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# The Efficacy of Restorative Practices on Reducing and Preventing Problem Behaviors in Adolescents

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**The Efficacy of Restorative Practices on Reducing and Preventing  
Problem Behaviors in Adolescents**

by

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

For decades, schools and juvenile detention systems in the United States and abroad have used punitive disciplinary practices such as detention, suspension, expulsion, and jail sentences to address adolescent misbehavior. These practices are considered to be retributive in that they serve as repayment to society in the case of detention and to act as “desertion” of society in the cases of suspension or incarceration” (Flanders, 2014, p. 328). Zero tolerance practices, touted by both educational and juvenile justice systems, have escalated the use of such practices. However, little evidence exists to support that these retributive practices have reduced the number of disruptions, fights, and other violent misbehaviors within schools (Lewis, 2009).

The need for a different approach to discipline within schools and juvenile justice systems has led many schools and juvenile justice programs to consider alternatives such as Restorative Justice. Also referred to as restorative practices, they are designed not only to change behavior, but also to “restore the environment and relationships damaged by the behavior” (Beale, 2003, p. 418). Some practitioners contend this approach results in lower rates of misbehavior and recidivism (Bradshaw & Roseborough, 2005; Lewis, 2009). The purpose of this paper was to demonstrate the efficacy of restorative justice and other restorative practices on reducing adolescent misbehavior.

### **Restorative Justice**

Restorative Justice seeks to reduce the existence of or the need for retribution (Mullet, 2014). Stutzman, Amstutz, and Mullet (as cited in Mullet, 2015) described Restorative Justice as an approach that gives voice to those who were harmed. Restorative justice is designed to heal and repair relationships, encourage accountability, reintegrate the harmers into the community,

and create a caring climate. Bradshaw and Roseborough (2005) emphasized that “dialogue, reparation, and accountability” are critical components of Restorative Justice (p. 15).

Restorative Justice brings together the people most affected by the offense to try and determine how to deal with the offense (Bradshaw & Roseborough, 2005). The intended outcome of such practices is focused on fairness or justice between both parties. Fairness pertains to both parties having an equal chance to be heard, and justice implies that both sides agree to the outcome and have been given proper healing from the injustice done to them (Brooks, 2014). Although Restorative Justice has been viewed as one specific approach, the term now also refers to numerous restorative practices in many different forms, which are described in the following section.

### **Restorative Practices Defined**

Restorative Justice includes practices identified as family group conferencing, peacemaking circles and friendship circles, restorative mini chats, and victim offender mediation (Schumacher, 2012). In some instances, restorative circles are the best tactic for implementing restorative practices. In other cases that involve juvenile delinquents, the best practice may be conferencing and mediation (Brooks, 2014).

**Family group conferencing.** Juvenile and youth court representatives meet with the families of the offender and the victim convene and discuss possible outcomes and repayments to be made by the offender to the victim. The option of a family group conference is usually sought when the offender has admitted guilt. All members of the family group conference must agree to specific terms (Maxwell & Morris, 1993).

**Peacemaking circles and friendship circles.** Circles are proactive approaches for establishing teacher-to-student relationships as well as student-to-student relationships. Peacemaking circles can be established for problem solving, providing support, or community building. Regardless of design, they are essentially built around the concept of care for peers (Schumacher, 2012).

**Restorative mini-chats.** Most often suggested for use in schools, mini-chats are shortened interviews conducted with the offender, the victim, and any observers. Mini-chats consist of three different phases: *unwind*, *rewind*, and *wind-up*. During the unwind phase, the teacher is questioning the victim about his/her feelings regarding the situation and what he/she would like to see happen. During the rewind phase, the offender is questioned and also informed about how his/her action affected the victim; the offender is also questioned about how he/she could help with the healing of the victim. The windup phase is for the observers; the teacher may have an open discussing with the observers in this phase and discuss how he/she can help with healing and reintegration (as cited in Mullet, 2014).

**Victim Offender Mediation (VOM).** This is a restorative practice closely related to family group conferencing, which requires the victim and the offender to meet with a qualified mediator to redress the wrongdoing. The victim and offender may also invite family support during this process (Brooks, 2014).

These restorative practices are just a few variations of restorative justice that have been used in schools and other adolescent programs. There are many more variations of restorative practices that have been evolved from the more well established restorative practices



(Schumacher, 2012). However, victim offender mediation has been the most well established form of restorative justice nationwide as of 2005 (Bradshaw & Roseborough, 2005).

### **Historical Background**

Restorative practices are not a new concept; rather, they are an ancient concept used by indigenous peoples of South Pacific Islands and the native peoples of North and South America (Daly, 2002). However, it was not until the late 1980s that restorative justice practices were used more widely in response to pressure from the Maori tribal leaders that the European justice system in place was harsh and unfair (Daly, 2002). In response to this, New Zealand enacted legislation that would change court proceedings for youth offenders.

In 1989, New Zealand parliament enacted the Children Young Persons and Their Families Act, which implemented new court proceedings for youth offenders that included the *Family Group Conference*. The conference brought together family members (“Whanau”) who were involved in making decisions about youth offender punishments and sentencing (Maxwell & Morris, 1993, p. 13). Maxwell and Morris (1993) investigated the effects of the newly mandated restorative practices. In their report, they cited “Tikanga o nga hara” as the Maori law of right and wrong and clarified that responsibility for this law was not necessarily put on each and every individual, but rather on the community (p. 14).

Heather Strange and John Braitwaite are major proponents of restorative practices and published numerous studies throughout the 1990s. In one study, they summarized how restorative practices were implemented as part of the Re-integrative Shaming Experiments (RISE) in Southern Australia (as cited in Daly, 2002). As a result of the RISE program,

relationships were greatly improved between juvenile offenders and the police as well as juvenile offenders and their respective communities.

Tom Tyler implemented a similar program called Southern Australia Juvenile Justice (SAJJ). He reported different outcomes than RISE, in that there was “less evidence of *restorativeness*” (as cited in Daly, 2002, p. 71). However, he provided greater evidence that victims saw the offenders in a more positive light after each restorative conferencing session (Daly, 2002).

