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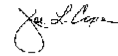
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership



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School of Educational Leadership

Investigating Administrators’ Resistance to Implementing Restorative Practices

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Beri Deister

December 2019

Dedication

The outcomes and recommendations presented in this research would not have been possible without the support of my family, the academic community, and professional colleagues. When I embarked on this journey, I soon discovered that executing the proposed methodology required more grit and determination than I ever anticipated, but my network of support carried me through.

I want to thank my amazing family, who sacrificed their time to complete my share of the family chores so that I could explore my passion. Every Sunday for three years they carried the doctoral mantel with me by intentionally creating time and space for me to work by doing the laundry, cooking dinner, and grocery shopping without request or complaint. Moreover, they served as my editors, encouragers, and primary inspiration for making a difference through this research.

In addition, I want to thank my academic mentor, Dr. Peter Williams. His guidance throughout this process was the perfect balance of support and accountability I needed to overcome unanticipated challenges along the way. Through his coaching and deep knowledge of the research process, I not only completed this study but I learned more about myself and leadership philosophy than I ever imagined.

Finally, I want to thank my professional colleagues. It was at the suggestion of a respected mentor within my organization that inspired me to pursue a doctoral degree. Continued expressions of interest and encouragement from my colleagues at work reminded me of the relevance of the study and importance of completing the work with fidelity. Without the

collective support of these individuals, this work would not be the same. Their love and encouragement served as the fuel I needed to make a difference in the academic community. This study is dedicated to the difference-makers in my world.

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Abstract

In this case study, the researcher investigated the barriers to school administrators' implementation of restorative practices as a management approach to student behavior. Based on the claim that restorative practices is a promising alternative to exclusionary disciplinary placements for changing behavior, the researcher used an emergent explanatory mixed methods design to better understand administrators' resistance to change despite overwhelming evidence that exclusionary disciplinary practices are the primary contributors to national trends in disciplinary disproportionality and institutional discrimination. The researcher identified and analyzed barriers to create recommendations for addressing administrators' resistance through organizational change strategies using systems theory.

Keywords: restorative practices, resistance to change, organizational change, systems theory

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Public education's aim to prepare young men and women to become productive members of society is being unknowingly compromised by implicit, ineffective, discriminatory disciplinary practices imposed by campus administrators around the country (Thompson, 2016). Despite school leaders' attempts to address student behavior violations, minority student groups are being disciplined at rates that are not proportionate to their representation (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). To address the overrepresentation, many educational organizations are looking to alternative behavior management approaches. *Restorative practices* (RP) is one strategy that has been recommended by the educational, governmental, and academic community to address this concern; however, its diffusion throughout administrator practice has been limited.

Background

In 1994, the Gun-Free Schools Act provided administrators a zero-tolerance springboard for student discipline, requiring student expulsion from school for any student who brought a firearm to school (Cerrone, 1999; Thompson, 2016). Over time, legislators and administrators across the nation co-opted the zero-tolerance philosophy for a broader range of offenses, such as tardiness and student absences (Cerrone, 1999; Thompson, 2016). This approach to discipline resulted in student suspensions for minor offenses and created a system that failed to improve student behavior and reduce student code of conduct violations (Allen, 2015; Bear, 2012; Thompson, 2016).

In 2014, the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) (U.S. Department of Education, 2014) reported that African American students were disciplined three times more often than their White peers for similar offenses. In addition, the application of suspensions and classroom removals was

similarly disproportionate for these students, which resulted in reduced exposure to student learning opportunities and contributed to growing gaps in academic skills, perpetuating the school-to-prison pipeline and doing little to affect recidivism for the same offenses (Bear, 2012; Cavanagh, Vigil, & Garcia, 2014; Gass & Laughter, 2015; Suvall, 2009; Thompson, 2016; Yull, Blitz, Thompson, & Murray, 2014).

The OCR advisory identified the disparity in the application of student discipline as institutionalized discrimination and reminded school administrators of their responsibility to avoid practices that perpetuated academic gaps (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Furthermore, it encouraged school leaders to consider the following alternative approaches to discipline management to achieve this goal: conflict resolution, RP, counseling, and structured systems of positive interventions (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Since receiving this recommendation from the U.S. Department of Education, school administrators have attempted to address the hegemonic discrimination inherent in zero-tolerance disciplinary practices by implementing the recommended alternative approaches (Cavanagh et al., 2014; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012; Thompson, 2016; Yull et al., 2014), but many of their efforts have been met with practitioner skepticism and resistance (Evans, Lester, & Anfara, 2013; Sumner, Silverman, & Frampton, 2010).

Restorative practices. One of the alternative approaches recommended by the OCR (U.S. Department of Education, 2014) was the implementation of RP, a collection of responses to student behavior that prioritizes reparation of harm and restoration of relationships (Carter, 2013; Evans et al., 2013; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012) as an alternative to traditional discipline. RP shifts the focus of conflict away from assigning blame and consequences toward seeking “restitution, resolution, and reconciliation” (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012, p. 140).

Examples of RP include: victim-offender mediation/reconciliation, community/restorative conferencing, peacemaking circles, and re-entry/welcoming circles (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). These practices focus on the power of social engagement as a means to build capacity for empathy and self-discipline rather than the need for an authority-figure to manage students.

There are two recommended models for RP implementation: whole-school and classroom. Naturally, classroom-only models have less potential to change the campus culture and climate despite their immediate positive impact on student-teacher and student-student interactions in the classroom. Therefore, many campus leaders opt to implement a whole-school model as an immediate response to the OCR recommendations (U.S. Department of Education, 2014) and their desire to change their culture of behavior management. Passarela (2017) identified four potential outcomes of whole-school models of RP:

- Accountability, community safety, and competency development (Ashley & Burke, 2009);
- A reduction in racial and ethnic disparities in school discipline (Rumberger & Losen, 2016);
- A reversal of the negative and academic effects of zero-tolerance school discipline policies (Rumberger & Losen, 2016);
- A reduction in contact between police and students on school discipline issues (Passarela, 2017; Petrosino, Guckenburg, & Fronius, 2012).

Research has provided a variety of recommendations for implementation based upon social change theories. Recommendations that are supported by multiple studies include:

- Building teacher awareness and understanding by communicating restorative core beliefs (Evans et al., 2013; Hopkins, 2015; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012; Sumner et al., 2012; Zion, Allen, & Jean, 2015),
- Capitalizing on teacher interest (Evans et al., 2013; Makoelle, 2014),
- Leveraging teacher leadership (Evans et al., 2013; Makoelle, 2014),
- Developing an organization that prioritizes relationships over control (Hopkins, 2015; Irby & Clough, 2015; Welch, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

Although RP has received support from the research community, Williams (2013) contended that "the practice . . . has not achieved the theory's potential" (p. 421). This is evident in a North Texas school district's implementation journey during the 2016/17 and 2017/18 school years. The district serves over 52,000 suburban students in the Dallas-Ft. Worth metroplex. Three years ago, the district implemented RP as a response to data that reflected a disproportionate number of disciplinary actions, specifically exclusionary placements, for African American students ("School performance," n.d.).

District leaders utilized research-based behavioral and sociological diffusion recommendations (Rogers, 1995), such as starting with administrators who were willing to change (Evans et al., 2013), assessing the organization's current reality (Zion et al., 2015), designing a culturally sensitive community (Haight, Gibson, Kayama, Marshall, & Wilson, 2014), and building capacity for responding to student wrongdoings and classroom conflict (Cavanagh et al., 2014). Following the guidance of these recommendations led to some diffusion of RP among administrators, but the recommendations did not have enough impact to fully diffuse the implementation of RP throughout the district without resistance. This challenge to the

full diffusion of RP suggested there may be unidentified psychological or organizational factors that prevented administrators from ever formally adopting the innovation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this emergent explanatory mixed methods case study was to understand barriers influencing administrators' resistance to change and the limited diffusion of RP as a means for reducing the disproportionality of exclusionary disciplinary placements among minority student groups in the educational setting. Why was RP proving difficult for administrators to fully adopt? The outcomes of this research provided clarity for leaders wishing to guide their most reluctant administrators through the philosophical shift required to eliminate disproportionality created by legacy systems of behavior management. Ultimately, this research aimed to give district leaders and campus administrators tools that empowered and supported the use of RP over time, even when it would be easier to continue using traditional disciplinary practices.

Methodological approach. The research design of this study used mixed methods to develop a multidimensional understanding of the barriers to administrator adoption of RP. Phase One of this study used an online survey to collect demographic information about study participants and quantitative data describing participant implementation of RP. This phase surveyed campus administrators in a school district in North Texas. I analyzed Phase One information for implementation trends that helped to inform Phase Two questions and participants.

I narrowed the focus in Phase Two to examine the specific barriers to administrator implementation. Participant group size and composition were dependent on the results of the Phase One responses. I invited Phase Two participants to participate in focus groups to give

voice to individuals sharing a similar experience (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015). Questions for this phase were open-ended and explored the specific challenges administrators faced while implementing RP (Ivankova, 2015).

At the conclusion of Phase Two, I analyzed qualitative data for patterns to better explain the barriers for administrator implementation of RP. I evaluated the barriers using the theoretical framework of general systems theory with an emphasis on resistance to change. Senge's systems theory was used to understand the social and systemic structures that affect the implementation of RP (Patton, 2016), and Cook and Lewandowsky's (2011) resistance to change theory considered the impact of administrators' neurological responses to change. I used these concepts to explore whether the barriers to implementation for the selected participants were primarily a social or psychological response, which could ultimately inform future implementation recommendations.

Research Questions

P1Q1. What is the relationship between administrator attitudes about restorative practices and their implementation of restorative practices?

P1Q2. What is the current status of implementation of restorative practices across the district?

P2Q1. How do administrators' perceptions impact their implementation of restorative practices?

P2Q2. According to the perspectives of administrators, what are the main reasons they do not implement restorative practices in their professional practice?

Definition of Key Terms

Diffusion. Diffusion refers to a social change resulting from intentional communications about a specific innovation (Rogers, 1995). Diffusion of RP, in this study, suggested that administrators undergo the desired change, adoption, and implementation of RP as communicated by district and campus leadership.

Disproportionality. Disproportionality in this study refers to the disparity between a student group's total representation in student enrollment as compared to their representation in exclusionary disciplinary actions. For example, in 2014 the OCR reported that African American students only represented 15% of the total national enrollment; however, 35% of the students across the nation that were suspended at least once were African American (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Moreover, 44% of the students suspended twice and 36% of students expelled were African American.

Exclusionary discipline. Exclusionary discipline refers to any disciplinary action that removes students from the learning environment. In terms of federal and state reporting, these actions include in-school-suspension, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion (Thompson, 2016).

Restorative practices (RP). This is a collection of practices that focuses on nurturing relational school cultures. RP is not solely designed for discipline but is a behavior management strategy intended to encourage positive behavior through connection to one's community. Influenced by the values and practices of restorative justice models implemented in the criminal justice system (Evans et al., 2013; Hopkins, 2015; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012), RP has been championed as a promising alternative to addressing student offenses as they honor social

engagement and community rather than traditional command-and-control behavior management philosophies (Evans et al., 2013; Hopkins, 2015; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012).

In the school setting, restorative justice transitions the responsibility for correcting student behavior from the administrator and back to the community. The practices and processes involved in developing a community of restorative justice have resulted in RP, a "whole range of interactions, proactive as well as responsive" (Hopkins, 2015, p. 23). Common practices include victim-offender mediation, victim-offender reconciliation, peacemaking circles, and restorative conferencing (Evans et al., 2013; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). Each can be implemented by campus personnel; however, the use of peer mediation contributes to the development of a community of restoration by preparing students to facilitate restorative circles, conferences, and mediations without the support of teachers and administrators (Payne & Welch, 2018).

School-to-prison pipeline. The school-to-prison pipeline is a term used to describe punitive institutionalized practices that contribute to the increased likelihood that a minority student will be incarcerated because of a lack of education resulting from exclusionary disciplinary practices (Thompson, 2016).

Social control. Social control is the philosophical belief that people need to be managed. In the school setting, social control manifests itself in the idea that student behavior is responsive to a clearly defined set of rules, expectations, and consequences (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012).

Social engagement. Social engagement is a philosophical framework that promotes democratic and community responsiveness toward one another (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). Social engagement encourages empathy and respect for all, emphasizing that all stakeholders are "worthy, interconnected, and relational" (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012, p. 151). A hallmark of

social engagement is that is does not value traditional control structures or outcomes vis-à-vis student consequences.

Zero-tolerance practices. Zero-tolerance practices are disciplinary responses to student behavior that do not require administrators to consider student intent, which would afford students due process during the administrative investigation (Cerrone, 1999). Inspired by the legislation provided in the Gun Free Schools Act of 1994 that required schools to expel any student for one year who brought a firearm to school, zero-tolerance legislation became a popular way for states to address other dangerous behaviors, such as possession of drugs or alcohol (Cerrone, 1999; Thompson, 2016). Over time, local school boards adopted zero-tolerance policies to address less serious infractions, such as school attendance, and many student behaviors became subject to systemic mandates rather than individualized responses.

Summary

To address the implicit discriminatory disciplinary practices that abound across the nation, administrators must change their behavior management practices. Zero-tolerance responses are not only perpetuating racial disciplinary disproportionality; they are doing little to deter students from misbehaving. In this study, I examined the diffusion of one recommended alternative approach—RP—by investigating the barriers to educator acceptance, belief, and implementation. A case study using an emergent explanatory mixed methods design allowed for the selection of a specific group of administrators along the adoption continuum to pinpoint unique factors that contributed to their philosophy and practice. I analyzed the data collected in Phase Two of the study using social and neurological theoretical frameworks. This analysis supported the development of implementation recommendations. The next chapter reviews the

literature to justify this study and my research approach to collecting meaningful, relevant resources.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

School leaders have become increasingly aware of their responsibility to address the growing number of exclusionary disciplinary placements for minority students. State and federal mandates require leaders to examine their current practices and consider their impact on student learning and achievement. As a result, many leaders have implemented alternative behavior management strategies, like RP, but they are facing resistance within the school community.

This review of literature examines the foundational values of a restorative mindset to illustrate the drastic difference between RP and traditional behavior management. A brief review of the history and development of RP for the school setting illustrates the origins of RP and the struggle leaders across contexts have had to facilitate the required shift in organizational philosophy and practice. I review and analyze implementation strategies through the theoretical framework of systems theory, focusing on resistance to change as a mental model.

Restorative Practices

RP is a cultural praxis that promotes relationship building among stakeholders, conflict prevention, and reparation of harm through effective and meaningful conversation (Hopkins, 2015). A move away from traditional punitive consequences, RP is a relational approach that "[focuses] on building and maintaining positive relationships across the school community" (Hopkins, 2015, p. 4). RP offers school staff a repertoire of best-practice tools and techniques for restoring relationships when things go wrong. Founded on the principles of restorative justice, a movement in the criminal justice system that seeks to reduce recidivism by repairing the relational damage that occurs when a victim is harmed, RP widens the vision of restorative justice to include proactive responses to student behavior rather than simply reactive responses to student wrongdoing.

Restorative Values

Restorative justice and the broader field of RP are grounded in respect for the "equality, dignity, mana and the potential of all people" (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 4). Hopkins (2015) described a restorative mindset as a way of being, not doing. The restorative philosophy leverages social engagement as a means for resolving interpersonal conflict and changing behavior in lieu of traditional structures of social control that focus on blame and punitive consequences. Hopkins (2015) identified five core values of restorative justice and contended that the combination of these values is what sets RP apart from other behavior management approaches. The values underpinning a restorative mindset include the following:

1. Recognizing that each stakeholder has a unique perspective or interpretation of an event and that they need a chance to share their point of view;
2. Appreciating the importance of enabling stakeholders to share and listen to the wants, needs, and feelings of each party;
3. Focusing on the impact of what has occurred;
4. Believing that the stakeholders involved are best-suited to find a resolution to the conflict and that their involvement will elicit the best response to the resolution; and
5. Trusting that the practice of listening and reflecting on the event is important to all participants and is a catalyst for building respect and empathy (Hopkins, 2015).

Essential Restorative Practices

Behavior development through RP has developed into a "social science that studies how to build social capital and achieve social discipline through participatory learning and decision-making" (Wachtel, 2016, p. 1). Nineteen years ago, the International Institute for RP (IIRP) identified eleven essential elements of RP for administrators committed to developing a campus

culture that can effectively leverage social engagement to promote positive choices and interpersonal interactions (Augustine, Engberg, Grimm, Lee, Wang, Christianson, and Joseph, 2018). Table 1 details these practices and gives a description of each.

