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Restorative Justice & A Dean of Students:

An Auto-Criticism of the Role of Care in School Discipline in a Poverty Impacted

Public High School

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the Morgridge College of Education

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Abstract

This qualitative study is an auto-criticism, an approach that allows researchers to study themselves. This emergent methodology is derived from educational criticism and connoisseurship, which fits under the broader category of arts-based research. School discipline is a programmatic component of any secondary school's educational framework and directly effects student engagement and academic achievement. An analysis of the dean role in relation to school discipline is central to this study. The main research question is what are the lived experiences of a dean who incorporates restorative justice practices in a poverty impacted public high school?

The author spent two years as a dean of students who utilized restorative justice practices when implementing school discipline. Following the auto-criticism protocol, this project incorporates three types of data sources to analyze the lived experiences of a dean: researcher journals, dean's office records, and schoolwide documents. This data is used to operationalize 'restorative justice' as an instructional tool to scaffold student engagement and mitigate disciplinary infractions. Findings show that restorative justice stimulates affective processes in both teachers and students. These affective processes offer a bridge between classroom instruction and the discipline process through a parallel process of support and an advocacy approach to teaching.

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Chapter One: Introduction

A Dream Job

When I saw a position open for a “Culture and Climate Dean of Students” at a large comprehensive public high school outside of Denver, I knew it was the one for me. Though my personal educational experience with the role of a ‘Dean’ has been in higher education, I was intrigued with the job description for a dean of students at a high school. This position is considered administrative with a focus on student support. Considering my research areas of social-emotional learning and trauma-informed education, I saw this position as a chance to implement advocacy strategies to address student discipline from an intervention lens. I began calling it my ‘dream job’ because the high school dean position was characterized as a TOSA (teacher on special assignment), and I believed this would allow me time and space to implement positive discipline through social-emotional curriculum. Without the confines of the classroom teaching role, I believed the TOSA role would allow me to build skills with students using strengths-based strategies, to take discipline-intervention risks, and to think outside of the box.

During my interview, we spent over three hours discussing social-emotional learning and alternative teaching approaches to address evolving student needs. We discussed the merits of culturally relevant pedagogy and other academic theories that have trickled over into mainstream educational jargon. We discussed alternative forms of discipline, including the school-within-a-school supported learning concept for

students deemed “at-risk” of not graduating on time. Though an outdated term due to its deficit-focused meaning, schools still use it to identify students who have attendance and behavior issues. I got the job.

I had spent half of my job interview discussing the ‘school-within-a-school’ concept as an alternative to out-of- school suspension. The assistant principal who controlled school discipline was in my job interview and had seemingly agreed with my thoughts on social-emotional learning and the importance of alternative-to-suspension models of discipline. I believed this school district, situated in a poverty impacted community would welcome alternative discipline styles and non-punitive interventions.

However, I later discovered a disconnect between words and actions at play in this high school, particularly the difference in the philosophical approach to ‘discipline’ as both content and process. I would come to realize that my ideal view of the job did not match the practiced reality. This school, like many others, still prioritized outdated and reactive methods of punishment. The first time I refused to automatically suspend a student without hearing their side of the story, he asked me if I wanted a job in the school’s counseling department. Sarcastic, perhaps? There was no opening in the counseling department, so I continued the work. My job title was eventually changed to Restorative Justice Dean of Students.

A “Restorative Justice Dean” is really an oxymoron. Restorative justice has its roots in nonviolent theology and refers to the act of repairing harm through restorative acts, not retributive punishments (Hopkins, 2015). A dean addresses school discipline and administers consequences to infractions. Historically, the dean role addresses this student misbehavior through strict punishment, and harsh consequences (Greene, 2016; Hopkins,

2004). A narrow view of discipline is often enacted. Regardless, “Restorative Justice Dean” was my title for two years as a high school dean of students. With emphasis on the “restorative” aspect of the title, I prioritized relationships, respect, and accountability in my deaning, which are at the forefront of any trauma-informed practice in school-based settings (Ludy-Dobson & Perry, 2010). This framework is the container for this study and holds the tension of an idealized job in a bureaucratized system. As a restorative justice dean, I utilized relational approaches toward student discipline to build behavioral skills via respect and accountability.

