation of innovations such as Restorative Practices have logistical requirements that challenge organizations to adapt site practices, policies, and personnel to meet the implementation needs. The participating high school made a concerted effort to improve campus climate at least six years prior to the implementation of Restorative Practices. Teacher interviews revealed multiple campus climate initiatives by name, along with school spirit activities and targeted student intervention aimed at improving campus climate. The implementation of Restorative Practices on the campus required implementation while maintaining existing initiatives. Implementation lacked consideration of previous successes with campus climate, a possible justification by some participants to ignore the rules of Restorative Practices implementation.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

There are potential benefits to further studies of the implementation of Restorative Practices as they relate to employee agency and implementation science. This study should be replicated in other schools in the district where Restorative Practices were implemented. This would enable researchers to compare findings to identify implications on district and school site implementation practices. The district may consider findings in the next phase of implementations of Restorative Practices in future high school regions.

In addition to teacher agency, future studies might explore student perspectives on the implementation of Restorative Practices. Student perspectives may include perceptions of

campus climate, agency, social-emotional development, and teacher-student relationships. As Restorative Practices seeks to improve campus climates, a student-centered study would be beneficial to interested parties. School and district leaders might find students' perspectives on the implementation of Restorative Practices beneficial to future implementations of innovations.

One identified challenge from this study was the absence of consensus on metrics to assess the effectiveness of Restorative Practices on the campus. As established earlier in this study, a critical consideration in implementation processes is the use of a program evaluation. The implementation of Restorative Practices at the school in this study could benefit from a program evaluation. This evaluation would enable implementers to measure effectiveness against clearly defined and measurable program goals.

A program evaluation of the implementation of Restorative Practices may lend itself to another research opportunity; a study that defines fidelity for the implementation of Restorative Practices. Prior to this study on the implementation of Restorative Practices, the researcher attended a seminar that included a panel of four school leaders who implemented Restorative Practices. The school leaders presented four distinct descriptions of their use of Restorative Practices. Restorative Practices is a relatively new initiative in central California schools and fidelity is loosely defined. An opportunity for a future study would be a meta-analysis of Restorative Practices implementation frameworks. This meta-analysis might produce common principles to guide a comprehensive implementation.

This study opened by sharing the rationale for the implementation of Restorative Practices; disproportionate suspensions of African-American students and students with learning disabilities in central California schools. The implementation of Restorative Practices warrants a study of the impact of Restorative Practices on the suspension rates of African-American

students and students with disabilities. Such a study would need to identify factors that contribute to suspensions and link components of Restorative Practices to those factors. For example, if student-teacher relationship challenges lend themselves to student suspensions, how does the implementation of Restorative Practices explicitly seek to improve student-teacher relationships? As targets of the implementation of Restorative Practices, the student behavior outcomes of African-American students and students with disabilities would be the focus of the analysis.

### **Concluding Remarks and Reflections**

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine teacher agency and the implementation of Restorative Justice Practices in an urban central California high school. The study examined relationships between agency, campus climate, and Restorative Practice implementation. The study sought to contribute to the field of educational leadership, particularly the implementation of campus climate innovations.

Findings from the study indicated a need to support teacher agency in all phases of the implementation of innovations. The school hired capable practitioners to support the implementation of the innovation on campus. Research from the review of literature paired with data from this study indicate an opportunity for the participating school to improve their ongoing implementation of Restorative Practices. First, they can couple student outcome data with student intervention best-practices to establish a broadly accepted rationale for Restorative Practices. Second, the participating school can use a meta-analysis of Restorative Practices implementation models to identify an accepted list of practices that represent implementation fidelity. Finally, the participating school can conduct a program evaluation to identify clear metrics to assess the effectiveness of Restorative Practices. The conclusion of a program



evaluation might initiate a continuous improvement cycle for stakeholders to apply their high level of agency to continuously monitor and adjust practices towards improved outcomes. The study revealed teachers at the school consider themselves agents as assessed by their confidence in their ability to produce mutually agreed upon outcomes. The successful implementation and maintenance of Restorative Practices on the campus depend on the extent teacher agency is applied to monitoring and modifying practice towards shared desired outcomes.

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## APPENDIX A

### Teacher Survey

Thank you for choosing to participate in this Restorative Justice implementation survey. The purpose of this instrument is to assess your perception of teacher agency, campus climate, and the implementation of Restorative practices on your campus. The survey consists of 28 questions and should take 8 minutes or less. By completing this survey, you are supporting research related to implementing Restorative Justice and other campus climate innovations.

Your individual responses are confidential and will be kept in a password-protected drive through the duration of the study. Findings will be reported in summary to address the goals and research questions of the study.

#### Demographic Information

1. How many years have you taught?
  - a. 0-5 School Years
  - b. 5-10 school years
  - c. 10-15 school years
  - d. 15 more school years
  
2. How many years have you taught at this school?
  - a. 0-2 School Years
  - b. 3-4 school years
  - c. 5-9 school years
  - d. 10 or more school years

Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

6-Strongly Agree      5-Agree      4-Somewhat Agree  
3-Somewhat Disagree      2-Disagree      1-Strongly Disagree

#### Perceptions of Agency

3. I have control over the implementation of restorative practices in my classes.
4. I monitor my implementation of restorative practices.
5. I adjust my use of restorative practices to improve classroom climate.
6. I have input in initiatives adopted at my school.
7. I have input in decision-making at my school.
8. I have time for group reflection about restorative practices?