Table 1

Eleven Essential Restorative Practices

Essential Practices	Description
Affective statements	Using "I" statements to help students recognize their behavior and the impact it has on others.
Restorative questions	What was the harm? How has it impacted you? What needs to happen to make things right?
Proactive circles	Conducting circles with the class to establish behavior expectations. These circles transition from teacher-led to student-led and should occur four times more than responsive circles.
Responsive circles	Using restorative questions and affective statements to respond to behavior or tensions affecting a group of people. All affected stakeholders participate through this formal practice.
Restorative conferences	Using a trained facilitator to lead all stakeholders who have been affected by a serious or persistent misbehavior through restorative dialogue.
Fair process	Allowing students to participate in the decision-making process. Clarifying the expectations of the process and the consequences for failing to meet those expectations.
Reintegrative management of shame	Implementing structures and expectations that avoid shaming participants. Separating the offense from the offender.
Restorative staff community	Using RP with staff to resolve conflicts and build community.
Restorative approach with families	Using RP with family members to support student behavioral and academic achievement.
Fundamental hypothesis	Maintaining high expectations for student behavior (Acosta, Chinman, Ebener, Phillips, Xenakis, & Malone, 2016).

From "Can Restorative Practices Improve School Climate and Curb Suspensions? An Evaluation of the Impact of Restorative Practices in a Mid-Sized Urban School District" by C. H. Augustine, J. Engberg, G. E. Grimm, E. Lee, E. L. Wang, K. Christianson, and A. A. Joseph, 2018, Santa Monica, CA: RAND. Copyright 2018 by the RAND Corporation. Adapted with permission.

Recently, Wachtel (2016) synthesized the essential elements identified in Table 1 to illustrate a balanced implementation of the IIRP's essential values and practices. Wachtel's (2016) restorative practices continuum narrowed down the IIRP's essential elements into five primary practices and captured the progression of learning that occurs when RP is implemented in both formal and informal structures. Wachtel's (2016) five primary practices include:

- Affective statements
- Affective questions
- Small impromptu conferences
- Groups or circles
- Formal conferences.

Proactive Practices

RP includes proactive and reactive practices. Kimball described RP as prevention and restorative justice as intervention (Kimball & Wachtel, 2013). Attending to the development of social skills that promote "affirmation, resilience, and positive relationship building" (Harden et al., 2014, p. 67) prior to student misbehavior sets RP apart from restorative justice. Proponents of RP argue that practices, such as using affective statements and questions, teach students and staff to communicate their feelings to one another in nonthreatening ways (Wachtel, 2016). Affective conversation sentences starters help offenders identify the potential impact of their choices and consider ways in which they can prevent harming the community.

Circles and conferences are also used proactively. Morrison and Vaandering (2012) noted the use of restorative circles as a key practice that has the ability to shift an organization's culture from one that solely honors restorative justice toward one that leverages social engagement prior to student offenses. Rooted in the practices of indigenous tribes, circles and conferences are

formal structures that build community, develop emotional literacy, and promote peaceful interactions (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). The use of a talking piece provides a participation structure for group interactions during the dialogue (Pavelka, 2013).

In addition, the regular use of circles is reported to develop stakeholder capacity for participation in the circle structure and strengthen relationships between students and staff (Hopkins, 2015). Scholars note that whole-school models founded on the integration of circles into the day-to-day interactions between staff and students have the ability to build a safe, positive school climate (Hopkins, 2015; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). Many models include the use of peer mediation as a restorative practice. Students are trained to facilitate circles and conferences with their peers to mediate interpersonal conflict (Payne & Welch, 2018). This approach enfranchises students as leaders of restoration. As shown in Table 1, the essential elements of restoration—using affective statements and restorative questions—support the development of student facilitators during proactive and responsive circles and restorative conferences. Furthermore, the use of peer mediators in these practices contributes to the restorative value of providing a fair process in which students contribute to the decisions made during the circle or conference.

Reactive Practices

RP in schools also draws directly from reactive restorative justice practices in the criminal justice system. Restorative justice practices are implemented to address harm that arises from a traditional victim-offender conflict. In school, reactive RP offers teachers and administrators a variety of responsive approaches to student offenses. Pavelka (2013) identified four of the most common reactive approaches to student behavior:

1. Peer mediation: Students mediate conflicts between multiple parties. Peer mediation equips students to lead their peers through restorative processes, like conferences and circles (Payne & Welch, 2018). Peer mediation is often used as a formal response to student conflict.
2. Peer or accountability boards: Student peers, victim(s), and wrongdoer(s) evaluate the impact of a student's behavior and develop an individualized case plan for the offender that addresses the needs of the offender and appropriate consequences to restore the effect of the wrongdoing on the community.
3. Conferencing: Trained facilitators lead all affected parties, including the victim, offender, family, friends, and supporters, through a dialogue designed to achieve restoration of the damage that occurred and the design of an agreement for future interactions.
4. Circles: Similar to conferencing, trained facilitators lead all affected parties through a structured reflection about the impact of the offense.

Each of these approaches honor the core values of restoration. They do this by promoting the development of positive communication skills and involving all affected stakeholders in the restorative process (Harden et al., 2014).

Efficacy of Restorative Approaches

Both restorative justice and RP have been studied and supported by researchers as alternative approaches to managing behavior. The impact and effect of these approaches has been measured against two primary outcomes: reducing offender recidivism and addressing racial disproportionality within the justice system (Bergseth & Bufford, 2007; Bufford, Cooper & Bergseth, 2018; Williams, 2013).

Restorative justice in the criminal justice system. Recent studies suggest that restorative justice in this setting has the ability to achieve the first objective, reducing offender recidivism, but not the second objective, reducing the over-incarceration of minorities (Bergseth & Bufford, 2007; Bufford, Cooper, & Bergseth, 2018; Williams, 2013). Bergseth and Bufford (2007) studied the long-term effect of restorative justice in the juvenile court system and determined that restorative justice interventions had the ability to reduce recidivism over a time frame of up to four years. The researchers continued their study and determined that restorative justice interventions were most effective for younger, male offenders with no previous criminal history who had a violence or property offense. It is important to note that juveniles with drug-related offenses were less likely to respond to RP. A follow-up study by the same researchers examined the impact of varied applications of restorative justice. In this study, Bufford, Cooper and Bergseth (2018) applied different levels of intervention ranging from minimal to highly structured to different types of offenders and found that an individualized approach to the restorative justice model was equally effective. As a result, the researchers concluded that restorative justice models could be tailored to attend to the specific needs of the offender and maintain their effectiveness. An organizational benefit to this finding is that it allows case workers the flexibility to maximize the time spent with juvenile offenders based upon their specific needs.

The second desired outcome of restorative justice intervention in the criminal justice system is a reduction in the incarceration rates of minorities. Williams (2013) noted that restorative justice serves “as part of a broader emancipatory and reparative process in keeping with a global reparations movement” (p. 444). Her study of institutionalized racism embedded in Nova Scotian laws and judicial practices speaks to a generalized concern for the fidelity of

restorative justice and identified a blind spot in the application of restorative justice practices—equality.

Williams's (2013) work points out the dichotomy that exists between the attitudes and beliefs of the personnel implementing and applying RP. For example, Williams's (2013) study noted that over one-half of the personnel implementing restorative justice in the Nova Scotia Restorative Justice Program (NSRJ) believed that race was a recurring factor in their cases, and 89% of the same employees believed that the needs of minorities were being met using restorative justice. However, only 9% of the total restorative justice referrals over a five-year period were for African Nova Scotian youth, despite community members' reports that a significant number of these children were subject to some form of state criminal control.

The lack of representation of African Nova Scotian youth in the restorative justice program suggests these offenders may be adversely affected by implicit bias and "the discretionary decision-making of Crown prosecutors" (Williams, 2013, p. 450). These adverse effects are not limited to Nova Scotian youth. Implicit bias and the ability to manipulate referral outcomes exists internationally. As a result, restorative justice in the criminal justice system has yet to "include the critical transformative dimension" required to reduce the racial disproportionality that exists in the criminal justice system (Williams, 2013, p. 450).

Restorative practices in schools. Mirroring the criminal justice system, RP in schools seeks to achieve similar goals by using a combination of practices that build and leverage social capital to manage student behavior. Wachtel (2013) summarized the philosophy of RP, theorizing "human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes when those in positions of authority do things with them instead of to them or for them" (Kimball & Wachtel, 2013, p. 21).

Unlike restorative justice in the criminal justice system, there is little generative research documenting the effectiveness of RP in schools (Evans, Lester, & Anfara, 2013). This is likely due to a lack of conceptual clarity (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012), clashing philosophies within the field of restorative approaches (Evans et al., 2013), and limited implementation timeframes. Morrison and Vaandering (2012) noted that the "sustained development of [RP] is piecemeal, inconsistent, and often ad hoc" (p. 148). When faced with a conflict that challenges their restorative mindset, practitioners often co-opt other strategies, seek zero-tolerance options, or give up their commitment to RP. To prevent these outcomes, Morrison and Vaandering (2012) called for further research and the development of implementation guidelines and strategies.

There are two principal discussions around the efficacy of RP. Most of the research has focused on decreases in student code of conduct violations and reductions in exclusionary practices (Ortega, Lyubansky, Nettles, & Espelage, 2016). The core of this research was based upon published disciplinary reports and schools that reported a commitment to RP, rather than peer-reviewed research analyzing the efficacy of RP in relation to variables of race, age, socioeconomic status, and the like. Scholars have noted that a positive correlation between RP and these outcomes is promising, but this correlation has not reflected causality because there is limited information about the specific practices used by each organization (Ortega et al., 2016).

As practitioner interest in RP spreads, studies have been completed in specific local contexts through a variety of methodologies, like case studies and participatory action research. Three examples of studies evaluating the efficacy of RP within a school community are listed below.

- Mirsky and Wachtel (2007) analyzed the effect of RP on students enrolled in CSF Buxmont schools, a system of alternative schools in southeastern Pennsylvania. Their

findings reported that "exposure to a restorative milieu positively improves both the attitudes and behavior of delinquent, at-risk youth" as evidenced by quantitative and qualitative measures that reflected improved self-esteem and a reduction in recidivism (Mirsky & Wachtel, 2007, p. 16). This study confirmed that exposure to RP for at least three months had the ability to reduce recidivism among students with a history of offending behaviors. Follow-up measures indicated the impact of RP was still evident with the initial cohort two years post study.

- Ortega et al. (2016) studied the impact of restorative circles on high school students. Their research sought to understand the experiences and perceived outcomes from participants' perspectives. The researchers identified both positive and negative outcomes of participation in restorative circles. Negative outcomes revealed participant frustration and disappointment with others in the process. Despite the negative outcomes, this research confirmed that restorative circles improved participant relationships, empowered students, and reduced suspensions. Furthermore, this study determined that participation in restorative circles served as an effective proactive strategy for teaching appropriate strategies for responding to conflict.
- Mansfield, Fowler, and Rainbolt (2018) studied the efficacy of RP at Algonquin High School, a suburban school serving more than 1,400 students in Central Virginia. The researchers detailed the implementation journey of RP at this school over a five-year period. While the study did not account for variables of restorative practice types or social or economic factors, it did consider the impact of a complementary program: school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports. This research confirmed

generalized conclusions about the ability of RP to reduce recidivism and exclusionary disciplinary placements in a local context.

Together, these studies have contributed to the growing body of research supporting the use of RP as a behavior management intervention. Serving as a catalyst for continued study, each of these studies evaluated the efficacy of RP through varied perspectives. The resulting call for continued use of RP in each of these studies raises the level of need for research-based implementation recommendations so educational leaders can effectively transform their learning environments.

Implementation

Despite the varied approaches to evaluating the efficacy of RP, a common theme presented in the literature indicates RP has the ability to positively impact student behavior, even with limited implementation. Moreover, proponents of restorative justice contend that it is “best applied to the school context because of the structure of these institutions, where community members see each other day after day and situations can turn dangerous if not adequately addressed” (Payne & Welch, 2018, p. 226). Nevertheless, adoption of RP across the United States has been slow (Evans, et al., 2013).

A variety of implementation strategies have been recommended, but none have garnered the collective approval of the research community or served as a catalyst for widespread adoption across the nation. Researchers have acknowledged teachers’ resistance to change in the development of their implementation recommendations (Buckmaster, 2016; Evans, et al., 2013). Rather than explore this phenomenon, Evans et al. (2013) recommended starting with a grassroots movement capitalizing on teacher interest and leadership.

The severity of the disciplinary disproportionality that has existed among campuses in this district requires imminent change. Previous attempts by district leaders to leverage the excitement of campus administrators have waned and resistance has begun to take root. Fiori (2017) explored teacher resistance to change through Kotter's eight-stage change model and identified critical stages in this framework that support teachers' willingness to adopt RP. In this study, I consider the impact of two change theories as constructs for negotiating the philosophical and practical changes associated with restorative practice: systems thinking and resistance to change.

General Systems Theory

General systems theory is rooted in the Aristotelian worldview that "the whole is more than the sum of its parts" (Von Bertalanffy, 1972, p. 407). This philosophy was challenged by 18th-century scientists and mathematicians, like Descartes, and alternate part-to-whole theories were used to explain biological and mathematical phenomena for centuries (Von Bertalanffy, 1972). In the late 1920's, von Bertalanffy challenged those scientific explanations arguing "the customary investigation of the single parts and processes cannot provide a complete explanation" (Von Bertalanffy, 1972, p. 410) of the impact of organization on a living thing. Initially related to biological studies, von Bertalanffy's claim that "in order to understand an organized whole we must know both the parts and relations between them" (Von Bertalanffy, 1972, p. 411), became the foundation for understanding the systemic dynamics of social groups, personalities, and technologies.

Born of a scientific and mathematical understanding of biological responses to stimuli, many researchers have tested von Bertanlanffy's claims in multiple fields. Boulding reported that he used von Bertanlanffy's living systems paradigm to successfully describe organizational

relationships in the field of economics (Boulding, 1965). Boulding and other researchers interested in applying von Bertanlaffy’s systems theory across new disciplines ultimately led to the development of general systems theory—scientifically exploring the idea of wholeness within a living system. As a result, a multitude of more specific system-theoretical approaches have been identified since von Bertanlaffy’s original assertion. These include cybernetics, control theory, and social change theory (Stroh, 2015; Von Bertanlaffy, 1972).

Despite the specific field in which a systems theory approach is applied, all theories are founded on the following principles:

- Individuals reflect systemic phenomena in their thinking and behaviors.
- A complete system includes all interconnected parts and is a part of a bigger experience made from other systems.
- The study and use of systems properties help people understand the corresponding needs of their experiences.
- There are three fundamental operations of systems thinking: analysis, comparing, and synthesis.
- System thinkers understand that the interconnectedness of a system’s parts is the cause of all diversity (Broks, 2016).

An example of applying systems thinking to a specific discipline is evident in the RP intervention model (Acosta et al., 2016). Acosta et al. (2016) claimed that the RP of conferencing, circling, and fairness impact student affect which in turn results in improved behavior and increased connectedness with members of the school community.

Systems Thinking

A hallmark of all systems theories is the application of systems thinking. In the early 1990s, Senge applied systems thinking within the context of organizational leadership. In *The Fifth Discipline*, Senge (1990) claimed that learning organizations, like other systems, are affected by the interconnectedness of parts within a greater system. He described systems thinking as “a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns rather than static snapshots” (Senge, 1990, p. 23). His framework provided a visual format in which to map systemic properties and processes specific to the learning organization’s experience.

Meadows (2008) and Stroh (2015) extended Senge’s (1990) definition of systems thinking to include the organization’s purpose, noting that systems thinking “helps people understand the purpose that [their] system is accomplishing” (Stroh, 2015, pp. 16–17). According to Meadows (2008), a system must consist of three components:

- Elements: These are the visible variables within the organization. Stroh (2015) described Meadow’s (2008) elements as nouns, stating they are the basis for systems stories because they provide information about the specific systemic context.
- Interconnections: These are the relationships that hold the elements together (Meadows, 2008). Stroh (2015) explained that interconnections are the fundamental actions within the system. These actions, or verbs, reflect changes and explain causation of systemic outcomes. Interconnections are represented as flows, time-delays, and feedback loops in systems mapping.

- Function or purpose: The function or purpose of a system is what is reflected in the way the system behaves. Functions are generally the result of nonhuman systems, and purposes are the reflections of human systems (Meadows, 2008).

Each of these components contribute to the overall performance of a learning organization. When one of the elements is manipulated, it affects the overall product of the organization. Many organizational leaders rely on the interdependence of these components to guide their organizations in the desired direction. Stroh (2015) contended that systems thinking is an effective mechanism for facilitating social and organizational change.