A Poverty Impacted School Community

Nestled northeast of Denver sits this comprehensive high school that serves a poverty impacted community. This school is home to 1,800 students in grades 9-12, with 86% of students receiving free or reduced lunch. The school receives Title 1 funding, and the graduation rate is 74%. Characterized as having a “Fringe Rural” school setting, the school serves an outskirts community where 90% of the student body is Hispanic, half of which is only Spanish speaking. For years, the local schools have repeatedly underserved these students, resulting in the lowest performance rankings in Colorado for several years in a row. Their standardized test scores were 13% proficiency in math, and 15% in reading/language arts for the 2017-2018 school year, the year prior to the start of my data collection (CDE, 2020).

Since 2010, the school has experienced a revolving door of principal leadership. This caused the Colorado State Board of Education to seize managerial control of the district in 2019, with orders for the school district to partner with an outside agency to take control of the daily operations. Several local newspaper outlets documented this

timeline with publications throughout 2018 and 2019. Yet, for confidentiality reasons, I have chosen to omit these references. Instead, I hope to contextualize this school within the larger context of schools in turnaround that often get squeezed on all sides by outside forces. The label ‘turnaround’ refers to those schools who have repeated years of failing test scores and are placed on an accountability clock to turn around their test scores (Fullan, 2006). This triggers outside forces to get involved in school matters, ranging from community stakeholders, school board members, district officers, local school officials, parents, family members, community resource providers, community members, local nonprofit advocacy groups, and any other concerned citizen. Many of whom have no formal background in education.

Throughout my first year there, district officials held a series of “Community Sessions” to elicit input and feedback from the public community about how to select and external manager. Yet, the decision was already made to go forward with a consulting firm out of state, effectively turning control over to private management. The details of that decision and subsequent fallout are deserving of a dissertation all their own and are beyond the scope of this project. However, I refer to the turnaround status as a way to show the nature of external forces that put overwhelming pressures on the internal workings of the daily school operations. There was a constant murmur among both staff and students regarding “What was going to happen next year when the external partners took over?” Vague in nature, that question reflected both the lack of knowledge and abundance of anxiety about the unknown future of the control of the school district and impacted the way staff interacted with students.

With the external pressures invisibly hovering over the school, the internal workings were tense from day one. Professional development presentations focused on the negatives of the previous year (via state test scores), and consequences of not increasing scores (potential staff replacement when the external management partners took over). Largely conventional in structure, the school has not implemented progressive educational practices to address the growing need for educator understanding around social-emotional supports to increase student success. Instead, school administrators use progressive rhetoric to purport “trauma-informed” and “restorative justice” without giving attention to exactly what these concepts mean in actual relation to student success (Hopkins, 2004).

When serving a poverty impacted community, it is important for this high school to implement programs that lead to long-term successes for its historically marginalized populations. With little economic growth, high rates of poverty, environmental concerns of air quality, and inconsistent access to clean drinking water, these community issues spill over into the school. Considering many opportunities to implement alternative forms of school discipline, the school uses a regurgitated punitive discipline ladder to (Appendix A) to drive student discipline. The external managers brought in prepackaged holistic curricular models with names like “Essential Elements of Instruction” and workshops to support effective classroom management practices (Forbes, 2012; Smith, Fisher, & Frey, 2015). Yet, in practice, the discipline remained deficit-based and punitive, which runs counter to restorative practices and social-emotional learning in general.

School-to-Prison Pipeline

For schools in poverty impacted communities, the use of hard and punitive discipline practices leads to an uncovering of internalized mechanisms that support the school-to-prison pipeline (Osher et al., 2012; Rios & Galicia, 2013; Skiba, 2018). The school-to-prison pipeline refers to targeted school discipline practices that criminalize students of color, replacing education with a pathway into the juvenile justice system. Zero-tolerance school discipline policies refer to repeated suspensions for minor infractions, “three-strike-and-you’re-out” discipline plans, and other behavioral contracts that puts students on a pathway to expulsion (Osher et al., 2012). Decades of research has increasingly shown these policies to be ineffective in curtailing student misbehavior and produce more negative consequences such as disproportionately affecting minority students and increasing dropout rates (Bhandari, 2018; Howard, 2014; Skiba et al., 2002).