In the U.S., restorative justice and other practices are a fresh idea, considering that in 1980s and 1990s the U.S. was increasing its use of punitive justice for youth offenders (Beale, 2003). When restorative justice programs first made an appearance in the U.S. in the late 1990s, only private- and church-managed organizations were implementing restorative justice programs for youth offenders. In 1993, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), under the U.S. Department of Justice, established a project called the Balanced and Restorative Justice (BARJ) Model in the U.S. The OJJDP was designed to promote restorative justice in juvenile justice programs around the country (Bilchik, 1998). The BARJ program was established in the Dakota County, Minnesota, Juvenile Justice System in 1995, and it was guided by four principles: community safety, accountability and opportunity for the offender, justice for the victim, and” respectful treatment for all involved” (Bilchik, 1998, p. 60). More recently, the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) has established a graduate school in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, that focuses on restorative justice training for schools in the U.S., Canada, and Europe (Lewis, 2009). Other recent restorative justice movements include those initiated through state legislation, such as in Colorado and Oklahoma (Koinis, 2014).

Although restorative justice practices may seem as a positive alternative to harsher disciplinary measures, they are not widely implemented in the U.S. Some teachers claim they have little extra time to carry out restorative practices (Mullet, 2014). In addition, more evidence must be provided to determine the effectiveness of restorative practices.

### **Research Question**

One research question guides this starred paper: Are restorative justice models and practices effective in preventing and reducing serious problem behaviors in adolescents?

### **Focus of the Paper**

I included quantitative and qualitative studies in Chapter 2 that were published between 2008 and 2015. Study participants were adolescents ages 12 to 21 from educational or juvenile justice programs. Studies were included if they evaluated interventions described as restorative justice, restorative discipline, or restorative practices; these were the only terms included because they are the only terms that include the use of the word *restorative*. Both domestic and international studies were included for review.

I searched for studies using primarily the Academic Search Premier and PsycINFO databases from the St. Cloud State University Library website. I also found a number of dissertations on this topic from PQDT Open. To locate relevant information for Chapter 1 and studies for Chapter 2, I used several keywords and combination of keywords including *restorative justice, restorative discipline, and restorative practices*.

### **Importance of the Topic**

From my perspective, restorative justice and discipline practices involve mediation between two or more groups. The mediating parties represent each of the opposing sides of an issue. The issue is addressed through organized communication; that is, each side is thoroughly questioned by a mediating party and by the opposing party. All communication takes place with all participating members from both sides of the issue present. Restorative practices effectively incorporate questioning and listening skills as a part of the process. The outcome of a restorative practice session should be that all or both parties on each side of the issue are properly represented, and peace and understanding have been essentially restored. Furthermore, the resolution of the issue has been accomplished as a result of the offender assuming ownership or responsibility.

Jennings Community Learning Center, the school in which I work, uses restorative practices as an alternative to the punishment practices such as detention, in- and out-of-school suspensions, and expulsion. Teachers and other staff make use of restorative practices during the school day as a means to resolve conflict between students and students and between students and staff. Although there is no measure of its efficacy, every year, our staff members have touted the importance of having restorative practices as a primary means of resolving conflicts. These practices reflect the community-based mentality of the school and its progressive focus on alternative ways of handling difficult situations. By conducting this review of literature, I hope to find scientific, research-based support for the practices we are using.

## Definitions

*Conferencing*: a restorative practice where the offender and the victim of a specific crime or misbehavior including their requested representatives (e.g., family, friends, advisors, etc.) meet to discuss the specific crime or malfeasance and its effect on each party, while including discussion of proper repayment for the offense committed and discussion of offender reintegration into the community. Restorative conferencing may come in the form of face-to-face mediation, mediation circles, and family conferencing (Brooks, 2014; Maxwell & Morris, 1993; Mullet, 2014).

*Exclusion bullying*: stopping someone to play or associate with others or friends (Wong, Cheng, Ngan, & Ma, 2011).

*Recidivism*: the reoccurrence of an offense or similar offense by the same offender (Bergseth & Bouffard, 2012).

*Restorative justice*: the term that refers to a specific model of practice, whereby justice has been served through restoring peace and healing to the victims and the offenders have been made aware of the hurt and damage that has been caused the victims through his/her misbehavior (Beale, 2003).

*Restorative practices*: the broad term that refers to any practice involving a restorative theme or action as a prevention of or reaction to a misbehavior or malfeasance (Schumacher, 2012)

*Retribution*: a set of constraints on the exercise of punishment (Flanders, 2014). Forms of retribution may include separation from the community, pain-for-pain discipline approaches, or taking away time and opportunity (as cited in Mullet, 2014).

*Retributive justice:* a consequence given to the offender such as suspension, jail time, or a fine as a result of a misbehavior or malfeasance. In essence, retribution uses punishment as repayment to the victim or community that has been victimized (Flanders, 2014).

*Restorative discipline:* Similar to restorative practices, restorative discipline is another broad term regarding alternative practices for handling misbehavior that might include mediation or restorative circles (Armour, 2013).

*Restorative whole-school approach:* a proactive approach to adolescent misbehavior in schools through training students, staff, and community members in restorative practices such as relationship-building strategies, victim support, bully reintegration and social inclusion, and school safety and harmony (Wong et al., 2011).

*Survival time:* the amount of time between juvenile correction as result of a particular offense and recidivism (Bergseth & Bouffard, 2012).

## **Chapter 2: Review of the Literature**

Are restorative justice models effective in preventing and reducing serious problem behaviors in adolescents? In this chapter, I review 10 studies of restorative justice practices that were implemented in schools and juvenile justice programs around the U.S. and in other countries. Studies are presented in two sections: Restorative Justice in Juvenile Justice Programs and Restorative Justice in Schools.

### **Restorative Justice in Juvenile Justice Programs**

In this section, I include four restorative justice studies that were conducted in juvenile justice programs. Two studies were conducted in two different juvenile justice programs within the U.S., and two were conducted in offender referral programs in England.

#### **Victim Offender Mediation in Texas**

Spriggs (2009) outlined the outcomes for juvenile justice programs' use of victim offender mediation (VOM) from nine different juvenile justice programs throughout the state of Texas. The VOM process, as described in this report, involved a 4-phase process in which the referral of viable participants is taken into consideration. The second phase of the VOM process involved a mediator who prepared both the victim and the offender. During the third phase of this program, the victim and offender met and discussed the event where the crime or misbehavior occurred as well as possible restitution for the crime committed. Both parties were allowed to have representatives present during this part of the process. The fourth and final phase involved a mediator who oversaw the outcomes of the mediation and the agreement of restitution made during the VOM meeting. This VOM process rests on four principles requiring

that participation should be voluntary, the offender admits his or her guilt, both participants are thoroughly prepared prior to meeting, and a trained mediator is used to facilitate the process.