Systems Mapping

Systems mapping is a way to visually represent the interconnections occurring within a system. Systems maps illustrate the actions that occur to the elements of a system and the resulting outcomes that ultimately reflect the purpose of the organization. Common elements in system diagrams are stocks, flows, time-delays, and feedback loops (Meadows, 2008; Stroh, 2015).

- Stocks represent the elements of a system.
- Flows reflect contributing and resulting factors based upon an action to the stock.
- Time-delays illustrate the impact of time on a system interconnection.
- Feedback loops are mechanisms within a system that create a behavior.

There are a variety of feedback loops that produce different outcomes. Two of the most common feedback loops are reinforcing and balancing loops. Reinforcing feedback loops create a cycle within the system that produces rampant growth (Meadows, 2008; Stroh, 2015). Reinforcing feedback loops are neither inherently positive or negative; they simply reflect unrestrained growth of an output. Balancing feedback loops are cycles that work to create

homeostasis within the system. They imbed corrective actions into the system, often resulting in organizational practices that seldom change (Meadows, 2008; Stroh, 2015).

An example of a simple system that can be represented by a stock and flow diagram is body temperature regulation. Figure 2 illustrates the impact of air conditioning on maintaining a consistent, comfortable body temperature.

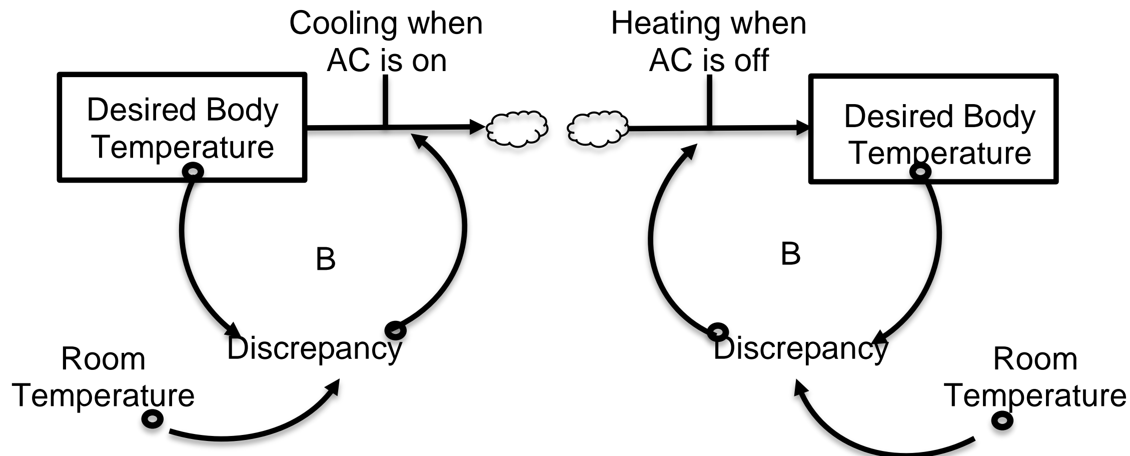

Figure 1. Stock and flow diagram. The function of this system, represented by the clouds, is to maintain a consistent body temperature. The stocks, desired body temperature, are acted upon by the air conditioning system. When the air conditioner blows, the room temperature is affected which results in a discrepancy between the desired body temperature and the current body temperature. The same premise holds true when the room heats up while the air conditioner is not blowing. The B situated in the middle of the loops indicates that both loops are balancing feedback loops that work to stabilize the stock level.

Changing a System's Function

If the "most crucial determinant of [a] system's behavior" (Meadows, 2008, p. 16) is its function, then knowing how to change a system to produce the desired function is critical. Systems theory can help explain the limiting feedback loops that reinforce barriers to implementation. Meadows (2008) noted feedback delays perpetuate implementation problems and make them "unnecessarily difficult to solve" (p. 3). My analysis of the barriers presented in this research through the lens of systems theory helped identify behavioral and neurological archetypes that limited the implementation of RP and perpetuated administrators' resistance to change.

Resistance to Change

Resistance to change, or "behavior which is intended to protect an individual from the effects of real or imagined change (Zander as cited in Dent & Goldberg, 1999, p. 34), is a

phenomenon at the center of many organizational change studies. Multiple researchers and leadership experts recognize the inherent challenge of moving people in a new direction and have worked to develop approaches that overcome member resistance. Many leadership styles have been developed to maximize an organization's productivity, and most of them accept that changing members' attitudes, beliefs, and practices is no easy task. Whatever the leadership approach, studies have confirmed the primary obstacle to organizational change is human resistance (Szabla, 2007).

Comprehending this phenomenon has been challenging for researchers to conceptualize because of the various reasons why an individual may not want to change. Researchers have worked to better understand resistance, but few verifiable conclusions as to the nature of resistance have been discovered. Szabla (2007) summarized the most common notions social scientists have used to describe resistance:

- Resistance is a "force obstructing the efforts of change agents" (p. 526).
- Resistance is a good data source that can be used to help leaders negotiate change.
- Resistance is a unique mix of helpful and useless information that should be considered when leading change.

These descriptions suggest that resistance is a multidimensional, complex response to change. Early research on resistance to change focused on these descriptions, narrowing them down to one of three dimensions: cognition, emotion, and intention (Szabla, 2007). Szabla (2007) hypothesized that leader behaviors could mitigate each of these dimensions, and his research concluded that different strategies aroused different responses across each dimension in an individual's response to change.

Resistance to change manifests itself as a balancing feedback loop that is positively and negatively responsive to external organizational forces (Burnes, 2015). To positively counteract resistance to change, Burnes (2015) recommended paying attention to the context for the change and encouraging active participation in the change. The following systems loops could further explain barriers to implementation and guide leadership recommendations for implementation.

The backfire effect. Within an organization, this neurological resistance manifests as a system archetype known as the backfire effect (McRaney, 2011). Leaders must understand it when presenting and diffusing an innovation to build better systems to overcome it (McRaney, 2013). Lewandowsky (McRaney, 2017) reported that individuals require a minimum of 30% negative, countervailing information to challenge their thinking prior to becoming open to accepting new information. To encourage acceptance, Cook and Lewandowsky (2012) recommended filling the gap that occurs when a closely held myth is debunked with an alternative, plausible explanation that is easy for them to believe. McRaney (2011) also suggested creating a culture that encourages safe questioning and self-reflection on individual practices and philosophies.

Fixes that backfire. This systemic archetype represents the negative consequences that result from a quick fix (Stroh, 2015). In the case of RP, a new application of disciplinary practices could be perceived as a quick fix that does not improve student behavior. In this system, the problem of disproportionality would be reduced in the short-term, but student behaviors would not improve. A perception that the fix is ineffective would reduce adopters' confidence in the relative advantage of RP and potentially explain their reluctance to implement the practices.

Shifting the burden. This archetype explains the negative effect of placing too much confidence in a program and failing to address the underlying issues that created the problem (Meadows, 2008; Stroh, 2015). RP implementation failure could be the result of competing cultural norms. This study may have reflected that a barrier to implementation had more to do with an underlying issue, such as teacher-student relationships or campus climate, than it did with the attitudes and beliefs of laggard adopters. A hallmark of the shifting-the-burden archetype is demonstrating a short-sighted, overcommitment to the quick fix, which depletes the resources needed to complete the necessary reform to a greater underlying problem.

Using Systems Thinking to Promote Change

Stroh's (2015) work championed the use of systems to create social and organizational change. Working with the end in mind—the desired function—Stroh (2015) developed a four-step process for social change through the use of systems: (1) building a foundation for change, (2) facing the current reality, (3) bridging the gap, and (4) making an explicit choice.

Building a foundation for change. Before an organization can change, leaders should set the stage for a successful change process by attending to the emotional and psychological needs of the stakeholders (Stroh, 2015). Stroh (2015) recommended leveraging three cornerstones for building a solid foundation for change within a system: engaging key stakeholders, establishing common ground, and building collaborative capacity.

Engage key stakeholders. Stakeholders are members within the system that will be most affected by the desired change. They should be members who represent all levels of responsibility within the organization and those outside the organization that may be affected. Stroh (2015) recommended using a stakeholder analysis tool to determine levels of engagement and motivation to achieve the desired purpose. The results of this assessment inform leaders of

the most appropriate way to invite each stakeholder into the collective gathering of change agents.

Establish common ground. Taking the time to allow participants to understand and appreciate the need for the change in purpose helps leaders establish common ground within the organization (Stroh, 2015). Using a focusing question helps establish common ground and develop a shared sense of direction and agreement on the status of the organization's current reality (Stroh, 2015). Focusing questions use systems mapping to discover new insights into organizational outcomes. These insights lead to the clarification of the mission, vision, and values, which provide a strong foundation for change by "creating a common context for collaboration and establishing creative tension" within the group (Stroh, 2015, p. 85).

Build collaborative capacity. For the group to function effectively, leaders must build collaborative capacity among participants. The principal focus for leaders should be to improve the relationships among group members. This capacity is not only good for collaboration, but it philosophically aligns the systems theory claim that systems are best when relationships are optimized, not individual skills (Stroh, 2015). In addition to building relational capacity, leaders should support members in their ability to develop systems thinking and collaborative communication. Education and guidance in appropriate communication strategies helps members work through the assumptions and mental models that limit collaboration. Finally, leaders must cultivate a "viewpoint of responsibility" (Stroh, 2015, p. 88) that inspires members to take responsibility for the current reality and the need to improve.

Facing the current reality: building understanding. As stakeholders' skills in systems thinking develop, the organization's current reality must be assessed. The collaborative team must take the time to learn as much about the organization as possible to best understand their

current reality. Systems interviews with organizational members outside of the collaborative team provide data that can be organized through systems mapping. Creating a preliminary systems analysis map provides insight into the relationships between the three components of the systems: elements, interactions, and purpose. Moreover, feedback loops embedded into the organization's practices and their impact on the organization's purpose present themselves in the systems analysis.

Facing the current reality: Building support by bringing the system to life. After creating the preliminary systems map, leaders should encourage each team member to make their own map of that data. This practice helps members to better understand how the stories are told and unfold using mapping. Mental models should surface during this practice and catalytic conversations around these mindsets should be facilitated. Catalytic conversations are described as those that deepen awareness, cultivate acceptance, and develop new alternatives (Stroh, 2015).

Making an explicit choice. The individual systems maps created by stakeholders not only facilitate catalytic conversations, they also help stakeholders identify their own priorities and purposes. In the unlikely event that stakeholders' priorities and purposes are aligned within the organization, change is imminent. In most cases, leaders must help stakeholders realize the benefit of finding common ground in the purpose that inspires them and shapes their practices despite their individual aspirations and goals. When stakeholders choose to make an informed choice about what they will have to surrender to achieve a common purpose, organizational change is possible.

Restorative Practice Implementation Recommendations and Systems Thinking

There are four primary implementation recommendations for school leaders wishing to implement RP. Table 2 compares the prolific research-based, academic recommendations for implementation to Stroh's (2015) steps for social change using systems thinking.

Table 2

Comparison of Implementation Recommendations to Stroh's (2015) Steps for Change

Academic Recommendations	Stroh's (2015) Steps for Social Change
Building teacher awareness and understanding by communicating RP core beliefs (Evans et al., 2013; Hopkins, 2015; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012; Sumner et al., 2012; Zion, Allen, & Jean, 2015)	Communicating core beliefs is a top-down leadership approach, which is not reflected in the systems thinking change model.
Capitalizing on teacher interest (Evans et al. 2013; Makoelle, 2014)	Stroh's (2015) step to engage key stakeholders requires inclusion of a variety of members, not just those that are interested.
Leveraging teacher leadership (Evans et al. 2013; Makoelle, 2014)	This aligns with engaging key stakeholders and facing the current reality: building support by bringing the system to life.
Developing an organization that prioritizes relationships over control (Hopkins, 2015; Irby, & Clough, 2015; Welch, 2017).	This recommendation aligns with facing the current reality: building support by bringing the system to life and making an explicit choice.

As illustrated in Table 2, some of the academic recommendations for the implementation of RP align with Stroh's (2015) steps for social change using systems thinking. On the whole, however, the recommendations appear to address broader practices rather than specific steps. Moldogaziev and Resh (2016) also encouraged the use of systems thinking for innovation implementation, stating that "the perspectives of organizational actors . . .are congruent with the origins of any given innovation or the location of the intended policy outcomes in the

organization" (p. 680). Simply stated, the policy outcomes or purpose of the innovation influences the perspectives of the stakeholders. Perhaps greater alignment could be achieved using a systems thinking approach to each of the implementation recommendations. In this study, I considered how systems thinking could mitigate administrator resistance to change based upon the barriers that were revealed in the research.

Summary

The literature discussed in this chapter provides a holistic review of RP and recommendations for organizational implementation. Extant literature has acknowledged the implementation gap that has existed despite administrator interest in RP. Many recommendations from research studies have allowed for partial implementation, noting that there have been some administrators who never respected the underlying philosophies and practices. In this study, I aimed to better understand administrator resistance so that all RP can be better understood, accessible, and applicable to the reluctant administrator.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology used in this study. Through an emergent explanatory mixed methods design, I hoped to uncover barriers to implementation that are unique to the reluctant administrator. With the data collected in this study, I planned to provide implementation recommendations that addressed administrator resistance to change through the appropriate feedback loops.

Chapter 3: Research Method and Design

To better understand the limited diffusion of RP within the school setting, I designed a two-phase research study that investigated barriers to administrator implementation. My goal was to provide implementation recommendations for campus leaders that aligned with practitioner needs so the practices may positively impact student behavior and reduce disciplinary disproportionality. The following research questions focused this investigation:

P1Q1. What is the relationship between administrator attitudes about restorative practices and their implementation of restorative practices?

P1Q2. What is the current status of implementation of restorative practices across the district?

P2Q1. What is the relationship between administrator attitudes about RP and their implementation of restorative practices?

P2Q2. According to the perspectives of administrators, what are the main reasons they do not implement restorative practices in their professional practice?

This chapter details the development and design of my research study. The methods, instrumentation, and participant requirements were logically supported by rationales presented in the research literature. Data collection and analysis protocols describe how the quantitative and qualitative methods work together to provide a multidimensional view of the problem being studied. I also discuss procedures for establishing validity, trustworthiness, and reliability in the results. Finally, I present ethical considerations, philosophical assumptions, and delimitations of the study to reflect a balanced, informed methodology.

Design and Method

Previous studies used the diffusion of innovations and organizational change to inform the myriad of recommendations for the implementation of RP (Evans et al., 2013; Hopkins, 2015; Irby & Clough, 2015; Makoelle, 2014; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012; Sumner et al., 2012; Welch, 2017; Zion, Allen, & Jean, 2015). Four consistent recommendations throughout the literature are: (1) Building teacher awareness and understanding by communicating RP core beliefs (Evans et al., 2013; Hopkins, 2015; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012; Sumner et al., 2012; Zion, Allen, & Jean, 2015); (2) capitalizing on teacher interest (Evans et al. 2013; Makoelle, 2014); (3) leveraging teacher leadership (Evans et al. 2013; Makoelle, 2014); and (4) developing an organization that prioritizes relationships over control (Hopkins, 2015; Irby, & Clough, 2015; Welch, 2017).

Despite the overwhelming support for these recommendations in the literature, RP has yet to fully diffuse into educational practice. To better understand the low efficacy of these recommendations, I designed a two-phase, emergent explanatory mixed methods case study that analyzed the barriers to implementation experienced by reluctant administrators. Figure 2 presents an illustration of the methods used in this research design.

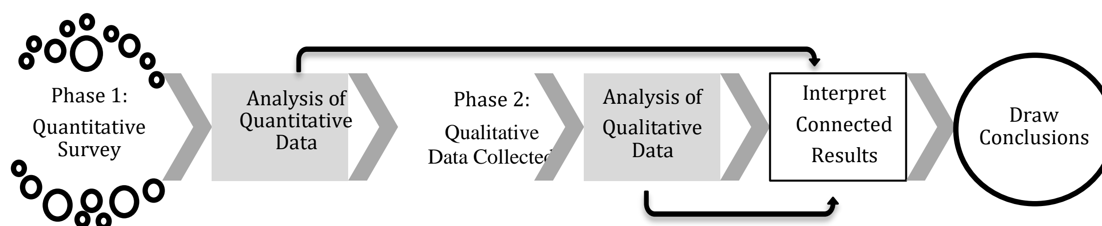

Figure 2. Emergent explanatory mixed methods design. The design used an analysis of quantitative data in Phase One to determine the participant group to be studied in Phase Two. It narrowed the participant group so that inquiry into their specific shared phenomenon could be investigated.