For a comprehensive high school that has a majority of Latinx students, both citizens and non-citizens, this is an important matter. Researchers have shown marked gaps in discipline patterns for Black and Latinx student group, as well as possible solutions to address this marginalization for much of the last twenty years (McNeeley & Falci, 2004; Rothstein, 2004; Skiba et al., 2011). Restorative justice theories have made their way into the educational realm to offer alternative methods; however, the pedagogical considerations for implementation have not been addressed at the whole school level (Hopkins, 2015). Most issues of school discipline begin in the classroom, yet discipline is treated as separate from instruction. This study analyzes my work as a restorative justice dean over two years as I navigated the implementation of alternative forms of school discipline amidst the research on school discipline trends. The school-

based setting contextualizes the development of restorative justice interventions and alternative forms of school discipline that can challenge the punitive model of retributive school discipline (Hopkins, 2004; Zehr, 2015). This is how to address the culture and climate of a highly impacted school community.

Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand restorative justice as a crucial component in challenging the school-to-prison pipeline. Largely theoretical, restorative justice frameworks are a necessary foundation for engaging students at all levels of instruction. Many students disengage from the educational system for a variety of reasons and there are very real barriers to education, particularly when schools are in poverty impacted communities. Restorative justice contains advocacy-based components that can show students that education is a means to increase their perception of self in positive ways. Ultimately, the school is the conduit for the overall educational empowerment of students, families, and communities (Seeley, 2004). When implemented with fidelity, restorative justice creates the space to address the many complex issues affecting student success at all levels of schooling.

The overarching research questions guiding this study characterizes restorative justice as a foundational way to frame teacher-student interactions.

What are the lived experiences of a dean who incorporates restorative justice practices in a poverty impacted public high school? How did a dean of students incorporate restorative justice in their role?

Sub-questions include:

1. **What are the implications of restorative justice for the role of dean of students in high schools?**
2. **What are the implications of restorative justice practices for classroom teachers as perceived by the dean?**
3. **What are the implications of restorative justice practices for school climate and culture, and student learning environments, as perceived by the dean?**

This study utilizes an auto-criticism methodology to explore these questions.

Rationale for the Study

This study examines the alternative discipline practices I implemented over a two-year period as a restorative justice dean of students. Alternative forms of discipline refer to discipline practices that are not harsh, punitive, or reactionary. Innovative and reflective, these alternatives can also contribute to keeping students in school to prioritize the ‘relationship’ and ‘repairing harm’ aspects of restorative justice theory. The rationale for centering this dissertation on the role of the restorative justice dean of students centers on the following:

1. ***School Culture***. The dean deals with disciplinary situations and safety issues that largely impacts the culture of a school. Punitive discipline measures do not mitigate discipline issues. Restorative justice offers a better approach than what is currently in practice.
2. ***Alternative to Suspension/Expulsion***. The role of dean is a responsive position. At the intersection of student misbehaviors and teacher frustrations, the dean has

the responsibility of resolving conflict fairly. Restorative justice utilizes elements of social justice and equity practices to guide those unfamiliar with it.

3. ***Social-Emotional Perspective.*** The dean has privileged flexibility to implement restorative interventions and responsive programs. This allows the dean to address social-emotional capacities through school discipline, which can serve as a model for other deans wanting to incorporate the social-emotional paradigm and behavioral skill development.
4. ***Implications for School Discipline Programs.*** The position of restorative justice dean of students can inform current conversations around school discipline and the need for more proactive discipline practices that prioritize relationships.

Many students have a history of disenfranchisement from their schooling due to maladjustment and cultural conflict (Kohl, 1994; Tatum, 1997; Valenzuela, 1999). Public schools and teachers can help mitigate these issues through educational advocacy.

Through a two-pronged process of both ongoing instructional support and collaborative student input, public school teachers can cultivate and encourage trauma-informed restorative interventions for students in highly impacted communities (Hopkins, 2012, 2015; Seeley, 2004). Through the consistent use of these interventions, teachers can develop a set of restorative justice practices to employ in conjunction with their content knowledge.

Context of the Study

As a restorative justice dean of students, I ascribe to an advocacy framework as a means of cultivating academic support and educational empowerment for marginalized students. These students generally lack the academic, social, and emotional processing

skills necessary to make significant academic progress. In other words, their behaviors get in the way of learning. Without intrinsic motivation, going from disengaged to engaged learner can be a slow and frustrating process that often does not immediately yield increased academic outcomes. After fifteen years as an educator, I view public schools as a resource to the community. Education is a valuable commodity that can empower students to change the trajectory of their lives. Thus, the onus is on the educator to remove all barriers to see them through this process.