#### Perceptions of Climate

Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

6-Strongly Agree      5-Agree      4-Somewhat Agree

3-Somewhat Disagree 2-Disagree 1-Strongly Disagree

9. My school is supportive of my work.
10. My school is an inviting workplace.
11. My school promotes collegiality.
12. My school encourages an appreciation of teachers' diverse opinions and values.
13. My school handles discipline problems fairly.
14. My school is safe.
15. My school staff cares about me.

### Restorative Practice Implementation

Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements about Restorative Practice Implementation.

6-Strongly Agree 5-Agree 4-Somewhat Agree  
3-Somewhat Disagree 2-Disagree 1-Strongly Disagree

16. Implementation has reduced classroom discipline referrals.
17. Implementation has increased academic achievement.
18. Implementation has increased student respect for other students.
19. Implementation has increased student respect for staff.
20. Implementation has increased staff respect for students.
21. Implementation has improved overall school climate.
22. Students are aware of restorative practices on our campus.
23. Restorative Justice implementation has been successful on my campus.
  
24. What have been some of the barriers to successfully implementing *restorative practices* in your school?
  
25. Are *restorative practices* available to all students in your school? Yes No Unsure
  
26. Some schools consider *restorative practices* as a standalone disciplinary option, while others view restorative practices as a part of a whole-school culture integrated within everyday interactions. How would you describe restorative practices at your school?
  - Whole-school integrated approach
  - Standalone disciplinary approach
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
27. How much training have you received in *restorative practices* since your school's implementation?
  - Less than 1 day
  - One day
  - Multiple days

- Multiple days with ongoing support
- None
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

28. For what reasons are *restorative practices* used at your school? Check all that apply.

- General preventive discussions
- Student verbal conflict
- Student/staff verbal conflict
- Student/staff physical conflict
- Student physical conflict
- Minor behavior infraction
- Major behavior infraction (physical)
- Vandalism
- Bullying
- Truancy
- Alcohol/Substance abuse

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX B**

### Teacher Interview Protocol

- 1) Tell me about your experience in education. School, District, Region? Specialties?  
Success Stories? Challenges?
- 2) How did your school arrive at Restorative Practices as an intervention?
- 3) Describe what restorative practices look like in your school.
- 4) How do you define restorative practices?
- 5) Describe your role in the implementation of restorative practices on your campus?
- 6) How would you describe site perceptions about restorative practices prior to implementation?
- 7) What do restorative practices look like on your campus?
- 8) What do you consider your biggest successes with the restorative practices program to date?
- 9) What were the challenges with implementing restorative practices in your classroom? On campus?
- 10) What are the challenges of operating, and sustaining restorative practices in your classroom? On campus?
- 11) How would you describe staff attitudes about restorative practices on your campus?
  - a. Has RJ implementation impacted staff respect for each other?
- 12) How is restorative practice performance data shared on your campus?
- 13) What else would you like to share about restorative practices on your campus?

## APPENDIX C

### Administrator Interview Protocol

- 1) Tell me about your experience in education. School, District, Region? Specialties? Success Stories? Challenges?
- 2) How would you describe the campus climate at your school?
- 3) How would you describe teacher *interest* in campus climate improvement and maintenance on your campus?
- 4) How would you describe teacher *involvement* in campus climate improvement and maintenance on your campus?
- 5) We will be discussing the of implementation restorative practices on your campus.
  - a) When was Restorative Justice identified for implementation?
  - b) Who was involved in the implementation process?
  - c) Why was Restorative Justice selected?
  - d) What steps were taken to engage stakeholders in the selection and implementation of Restorative Justice?
- 8) Where are *restorative practices* implemented on your campus? (i.e. Classroom, office, peace room, thinkery, counseling office, etc.)
- 9) What do you consider your biggest successes with the restorative practices program to date?
- 10) What were the challenges with implementing restorative practices in your classroom? On campus?
- 11) What are the challenges of operating, and sustaining restorative practices in your classroom? On campus?
- 12) How would you describe staff attitudes about restorative practices on your campus?
- 13) How is restorative practice performance data shared on your campus?
- 14) Can you describe the training regimen for Restorative Justice on your campus (Initial training, ongoing, staff wide, targeted, etc)?
- 15) What other information might it be important for me to know about Restorative Justice at your school?

## APPENDIX D

### IRB Approval Letter



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**To:** Jeffrey Hunt  
**From:** Douglas James Adams, Chair  
IRB Committee  
**Date:** 02/13/2018  
**Action:** **Expedited Approval**  
**Action Date:** 02/13/2018  
**Protocol #:** 1801094915  
**Study Title:** Teacher Agency and the Implementation of Restorative Justice  
**Expiration Date:** 01/31/2019  
**Last Approval Date:**

The above-referenced protocol has been approved following expedited review by the IRB Committee that oversees research with human subjects.

If the research involves collaboration with another institution then the research cannot commence until the Committee receives written notification of approval from the collaborating institution's IRB.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without Committee approval. Please submit continuation requests early enough to allow sufficient time for review. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in the automatic suspension of the approval of this protocol. Information collected following suspension is unapproved research and cannot be reported or published as research data. If you do not wish continued approval, please notify the Committee of the study closure.

Adverse Events: Any serious or unexpected adverse event must be reported to the IRB Committee within 48 hours. All other adverse events should be reported within 10 working days.

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, study personnel, or number of participants, please submit an amendment to the IRB. All changes must be approved by the IRB Committee before they can be initiated.

You must maintain a research file for at least 3 years after completion of the study. This file should include all correspondence with the IRB Committee, original signed consent forms, and study data.

cc: Ed Bengtson, Key Personnel