Beginning with a quantitative phase and concluding with a qualitative phase, I used a participant-selection variant of explanatory mixed methods. The results of this approach allowed me to zoom in on specific groups of administrators to identify individual barriers to implementation, providing a multi-perspective exploration of the phenomenon (Bergman, 2008; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Curry & Nunez-Smith, 2015). Together, patterns and relationships that emerged among variables delivered a “more complete picture” (Curry & Nunez-Smith, 2015, p. 38) of the barriers to implementation for the participants (Curry & Nunez-Smith, 2015; Stentz, Plano Clark, & Matkin, 2012).

The timing of each phase was intentional and designed to produce a nuanced understanding of the variables that influenced administrator implementation of RP (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Figure 3 details the progression of participant sampling and data analysis completed in this study. In Phase One, I used quantitative methods to explore the levels of RP implementation, attitudes towards RP, administrator experience, and campus demographics. I then utilized qualitative methods to investigate the specific barriers to implementation for this particular group during Phase Two. The “explicit interrelating” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 66) of the results, or mixing, occurred at multiple points during the study. Initially, data were connected during the data collection phases, building Phase Two results on the Phase One findings. During the data analysis stage, I related the results to one another through merging, and final mixing occurred during the interpretation stage of the research process to support the development of new insights, inferences, and conclusions.

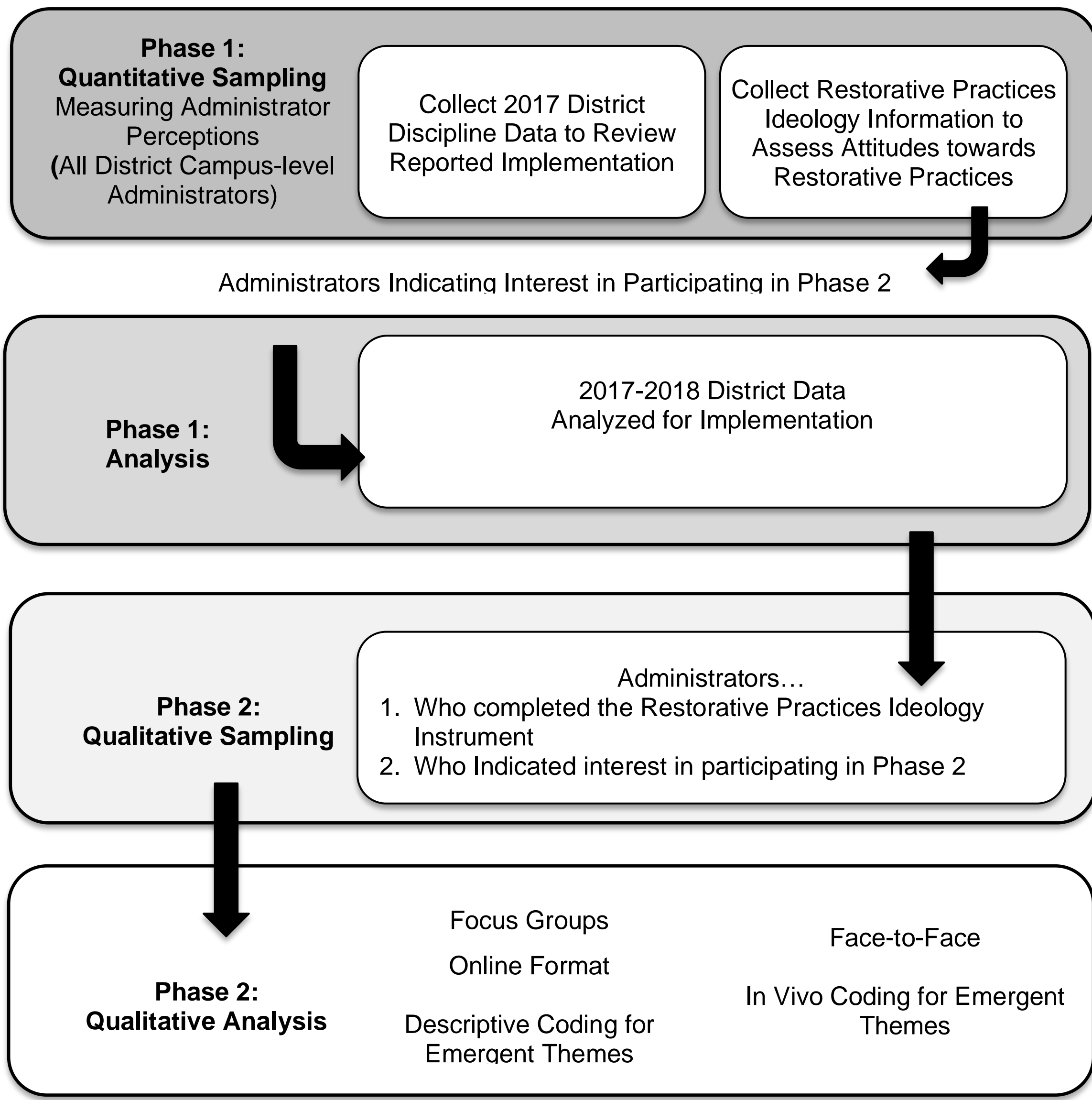

Figure 3. Phase sampling and analysis progression. This study began with the collection of quantitative data: district disciplinary data and RP ideology instrument responses. Responses were analyzed to determine the participant sample of Phase Two. Barriers to implementation were further investigated in Phase Two through qualitative methods.

Population, Setting, and Sample

I conducted this study in a North Texas school district that is ranked in the top twenty largest districts in the state. Prior to this study, disciplinary data trends in this district reflected national trends of disproportionality among minority students despite the district's implementation of RP three years ago. Upon the recommendation of the district personnel, the study included all campus administrators.

Quantitative sampling. I contacted administrators via electronic communications to participate in the quantitative survey—Phase One. Only currently practicing campus administrators were eligible for Phase Two. Focusing on this group ensured a common introduction to the behavior management approach and provided a baseline of information that included a common vocabulary and common expectations from district officials. This requirement ensured administrators had the opportunity to utilize RP in an administrative role. Due to the size of the district, Phase One could have included 178 administrators.

Qualitative sampling. Phase Two used descriptive statistics collected in the quantitative phase to identify respondents who had experienced the same central phenomenon: administrators who were knowledgeable of RP implementation. Descriptive statistics analyzed district discipline data that compared consequences assigned to types of code of conduct violations. This analysis reflected administrators' reported implementation for the identification of Phase Two participants. Because of the specific nature of the phenomenon being studied, seven administrators participated in Phase Two.

Instrumentation

Each phase of this study required the application of data collection instruments. These were designed to address each type of research question. Plans for distribution of the material

and procedures for collection were established prior to beginning the study. Moreover, a plan for analyzing the data informed how I would present the results and draw conclusions.

Quantitative materials. I used district disciplinary data to measure administrator implementation. The data included offense and action codes that could be analyzed for consistency in disciplinary action and the frequency of RP application. The data requested included district, campus, administrator, grade-level strand, and masked student details. I completed a written request for data using the district's required form to conduct a study within the district. I completed this prior to receiving approval by Abilene Christian University's (ACU's) Institutional Review Board (IRB; see Appendix E). A commitment to respect the confidentially of the information was also provided to the district prior to receiving the information. The school district provided much of the requested data. It did not provide campus or administrator information based on a concern that those details would provide too much information about participants who had not agreed to participate in the study.

Prior to initiating the research, I submitted my research proposal to the IRB for approval, including methodology, instrumentation, and communications. All initial documents were approved. After receiving the disciplinary data from the district, I realized that I could not analyze Phase Two participants' reported implementation with fidelity because I did not know which disciplinary actions they assigned. I considered asking for their consent for the district to provide that information to me, but I wanted to maintain participant confidentiality. I also thought about having them bring their data to the focus group, but there was no way to guarantee that it would be accurate or aligned with the data provided by the district. As a result, I redesigned the focus group questions to encourage reflection about the district's overall data and

their perceived implementation within the bigger picture. I submitted revised focus group questions to the IRB; they were approved prior to using them.

I used an online survey through SurveyMonkey to collect quantitative data addressing P1Q1 (What is the relationship between administrator attitudes about RP and their implementation of restorative practices?). A district-level administrator emailed the survey to all campus administrators in the district. The email was sent twice. The survey consisted of demographic questions and items from the Restorative Justice Ideology Instrument (RJII; Roland, Rideout, Salinitri, & Frey, 2012). This instrument assessed attitudes about restorative justice values, which parallel RP values. The items used a five-point Likert scale to assess administrator attitudes and implementation of restorative justice. The final section of the survey allowed respondents to indicate their desire to participate in Phase Two. The authors of the instrument, Roland et al. (2012) gave permission for use in this study (see Appendix C).

I used an analysis of district discipline data to address P1Q2 (What is the current status of implementation of RP across the district?). I analyzed administrator implementation or frequency and consistency at the grade and district levels. Specific attention was given to the following variables: student offense, administrator action, student demographic information, and offender age.

Qualitative materials. I invited administrators selected for Phase Two to participate in an online focus group, which was conducted using online meeting program called Zoom. A benefit to utilizing this program was its ability to capture participant responses in audio, video, and written format. In addition, the online format allowed for protection of participant confidentiality, as the online format eliminated the possibility that participants would be observed meeting in a common location. This format also allowed participants to mask their

identity by disabling the camera feed or uploading an avatar. At the beginning of each focus group, participants were asked if they wanted to be seen or remain anonymous. All elected to have their image and voice recognizable to the other focus group members.

Focus group questions were open-ended and explored P2Q1 (How do administrators perceive the impact of RP on their campus culture?) and P2Q2 (According to the perspectives of administrators, what are the main reasons they do not implement RP in their professional practice?). I established norms for participation at the beginning of the focus group that included a review of the informed consent provided prior to the meeting time, expectations for maintaining confidentiality, and participation guidelines. I developed a set of pro-forma questions to guide the conversation.

If there were not enough participants to create focus groups, I prepared a plan for conducting individual interviews. This was not required as there were enough participants who could meet in a focus group setting.

Procedures

Each phase of this study required specific attention to research procedures appropriate to the type of measurement. Recruitment procedures, data collection methods, and analysis protocols specific to each phase are discussed in this section.

Phase One. An online survey was emailed to all campus administrators in the district introducing them to the study. The email provided information regarding the purpose of the research, anticipated participation time, how the research outcomes could be used to benefit the educational community, and a link to the quantitative survey. The introduction to the study addressed my role within the educational community and provided assurances of confidentiality to minimize the risk participants might feel if they were selected to participate. In addition, I

highlighted the informed consent items in the email, specifically the option for participants to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Email recipients who followed the link prior to the end of the quantitative survey deadline were taken to the Phase One survey. Phase One survey results were exported into a spreadsheet and uploaded into SPSS software.

The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. This information was analyzed using Excel and SPSS for descriptive statistics to respond to the Phase One research questions: P1Q1 (What is the relationship between administrator attitudes about RP and their implementation of RP?) and P1Q2 (What is the current status of implementation of RP across the district?).

I analyzed P1Q2 data using descriptive statistics. This analysis provided a clear picture of the district's reported reality about administrator implementation of RP. Variables that were analyzed included the frequency at which administrators implemented RP and the consistency of their application.

Phase Two. Participants selected for this phase received an email inviting them to participate in an internet focus group. Instructions for participation, date, and time of the group were provided. I asked participants to indicate if they planned to attend to ensure that a focus group could be established. The email readdressed my role in the organization and restated my commitment to maintaining confidentiality in participant responses. I also reiterated informed consent items and the participants' right to remove from the study at any time. Participation options and anticipated participation time were presented and the recipients of the Phase Two invitation had the opportunity to accept or decline their interest in continuing the study. Data from each focus group were collected using screen-capturing technology or printed written transcripts.

I recorded and transcribed participant responses for content analysis using an inductive approach. This framework allowed for new concepts and results to emerge in the coding of categories, concepts, and themes (Patton, 2015). I used descriptive coding to collect focus group responses. Then I triangulated and analyzed categories, concepts, and themes within the framework of systems thinking as a construct to implement change. The mental model that was most closely analyzed within the theory was the backfire effect, which is an innate neurological resistance to change. The theoretical triangulation contributed to the substantive significance of the study as it led to findings that increased and deepened practitioner understanding of the impact of resistance to change on implementation of RP, and findings that were useful for their intended purpose (Patton, 2015).

Validity

To verify the accuracy of the results, the validity of both the qualitative and the quantitative strands of this study must be addressed. Creswell (2011) defined validity specific to mixed methods research "as employing strategies that address potential issues in data collection, data analysis, and the interpretations that might compromise the merging or connecting of the quantitative and qualitative strands of the study and the conclusions drawn from the combination" (p. 239). Moreover, Creswell (2014) warned that specific attention should be given to ensuring the validity of an emergent explanatory mixed methods approach because it is easy to overlook many of the ways available to analyze and interpret the qualitative results. To prevent this common misstep, I verified the qualitative findings through peer debriefing. The district's director of student services reviewed the themes presented in the results, as reported in Chapter 4. She was invited to ask relevant, probing questions about the results to ensure the interpretation

of the data "[resonated] with people other than me" (Creswell, 2014, p. 202), and verify that the claims were aligned with conversations she has had with other administrators in the district.

Creswell (2014) noted that the concept of validity has different meanings for each type of data. Where qualitative validity ensures the results have been analyzed for accuracy, quantitative validity verifies that me used an approach aligned with the work of other scholarly research projects (Creswell, 2014). The validity of the quantitative strand of the research was assessed based on these two factors:

- Content validity, or the degree to which the instrument measures the content it is intended to measure. In this study, the content was the level of implementation of RP.
- Construct validity, or the ability for the instrument to measure a hypothetical concept. In this study, the hypothetical concept was administrators' belief in the promise of RP.

Trustworthiness and reliability. In addition to validity, the trustworthiness and reliability of the quantitative and qualitative measures are important to establish in a study (Creswell, 2011). Reliability of the quantitative data is supported when the success of the instrument being utilized is reported through coefficient and test-retest results (Creswell, 2011). The RJII was tested for trustworthiness by the developers using a two-stage approach (Roland et al., 2012). The first stage assessed the factor structure and reliability of the tool and the second stage assessed the validity and reliability. Results of the first stage helped the developers refine the instrument by reducing the number of questions and eliminating redundant items. The second stage built upon the results of the established factor structure and examined the reliability and validity of the instrument using Cronbach's alpha coefficients and bivariate correlations (Roland et al., 2012). The instrument demonstrated a "reasonable high level of internal consistency"

(Roland et al., 2012, p. 16). The results of each of these measures supported the reliability and validity of the RJII.

Internal and external validity. Another approach to ensuring the validity of the research is to attend to the internal and external validity of the data. The internal validity of a research study is the extent to which a causal relationship can be determined through the analysis (Creswell, 2011). The demographic section of the quantitative survey accounted for the threats of attrition and experience to construct internal validity in the instrument. In addition, district discipline reports illustrated administrator practice. The external validity of the qualitative data considered the study's ability to generalize to a larger population (Given, 2008). The participant sample had a similar foundational experience in training, location, and position. Replication studies of this research would be required to verify the external validity of this study. Addressing these considerations will protect the internal and external validity of this study.

Ethical Considerations

This study was submitted to ACU's IRB for approval prior to initiating a research relationship with the chosen organization. The district I elected to work with has a formal process for conducting research within the organization. I followed their expectations by contacting the district's director of assessment and completing the appropriate paperwork. Once permission to conduct research was given, I submitted my solicitation email to the director of assessment, and she sent it out to campus administrators per the district's practice with research studies.

All aspects of this study honored the three ethical principles identified in the Belmont Report: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice ("The Belmont Report", 2018). To honor the report's call to respect individuals, I ensured that participants were apprised of the potential

consequences, positive and negative, of participation in the study. This concern was addressed in the initial email. Beneficence was communicated through assurances that guaranteed that participation in the study would not affect their position or employment in the district. Furthermore, the benefits of learning from one another to improve student experiences was highlighted in the email. Justice was communicated in the initial message, as all campus administrators were invited to participate. The nature of the case study limited participation to just one school district, but it did not limit participation within the district.

I protected the confidentiality of the human subjects participating in the study by masking all identifying information, including the name of the school district, prior to publication. Informed consent was provided before each phase of the study. The informed consent documents articulated and reiterated the responsibility of both the researcher and participants to respect the confidential nature of focus group participation. For participants who did not want to be identified, attention to identifying factors, such as participant names and email addresses, were given—especially for those individuals participating in the focus groups. Communications were conducted through email, Zoom, and SurveyMonkey, which allowed for anonymity, as participants could create masked email addresses and names.