The lived experiences of a restorative justice dean is conceptualized from a social-emotional lens. Social-emotional refers to how students understand and manage their social interactions and emotional management in the context of learning or education. Broken down into five domains by the Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning (CASEL), social-emotional learning correlates to the growth of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020). Social-emotional education is the extent that emotional intelligence is considered in curricular and instructional planning. Social-emotional learning is growing in application particularly in schools in poverty impacted communities. School officials who adopt social-emotional practices have realized alternatives are necessary to guide students in acquiring behavior skills necessary to be engaged members of society.

Auto-Criticism: A Form of Educational Criticism & Connoisseurship

This dissertation project uses an auto-criticism methodology. Auto-criticism is derived from educational criticism and connoisseurship. Eisner (1976) developed educational criticism and connoisseurship as a research method to study schools and

classrooms, as “teaching is an activity that requires artistry, schooling itself is a cultural artifact, and education is a process whose features may differ from individual to individual, context to context” (p. 40). Uhrmacher et al. (2017) have expanded on Eisner’s ideas, and they have suggested auto-criticism as a method. Utilizing the self, lived experiences are analyzed as multiple perspectives, or “our ability to see a situation from several points of view” (Eisner, 1998). Stemming from the art world, criticism and connoisseurship serve important functions of interpretation and evaluation to further understanding of the artistry taking place. When applied to education, this method attempts to make “fine-grained discriminations among complex and subtle qualities” (Eisner, 1998, p. 63). Though educational criticism and connoisseurship stem from the arts and humanities, the elements are appropriate for this qualitative study as it creates space for honesty and discernment. The auto-criticism approach uncovers the practices of a restorative justice dean of students by analyzing the lived experiences of this role. Attempting restorative justice mediations takes considerable time and effort to convince staff and administration it is a worthwhile investment. The momentum in poverty impacted schools is swift and reactive, often resulting in power struggles that lead to suspensions.

‘Connoisseurship’ refers to the art of appreciation (Eisner, 1976). When we care deeply about something, we want to know more about it. To be a ‘connoisseur’ is to be informed about the indiscriminate qualities, the subtleties, the particulars for purposes of developing an awareness and understanding of the experience. ‘Criticism’ is the art of disclosure (Eisner, 1976). Though connoisseurship mostly takes place in private, criticism is bringing aspects to the forefront in a public manner. For this to be effective,

an honest assessment of the educational environment must take place in intentional ways. Thus, a high school dean position is ideal for exploring truly responsive educational practices to help support the most marginalized students. Eisner acknowledges that “effective criticism requires the use of connoisseurship,” as the role of the critic is to help the audience to see (1976, p. 41). Implementing restorative justice discipline practices to support students requires that the adults in the situation respond from a social-emotional perspective. This guides the behavioral skill development that takes place throughout the restorative process and can be used to strengthen schoolwide discipline frameworks.

An educational criticism has four main components to categorize the phenomena: description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics. The descriptive aspect focuses on the rich tapestry of details that make up the research environment in a way that allows the reader to feel present. Interpretation is what sense the researcher makes of the phenomena taking place. The evaluative aspect identifies what is of value, including assessing the educational significance of the description and interpretation. Thematics refers to the themes that emerge throughout the process. The educational criticism (public, external) discloses what is learned through the connoisseurship (private, internal).

A continuum of connoisseurship exists from amateur to master, and is advanced through discernment, appreciation, and valuing (Uhrmacher et al., 2017). For this auto-criticism, these aspects are identified through the lived experiences of the researcher. When I share with others that I am a high school teacher and my passion is in alternative forms of student discipline to keep kids in school, they almost grimace. Negative stereotypes and connotations form society’s view on students who are not engaged in school. Formerly labeled ‘high risk’ or ‘at-risk’ by school officials and researchers alike,

these students are the outliers of public education. Often truant, many of these students struggle to attain credits and graduate on time, if at all.