To determine program success, researchers analyzed the percentage of successful mediation agreements, 1-year re-referral rates, and re-referral rates based on type of crime committed. Of all the juvenile justice programs in this report, five of the nine VOM programs had successful mediation agreement rates at or above 80%. The program with the highest agreement percentage rate based on number of average annual participants was Tarrant County, with an average annual participation rate of 200 and a mediation agreement rate of 98.1%. These data suggest that offenders with prior experience with the VOM process were less likely to participate in the VOM process for a later offense in Tarrant County ( $n = 35.3\%$ ) than in Dallas ( $n = 51\%$ ) and Travis County ( $n = 58.2\%$ ). When re-referral rates were examined by type of crime, the highest re-referral rates were among crimes classified as probation violation (49.1%) and misdemeanors (47.7%), whereas the lowest referral rates were amongst those crimes classified as felonies (24.1%). In this report, however, the data from only three counties were analyzed for re-referral rates.

Overall, the data from this report are inconclusive regarding the success of the VOM process in Texas, primarily because only nine of 166 programs in Texas have adopted the process. The data from the three largest VOM programs in Texas suggest that the VOM process does not necessarily reduce recidivism, given the continued high re-referral rates among offenders who have prior misdemeanors and probation violations. However, the agreement rate for the largest VOM programs is successful, with mediation agreement rates above 80%.



## **English Youth Justice System**

Newbury (2011) conducted a qualitative study of England's restorative youth referral order system via observations of 41 different community panels, 55 interviews with youth offenders who received referral orders, and several interviews with victim liaison officers. Referral orders, as originally introduced to England juvenile justice system in 2002, attempted make the process of punishment for juvenile crimes more restorative. Crime victims could attend the offender's hearing panel and present input regarding: (a) how they were affected by the crime, and (b) how the offender should be sentenced. The youth offender panels are usually made up of one Youth Offending Team (YOT) worker and two community individuals who are trained in restorative justice programming. Parental guardians of both victim and offender are also encouraged to attend the panel.

In order to assess the effectiveness of the referral order program, interviews were conducted with the victim liaison officers (VLO) who served as representatives for the victims. Interview data revealed that all of the VLOs demonstrated major concern for the victims during the process. They indicated that in many cases, the panel can cause further damage to the victims because of three reasons: the victim is still recovering from the offense, the punishment for the victim is perceived to administered at the wrong time, and the offender may not be sincere because they are either forced into the panel or attendance will help the offender's case. One VLO claimed that victims should not even attend the panels because "there are so many other procedural items to sort out for the offender, that the mediation usually becomes sidelined" (Newbury, 2011, p. 255). However, some VLOs agreed that the victim's presence more than likely had a restorative effect on the offender.

In contrast to VLO perceptions, many of the offenders reported the positive effects of having the victims present. When interviewed, one offender mentioned that he would not have apologized after stealing a man's moped and crashing it because he did not feel bad for what he did. When asked if she would apologize to a girl she had assaulted, a female offender replied that she would have wanted to hit the victim again rather than apologize, because she felt it was her right to assault the victim in order to defend her friend. Of the 55 offenders who participated in the interview, only one agreed that he would have apologized to the victim if the victim attended the meeting. However, during a second interview one offender said that he made amends with the victim outside of the referral order proceedings because he saw the victim at the panel. He indicated that prior to the panel he did not know the victim's identify, but when the panel convened, "he realized that the victim lived near him" (Newbury, 2011, p. 261).

According to Newbury (2011), the referral orders process in England failed to uphold the elements of restorative justice. In order for a process to be considered restorative, both the victim and the offender must reach a common understanding. In this case, the author considers the process of the referral orders and panel meetings too forced, and in many cases moved along too quickly without allowing the victim and offender ample time for reflection prior to the panel meeting.

Similar to the preceding study on Youth Offending Panels in England, Stahlkopf (2009) presented two case studies of juvenile restorative justice programs in the Oxford and another program in northern England. Both programs employed the use of the referral order system for youth offenders, and also used Youth Offense Panels (YOP) and Youth Offence Teams (YOT). The referral orders were similar to the Newbury (2011) study, in that, those invited to the panel

meetings included community members, at least one member from the YOT, families of the offenders and the victims, the offenders, and the victims. This study is a qualitative case study of two different systems that focus primarily on the views and reactions of the offenders who participate in the YOPs.

All information for the 33 participants was gathered through 150 interviews from cases that ranged from minor (3-4 month referral orders) to severe offenses (6 months to 1 year referral orders). All participants in the interviews ranged in age from 11-17. Other information pertaining to both case studies was gathered through observations of the restorative nature of the YOPs and the members that attended them.

According to the data gathered by the author through interviews with the offenders who participated in the YOPs, most offenders found the process quite helpful. When asked if they were treated fairly, 100% ( $n = 33$ ) of the offenders said “yes,” and 77% ( $n = 20$ ) of the offenders agreed that the members of the panels were trying to help the offenders. Of all the participants, 70% ( $n = 16$ ) agreed that the referral orders were a good idea, and 64% ( $n = 21$ ) felt that the members of the panel were allies for the offender. However, some responses demonstrated that not all matters were resolved through the referral order process. Only 39% ( $n = 9$ ) of the offenders felt differently about themselves after the panel meeting, and only 35% ( $n = 9$ ) felt differently about their original behavior after the meeting had taken place. Overall, the data collected from the interviews demonstrated a good feeling about the structure of the panels.

Observations of the panel meetings demonstrated that the most of the offenders had little say in how they could repair the harm done and that panel members were not acting in a restorative fashion. For example, some participants responded, “I did what they told me,” “I had

no say,” and “I had to do what I was told” (Stahlkopf, 2009, p. 241). Other offenders reported that they did not understand the process or to what they were agreeing. Similarly, observations of the panel members demonstrated a lack of restorative attitudes. One female panel member became so frustrated by an offender’s short responses that she resorted to shouting at the offender by the end of the meeting. In another case, the offender was urged by his YOP to try and get a higher paying construction job in the latter stages of his referral order process; the panel ridiculed the offender after he accepted a position as a lower paid mail carrier. These panel observations indicate that the actions of some panel members are not always restorative.

The theory of the referral order process and the YOP meetings are of a restorative essence. The data collected from the interviewees in this study suggest that the offenders view the referral order in a more positive light than otherwise suggested in first study in this section. However, the two studies in this section reveal that observation of the meetings demonstrates that the attitudes of the panel members are not always restorative. If the referral order process is to be restorative in nature and helpful to all who participate, all participants need to have a mindful, restorative approach in all aspects of the process.

### **U.S. Juvenile Justice Programs**

Bergseth and Bouffard (2012) conducted a study in the upper midwest to evaluate the outcomes of a voluntary restorative justice (RJ) program for juvenile offenders. The program used face-to-face dialogue, also known as victim offender mediation (VOM). Participants in the RJ program were referred to the program by the courts, and they were given the opportunity to opt out and participate in the traditional juvenile justice program. Those who participated in the traditional juvenile justice program were most often subject to a period of probation.