In addition, the informed consent document articulated my commitment to maintaining the security of the written transcripts and participant responses. All survey data were uploaded to the ACU raw data storage module and downloaded onto my hard drive. The device storing the information is password protected along with the downloaded documents. The passwords are different for both sources. The accounts that collected data have also been password protected, and the documents have not been viewable to anyone except me.

Assumptions

The design of this study values the insight that can be learned from multiple perspectives. The qualitative phase of the study is founded in a postpositivist paradigm. Thus, the underlying assumptions of Phase One aim to support or disprove a claim (Leavy, 2017). This mindset is used to "develop instruments, measure variables, and assess statistical results" of the research questions (Creswell, 2011, p. 83). Phase Two of this study shifted the philosophical framework from a postpositivist to a constructivist paradigm when the data collected became open-ended and valued multiple perspectives. The last stage of the study brought the results of the two assumptions together to create new understandings of the phenomenon of resistance to change, systems thinking, and implementation of RP.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was the size of the participant sample. Because this case study focused on a single school district, the participant pool was already narrow with fewer than 200 potential participants. Coupled with the voluntary nature of participation in this study, the participant rate was lower than hoped. Two contributing factors to the low participant turnout were the demanding nature of the job and the time of year the study occurred. Simply put, administrators had many responsibilities and few had time to participate in an additional request, especially during the time of year I conducted the study—during the second semester.

Delimitations

A delimitation of this study was the population sample because it was so small and primarily included early adopters. Excluding late adopters would add another dimension to the results of this study, but because the RP work in the district was so recent, this group had not formed yet. Because my aim in this study was not to seek a way to convince administrators to

use RP, I focused solely on the barriers that were so significant that they affected administrators' willingness to adopt.

Summary

The methodology described in this chapter was designed to answer the research questions investigating the barriers that limit educator implementation of RP. An emergent explanatory mixed methods approach allowed me to study the various perspectives of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011): actual administrator implementation of RP and their attitudes towards RP. The two-phase study utilized quantitative measurements to identify a niche population sample that existed in the educational setting and qualitative instruments that explored the factors contributing to administrator resistance to use RP. Data collection and analysis protocols were detailed to ensure the validity, trustworthiness, and reliability of the findings. In addition, this chapter discussed plans to safeguard participant confidentiality. I also reviewed researcher reflections about design choices honoring the ethical treatment of participants and the organization. Finally, I accounted for intentional decisions made and potential factors beyond my control that may have affected the research outcomes. Together, the considerations and design choices presented in this chapter worked to answer the study's research questions. Chapter 4 provides an analysis of the results of quantitative and qualitative data presented in each phase of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

To investigate the relationship between administrator attitudes and implementation of RP, I conducted a two-phase emergent explanatory mixed methods study. This chapter details the methods utilized and reports the results of each phase of the study. Phase One explored two research questions quantitatively:

P1Q1. What is the relationship between administrator attitudes about RP and their implementation of restorative practices ?

P1Q2. What is the current status of implementation of RP across the district?

Phase Two used qualitative methods to explore the remaining research questions:

P2Q1. What is the current status of implementation of restorative practices across the district?

P2Q2. According to the perspectives of administrators, what are the main reasons they do not implement RP in their professional practice?

This chapter is divided into three sections: participant information, quantitative results, and qualitative results. The first section reviews the demographic information collected that describe the participant sample. The following sections present descriptive statistics analyzing the following data points:

- Administrator attitudes as reflected in the RJII (see Appendix A).
- Reported implementation of disciplinary actions.
- Administrator perceptions about the implementation of RP in their professional practice.

Together, the results of these data points informed the recommendations for implementation and further study.

Participant Information

I collected participant demographic information at the beginning of the RJII. The instrument was distributed to all campus level administrators in the district in the form of an online survey using SurveyMonkey. The survey was completed by 3.8% of eligible district administrators. In addition to the 16 questions of the RJII (Roland et al., 2012), participant demographic information was collected. Although small, the participant sample is highly reflective of the demographic distribution of administrators and teachers in the district as reflected in the 2018 Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) (Texas Education Agency, 2018). Table 3 presents participant demographic information.

Table 3

Participant Demographic Information for the Restorative Justice Ideology Inventory

Characteristic	Number of Participants
How long have you been a campus administrator?	
0–3 years	4
4–6 years	1
6–9 years	0
10–15 years	2
15 or more years	0
What is your age?	
20–29	0
30–39	5
40–49	2
50–59	0
60–69	0
Are you male or female?	
Male	1
Female	6
What is your ethnicity?	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0
Asian	0
Black or African American	2
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0
White	5
What grade levels do you serve: elementary, middle, or high school?	
Elementary	2
Middle	2
High	3
Have you attended professional learning on RP? If so, when?	
Yes	6
No	1
If so, when?	
2017	1
2018	5
2019	0
Never	1

The demographic information collected in the RJII indicated that the participant sample demographically resembled the eligible participant population. According to the 2018 TAPR report (Texas Education Agency, 2018), campus administrators made up 3% of the professional staff employed in the district. The seven administrators who participated in the study represented 3.6% of campus administrators in the district, which is a comparable ratio. In addition, the ethnic distribution of total minority staff was 24.4% for the district and 28.5% for this study. The male to female ratio documented in the TAPR report (Texas Education Agency, 2018) only reflects the teaching staff, which was 20% in 2018; however, the ratio for this study was proportionately similar at 14%.

Quantitative Results

Over the course of the study, I collected two sets of quantitative data: the RJII and reported district disciplinary data for the 2016/17 school year. I used these data to answer the research question P1Q1 (What is the relationship between administrator attitudes about restorative values and their implementation of RP?). These two data sets provided information about participants' attitudes about restorative justice practices and administrators' actual implementation of RP during the 2016/17 school year across the district.

Restorative Justice Ideology Inventory

The 16 questions in the RJII assess educator attitudes around three restorative justice factors: restoration, cooperation, and healing. Figure 4 summarizes the participants' responses to each factor of the RJII. According to the designers, the three factors assessed in the RJII measure the nuanced balance between ideology and the application of justice (Roland et al., 2012). Based on a 100-point scale, teachers who scored high on the RJII often had high self-efficacy, a dimension often associated with RJ practitioners. Table 4 reports the descriptive statistics of

participants' responses. The first three columns provide measures of central tendency for the three RJ factors: restoration, cooperation, and healing. The final column details the measures of central tendency for the total RJII score.

Table 4

Restorative Justice Ideology Inventory Responses Descriptive Statistics

		Restoration	Cooperation	Healing	Total
N	Valid	7	7	7	7
	Missing	0	0	0	0
M		85.86	71.71	79.29	81.86
Mdn		86.00	84.00	80.00	82.00
Mode		86.00	68.00a	80.00a	85.00
SD		5.58	31.25	8.86	4.53
Variance		31.14	976.58	78.57	20.48
Percentiles	25	86.00	68.00	70.00	78.00
	50	86.00	84.00	80.00	82.00
	75	89.00	92.00	85.00	85.00

Overall, participants' total scores averaged 81.86% (*SD* = 4.52). This score fell within the range that Roland et al. (2012) suggested could be used as a baseline to determine levels of readiness for overall introduction or adoption of restorative justice practices. A closer look at each factor provided more specific information about participants' varied levels of comfort with the individual factors assessed. The factors of restoration and healing both had less variance within their respective data sets. Restoration averaged 85.86% (*SD* = 5.58), and healing averaged 81.86% (*SD* = 4.53). However, the average for cooperation was much lower (*M* = 71.71%, *SD* = 31.25).

The statistics describing cooperation for this particular sample indicated that participants' attitudes towards the value of cooperation as a restorative justice practice were not as closely aligned as their attitudes towards restoration and healing. Roland et al. (2012) recommended using this information as a guide to responding to practitioner barriers to implementation. For the

purposes of this study, I included the information provided in Table 4 in the mixing of data that informed the conclusions presented in Chapter 5. Presented graphically, Figure 4 illustrates the study participants' attitudes toward the three RJII factors: restoration, cooperation, and healing.

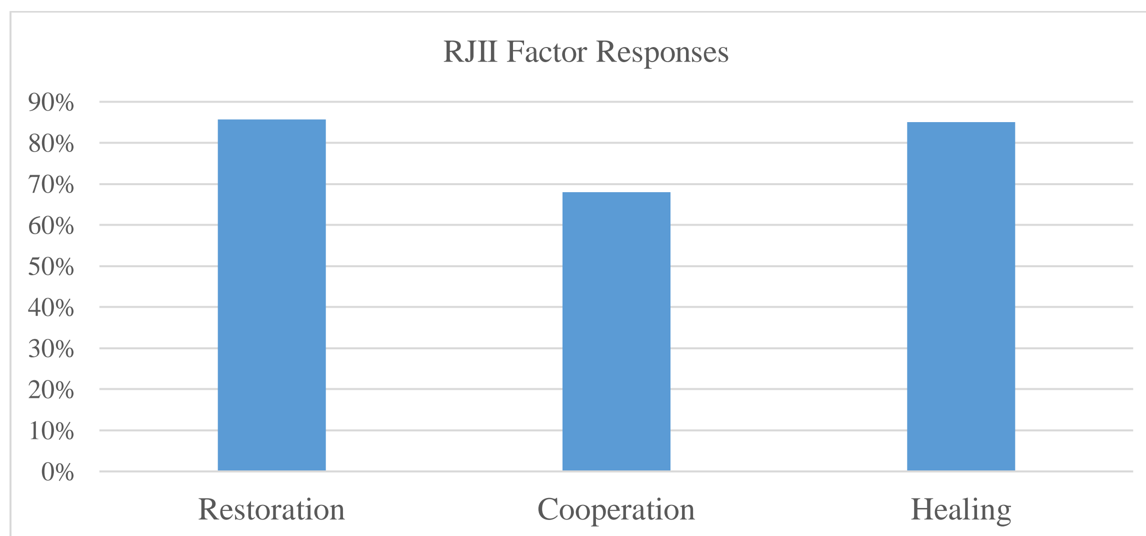

Figure 4. RJII factor responses. This bar graph provides a visual representation of the participants' attitudes toward the three RJII factors. Participants scored higher in the values of restoration (86%) and healing (85%). Participant attitudes aligned least with cooperation (68%).

Restoration. The restoration factor in the RJII measured educators' attitudes about repairing victim-offender relationships and working to return the relationship to its original state after an offense occurs. Roland et al. (2012) noted that restoration has a focus on "building and repairing relationships" (p. 437). In addition, they reported that restoration is most effective when the desire for restoration is "internally guided by moral values" (Roland et al., 2012, p. 436). Each of the items assessing the factor of restoration focus explored the internal attitudes guiding educators' responses. Table 5 summarizes participant responses to items related to restoration.

Table 5

Restorative Justice Ideology Inventory Participant Responses: Factor 1, Restoration

Characteristic	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Wrongdoing should be addressed without removing the student from the classroom.		1	6		
Consequences from wrongdoing should include plans for reintegration into classroom activity.	3	4			
Collective resolution is an appropriate anti-bullying strategy.	1	6			
I have a moral duty to help students to get back on track.	7				
It is my responsibility to develop empathy in students.	5	1			1
When wrongdoing occurs, community members need to express their feelings.	2	4	1		
Repairing hurt requires sustained effort.	6	1			

When calculated according to the RJII scoring guide, located in Appendix A, the participant sample is described as 86% positive in the area of restoration. Roland et al., 2012 further explained that the factor of restoration is positively correlated with the dimension of empathy known as perspective taking. As a result, the RJII suggested that the participants had a high regard for the idea of restoration because they had the ability to see things from another's viewpoint.

Cooperation. The factor of cooperation explored the participants' beliefs about the impact of working together to respond to the damage to relationships resulting from an offense. The designers of the RJII intentionally reverse-worded the items related to this factor to "deter . . . acquiescent response patterns" (Roland et al., 2012, p. 438) and ensure well-considered participant responses. Table 6 details the items exploring the factor of cooperation and summarizes participant responses.

Table 6

Restorative Justice Ideology Inventory Participant Responses: Factor 2, Cooperation

Characteristic	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Fear of punishment is a useful strategy in deterring wrongdoings.	2	1	3	1	
Examples should be made of students who are disruptive.	3	2	1	1	
In righting a wrong, only the victim's needs should be addressed.	3	3	1		
The victim's voice is more important than the offender's voice.	1	3	3		
Wrongdoing should be addressed based solely on the teacher's understanding of the situation.	3	4			

Roland et al. (2012) explained that educators with high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to consider cooperation as a response to wrongdoing. They reported that educators with low self-efficacy often felt ill-equipped to capitalize on the benefits of cooperation, resulting in "relying on 'status quo' discipline tactics" (Roland et al., 2012, p. 442). Participant responses for this study indicated the sample was 80% favorable to the restorative principle of cooperation.

Healing. The third factor analyzed in the RJII—healing—explores the principle of "getting better to live better" (Mullet, 2014, p. 158). Healing not only refers to the emotional and physical safety of the victim. In the restorative milieu, healing also refers to the offender's need to relate more positively to the community and change his or her behavior. Table 7 identifies the items that were used to explore the factor of healing and summarizes the participants' responses.

Table 7

Restorative Justice Ideology Inventory Participant Responses: Factor 3, Healing

Characteristic	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Students who do wrong are deserving of respect.	5	2			
Parents should have a voice in the process of righting wrongs.	3	3	1		
A wrong-doer who is obnoxious always deserves to be treated with dignity.	3	4			
All members of the class should have a say on how to deal with wrongdoing.			4	2	1

Study participant responses to the restorative factor of healing indicated the sample responded 79% positively to the items in the survey. An interesting observation to note is that all participants responded neutrally or negatively to the idea that the class should have input into the consequences of others. This collective attitude was the only item where all participants responded neutrally or negatively to a dimension of restorative thinking.

District Disciplinary Data

District disciplinary data for the 2016/17 and 2017/18 school years were analyzed for descriptive statistics to answer research question P1Q2 (What is the current status of implementation of RP across the district?). The data provided by the district consisted of the reported implementation of various disciplinary practices but was not exhaustive of every behavior management technique or disciplinary practice occurring across the district. For example, teacher-implemented disciplinary actions, such as warnings, conferences, and detentions, were not represented in these data; the data only provided documented administrator actions. In addition, the only disciplinary actions the state requires to be reported to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) are exclusionary placements. As a result, it is important to note that the

data trends identified in the statistical analyses in this study only reflected the reported implementation of the disciplinary actions utilized during these school years.

Summary of disciplinary actions. During the two school years studied, district administrators identified 90,248 student code of conduct violations, with 41,826 code of conduct violations occurring in 2016/17 and 48,422 in 2017/18. Of the 90,248 code of conduct violations reported, 18,151 of those violations did not have a disciplinary action assigned to them (7,357 in 2016/17 and 10,794 in 2017/18). The remaining data documented the student offense and the corresponding disciplinary action assigned. In addition, the data identified whether or not the action was required by the state, classified as mandatory, or if the action was determined by the authority of the administrator, classified as discretionary. Figure 5 illustrates the reported application of exclusionary practices as determined by state requirement.

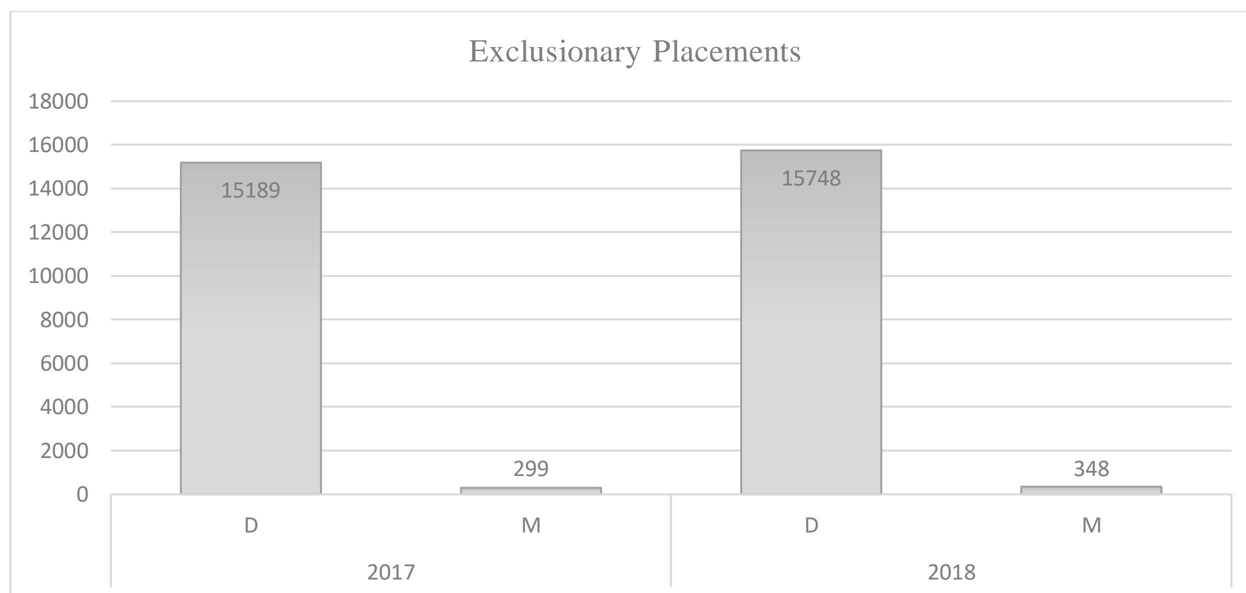

Figure 5. Exclusionary placements, discretionary and mandatory. D = discretionary; M = mandatory. This figure illustrates the reported application of exclusionary placements during the 2016/17 and 2017/18 school years. In addition, the bar graph documents the level of state requirement for the consequence assigned.