Researcher Background

As a trained educator, I have spent the last fifteen years in various teaching capacities. From the role of a classroom teacher to a community advocate, from a coordinator of student advocacy to a community college instructor, and ultimately a high school dean, I have been a part of student support at all levels. This study focuses on the two years I served as a restorative justice dean of students at a comprehensive high school. I have developed numerous trauma-informed intervention strategies designed to support students and families in their attainment of an education. I have spent countless hours building relationships with all partners in this process. Additionally, and more importantly, I have identified the components of rapport and respect, which are necessary to establish firm and long-lasting relationships at all levels of the learning process.

As a community advocate, I was on the frontlines of educational frustrations that inhibited poverty impacted students from receiving equitable educational opportunities. As a coordinator of student advocacy, I developed an advocacy-based program that requires teachers to do their own work in understanding the barriers they themselves present to student achievement. As a dean, I see my role as supporting students through effective teacher supports, including helping them implement academic and behavioral interventions. My goal is to provide instructional feedback to support reflective practitioners who are able to build their capacity around instructional awareness. My research focus is on cultivating the advocacy side of teaching through transformational instructional support. Having spent fifteen years in instructional capacities (both

secondary public school and community college), I have come to realize that the first step of student support is teacher support. Instruction is the driving force that cultivates the transformative power of education. My time as a teacher, advocate, and dean has allowed me to develop a working knowledge of restorative justice that meets the modern needs of student behavior and discipline challenges.

Throughout my career, I have utilized an advocacy framework to situate my teaching interactions. Stemming from the field of social work, advocacy indicates the extent to which one is willing to vouch, stand-up, or defend another from unfair situations, both real and perceived. Advocacy is an active practice, a space where theory and practice meet to engage in a form of praxis (Freire, 1968). This praxis emphasizes space as a redemptive measure (Lefebvre, 1974). Advocacy takes place in the affective realm of instruction and relies on the activation of social-emotional and trauma-informed levels of experiencing. This experience provides a level of discernment that is essential for deep understanding of educational environments. From an inclusive standpoint, the role of the teacher is to facilitate the co-construction of knowledge while making learning accessible and engaging for all students. To make instructional changes a priority, the role of the Restorative Justice Dean is one of teacher support via student support. Thus, teachers, administrators, and district leaders need to be cognizant of the impacts of their decisions on the larger community. This analysis serves to contextualize advocacy from the standpoint of “self-as-advocate” within this auto-criticism.

Auto-Criticism: Study of Self

As auto-criticism is the chosen methodology for this project, the focal point is the lived experience of the researcher. This allows the researcher to “write about one’s own

life in the context of being a teacher...and in doing so, one would want to interpret one's own narrative with categories that bring new intellectual ideas to life" (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 79). This methodology is appropriate for this project, as my experience as an advocate has shaped the way I approach my work as a teacher, dean, and educational connoisseur. I view advocacy as a combination of care, culturally relevant pedagogy and the social work-inspired wraparound services approach of supporting students and families (Bruns, Walker & TNWIAG, 2008). This approach builds upon the work of Banks (1991, 1993, 2002), Gay (1988, 1995, 2018), Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995), and other multicultural educators who encourage teachers to adopt culturally relevant pedagogical strategies that reflect the lived experiences of students. My strengths involve creative interventions, restorative techniques, and conflict resolution strategies – for both students and teachers. One of the biggest challenges the school faces are teachers who trigger students to escalate behaviorally through their word choices, tone of voice, or perception that students must comply with adult demands.

My fifteen years on the ground in public education reminds me this is not generally the case when utilizing culturally responsive teaching practices for students. Social-emotional learning and trauma-informed educational frameworks places the onus on adults to regulate themselves emotionally in order to model appropriate interactions for students. This is the main reason that culturally responsive teaching practices are essential to the implementation of these frameworks. Educators need an understanding of the role trauma-informed practices play in social-emotional learning. I frame advocacy to embody a third space in education (Gutierrez, et al., 1999; Soja, 1996). As a culturally responsive educator, I create a third space in order to promote the ideals of advocacy to

encourage success with my students. Though my own personal story is relayed in parts here, I would like to present this auto-criticism in a way that showcases restorative justice as a viable school discipline practice.

These conceptualizations are necessary to understand how I approached the research questions. I answered each research question by systematically collecting data pertinent to the lived experiences of the restorative justice dean of students. Throughout my two years in this capacity, I approached the work as both a dean and as a researcher. I maintained field logs, researcher journals, and restorative justice mediation notes. I also engaged colleagues in restorative justice ideas for classroom management via email. These data represent the nuanced interactions forming the lived experiences of the restorative justice dean of students. I use this data to uncover the implications for the role of the dean, implications for the classroom environment, and implications for the wider use of restorative justice in schools.