The majority of the 284 participants who were referred to the RJ program were male (73.9%), white youth (73.6%) from urban areas (74.6%) with an average age of younger than 15. The largest portion of the 267 youth who participated in the traditional program were also male (71.5%), White (69.3%), and lived in urban areas (62.9%). However, the average age of those who participated in the traditional program was over the age of 15. The majority of offenses committed by the youths in the both programs were crimes against property such as vandalism and destruction of property.

A Kaplan-Meier survival analysis was utilized to determine the efficacy of both programs in this study. Specifically, characteristics of the offenders were compared to the average time of recidivism after each offender completed the designated program. The average time of recidivism was measured in months after program completion, which was referred to as *survival time*.

Data analysis revealed that youth who participated in the RJ program had a greater survival time ( $F_{(284)} = 54.4, p < .05$ ) than those who participated in the traditional program ( $F_{(267)} = 43.9, p < .05$ ). The greatest difference was the longer survival time for offenders in the RJ program under the age of 14 who had an average of 18.3 months ( $F_{(168)} = 56.3, p < .05$ ). The characteristic that demonstrated the least difference in survival time was among the females who averaged 4.2 months longer than the males, although it was not statistically significant. The traditional program proved to be more effective than the RJ program only in cases regarding offenders who committed crimes in the *other* category, although findings were not statistically significant.

The results of this study demonstrated that RJ programs were effective in reducing recidivism rates among adolescents in juvenile justice programs. This study also showed that RJ programs can work with a wide range of different groups such as adolescents from urban and rural areas, as well as adolescents from different age and race groups. Bergseth and Bouffard (2012) suggested there are some areas where RJ programs may not be effective, specifically for offenders who are higher in risk and have more than one prior offense. They also recommended that studies be conducted with larger population samples and that other demographic variables be considered such as socioeconomic status, family status, education levels, and community participation levels.

### **Baltimore's Urban Community**

In 2014, Brooks completed a doctoral dissertation to determine the effectiveness of restorative justice on recidivism rates for African-American males between the ages of 12 and 17 years of age within one of Baltimore's juvenile justice programs. This case study involved observation of the program as well as interviews with seven restorative justice program facilitators. The author of the study employed *Three Flows of Activity* (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to analyze the interview findings and develop central themes.

Participants were asked the central research question: "How do restorative justice programs help African-American males 12-17 reduce recidivism rates and lessen their involvement in the juvenile justice system?" Three different themes emerged: (a) it helps youth realize their overall accountability and their ability to rebuild their lives, (b) it allows both sides to be heard, and (c) it enables children to move on and learn from their past mistakes. Further

data analysis revealed that 71% of the participants' responses supported the first theme, 57% supported the second theme, and 57% supported the third theme.

For each of the three central themes, alternative themes arose. These alternatives are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

**Central and Alternative Themes**

CENTRAL THEME	ALTERNATIVE THEME
Restorative justice helps youth realize their overall accountability and their ability to rebuild their lives	Restorative justice reduced recidivism just by allowing adolescents to be heard without taking away their rights.
Restorative justice allows both sides to be heard.	Restorative justice provided a visible change to adolescents so they did not feel so "locked up."
Restorative justice enables children to move on and learn from their past mistakes.	The offenders struggle to learn from their mistakes because they do not know who or what to trust during the restorative process. The selection process for the program needs to be improved.

The alternative themes represent different ideas as presented by the facilitators that demonstrate the multiple purposes served by the restorative justice program, however, they were considered the dissenting opinion since they were addressed by the minority of the group. Although these alternative themes were not the central focus of the restorative justice facilitators, they are still ideas that should not go overlooked in the future of the program.

Overall, the evidence used in this study to support restorative justice programming within the juvenile justice system is unclear. The actual program used in Baltimore's urban community is never explained within the study. However, most of the participants within the case study generally supported the use of restorative justice as an alternative to punitive or retributive punishments.

## **Restorative Justice in Schools**

In this section, I include six different studies of the efficacy of restorative justice in schools from around the U.S. and abroad. Three of the studies were conducted in the U.S., one of the studies included both U.S. and English schools, and two studies were conducted in countries including England and Hong Kong.

### **U.S. Schools and Abroad**

The International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) has helped with the implementation of restorative practices in many schools around the U.S. and in other countries such as Canada and England. The IIRP trains each school on a wide range of restorative practices including check in-check out circles, victim/offender conferencing, and circles of healing. Lewis (2009) reported on the rates of success for schools within the U.S. and abroad that implemented restorative practices under the IIRP.

Although the exact amount of time is not reported in the study, each school participated in teacher workshop days prior to the school year in order to receive training on restorative practices. The success of the restorative practices at each school was measured in reduction of out-of-school student suspensions, incidents of misbehavior, and staff opinions about the effectiveness of the restorative practices.

The success of most schools in this study in the U.S. was measured in the decrease of disciplinary referrals, whereas some also included the drop in out-of-school student suspension rates. Over a 2-year time period, two schools saw a decrease in out-of-school student suspensions: West Philadelphia High School ( $n = - 58$  suspensions) and Newtown, Pennsylvania, Middle School ( $n = - 8$  suspensions). Palisades High School in Kinterville, Pennsylvania,



experienced a decrease of 40 suspensions over a period of 4 years. Other schools noted overall decreases in disciplinary referrals: West Philadelphia High School ( $n = -31$  referrals), Pottstown, Pennsylvania ( $n = -11$  referrals for fighting), Newtown Middle School ( $n = -68$  referrals), Pallsades High School ( $n = -150$  referrals), and Springfield Township High School of Erdenheim, PA ( $n = -67$ ). This study has demonstrated that all schools within the study have seen decreases in referrals for misbehavior. For the schools that measured it, decreases in out-of-school suspensions were also reported.

Canadian and British schools reported similar results as U.S. schools. The study included one school district from Ontario Canada in which out-of-school suspensions at the secondary level decreased from 679 to 615 suspensions. Bessel Leigh School of Oxfordshire, England, reported a decrease of 55 behavioral incidents during the first 3 weeks of each school year over a 2-year period. The City of Hull, England, school district reported a decrease of 37 average weekly physical abuse incidents and an overall decrease of 121 out-of-school student suspensions.