Across both school years studied, administrators assigned 30,937 discretionary exclusionary actions. The 647 mandatory actions made up 2% of the total number of placement actions assigned, with 1.9% of out of placement actions occurring in 2016/17 and 2.0% of out of placement actions occurring in 2017/18.

To examine the reported implementation of RP across these school years, I categorized the disciplinary actions into five categories:

- Exclusionary—The student was removed from peers during the school day or the district provided transportation. Examples include lunch detention, suspension from activities, suspension from the bus, time out in principal office, in-school suspension (ISS), out-of-school suspension (OSS), assignment to the Disciplinary Alternative Educational Program (DAEP) school/center, or assignment to the Juvenile Justice Alternative Educational Program (JJAEP).
- Lesser Action Provided—In these rare cases, the student was found guilty of a code of conduct violation that required a mandatory expulsion, but for whatever reason a lesser action was assigned. In all cases the lesser action was still an exclusionary placement to ISS, OSS, or DAEP.
- No action assigned—This category reflected the number of student code of conduct violations that did not receive a documented disciplinary action.
- Restorative—The student received a disciplinary action that falls within the restorative justice framework. Actions include parent and student conferences, warnings, restitution, and RP.

- Traditional, Neither Restorative nor Exclusionary—The student received a consequence that does not remove them from peers during the school day but does not aim to use restorative principles or RP. Examples include before- and after-school detention.

Table 8 describes the application of disciplinary action by category. Keeping in mind that there were an additional 6,596 student code of conduct violations in 2017/18, the data indicated that there were 5,929 fewer exclusionary placements from the previous school year. Other notable trends in the data by category include the decrease in lesser actions provided and RP, and the increase in code of conduct violations that did not receive a documented disciplinary action.

Table 8

Reported Implementation of Disciplinary Actions by Category

School Year	Exclusionary	Lesser Action Provided	No Action Assigned	Restorative	Traditional
2016/17	26139	11	7357	11316	3599
2017/18	20170	1	10794	7723	3138

A supplementary analysis of the district disciplinary data provided information about the number of students violating the code of conduct. One measure of the success of RP is practitioners' ability to reduce repeated violations of the student code of conduct (recidivism). Table 9 gives an overview of the number of students who committed code of conduct violations during each school year, and whether they required multiple disciplinary actions during that school year. In both school years, more students committed multiple code of conduct violations than students who only committed one.

Table 9

Students with Code of Conduct Violations

School Year	Total	One Violation	2+ Violations
2016/17	11944	5371	6573
2017/18	12585	5479	7106

The district data provided did not have action dates for each incident, so it was not possible to measure the effect of the actions assigned in relation to their ability to reduce recidivism; however, there were enough data to describe how discipline was applied to students on their first offense and to tell if the students receiving a RP committed an additional code of conduct violation. Table 10 shows the distribution of actions assigned to student offenders with only one violation. Both years reported a higher rate of exclusionary actions than any other administrator response.

Table 10

Action Assigned to Students with Only One Code of Conduct Violation

School Year	Restorative Practice	Exclusionary Action	Traditional Action	No Action Assigned
2016/17	1290	2103	426	1552
2017/18	1616	2403	418	1042

To further describe the data presented in Table 10, I calculated the number of students who were assigned an RP and had multiple code of conduct violations. In 2016/17, 1,116 students were assigned to one of the restorative practices, such as a circle or opportunity to make restitution, and additional actions sometime during the school year. The following year, 4,187 students met the same criteria. When compared to the information provided in Table 8, it is

evident that fewer students (1,116) received more RP assignments (11,316) in 2016/17 than in 2017/18, where 4,187 students received a total of 7,723 RP assignments.

I analyzed the disciplinary data to measure the effect of RP as a way to reduce the disproportionate application of discipline from various perspectives: ethnicity, gender, and grade level. Table 11 details the number of disciplinary actions assigned to students by category and ethnicity. This information directly related to P1Q2 (What is the current status of implementation of RP across the district?) and my purpose in the study to evaluate the diffusion of RP as a way to reduce racial disproportionality of exclusionary disciplinary practices because it narrowed the focus of the reported implementation. A noteworthy trend in the data in Table 11 was that administrators implemented fewer exclusionary actions and fewer RP in 2017/18 than they did in 2016/17 across all ethnic groups. In fact, the only category where that increased in those two school years was No Action Assigned, indicating administrators did not address more documented code of conduct violations than they did in the previous school year. The only exception to this trend was that two more exclusionary disciplinary actions were applied to students identified as Native Hawaiian/Other/Pacific Islander in 2017/18.

Table 11

Reported Implementation of Disciplinary Actions by Category and Ethnicity

Ethnicity	School Year	Total Students Enrolled	Number of Code of Conduct Violations	Exclusionary	Lesser Action Provided	No Action Assigned	Restorative
African American	2016/17	5,519	12,317	6,565	2	2,047	2,878
	2017/18	5,613	10,549	5,152	0	2,943	1,822
American Indian /Alaskan Native	2016/17	226	258	119	0	39	80
	2017/18	205	212	107	0	41	43
Asian	2016/17	7,269	2,493	1,293	0	364	669
	2017/18	7,485	2,062	876	0	531	462
Hispanic	2016/17	12,547	16,412	9,936	2	1,960	3,322
	2017/18	15,475	13,093	6,866	0	3,220	2,039
Native Hawaiian / Other/Pacific Islander	2016/17	53	39	14	0	8	12
	2017/18	48	31	16	0	5	8
Two or More Races	2016/17	1,895	2,036	986	0	349	538
	2017/18	1,934	1,843	856	0	472	362
White	2016/17	22,748	14,867	7,226	7	2,590	3,817
	2017/18	21,608	13,991	6,297	1	3,582	2,987

Table 12 reports the totals presented in Table 11 and illustrates the percentage of disciplinary actions as applied to student groups in relation to their entire student enrollment. Data from both school years studied indicated that African American students were disciplined at a rate of two or more times their total enrollment representation in each school year. The only other student group that had a notably disproportionate representation of students disciplined to total number of students enrolled were students identified as White. For both years, White students received a disproportionately low number of disciplinary actions as compared to their total student group enrollment. Disciplinary actions assigned to all other student groups during 2016/17 and 2017/18 proportionately reflected the total student enrollment for each group.

Table 12 also illustrates trends in the action categories from year to year. A noticeable trend related to student disciplinary proportionality is that all student groups experienced a reduction in exclusionary placements from 2016/17 to 2017/18. Exclusionary disciplinary actions for all student groups were lower than their total student representation. In addition to a reduction in exclusionary placements, there was also a reduction of applied RP. Table 12 documents that administrators implemented more traditional actions in lieu of restorative or exclusionary practices.

Table 12

Percentage of Disciplinary Actions by Types and Student Groups

Ethnicity	School Year	Student Population %	Total Number Code of Conduct Violations	Exclusionary Placements %	RP Assigned %	Other Actions %
African American	2016/17	10.4	3047	12.3	5.4	5.4
	2017/18	10.7	3528	5.6	3.5	6.9
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	2016/17	0.4	54	0.2	0.2	0.1
	2017/18	0.4	95	0.1	0.1	0.1
Asian	2016/17	13.7	436	2.4	1.3	1.0
	2017/18	14.3	610	1.0	0.9	1.4
Hispanic	2016/17	29.1	3622	18.7	6.2	5.9
	2017/18	29.6	4563	6.1	3.9	8.0
Native Hawaiian/ Other/Pacific Islander	2016/17	0.1	9	0.0	0.0	0.0
	2017/18	0.1	9	0.0	0.0	0.0
Two or More Races	2016/17	3.6	603	1.9	1.0	1.0
	2017/18	3.7	538	0.9	0.7	1.2
White	2016/17	42.8	3439	13.6	7.2	7.2
	2017/18	41.3	3453	6.8	5.7	9.0

Further analysis of the district disciplinary data illustrated the differences in actions assigned to students by gender. Table 13 provides descriptive statistics about the percentage of action types by student gender. In this table, five trends emerged:

1. Male students had almost 3 times as many code of conduct violations during both school years.
2. The percentage of both male and female students with code of conduct violations increased from the 2016/17 school year to the 2017/18 school year.
3. The percentage of females receiving RP and other actions was higher in all school years studied.
4. The percentage of exclusionary placements for males and females was relatively comparable.
5. Both males and females received a high percentage of exclusionary placements than RP and other actions combined.

Table 13

Disciplinary Actions by Types and Gender

Ethnicity	School Year	Total Number of Code of Conduct Violations	Exclusionary Placements (%)	RP Assigned (%)	Other Actions(%)
All Males	2016/17	30616	48.6	17.7	7.0
	2017/18	35626	53.9	22.3	7.2
All Females	2016/17	11210	47.2	20.5	8.8
	2017/18	12789	54.1	26.3	8.1

Table 14 presents a more detailed picture of the reported disciplinary actions, highlighting the percentage of disciplinary actions as applied to gender and ethnicity. Based on the data reported in Table 14, all students, regardless of ethnicity, were more likely to receive an exclusionary action than any other type of disciplinary action. It is important to note that the column reporting the percentage of student population reflected the total number of students, both male and female, in each student group. This number provided information to use a measure for the proportionate distribution of discipline across all student groups. According to the data in Table 14, the reported number of code of conduct violations for African American students was twice as high as their ethnic representation in the district despite an increased application of RP over time. In addition, the data showed that in 2017/18 African American students with code of conduct violations had a greater than 50% chance of being assigned an exclusionary placement when they committed an offense. Table 14 also indicated that in 2017/18, Hispanic males and females were excluded at 60% or higher for code of conduct violations.

Table 14

Disciplinary Actions as Applied to Ethnicity and Gender

Ethnicity	School Year	Student Population both Male and Female per Student Group (%)	Total Number of Code of Conduct Violations	Code of Conduct Violations (%)	Exclusionary Actions (%)	RP Assigned (%)	Other Actions (%)
AA Female	2016/17	10.4	3047	27.2	48.9	18.4	7.7
	2017/18	10.7	3528	27.6	55.4	25.7	7.3
AA Male	2016/17	10.4	7547	24.7	48.5	16.7	5.8
	2017/18	10.7	7789	21.9	59.2	25.3	7.3
AI/AN Female	2016/17	0.4	54	0.5	55.6	16.7	5.6
	2017/18	0.4	94	1.2	40.4	35.1	8.5
AI/AN Male	2016/17	0.4	158	0.5	48.7	21.5	11.4
	2017/18	0.4	163	0.5	49.7	28.8	6.7
Asian Female	2016/17	13.7	436	3.9	38.3	30.0	9.6
	2017/18	14.3	765	6.0	42.9	25.0	25.0
Asian Male	2016/17	13.7	1626	5.3	43.6	20.4	9.3
	2017/18	14.3	1883	5.3	51.2	25.4	7.0
Hispanic Female	2016/17	29.1	3621	32.3	50.2	17.7	8.4
	2017/18	29.6	4564	35.7	61.0	22.2	8.0
Hispanic Male	2016/17	29.1	9462	30.9	53.4	14.8	7.0
	2017/18	29.6	11849	33.3	60.4	19.5	7.0
NH/PI Female	2016/17	0.1	9	0.1	33.3	33.3	11.1
	2017/18	0.1	9	0.1	44.4	44.4	0.0
NH/PI Male	2016/17	0.1	22	0.1	59.1	22.7	4.5
	2017/18	0.1	30	0.1	33.3	26.7	16.7
Two+ Female	2016/17	3.6	604	5.4	45.7	20.7	12.4
	2017/18	3.7	538	4.2	47.6	28.4	10.8
Two+ Male	2016/17	3.6	1233	4.0	47.0	18.7	6.3
	2017/18	3.7	1497	4.2	48.8	25.7	7.0
White Female	2016/17	42.8	3441	30.7	43.8	24.3	9.5
	2017/18	41.3	3453	27.9	45.1	30.8	9.0
White Male	2016/17	42.8	10552	34.5	45.4	20.4	7.6
	2017/18	41.3	11414	32.0	49.7	24.1	8.0

Note. AI/AN = American Indian/Alaskan Native; NH/PI = Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; Two+ = Two Races.

In addition to analyzing how discipline was applied to specific student groups by ethnicity, I examined how discipline was applied to students at various school levels. This analysis contributed to the study of research question P1Q2 (What is the current status of implementation of RP across the district?) as it elucidated the level at which RP was implemented most. Table 15 reports that the majority of code of conduct violations occurred in middle school, grades 6–8 in this district. Not only did the most violations occur on these

campuses, but middle school administrators issued the highest percentage of exclusionary practices during both school years. According to the data in Table 15, all three school levels issued a higher percentage of RP in 2017/18 than they did in the previous school year; however, middle school administrators' percentage of other actions declined in 2017/18 while the other school levels increased.

Table 15

Disciplinary Actions by Types and School Level

School Level	School Year	Total Student Population (%)	Total Number of Code of Conduct Violations	Exclusionary Actions (%)	RP Assigned (%)	Other Actions (%)
Elementary	2016/17	48.1	8994	38.6	10.1	0.2
	2017/18	43.9	12003	35.5	16.7	16.8
Middle	2016/17	23.2	18865	51.7	23.0	10.2
	2017/18	23.2	24814	60.7	26.1	8.2
High	2016/17	32.5	13963	48.7	17.8	8.5
	2017/18	32.9	13611	50.1	20.8	11.3

When studied together, Tables 8–15 provide a multidimensional quantitative representation of the implementation of RP within the district across two school years. Each table contributes to answering P1Q2 (What is the current status of implementation of RP across the district?) from a different perspective. The implementation picture presented in the quantitative data is further informed by the qualitative results of the two focus groups conducted. The next section of this chapter presents the themes that emerged in both focus groups.

Qualitative Results

To answer research questions P2Q1 (How do administrators' perceptions impact their implementation of RP?) and P2Q2 (According to the perspectives of administrators, what are the main reasons they do not implement RP in their professional practice?), I conducted mini-focus

groups. Two sessions were hosted using Zoom, a web conferencing website. Each session lasted 60 minutes and consisted of three to four participants. Focus group participants also completed the RJII in Phase One of the research study. I recorded each focus group and coded for themes after its conclusion.

Focus group questions explored the following implementation categories: self-reflection on personal practice (as related to RJII scores), challenges, needs and supports, advice, and. During analysis of both focus group transcripts the following themes emerged.

Theme 1: RP was effective. All focus group participants communicated a respect for the effectiveness of RP and alternative disciplinary strategies. About the value of RP, one focus group member stated, “Sometimes the greatest thing we can do for a child is to help them learn to see from the perspective of someone else.” Throughout the focus groups, participants unanimously recognized the growth potential that RP offered and articulated a critical need to implement it as a means to address recidivism of student code of conduct violations. One member observed that RP was so effective that it was easy to tell when teachers and administrators were not using the practices. Another focus group member concurred, stating that it was critical to implement RP all of the time because by nature they are practices, not a one-off disciplinary action.

Theme 2: Administrator attitudes and implementation were influenced by external factors. Administrators reported their attitudes were often influenced by external factors like time of year and teacher resistance. Group participants discussed the challenge of assigning discipline in a way that was effective, equitable, and supported the teacher. The philosophy that discipline is cumulative was also presented as a factor that negatively impacted their perceived ability to utilize RP in lieu of traditional discipline. While reflecting on their RJII scores, one

participant initiated a discussion about the possibility that their scores might have been different earlier in the year. RJII responses were submitted in the third quarter of the school year, but the focus groups did not meet until the fourth. The suggestion elicited the comment that "restorative is not a welcome word this time of year," which was followed with laughter from other participants.