A Restorative Story

What lies ahead is the personal journey of a dean of students utilizing restorative justice practices to inform school discipline in a way not known before at that school. As a social justice advocate, my educator instincts place restorative practices in the same realm as school discipline. Yet, in trying to implement restorative programs as a restorative justice dean proved more challenging than anticipated. The next chapter looks at the literature supporting restorative justice, including a review of its use in schools, both in Colorado and beyond. Chapter two also reviews current models of school discipline in relation to the growing use of restorative practices. Chapter three considers the methodological considerations for auto-criticism and educational connoisseurship and

criticism. Chapter four presents the findings of the study, as I collected several layers of data over a two-year period to capture the lived experiences of a restorative justice dean of students. Chapter five discusses these lived experiences and offers recommendations that promote school discipline reforms using restorative justice practices.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

A Call to Action

Interest around restorative justice and its applications to education continues to increase. This chapter takes an in-depth look at that growth as it relates to public high school discipline procedures. In the first part of the literature review, I consider the foundation of restorative justice and show how it relates to school discipline as a philosophy. The foundations of restorative justice are in criminal justice, which makes its application in public schools a preventative measure to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline. The second part of the literature review examines current models of school discipline and emerging alternative forms of discipline, particularly emphasizing restorative justice practices.

What is Restorative Justice?

In the realm of courts and probation systems, restorative approaches are generally used to restore ‘justice’ in instances where wrongdoing occurred. Zehr (2015) defines restorative justice as “a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offense to collectively identify and address harms, needs, and obligations in order to heal and put things as right as possible” (p.7). Both victim and offender are brought together to repair harm in productive ways. With roots in antiquity, scholars have found restorative practices and customs throughout various cultures including Native Americans, Tribal Africans, and Aborigines (Zehr, 2002). These approaches have been

around utilized since the 1970s and have extended to the use in schools since the 1990s to address student behaviors without the use of exclusionary discipline practices (Karp & Breslin, 2001). Restorative practices can be a key component to schools and discipline systems that intend to show offenders the impact of their behaviors on the larger community. While no longer appropriate to “get rid of troublemakers” (Bowditch, 1993), most schools are seeking ways to address disciplinary infractions without the use of suspensions and expulsions.

Largely a philosophical concept derived from the criminal justice system, restorative justice ideas have been around for decades. The 1960s ushered in the Free Schools Movement, which used community resources and support to open alternative schools that were free from state control (Miller, 2002). Though grassroots, these free schools existed to educate students differently. They used an unofficial form of social justice through their focus on the social, emotional, and moral development of students. These small educational communities desired “to make learning relevant and responsive to the lively social and political issues of the day” (Miller, 2002, p.3)

Restorative justice became increasingly applied to schools throughout the 1970s, with most public school districts acknowledging these practices in some form by the 1990s. During that time, research began to emerge that a student’s academic disengagement was largely a disconnect between the culture of the school and school-based practices, rather than the individual mindset of a student (Kagan, 1990; Valenzuela, 1999; Zehr, 2015). Restorative justice trainings and dedicated school positions have been in widescale practice for the past decade. From a practical standpoint, there is a new push in public education to acknowledge the affective realm of education for all students.

Now, much attention is given to these areas, as teachers are required to attend professional development programs that emphasize these practices in classroom teaching. However, there is little research into actually *how* these practices look when implemented into the intentional or operationalized realms of teaching. Teachers are given the background information and theoretical knowledge of these practices, yet they are not afforded time and space for how they can be implemented into their own teaching. This paper uses both ‘restorative justice’ and ‘restorative practices’ interchangeably.

The restorative justice model focuses on repairing harm caused by another person. It utilizes communication skills and relationship-building strategies to resolve the conflict between two parties. The restorative justice model asks four questions in every situation:

- What happened?
- What are the effects?
- What could I have done differently?
- What is the solution or repair?

These questions are designed to extract the details of the conflict and identify ways to move forward. It is best to root the conversation in restoring the relationship, then get into the specifics of the conflict.