Based on the numbers of behavioral incidents and out-of-school suspensions in American, Canadian, and British schools included in this study, researchers concluded restorative practices were effective. Even though this study included a limited amount of schools, it shows that there are some schools that have succeeded with the implementation of restorative practices. Because schools present their data differently, results cannot be interpreted uniformly. Nonetheless, the overall message of the study is a switch from zero tolerance policies to restorative practices has successfully decreased the number of out-of-school suspensions as a means for dealing with adolescent misbehaviors.

### **Four Schools in Hong Kong**

In response to increased incidents of bullying in Hong Kong schools, a number of schools have implemented the Restorative Whole School Approach (RWsA) that involved all students, staff, and community members. Wong et al. (2011) examined the effectiveness of the RWsA approach that included “relationship-building strategies, victim support, bully reintegration and social inclusion, and school safety and harmony” (Wong et al., 2011, p. 849).

Four schools were involved in the longitudinal study over a 2-year period. One school fully implemented the RWsA, two schools partially implemented the RWsA, and one school did not implement the RWsA and served as the control. A team of social workers and restorative practice specialists introduced the three schools, to the RWsA model. Training and implementation lasted for 15 months, and schools had the option of establishing all or some of the restorative practices.

In order to assess the effectiveness of the RWsA in each school, 1,480 randomly selected middle-school students from the four schools completed a pre-post 41-question survey using either a 6-point or 4-point Likert scale to indicate agreement or disagreement. The items addressed bullying, hurting others, lack of empathy, caring behavior, self-esteem, level of school harmony, sense of belonging, and positive perception toward teachers. Of the 1,480 students surveyed, 1,176 student surveys were valid for pre- and post-implementation comparison using *t*-tests.

Significant decreases were observed in bullying overall in the fully implemented RWsA school ( $t = 3.41, p < .001$ ) and in the partially implemented RWsA schools ( $t = 2.4, p < .05$ ), whereas the control school experienced a significant increase in occurrences of bullying

( $t = -2.55, p < .05$ ). At the fully and partially implemented RWsA schools, significant decreases in *exclusion bullying* were also recorded and significant increases in verbal bullying were reported at the non-RWsA school.

Significant changes also occurred in other school attributes as measured using a school climate survey answered at random by students of all schools. Most notably, self-esteem levels rose significantly in the fully implemented RWsA school ( $t = -.4, p < .001$ ), and using the same mode of measurement, levels in lack of empathy dropped as well ( $t = 2.35, p < .05$ ). On the other hand, significant decreases in positive perception toward teachers and sense of belonging were reported in the control school and the partially implemented schools. The control school reported no change in self-esteem, lack of empathy, and hurting others.

The most important finding in this study was the significant decrease in bullying in schools that fully or partially implemented the RWsA programs. To explain the finding that positive perception toward teachers and sense of belonging decreased in partially implemented schools, the authors noted lack of fidelity, although this aspect was not measured formally. Overall, the school that fully implemented the RWsA demonstrated that this approach can decrease bullying behavior and increase the attributes that make a school a positive learning environment.

### **Upper Midwest High School**

DeWitt and DeWitt (2012) conducted a study assessing the effects of a restorative approach on the incidents of hazing at the high school level. In 1999, a group of high school students were caught participating in a hazing ritual that had been taking place annually for as far back as many members from the community could remember. The hazing incident was designed

to be an initiation rite for a select, invited group of incoming male and female freshmen.

Community members who witnessed the event reported the incident, and police halted the event soon after it started. School board members and other community leaders then collaborated to find solutions to the ongoing hazing concern.

With the backing of local law enforcement, in 2000 the high school principal and district superintendent implemented the recommendations of the planning group. The students were required to take part in three different restorative actions that were inspired by juvenile justice practices: (a) attend a session with a well-known speaker to discuss the incident and dangerous effects of hazing, (b) give presentations about the dangers of hazing to high school and middle school students, and (c) complete 20 hours of community service. Students who refused to participate in the restorative practices would have to serve jail time. This restorative approach was to repay the community by educating the larger student population about the dangers of hazing.

In 2006, the school administered a questionnaire to the junior class of 437 students to determine what students knew about hazing and if there were any known incidents of hazing taking place at the time. Students also reported their level of participation in school activities and if a sibling or parents previously attended the school in order to gain insight as to whether the level of participation in extra-curricular activities had waned after the implementation of restorative justice, and if the generational tradition of hazing had been halted.

Analysis of the questionnaire results demonstrated that very few students have been victims of hazing at the school as 28 of the 437 questionnaire participants replied that they had been victims. Even fewer students ( $n = 26$ ) currently participated in hazing at the school, and a

majority of the students had an understanding of hazing and its consequences (194 of 437 participants). Other questionnaire information suggests that there was no change in extra-curricular participation and that generational culture of hazing had been stopped after the implementation of the restorative practices. Of the 437 questionnaire participants, 294 of the actively participated in school activities and most of the participants ( $n = 234$ ) had at least one parent who attended the same high school. However, a total of 194 students reported they had knowledge of hazing that took place at the high school, specifically the girls' hockey team, which suggests that hazing still does exist at the school.

Although prior data of those who have participated in hazing incidents is not included in the study, the author does report that number of those who have participated in and those who have been victims of hazing has dropped quite dramatically. The numbers of those who understand the definition of hazing has increased. Overall, the author reports that the community and the school have seen an improvement in culture as the occurrences of hazing have decreased after the implementation of the restorative practices.

### **Ed White Middle School**

Armour (2013) evaluated the outcomes of a restorative approach to discipline and community-building program at Ed White Middle school of San Antonio. The program was implemented with 225 sixth-graders; males and females were equally represented. The majority of the student population was identified as Hispanic, whereas 87 students were identified as African-American and 110 students were identified as White. Five of the 22 teaching staff were male, and the majority were identified as non-Hispanic.

The Institute for Restorative Justice and Restorative Dialogue (IRJRD) used quantitative and qualitative procedures to evaluate restorative discipline outcomes 1 year after implementation. Pre-post quantitative measures included in-school suspension (ISS) and out-of-school suspension data, occurrences of specific problem behaviors, and survey data that measured the extent of implementation in each classroom during each month of the school year as well as student and parent/caregiver satisfaction. Qualitative measures include interviews with a small group of staff to determine their experiences with the implementation of the restorative discipline programming on a month-to-month basis.

The implementation of the restorative discipline program at Ed White Middle School began with a 2-day staff training retreat. The school hired a consultant and developed a Leadership Response Team (LRT) to oversee the execution of the restorative discipline program within the school. All sixth-grade teachers were directed to implement restorative justice circles in their classrooms and to employ check in/check out sessions. All staff were directed to deal with discipline issues in their own classrooms. However, the more serious discipline issues were referred to the LRT for a restorative conferencing measure.