Teachers' attitudes toward RP were another external factor that affected administrators' attitudes about its implementation. Multiple comments revolved around the idea that teachers did not view RP as effective discipline. Discussion around teachers' perceptions about the effectiveness of exclusionary placements, whether accurate or not, occurred in both groups. Many group members commented on teachers' willingness and ability to adopt a philosophical mindset that embraced RP, and they noted that teacher attitudes toward RP were a contributing factor in their ability to implement RP. The primary reason presented was focus group participants' desire to support both teachers and students, which they articulated was difficult to do if they were providing a disciplinary response that the teachers did not value.

Theme 3: Relationships are the foundation of RP. Focus group participants acknowledged that RP had the power to heal broken relationships. When implemented effectively, participants concurred that RP created a safe space for both teachers and students to connect. RP measures, like SPARK plans and circles, were determined to be good for all parties, as they built relationships that encouraged commitment to the community and a desire to restore harm and change behavior. One focus group discussed the idea that RP was essential to making restorative justice meaningful. For example, without the relationship building that occurs with RP, a restorative justice apology might not have had the same level of effectiveness. Victims

could perceive this apology to be hollow and meaningless; however, an apology given to someone with whom the offender was in relationship had the potential to be more powerful.

Theme 4: Implementation of RP takes time. Participants discussed the concept of time in two different ways in each focus group. The first discussion revolved around the actual length of time that it takes to implement a RP. For example, creating classroom agreements could take up to a full class period. Participating in a re-entry circle at the alternative center required scheduling parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators for a meeting that lasted 30–45 minutes. The participants often agreed that traditional discipline takes less time to implement initially than RP, which is why some administrators struggled to move away from exclusionary placements. One focus group member reflected on the challenge of time by noting that, one way or another, time would be spent responding to student behavior. She noted that the time that it takes to implement an RP is valuable because of its greater potential to reduce recidivism than exclusionary placements. Her comment that "it's time well spent, because [one way or another] you're going to spend that time," was well-received by the participants and initiated discussion around the cumulative amount of time assigning suspensions was often more that would have been needed for an RP intervention.

The second conversation around time centered on the length of time it takes to implement RP within the organization. All participants agreed that the philosophical shift from traditional discipline to RP requires time and support. Multiple participants suggested providing extensive professional learning for all staff, which in this case was a full day of training. In conjunction with the training, participants championed the need for time to practice RP and provide feedback when teachers implement it. From celebrating successes to addressing misunderstandings and poor implementation, participants agreed that changing the organization takes time.

Validity of themes. Each of the themes that emerged from the focus groups were reviewed by the district's director of student services. One of her roles within the organization was to coordinate the district's disciplinary practices and make sure they were aligned with current legislation, the district's student code of conduct, and disciplinary philosophy. She validated all four themes as presented with the following notations:

Theme 1: RP was effective. In conversations with administrators across the district, she concurred that many, primarily elementary administrators, believed this to be true. She noted that to implement RP with fidelity, there was a growing belief among administrators she had spoken with that RP must not be a one-time disciplinary action; it must be implemented systemically.

Theme 2: Administrator attitudes and implementation were influenced by external factors. The district's director of student services validated this conclusion and provided some additional insight to factors that may have contributed to teacher resistance. She noted that institutional practices, like using a district-wide discipline matrix, works against the RP mindset that discipline should be differentiated and appropriate to each student in each unique situation. The discipline matrix promotes the idea that everyone should get the same consequences rather than equitable consequences.

Theme 3: Relationships are the foundation of RP. The district's director of student services stated that she believed this perception to be true with the district. She confirmed that RP was most effective when teachers and administrators had invested the time in building relationships.

Theme 4: Implementation of RP takes time. This theme was validated based upon many conversations that she had had with administrators since she stepped into her role in the district. She noted that the time needed to effectively implement RP was not only a difficult constraint for

teachers and administrators, but that it was also a challenge for parents and students. She also observed that the challenge of time was most restrictive at campuses that needed RP the most because their administrators often had so many other responsibilities competing for their time that the other campuses did not.

Summary

The analysis of data described in this chapter focused on investigating this study's research questions. I utilized multiple measures to describe the quantitative and qualitative data to illustrate the implementation of RP, broken down by ethnicity, gender, and school level. I also identified and discussed emergent themes that impacted administrator implementation. Chapter 5 discusses how the information from both phases were mixed to inform research-based conclusions. The mixing of data provided a foundation for conclusions and implementation recommendations designed to address administrators' resistance to change as it related to implementation of RP.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The challenge of diffusing an innovation such as RP throughout an organization is not limited to the district being studied. An abundance of research and accompanying recommendations exist about organizational change. At times, however, there are innovations that fail to diffuse for a myriad of reasons. Researchers (Burnes, 2015; Dent & Goldberg, 1999; Fiori, 2017) have identified individual's psychological resistance to change as a contributing factor to the limited diffusion of new interventions and programs. In this study, I aimed to investigate the barriers to the implementation of RP within a specific school district through the theoretical framework of general systems theory with an emphasis on resistance to change.

This emergent explanatory mixed methods case study explored the problem of limited administrator implementation of RP across a three-school-year implementation timeline within a single school district. I analyzed multiple measures of data across two phases of data collection to answer four research questions:

P1Q1. What is the relationship between administrator attitudes about RP and their implementation of restorative practices ?

P1Q2. What is the current status of implementation of RP across the district?

Phase Two used qualitative methods to explore the remaining research questions:

P2Q1. What is the current status of implementation of restorative practices across the district?

P2Q2. According to the perspectives of administrators, what are the main reasons they do not implement RP in their professional practice?

Phase One of the study utilized quantitative data to measure administrator attitudes about RP and restorative values. Participants completed the RJII, an assessment analyzing

administrator attitudes about the three core values of restorative justice: restoration, cooperation, and healing. I invited administrators who participated in Phase One to join in Phase Two, which consisted of qualitative focus groups exploring administrators' perceptions about their responses on the RJII and their implementation of RP. From these discussions, four themes emerged: RP was effective, administrator attitudes and implementation were influenced by external factors, relationships are the foundation of RP, and implementation of RP takes time.

Chapter 4 provided data and analysis from each phase of the study separately. This chapter presents interpretations from the mixing of the data from both phases to support the development of new understandings, implications, conclusions, and recommendations for future study. I evaluate the interpretations for alignment with recommendations from current practice, the research literature, and reasonableness for generalizations based upon the limitations of the study. The chapter concludes with recommendations for practical applications within the school setting and recommendations for further research. In the end, this chapter provides administrators who want to utilize RP with a series of recommendations for successful implementation.

Discussion of Findings in Relation to Past Literature

Both phases of this study demonstrated that a systemic resistance to change with respect to RP exists within the school district. The quantitative data presented in Table 8 documents a reduction of 3,593 RP actions issued during a recent school year with an additional 6,596 code of conduct violations over the previous year. This can be explained by some of the perceptions presented in the Phase Two focus groups—specifically discussions describing the influence of teacher perceptions about RP on administrator implementation decisions. This finding based upon the mixing of both qualitative and quantitative data and the findings for each research question in relation to past literature are discussed below.

P1Q1: What is the relationship between administrator attitudes about restorative values and their implementation of RP? P1Q1 is answered by an evaluation of results from the RJII and the district's reported implementation of RP. Information from Table 4 reports that as a whole the measured beliefs of participant sample were at a level that demonstrated readiness to implement RP. Table 8, however, documents a limited implementation of RP across both years and a decline in implementation from 2016/17 to 2017/18. In total, only 21% of disciplinary actions applied during the study timeline were restorative, while 51% were exclusionary. Furthermore, 98% of the exclusionary actions applied were made at the discretion of the administrator assigning the consequence.

Analysis of these data points indicates that, within this system, the relationship between administrator attitudes and readiness for implementation were not directly correlated. This mirrors Williams's (2013) findings about the implementation of restorative justice practices in Nova Scotia and is supported by existing research that states when practitioners' ideologies are challenged, they often yield to other strategies (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). This can be explained by systems theory as a balancing feedback loop that is working to create homeostasis within the disciplinary system (Meadows, 2008; Stroh, 2015).

P1Q2: What is the current status of implementation of RP across the district? P1Q2 is answered by an analysis of the district reported data across two school years. The efficacy of restorative approaches is measured by two primary outcomes: reducing offender recidivism and addressing racial disproportionality. I evaluated the current implementation of RP within the district through the lens of both outcomes. Because the district disciplinary data did not include incident or action dates, it was impossible to determine a correlation between the implementation of RP and its ability to reduce offender recidivism. What can be observed is that in the 2017/18

school year, administrators assigned RP to more students, but they did not assign RP to the same students as many times as they did the year before. There was not enough information in the data set to determine a causal relationship between RP and recidivism, but it is worth noting in the findings.

Tables 10 and 11 detail the reported implementation of disciplinary actions categorized by student groups and gender. From 2016/17 to 2017/18 there was a reduction in the percentage of exclusionary placements in all student groups. Over the same time period there was also a reduction in the number of RP assigned while there was an increase in the percentage of other actions assigned. Looking at the implementation of RP by gender, Table 11 notes that an increase in the percentage of RP actions did not result in a lower possibility of boys or girls receiving an exclusionary placement. Based on this data, it could be inferred that the reduction in exclusionary placements is related to the increase in other disciplinary actions and number of referrals with no action rather than the implementation of RP.

Together these outcomes continue to challenge claims of high levels of efficacy in the areas of recidivism and reduction of exclusionary disproportionality. This can be explained by the systems theory archetype of shifting the burden. This occurs when a system relies on a program rather than addressing the cultural norms that perpetuate unwanted behaviors. The drop in RP implementation could be considered a feedback delay within the bigger context of the school district's system of response to student behavior (Meadows, 2008).

P2Q1: How do administrators' perceptions impact their implementation of RP? Emerging themes from focus group responses provided insights about this research question. Coupled with the results of the RJII, participants reported an overall belief in the value of RP as a means for addressing recidivism and teaching empathy. Despite their positive perceptions,

participants acknowledged the internal struggle of acting in a way that aligned with their beliefs and identified several external factors that challenged the alignment between their perceptions and actions. The internal struggle they described could be explained by the three dimensions of resistance to change: cognition, emotion, and intention (Szabla, 2007). While the participants articulated positive emotions and intentions toward RP, it is possible that they were limited by their cognition—in this case a specific knowledge that RP is effective. The negative consequences that resulted from the internal conflict presented by the administrators participating in the study is an example of the systems theory archetype—fixes that backfire. The lack of information confirming the success of RP is not enough to sustain the disappointment of the less than quick fix solution that the district and practicing administrators might have hoped RP would be.

P2Q2: According to the perspectives of administrators, what are the main reasons they do not implement RP in their professional practice? Participants provided several specific responses to P2Q2. One reason that participants identified as a barrier to their implementation was the time of year. Participants noted that later in the school year they found it more difficult to implement RP a means for behavior intervention. They correlated this difficulty to the long-held philosophy that discipline should be cumulative in nature—disciplinary actions should become more punitive over time. A secondary factor that compounds this challenge was the participants' belief that teachers did not value RP in the same manner that administrators did. Participants noted that the conflicting beliefs were presented as a greater challenge because they wanted to support teachers and students, but often teachers did not feel supported when administrators utilized a behavior intervention that teachers did not value. As a result, participants noted that they felt torn between assigning an action that aligned with their beliefs in

lieu of an action that would make their teachers feel valued. A third barrier to implementation articulated by the participants was lack of time. Collectively, participants agreed that RP takes time. Whether applied as a proactive strategy or a reactive consequence, participants noted that RP takes more time to implement than traditional or exclusionary consequences, which is why many administrators failed to implement responses that were aligned to their beliefs.

The challenge presented by the construct of time (time of year and time to implement) is another example of shifting the burden. A hallmark of this archetype is that overreliance on a new system depletes the resources needed to create sustainable change. In addition, the barriers and limited implementation articulated by the focus groups aligned with Morrison and Vaandering's (2012) claims that clashing philosophies and limited timeframes were critical factors that negatively impacted the diffusion of RP within a learning organization.

Limitations

The analyses of the data resulting in responses to each of the research questions were informed by the support of existing research in the fields of restorative justice, RP, resistance to change, and systems theory. In spite of the correlations to the current literature, the study was not without limitations. Upon reflection of this research study, there were three primary limitations to the interpretation and generalization of the results: participant sample, longitudinal data, and researcher bias.

The first limitation to the study was the size and composition of the participant sample. Despite two attempts to solicit participants, only seven administrators from the district responded to the call for research. The seven administrators represented 3.6% of eligible administrators within the district. The composition of the participant sample was surprisingly reflective of the

overall demographics of potential participants; however, its size was a limitation that should be acknowledged when considering the generalizability and validity of the results.

Another factor that should be considered about the sample is that participation was voluntary, which could explain why all seven participants fell within the readiness range of the RJII. Had participation been solicited another way (required by the district, opened to teachers and administrators, or open to administrators in multiple districts) there could have been more variance among participants' ideologies. These limitations were mitigated by the study's research framework—a case-study—as the results were purely descriptive of the organization as reflected through the perceptions of the focus group (Creswell, 2014).

A second limitation of the study was the limited range of longitudinal quantitative data provided by the district. With only two years of data, it was impossible to draw reliable conclusions. A lack of historical data about the implementation of RP was to be expected; a limited number of studies exist in this field (Evans et al., 2013). In addition, the short timeframe presented in the data should also be considered in the conclusions drawn from the perspective of systems theory.

In addition to the limitation of the timeframe of the data, a limitation within the data is the validity of the reported implementation of all actions. As discussed in Chapter 4, the district disciplinary data reported actions in response to student behavior but did not include offense and/or action dates. Keeping in mind there is always the potential for human error in submitting documentation, the data confidently reflected the number of exclusionary placements assigned during each school year. Where the data may have had gaps is in the documentation of RP. Knowing that RP is both proactive and reactive, ranging from student conferences to restitution of damages, it was very likely that not all of the RP implemented by administrators was

documented. The study accounted for this limitation by including disciplinary actions that were not only coded “RP” within the discipline reporting. In addition, I mitigated this gap in data by simply acknowledging the information as reported, creating space for the information to serve as descriptive of what could be learned by the data.

The third limitation in this study was researcher bias. Despite my best attempts to remain unbiased and distance myself from the focus group discussions, the findings could be considered biased by outside parties. To counteract this, I drafted focus group questions that were reviewed by my dissertation chair prior to using them with each focus group. I also addressed potential researcher influence at the beginning of each focus group by explaining that I would not participate in discussions; I would only facilitate. During the focus groups, probing questions were limited to those that would encourage further reflection. Probing questions were intentionally neutral. During my analysis of the focus group responses, words and phrases were transcribed onto a spreadsheet, which allowed for the grouping of themes to emerge. I developed categories, codes, and themes from participants’ words rather than a pre-existing list of anticipated ideas. To ensure validity in the responses, all themes presented in the study were supported by existing literature.

As in any study, this study’s limitations inform the level of generalizability of the following interpretations and conclusions. In addition, the validity of the study may be questionable—specifically about the impact the non-reported discipline data could have had on the overall accuracy of the district’s reality. Despite these limitations, the study presented a multidimensional analyses of multiple factors that explored the limited diffusion of RP within the school district. In fact, it is the multidimensional approach that reinforces the overall findings of the study, because the focus group participants concurred that RP was not implemented in

alignment with their beliefs. Overall, the limitations did not impact this case study's aims to explore this specific phenomenon within the context of one organization.

Recommendations

To mitigate administrator resistance to change, this study demonstrated the importance of focusing on cultural change to bring about systemic change. The district's initial reliance on programming as a solution for a larger problem resulted in negative feedback loops, which undermined administrators' ability to consistently apply disciplinary actions that aligned with their beliefs. Administrators hoping to effectively implement RP within their organization should consider the following recommendations for practical application. These recommendations were developed from the interpretations resulting from the mixing of both the quantitative and qualitative data and recommendations from existing literature in the fields of RP, change leadership, and systems theory.

Recommendations for practical application. This study confirms what existing research has already demonstrated: simply applying a program intervention is often met with resistance (Meadows, 2008; Stroh, 2015). To counteract the effect of individuals' resistance to change, leaders must first acknowledge that it exists. In fact, it is essential that leaders recognize the difference between change being difficult for people and the actual psychological response born of self-protection from real or imagined change. Implementation of RP not only requires changes in behavior; it requires a mindshift that is more akin to social change than procedural change, which is likely why many current implementation recommendations do not create sustainable change. Knowing that much of the resistance leaders will experience is the result of a neurological reaction to change helps explain why using systems thinking to promote change mitigates the resistance leaders are likely to face.