Current Models of Student Discipline

Many school districts utilize zero-tolerance discipline practices to discourage negative student behaviors. These exclusionary policies pre-determine harsh punishments including long-term suspensions, expulsion, and other forms of exclusion from the school environment. Research shows these policies have little to no effect on school safety, and they more often lead to higher dropout rates and targeting of minority students (Amstutz

& Mullet, 2014; Skiba et al., 2002). One assumption is that exclusionary models of school discipline deter future instances of student misbehavior of that student or other students. Russell Skiba, leading scholar of school discipline, has shown that school suspensions in and of themselves are a risk factor for future negative outcomes (2018). A study of 12-16 year old's in the United States and Australia showed that out-of-school suspensions are a predictor of future anti-social and violent behavior twelve months later, even when controlling for several risk and protective factors (Hemphill & Hargreaves, 2009). Removal from class creates stigma around school attendance and makes it more difficult for those punished students to belong to the school and classroom community. Moreover, frequent suspensions cause students to miss academic instruction, which negatively affects their cognitive understanding and has been shown to lower math and English language arts achievement (Hwang, 2018).

Exclusionary discipline practices views school as a privilege. Suspensions were once reserved for extreme infractions such as fighting. Yet often now, suspensions are doled out for minor subjective infractions such as cursing against a teacher, or the ironic and frustrating twist of being suspended for truant behaviors. Once the educational option is removed, we know from research that there is a higher rate of academic disengagement, higher dropout rates, and higher instances of juvenile adjudication and incarceration. This is known as the school-to-prison-pipeline and has become a byproduct of exclusionary discipline practices for the last several years (Bhandari, 2018; Osher et al., 2012; Skiba, 2018). The Breaking Schools' Rules study tracked all of Texas students in grades 7-12 for six years. After controlling for more than eighty variables, researchers found that being suspended for minor infractions tripled the risk of involvement in the

juvenile justice system in the following year (Fabelo et al., 2011). We have known for years that a major indicator of success is that students feel a sense of safety in their school environment (Hawkins & Weiss, 1985), and out-of-school suspensions run counter to that ideal. Suspensions models are even less effective for traumatized students and those living in highly impacted communities.

Another assumption of exclusionary models of school discipline is that the school environment is made safer. Yet, little evidence shows that removing students from school produces a safer school climate. Data from a survey in Chicago public schools shows that schools with higher rates of suspensions and expulsions have a lower feeling of safety (Steinberg et al., 2011; Skiba, 2018). Not surprisingly, higher rates of suspensions correlate to lower quality of relationships, which results in lower feelings of safety. Schools that choose the quick exclusionary punishments in lieu of more time-consuming alternatives to suspension have a less-safe school climate, regardless of socioeconomic status (Steinberg et al., 2011). Though more effective behavior strategies have been identified, improper implementation cause them to fade out of practice quickly (Skiba & Peterson, 2000).

The dean of students is used as a mid-level manager. While a resource for teachers, they are closely monitored by the administration team. One could argue that the dean of students' role is prone to failure, as they are generally tasked with the twin beast of attendance management and discipline responses. Most research on the position of dean of students is at the university level within higher education literature. Little to no research exists on the dean of students in K-12 settings, as told from their perspective.

Utilizing auto-criticism to analyze the lived experiences of a dean of students in a public high school in the first of its kind.

Effects of Exclusionary Discipline Practices

Schools have a dual responsibility of providing a safe and orderly environment conducive to learning, and to maximize attendance and engagement in that environment (Skiba, 2018). A rise in exclusionary practices over the last thirty years can be traced back to zero tolerance policies popularized with the war on drugs. Zero-tolerance behavior policy started being applied to schools widely throughout the 1990s as part of a “get tough” approach to school discipline. Yet, utilizing criminal drug policies as a basis for school discipline reform departs from the purpose of school discipline in the first place. In *Discipline & Punish*, Foucault (1977) recounts that in the seventeenth century ‘strict discipline’ was an art of correct training. Thus, the “chief function of the disciplinary power is to ‘train’...discipline ‘makes’ individuals” (p. 170). Schools that employ harsh exclusionary discipline practices are not concerned with training students differently and making changes in behavior, and they are not concerned with creating space for students to practice acceptable ways of behaving. Instead, schools are merely concerned with maintaining the archaic status quo through social control (Perry & Morris, 2014).