Quantitative analyses revealed mixed results. The frequency of out-of-school suspensions dropped by 84% (2011/2012 = 66 suspensions; 2012/2013 = 11) from the 2011/2012 school year to the 2012/2013. However, partial day ISS increased by 123% (2011/12 = 75; 2012/13 = 167). According to Armour (2013), the reason for the increase in partial day ISS, is due to the change in nature of partial day ISS to function as the time for Restorative Discipline (RD) program processes to take place. School climate surveys completed by the teachers, parents, and students had varying results. For the teachers, their mean scores started low in the

fall ( $M = 39.5$ ), peaked in winter ( $M = 46.6$ ), and then dropped again in the spring ( $M = 42$ ). The scores for the parents started low ( $M = 24.4$ ) and rose gradually until the end of the year ( $M = 27.5$ ). The survey scores for the students started high ( $M = 31.9$ ), dropped in the winter ( $M = 21.8$ ), and then rose again in the spring ( $M = 30.3$ ).

Qualitative analysis of the Restorative Discipline program at Ed White Middle School was based upon focus group interviews. Some of the more prominent recommendations from the focus groups suggest that teachers need to be better trained with consistent feedback and access to RD professionals throughout the day. Staff also recommended the need for clear RD steps as well as better scheduling for RD circles that are not held during class time. The focus groups revealed that a majority of the staff abandoned RD processes about halfway through the year because the RD program was too difficult to establish.

Overall, the RD program at Ed White Middle School produced mixed results. Quantitative analysis demonstrated that there was a drop in the use of out-of-school suspension, but an increase in partial day ISS due to the change in the nature of the punishment that was attributed to the RD program. However, the school climate surveys completed by parents, teachers, and students reported varying levels among all three groups throughout the year, which demonstrates mixed approval with how the school was functioning. Qualitative analysis of interviews with staff that participated in the RD program showed that the RD program at Ed White Middle School still needed a lot of improvements in order to be successful in other grades and in years to come.

### **Oakland Unified School District (OUSD)**

Jain, Bassey, Brown, and Preety (2014) implemented the Whole School Restorative Justice approach (WSRJ) at Cole Middle School, a small school in the OUSD. After the success of the WSRJ approach at Cole Middle School, more and more schools within the OUSD began implementing the same approach to deal with misbehavior. In 2010, the OUSD board mandated that all schools within the Oakland school district implement the WSRJ. By 2014, 30 schools within the OUSD adopted the WSRJ approach. In order to accomplish WSRJ goals, each school implemented circles, victim/offender mediation, restorative conversations, and family group conferencing. Jain et al. (2014) conducted a study to evaluate the outcomes of the WSRJ program within the OUSD.

An online survey was distributed to teachers and staff in order to measure the perceived effectiveness and implementation of the WSRJ approach. Researchers also examined out-of-school suspension rates, reading test performance, and graduation rates. In addition to these quantitative data, focus groups were conducted with students, staff, and community stakeholders to ascertain the overall strengths and weaknesses of the WSRJ approach.

Online survey data suggested teachers and staff positively perceived the WSRJ program overall, in that most teachers and staff who completed the survey ( $N = 355$ ) felt the program and its implementation were successful. During the time of the study 29.3% of the survey participants believed that their school's implementation of the WSRJ program was thriving, whereas 33.6% felt their school's program was still developing. Eighty percent of the survey participants strongly agreed that the schools should continue using the WSRJ program, whereas 7% strongly disagreed. Approximately 44% thought the WSRJ helped reduce office referrals for



misbehavior, 45% thought it helped reduce disciplinary actions with Latino and African-American males, and 56% felt that it helped reduce out-of-school suspensions. When asked about the impact of the WSRJ program on the social-emotional skills of the students, 67.1% of the participants agreed the program helped improve those skills, 63.2% believed the program improved the way students resolved conflicts, and 53.3% felt the program improved the way adults resolved conflict with students. Based on these survey data, it appeared that most participants supported WSRJ implementation and effectiveness.

Focus group interview data reiterated much of the survey data with regard to implementation and effectiveness. However, many participants offered advice as to how the WSRJ program could be improved. For example, one teacher mentioned that there was not enough time in the day to conduct restorative conversations. Another staff member stated that the restorative practices were not used with consistency due to time constraints. This teacher claimed that instead of suspending a student, the front office held the student for the day still called this a restorative measure. However, staff members who supported the WSRJ approach in the focus groups touted the approach as a process that improved the conflict resolution process between staff and students and students and their peers. One student mentioned that the restorative process allowed him to verbalize his frustrations before the conflict worsened.

District-wide expulsion and suspension record from 2011-12 and 2012-13 school years demonstrated an overall decrease in punitive discipline measures and an increase in student reading achievement rates. From 2011 to 2014, suspension rates for schools that implemented the WSRJ program dropped from 34.4% to 13.9%, whereas schools that did not implement the WSRJ program increased from 13.4% to 18.1%. The dropout rates for WSRJ schools dropped

dramatically by 56.2%, and the 4-year graduation rate increased by 59.9%. The reading achievement rates of ninth graders in the WSRJ schools increased by 128.2%. Thus, the quantitative data gathered from the district demonstrated improved school wide outcomes.

Overall, the implementation of the WSRJ program in the OUSD was successful. Jain et al. (2014) demonstrated that schools that adopted the WSRJ program decreased their dropout rates, improved graduation rates, decreased out-of-school student suspension rates, and increased reading scores. Survey and interview data from teachers and other staff reflected improved school functioning and improved student and staff communication that could be improved by: (a) securing greater buy-in from staff and students, and (b) giving restorative practices more time to be implemented within the schools.

### **Summary**

This chapter included a review of 10 studies that investigated the impact of restorative justice practices in schools and juvenile justice settings in the U.S. and in other countries. Table 2 provides a summary of study findings, which are discussed in Chapter 3.