Rather than implementing RP through the lens of a programming change or newly adopted practice, I would recommend leaders zoom out and consider what they are hoping to achieve by implementing RP as related to the organization's mission, vision, and goals. Identifying the function of the organization provides clarity to stakeholders when change is imminent (Meadows, 2008). In the case of student discipline, the function may be to respond to student behavior in a way that is culturally proficient and reduces recidivism. It could also be as simple as implementing RP to create safe and inclusive learning environments. With a clearly articulated function, leaders can begin to use systems thinking to tackle practitioner resistance to change and achieve systemic change.

Once the function of the organization has been determined, I recommend inviting all stakeholders into a conversation that explores the interdependent relationships of the organization and their alignment to the function of the system. It is likely that only some stakeholders will respond to the invitation, much like the participant sample of this study, but welcoming all stakeholders to the conversation promotes transparency and trust. This recommendation contradicts current research (Evans et al., 2013) that champions beginning with a grassroots movement, but it is aligned with Stroh's (2015) four-step process for social change and is based on the challenges articulated by administrators in this study. The most referenced barriers to administrators' implementation was the lack of buy-in from teachers and teachers' misunderstandings about the impact of RP.

After identifying the organization's function, leaders should engage stakeholders, establish common ground, and build capacity. Each of these responsibilities works to strengthen the system from the inside out. Leaders wishing to develop a system that utilizes RP to create safe and inclusive learning opportunities for students recognize the value of all stakeholders'

buy-in to support the development of positive relationships and promote implementation of RP with fidelity. To develop a system that promotes social change and overcomes resistance to change, leaders must attend to the cognitive and emotional needs of every person responsible for achieving the function (McRaney, 2017). Strategies to engage all stakeholders should focus on professional relationship building and collaborative capacity. The connections developed during this stage of implementation will help the organization identify and adjust to potential negative feedback loops that arise as the organization aims to achieve its function.

In addition to building relational and collective capacity, leaders should use this time to build an understanding of the methods used to achieve the organization's function. Teachers and administrators should participate in professional learning together to grow in their collective understanding of RP. Plans for implementing and documenting RP as a proactive approach to behavior management should be shared so that all stakeholders have a common understanding of implementation expectations. While growing practitioner capacity in the application of RP, it is essential for leaders to keep in mind that RP is a tool aligned with a philosophical response to student behavior that values restoration, cooperation, and healing. Overreliance on a tool rather than attending to practitioner philosophy will result in the creation of a negative feedback loop, which will undermine the organization's ability to achieve its goal. The key to creating an effective system is to focus on the desired vision more than the desired program (Stroh, 2015).

Finally, articulating the current reality is an essential step for leaders wanting to facilitate sustainable change. Keeping in mind that people must be given a significant amount of countervailing information before their thinking is truly challenged and they are open to accepting new information (McRaney, 2017), it is critical that leaders explicitly articulate the organization's need for change in relation to the identified function. By providing each educator

responsible for achieving the organization's function with the information about the current reality of the academic, social, and emotional consequences of the school's current disciplinary function, they can begin to make choices about their willingness to adopt new disciplinary philosophies and practices. As early adopters begin to emerge, leaders should capitalize on their excitement and interest by encouraging them to communicate the reasons that inspired their philosophical shift. Continued reinforcement of the personalized reasons that influenced each adopter's decision contributes to the catalog of myth-busting, resistance-defeating information required to help encourage adoption and implementation of RP to ensure the organizational system is functioning as it should.

Based upon these findings, the district in this study should address the negative feedback loops that limited the successful diffusion of RP over the course of the two years being studied. Beginning by clearly articulating their current reality about institutionalized racial discrimination through disciplinary disproportionality, and their vision for how stakeholders respond to all student behavior will establish the function of the organization with respect to student discipline. In addition, communicating their current reality can allow for the identification and elimination of existing feedback loops that are limiting the administrators' implementation of RP, such as teacher resistance and the mentality that discipline is cumulative in nature. Engaging all professional staff and building their relational capacities can create new, positively reinforcing feedback loops that promote partnership between teachers and administrators in the application of RP. This partnership can support the continuum of RP that ranges from proactive strategies to reactive strategies, creating a balancing feedback loop that will generate a holistic response to student behavior rather than a one-sided, reactionary response. Throughout their RP implementation journey, the district should continue to provide information about their current

reality to teachers and administrators. Periodic analysis of simple descriptive statistics describing the systems' current implementation status would serve as countervailing information that could ultimately help mitigate deeply-rooted psychological resistance to change. With these measures in place, the district could be well-prepared to build upon their pre-existing systems. To ensure the system maintains a healthy symbiosis, a leadership team should monitor and evaluate its functioning regularly.

Recommendations for future research. The recommendations are based upon research-based strategies for implementing social change through systems thinking as informed by the experiences of the district being studied. This case study aimed to contribute to the growing body of research on the implementation of RP within the school system. As this is still a relatively new field of study within the academic community, this study could serve as a theoretical guide for future research, allowing for further exploration of how RP affects students, student behavior, and campus culture over time and the overall ability for RP to fully diffuse in the U.S. school system.

In addition, the recommendations for practical application could also be studied. An analysis of the successful implementation of RP based upon these recommendations would be quite interesting and address the limitations of generalizing a single case. It would be interesting to see how the findings differ when analyzed in a larger study or through the perspectives of teachers and administrators from different cultures, different organizational units, or simply a different school district. In addition, it would be interesting to see the results of a similar study that specifically attended to reducing the effects of the limitations of this study. One example might include a longitudinal study that follows an organization's RP journey from its inception.

Conclusions

The district's RP implementation journey served as an insightful case study in the real-life challenges leaders experience when trying to change an organization's fundamental beliefs and practices in a short timeframe. Its commitment to addressing racial disproportionality and improving administrators' responses to student behavior on such a grand scale—over 5,000 employees and 53,000 students—is a massive undertaking. Current literature champions many of the implementation strategies that the district utilized, like starting with a grassroots movement (Evans et al., 2013; Hopkins, 2015; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012; Sumner et al., 2012; Zion et al., 2015) and developing an organization that prioritizes relationships over control (Hopkins, 2015; Irby & Clough, 2015; Welch, 2017). These strategies served as a starting point for the organization, but based on the district disciplinary data and the focus group responses, it is clear that there is still work to do to continue the diffusion of RP within the district.

In a follow-up discussion with the district's director of student services she concurred that the district's initial approach was based upon research available to leadership at the time. Through their initial experiences district leadership has determined the success of their implementation lies in developing a systemic approach that prioritizes relationship building between students, teachers, and administrators. Using an internal analysis and reflection on implementation data, the district has developed a long-term plan that includes district-wide RP goal setting, professional learning centered on the understanding the role of RP in discipline, development of an RP, annual campus-level trainings designed to refresh and extend RP learning, RP Twitter chats two times each year, and providing on-going professional learning experiences for campus leaders to bring to staff meetings, PLCs (professional learning communities), and other campus learning opportunities.

This study aimed to examine the barriers for administrator RP implementation to provide campus leaders recommendations for a full diffusion of RP within their district. It is important to remember that this emergent explanatory mixed methods study analyzed data from the district's initial implementation. As a researcher, I am grateful that the district was willing to serve as the studied organization so that multiple perspectives and data points could be evaluated to provide a multidimensional evaluation of administrators' application of RP.

Analysis of the data revealed that administrator implementation was impacted by many external factors that were influenced by educators' philosophies about appropriate responses to student behavior. The results of this case study aligned with the district's internal findings and suggest that the action steps presented in the literature (Evans et al., 2013; Hopkins, 2015; Irby & Clough, 2015; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012; Sumner et al., 2012; Welch, 2017; Zion et al., 2015) should be implemented within a larger framework using systems theory because of the tightly held philosophies that drive educators' responses to student behavior.

Approaching the implementation of RP as a social, cultural, or organizational change through the lens of systems theory promotes alignment between the desired intervention and the organization's mission, vision, and goals, because it requires that organizational leaders articulate their desired purpose so that they can create a system that utilizes all stakeholders and counteracts the negative forces of philosophical resistance to change through the creation of positively reinforcing feedback loops. The results of this research study do not contradict current research recommendations; they simply suggest that current recommendations should be implemented through the intentional theoretical framework of systems theory to counteract forces, such as resistance to change, that undermine leaders' efforts.

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Appendix A: The Restorative Justice Ideology Instrument

This survey collects a combination or demographic data with items evaluating perceptions about restorative practices. Participants will respond to restorative practices items on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree".

Demographic Questions

1. How long have you been a campus administrator?
2. How long have you been a campus administrator in the district?
3. What grade levels do you serve: elementary, middle, or high school?
4. Have you attended professional learning on restorative practices? If so, when?
5. What is your age?
6. Are you male or female?
7. What is your ethnicity: American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, White?

Restorative Practice Items

1. Wrongdoing should be addressed without removing the student from the classroom.
2. Consequences from wrongdoing should include plans for reintegration into classroom activity.
3. Collective resolution is an appropriate anti-bullying strategy.
4. I have a moral duty to help students to get back on track.
5. It is my responsibility to develop empathy in students.
6. Fear of punishment is a useful strategy in deterring wrongdoings.
7. When wrongdoing occurs, community members need to express their feelings.
8. Repairing hurt requires sustained effort.
9. Students who do wrong are deserving of respect.
10. Examples should be made of students who are disruptive.
11. In righting a wrong, only the victim's needs should be addressed.
12. The victim's voice is more important than the offender's voice.
13. Parents should have a voice in the process of righting wrongs.
14. A wrong-doer who is obnoxious always deserves to be treated with dignity.
15. Wrongdoing should be addressed based solely on the teacher's understanding of the situation.
16. All members of the class should have a say on how to deal with wrongdoing.

Appendix B: Restorative Justice Ideology Questionnaire

Self-Scoring Key (Roland et al., 2012)

Factor (Principle) – Restoration (Questions #1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8)

Total Score = ______ out of a possible 35 total

Percentage Score = ______

Factor (Principle) – Cooperation (Questions #6, 10, 11, 12, 15)
*For all of these items reverse the score of each item (i.e., 5=1, 4=2) and then add up the items to obtain your total score.

Total Score = ______ out of a possible 25 total

Percentage Score = ______

Factor (Principle) – Restoration (Questions #9, 13, 14, 16)

Total Score = ______ out of a possible 20 total

Percentage Score = ______

Appendix C: Consent to Use Restorative Justice Ideology Questionnaire

On Tue, Oct 23, 2018 at 10:32 AM Karen Roland <xxxxx> wrote:
Dear Beri, thank you for your message and interest in the RJI instrument. Your research sounds very interesting and will also add to the body of knowledge concerning restorative justice and practices. We gladly provide you with permission to use the Restorative Justice Ideology Instrument in the first phase of your study. Wishing you success with your research and doctoral studies!

Dr. Karen Roland
Experiential Learning Specialist
(Retired Professor, University of Windsor)
Email xxxxx

From: Beri Deister [mailto:xxxxx]
Sent: Sunday, October 21, 2018 7:01 PM
To: Karen Roland <xxxxx>
Subject: Restorative Justice Ideology Instrument

Dr. Roland,

My name is Beri Deister, and I am a doctoral candidate with Abilene Christian University. Currently, I am developing a research study that will investigate factors that contribute to effective implementation of restorative practices within a learning organization, and I am very impressed with the Restorative Justice Ideology Instrument that you and your colleagues designed.

The organization I am studying began their restorative practices journey by focusing primarily on restorative justice. Recently they have transitioned from a restorative justice-based model to one that focuses on both proactive and reactive responses to student behavior. I would like to request your permission to use the Restorative Justice Ideology Instrument in the first phase of my study. Your instrument would serve as a baseline, qualitative measure of participant's attitudes towards restorative values.

Appendix D: Revised Focus Group and Interview Protocol

Invitation—sent via email

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the upcoming focus group. The purpose of the group will be to explore your thinking on the implementation of restorative practices. Throughout our time together, there will be a series of questions, prompts, or cues to facilitate a thoughtful discussion among group members. I encourage you to share anecdotes, stories, and experiences so that together the group can fully explore your leadership strengths and needs in regard to restorative practices.

In phase one, you completed the Restorative Justice Ideology Inventory (RJII). This survey was designed to measure educator attitudes towards three restorative justice themes: restoration, cooperation, and healing. During the focus group, there will be an opportunity to explore the connection between administrator attitudes about and implementation of restorative practices. If you would like to view your results prior to the meeting, please let me know and I will email them to you. If you prefer not to know, that will not impact your participation or eligibility. To participate in the focus group, you will need to join my Zoom meeting at (insert info here). You will also need access to the email address you provided in the phase one survey.

Meeting Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in today's session. I appreciate your willingness to share your observations and insights as I better understand administrators' implementation of restorative practices. As an administrator in the district prior to this school year, your knowledge and experience with student behavior management and campus culture is an asset to this study because you have had the opportunity to implement restorative practices on your campuses.

Your responses will be recorded and coded for group and individual categories, concepts, and themes. This information will provide a qualitative measure for understanding barriers to implementation. This session aims to respect your administrator-student confidentiality requirements, so please feel free to mask any identifying information you feel necessary.

After the session has concluded, I ask that you will respect the confidentiality of other participants responses and their inclusion in this study. All members included today have signed the informed consent and are held to the same expectation for honoring the confidentiality of the session.

Please know, participation is completely optional. You may answer as many questions as you are comfortable with, and if at any point you would leave the session you may simply leave the session. If you have any questions as we progress, don't hesitate to ask. What questions may I answer for you about this session before we begin?

Focus Group Questions

1. Let's start off with a discussion on restoration. When you hear the terms restorative justice and restorative practices, what do you think of? Is there a difference between the two? Explain.
2. On your screen, I've posted two words: prevention and intervention. What are some preventative practices you have used to create a restorative culture on your campus? And, what restorative interventions have you used?
3. Prior to the meeting, you were given the opportunity to review your results of the Restorative Justice Ideology Inventory (RJII). As a reminder to everyone, this survey was designed to measure educator attitudes towards three RJ themes: restoration, cooperation, and healing. For those of you who viewed your results, will you please share your reflections about your results? What was affirming or surprising to you? How do you see them represented in your behavior management practices? (Offer to email results again if requested.).
4. Let's transition from beliefs about restorative practices to implementation. We know there are some behaviors that the state requires suspension or expulsion. However, there are many other behaviors that you are given the authority to address a variety of ways. If you were to draw a pie chart of your implementation of restorative practices vs. traditional behavior management (demerit systems, pins/color charts, detentions, removals, and suspensions), what do you think it might look like?
5. Please discuss the relationship between your pie chart results and your RJII results. What are your thoughts about the alignment between the two? How are your attitudes about restoration reflected in your implementation of restorative practices?
6. What factors impact the alignment between your reported attitude towards restoration and your implementation? What supports have helped you to create a tight alignment between the two? What supports would help you strengthen that alignment?
7. What changes, if any, do you need to make to improve the alignment between your actions and beliefs? What challenges do you think you might encounter?
8. Think about conversations you have had with other administrators. What restorative practices are they using that you have not used? If you were to give advice to another administrator wishing to motivate others to use restorative practices, what resistance would you tell them to anticipate? What factors contribute to this resistance?

Closing: Thank you for contributing to this study. I appreciate your time and willingness to participate. During the focus group, you were asked to predict your implementation ratio (restorative:traditional). If you would like chart based upon your Skyward reported implementation from 2017-present, I would be happy to email it to you. Just let me know.

As mentioned previously, all responses will be coded and published in the final presentation of this study. If you would like to see how your collective experience supports this exploration, please let me know and I will share the final publication with you.

Appendix E: IRB Approval Letter

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103
325-674-2885

November 19, 2018

Beri Deister

Department of Education

Abilene Christian University

Dear Beri,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled "Investigating Administrators. Resistance to Implementing Restorative Practices"

was approved by expedited review (Category 7) on 11/19/2018 (IRB # 18-092). Upon completion of this study, please submit the Inactivation Request Form within 30 days of study completion.

If you wish to make any changes to this study, including but not limited to changes in study personnel, number of participants recruited, changes to the consent form or process, and/or changes in overall methodology, please complete the Study Amendment Request Form.

If any problems develop with the study, including any unanticipated events that may change the risk profile of your study or if there were any unapproved changes in your protocol, please inform the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs and the IRB promptly using the Unanticipated Events/Noncompliance Form.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

Our Promise: ACU is a vibrant, innovative, Christ-centered community that engages students in authentic spiritual and intellectual growth, equipping them to make a real difference in the world.