**Table 2****Summary of Chapter 2 Studies**

AUTHOR (DATE)	QUANTITATIVE/ QUALITATIVE	PARTICIPANTS/ SETTING	PROCEDURE	RESULTS
JUVENILE JUSTICE FACILITIES				
Spriggs (2009)	Quantitative	Nine juvenile justice programs in Texas	Analysis of victim offender mediation agreement data and re-referral rates for the VOM process	A high percentage of successful agreements occurred among VOM participants, but there were also high rates of re-referrals to the VOM process by reoffenders.
Stahlkopf (2009)	Qualitative	2 Oxfordshire Youth Offending Teams in Oxfordshire County, England; 33 males of ages 11-17	Observation, interviews, and case file analysis	Most of the participating youth felt that the restorative practices implemented by Youth Offending Teams were useful and helpful. Over half of the participants felt that the restorative practices did not affect their behavior.
Newbury (2011)	Qualitative	41 adolescent offenders and 14 victim liaison officers from southeast England's youth offending teams.	Observation of youth justice panels and face-face interviews with offenders and victim liaison officers	Eight percent of youth justice panels had some victim representation; there was tension between the inclusion of the victim in the process and the actual process itself.
Bergseth & Bouffard (2012)	Quantitative	284 youths in a restorative justice process and 267 similar youths in a traditional juvenile justice program in an upper Midwest city	Regression analysis of age and length of time in each program to the "survival time" of staying offense free after being exited from each program	Youth who were referred to the restorative justice program remained offense-free for a significantly longer period of time than those referred to the traditional juvenile justice program.
Brooks (2014)	Qualitative	Seven experts on restorative justice programs in Baltimore	Face-to-face interviews; case study	Five participants agreed that recidivism could be reduced when personal accountability was realized.

Table 2 (continued)

AUTHOR (DATE)	QUANTITATIVE/QUALITATIVE	PARTICIPANTS/SETTING	PROCEDURE	RESULTS
SCHOOLS				
Lewis (2009)	Combination	10 high schools and middle schools in the U.S., Canada, and England	Case studies, interviews of school representatives, and school disciplinary data	There were significant reductions in disciplinary actions and inappropriate behavioral incidents. at all schools.
Wong et al. (2011)	Quantitative	1,480 seventh- and ninth-grade students from 4 different Hong Kong schools.	Pre- and post-intervention survey analysis of bullying occurrences and other variables	Bullying decreased significantly at schools that implemented restorative approaches and bullying increased at those schools that did not implement restorative approaches.
DeWitt & DeWitt (2012)	Qualitative	437 high school juniors at 1 Midwest U.S. high school	Survey	A significant reduction in the number of hazing occurrences were reported.
Armour (2013)	Combination	331 sixth-grade students and 31 teachers/staff in 1 middle school	Records review, data analysis, and teacher interviews	Implementation resulted in reduction of in-school and out-of-school suspensions; teachers gained better relationships with students.
Jain et al. (2014)	Combination	22 middle schoolers 10 high schoolers, and 18 staff from one middle school and one high school in Oakland, CA. 355 staff from 24 schools, peer interviews with 5 high school students. Data from 700 students in two RJ schools and from 17,650 students in 33 schools.	Focus group observations, interviews, online survey, student-level data analysis, school-level data analysis, case studies of success stories.	African-American school suspensions decreased by 40%; all student school suspensions decreased by 34%. 76% of peer conflict was resolved in restorative circles; empathy, understanding, accountability, and sense of school connectedness and empowerment also increased.

### **Chapter 3: Conclusions and Recommendations**

Restorative justice practices provide a positive alternative to disciplinary practices commonly used in schools to address rule-breaking and acting-out behaviors. Restorative Justice is a means of resolving conflict and preventing and reducing serious problem behaviors in adolescents. In Chapter 2 of this paper I reviewed the literature that evaluated the effectiveness of restorative justice models and practices in juvenile justice programs and schools within the U.S. and abroad. Historical and theoretical background information on this topic was presented in Chapter I. In this chapter I discuss the findings of Chapter 2 studies, recommendations for future research, and implications for practice that are a result of my literature review.

#### **Conclusions**

I reviewed 10 studies that examined the effectiveness of restorative practices on preventing and reducing adolescent misbehavior in juvenile justice and schools. In this section, I synthesize the research to reflect common themes and findings among the studies with regard to restorative justice models and practices.

#### **Restorative Justice in Juvenile Justice Programs**

Five studies pertained to the effectiveness of restorative practices on adolescent misbehavior within in juvenile justice programs in the U.S. and abroad (Bergseth & Bouffard, 2012; Brooks, 2014; Newbury, 2011; Spriggs, 2009; Stahlkopf, 2009). In this section I discuss the themes I identified in the juvenile justice studies.

*Improved processing for offenders.* Restorative justice (RJ) models and practices improved the judicial process for the juvenile offenders overall in three of the studies. Results of these studies reported improved conditions for the offenders (Brooks, 2014; Newbury, 2011;

Stahlkopf, 2009). Newbury noted offenders were more cooperative when the victim was present during the process, and offenders reported the RJ process was a good idea.

*Increased survival times.* Survival time was used to measure the time between a juvenile offender being released from a juvenile justice facility to the point in which the same offender commits another crime. Restorative models and practices helped increase the survival times of juvenile offenders after they participated in an RJ program. Bergseth and Bouffard (2012) investigated survival time and found that RJ was associated with increased survival time.. However, survival time did not increase for those who had committed offenses in the “other” category (e.g., minor traffic offenses).

*Not appropriate for all situations.* As indicated in the Bergseth and Bouffard (2012) study, RJ practices may not be appropriate for all offenses. Some juvenile justice program workers agreed and highlighted the need for better process for how participants are selected. In addition, some victims are not ready to meet with the offender, and many offenders do not feel remorse for their crime (Newbury, 2011; Stahlkopf, 2009). Without voluntary participation, there will be no positive agreement (Spriggs, 2009).

*Increased victim/offender agreements.* One of the most important parts of the RJ process in a juvenile justice system is the agreement on how the offender can repay the harm done to the victim. Spriggs (2009) demonstrated that five of the nine county juvenile justice programs in Texas were able to help their RJ program participants come to positive agreements with the victim.

*Summary.* Although RJ models and practices have produced positive results in survival time for offenders, increased agreements between offenders and victims, and better experiences

for offenders in the process, RJ models and practices will not work for every participant or every situation. RJ models and practices have also produced positive results in effectiveness on adolescent misbehavior in schools. Schools that have fully implemented RJ programs have seen drops in hazing and bullying coupled with decreases in the use of out-of-school student suspensions. Schools that have implemented RJ programs have also shown increases in positive school perception by students, staff, and parents.

### **Restorative Justice in Schools**

In all of the research I reviewed I found five studies that pertained to the effectiveness of restorative practices on adolescent misbehavior within in schools in the U.S. and abroad (Armour, 2013; Bergseth & Bouffard, 2012; DeWitt & DeWitt, 2012; Jain et al., 2014; Lewis, 2009; Wong et al., 2011). In this section I discuss the themes derived from these studies.

*Out-of-school student suspensions.* The effectiveness of RJ models and practices in schools has typically been measured by decreases in of out-of-school student suspensions. Several studies reported substantial decreases in out-of-school student suspensions over the 2-3-year duration of the study (Armour, 2013; Jain et al., 2014; Lewis, 2009).

Although these studies indicated overall success, the measurement of out-of-school student suspensions on its own can only be used as an indicator of each school's commitment to establishing a RJ program. In other words, each school has the ability to decide whether or not to suspend, and the school's focus on decreasing suspensions as part of a study may have affected outcomes. When paired with other measures such as staff/student school perception and behavioral incident occurrences, the measure of out-of-school student suspensions helped to demonstrate overall effectiveness of the implemented RJ models and practices.

*Bullying and hazing.* When implemented effectively, RJ models and practices can help with decreasing the occurrences of incidents of bullying and hazing in schools. Two studies reported that RJ models and practices improved school climate by decreasing incidents of bullying and hazing in Hong Kong (Wong et al., 2011) and in the midwestern United States (DeWitt & DeWitt, 2012). In both studies, students' perceptions of bullying and hazing also led support to the program's success. Although the methods of data collection (surveys) could be considered as matters of opinion, the overall perception and observance of bullying and hazing visibly decreased.

*Implementation and buy in.* In order for any RJ program to be fully effective in reducing adolescent misbehavior, each school must fully implement the program as designed by the district. Staff and students must also demonstrate a commitment to the RJ program through buy in (i.e., agreeing there will be foreseeable benefits). Three of the school RJ studies discussed the effect of the extent of RJ program implementation and buy in, including Armour (2013), Jain et al. (2014), and Wong et al. (2011).

The reality is that establishing an effective RJ program can be challenging to embedded teacher views and opinions, as Armour (2013) discussed and demonstrated in his report. Wong et al. 2011 also discussed the difficulties of establishing the Restorative Whole School Approach (RSWA) program. However, the data presented in this study demonstrated overall positive effects of the RJ models and practices at the schools that either fully or partially implemented the RSWA program. Finally, the report by Jain et al. (2014) is a demonstration of how buy-in can sway the effectiveness of the RJ program as most of the staff surveyed bought into the RJ program and the results could be considered overall successful.



Overall, buy in and level of implementation can influence the effectiveness of RJ models and practices, as seen in all three studies that reviewed the measure. Lack of buy in causes a drop in consistency of implementation of the program. Partial implementation of an RJ program will also fail to produce the same effectiveness of a fully implemented program as outlined by a school district plan for implementing RJ models and practices.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

After reviewing the research regarding the effectiveness and implementation of RJ models and practices in juvenile justice programs and schools, I believe further research is needed to analyze the long-term effects of RJ models and practices.

One focus of future research should be on the effectiveness of the multiple styles and models that are defined as *restorative*. Multiple practices were used throughout the studies reviewed in Chapter 2 of this paper that had restorative properties including victim offender mediation, family group conferencing, check-in/check-out circle, and restorative whole school approaches. However, there needs to be more longitudinal studies that identify the effectiveness of each practice within the same organizational structure. Since RJ contains such a large scope of practices and models, organizations could benefit in their implementation of RJ programs by understanding what the most effective RJ practices for any given situation.

Another focus of future research should be on programs that make use of random sampling of its participants (Bergseth & Bouffard, 2012). Most studies examined in Chapter 2 examined programs that selected participants prior to the beginning of each study. No such program exists where participants are randomly selected with no consideration given to prior history, ethnicity, or the nature of the misbehavior. Most juvenile justice programs that were

studied screened individuals prior to entering them into the RJ program. A study of a program that involves random selection could be beneficial, as it would show the actual effectiveness of RJ models and practices without organizational bias.

Future research should also examine the relation between the effectiveness of a given RJ program with the level of commitment of the facilitators to RJ principles. Stahlkopf (2009), made note of youth offending panel (YOP) members who were not committed to RJ principles in their proceedings, which led to a less effective result for each participant. However, the focus of the Stahlkopf (2009) study was on the experiences of the offenders. Understanding the commitment to RJ principles and its effect on the final outcome of the RJ program will help organizations that are trying to implement RJ models and practices in training of each individual facilitator.

Finally, future research should include replication of tested variables and outcomes. Most studies in this paper had outcomes with different variables tested, including survival times, reductions in out-of-school suspensions, and recidivism rates. A series of studies should be conducted over many years that use the same collection of tested variables and outcomes.

### **Implications for My Practice**

In order for Restorative Justice models and practices to work effectively in reducing adolescent misbehaviors in my own practice at Jennings Community Learning Center, there are issues and implications that should be considered. I will address three of the most important implications I learned from reviewing the research on this topic.

As demonstrated by the Chapter 2 findings, RJ models and practices can be very effective when they are implemented properly. Proper implementation begins with thorough and

systematic staff training. After the implementation of RJ models and practices, there should be consistent check-ins with staff and students to ensure that the practices are being carried out appropriately and consistently. Jennings CLC has struggled with implementation of the RJ program, mainly because only a few of the staff have received proper training. If RJ models and practices are to be effective at Jennings CLC, staff should receive training from an outside entity that will also ensure check-ins with staff to ensure that commitment to program is upheld throughout the school year.

Staff and student buy-in to RJ principles and practices is essential. As shown in the report from Ed White Middle School, staff who do not agree fully with the RJ principles will begin to dismiss the practices as the school year progresses (Armour, 2013). Effective training is key to securing staff and student buy-in. Although at Jennings CLC, there is a lot of buy in to RJ models and practices—especially the proactive approaches (e.g., community-building circles and all-school meetings)—little follow through occurs when it comes to reactive forms of RJ practices (e.g., victim offender mediation). When a student commits an infraction, students are often dismissed from the building with no RJ processing. In order for RJ models and practices to be successful at Jennings CLC in this area, staff need to demonstrate more commitment to following through with every step.

A third important aspect of RJ implementation is the behavior of staff who carry out the RJ practices. Staff should participate voluntarily and uphold the *restorativeness* of the process. Those who adhere to punitive measures destroy the process. This is not a struggle for staff at Jennings CLC because most of the staff buy in to the concept of RJ. However, remaining

*restorative* throughout the entire school year is important in maintaining RJ practice as the school year progresses.

### **Summary**

Restorative Justice is an idea that was first established by indigenous peoples from all over the world. The idea behind RJ is to heal and repair relationships, encourage accountability, reintegrate the harmers into the community, and create a caring climate (as cited in Mullet, 2014). Recently, we have seen a reemergence of RJ models and practices in our justice systems and in our schools in response to the failure of punishing approaches. However, there is still much work to be done to implement effective RJ programs and provide the resources needed to ensure appropriate RJ practices.

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