Researchers found a vicious cycle when considering the racialized stigma at play in school discipline (Okonofua et al., 2016b). Teachers fear disorder in the classroom and therefore treat racially stigmatized students more harshly. Simultaneously, these students who fear the racialized stigmatization, react disengage and mistrust their teachers. This inevitably leads to what Skiba calls, “mutually assured discipline” (2018). Lost

instructional time and negative correlations with academic achievement are short term effects of exclusionary discipline practices. Perry and Morris (2014) conducted a three-year longitudinal study where they found that in schools that used higher rates of exclusionary discipline practices, showed a decrease in academic achievement over time – even for non-suspended students. Similarly, out-of-school suspensions have been shown to account for 20% of the black-white achievement gap in reading (Morris & Perry, 2016). There is clear evidence that out-of-school suspensions disrupts the learning of students and can lead to long term consequences like dropping out of high school and involvement with the juvenile justice system (Skiba, 2018). Researchers found that among students who were suspended in ninth grade, each suspension decreased their chances of graduating by 20% (Balfanz et al., 2014).

Schools have some resources to mitigate the negative effects of punitive discipline models, and current literature provides suggestions for alternative forms of school discipline (Hopkins, 2015; Milner et al., 2019; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Yet, what resources and professional development do schools need in order to be able to successfully implement new models of school discipline? Instructional support models generally center on building student resiliency by means of enhancing the teacher-student relationship (Doll et al., 2014; Souers, 2016; Vitto, 2003). Numerous manuals exist to support teachers in differentiating instruction (Thousand et al., 2007), managing the emotional states of learners (Jensen, 2003), and building social-emotional learning in the classroom (Merrell & Gueldner, 2010). All of these suggestions focus on the interactions between teacher and student, and they require a culture of implementation and pro-restorative attitudes. Some schools have been successful in trying new programs that

address specific student need, such as implementing a school learning lab to address racial disparities (Bal et al., 2018).

Still, most schools operate school discipline from a consequence-based punishment model, where consequences are selected from a menu of options or computed through a behavior flowchart depending on the infraction. There is little connection between the actual disciplinary event and the punishment (Amstutz & Mullet, 2014; Cicek, 2012). Though some schools profess and incorporate restorative practices, the public school system is largely designed to maintain punitive discipline measures. There has been some suggestion to counteract racial bias in school discipline through the use of social-psychology techniques (Ispa-Landa, 2018), and this would place the onus for change on the teacher and not on the student. This is a precarious area to navigate, as most school discipline measures are the product of individual personality, professional values, and educational praxis.

Impact of Trauma on Student Behavior

In the last two decades, the impact of trauma on the developing brain has gained increasing attention in school settings. Since the publication of the *Adverse Childhood Experience* study in the late nineties, much consideration has been given to the effects of childhood trauma on lived experiences (Felliti et al., 1998). Educational professional development programs have increasingly incorporated sessions on trauma, stress, learning processes, and basic neuroscience to describe how much of the K-12 population are showing up in the classroom. Neuroscience tells us trauma affects brain development, and this correlates with gaps in student skill levels particularly around behavior. With roots in psychology, medicine, and social work, to be “trauma-informed” in an

educational setting means to acknowledge the effects of trauma on cognitive structures and learning processes. Trauma-informed education recognizes student distress and emotional dysregulation as skill-based processes. When students are emotionally dysregulated and acting out, they lack corresponding skills to calm themselves and enter a mode of rational thinking. Thus, student misbehavior pertains to the development of specific behavioral skills, as opposed to students making a conscious choice to behave in certain ways.

To be “trauma-informed” requires an awareness of teacher-bias and internalized emotional processes, both sophisticated levels of emotional intelligence. This term has been increasingly applied to school mental health systems and has also become a popular professional development topic at school district in-service days and new teacher trainings. Trauma-informed education refers to differentiation when interacting with individuals and communities who have been exposed to varying degrees of trauma. Students who experience higher rates of trauma learn differently due to fractures in their processing structures (Perry, 2010). Cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes are stunted, causing gaps in learning and emotional regulation. Thus, students who have experienced varying levels of trauma do not respond in developmentally appropriate ways. The traumatized brain image reveals deficits in several cognitive and behavioral processes. Figure 1 compares a traumatized brain to a typically functioning brain.

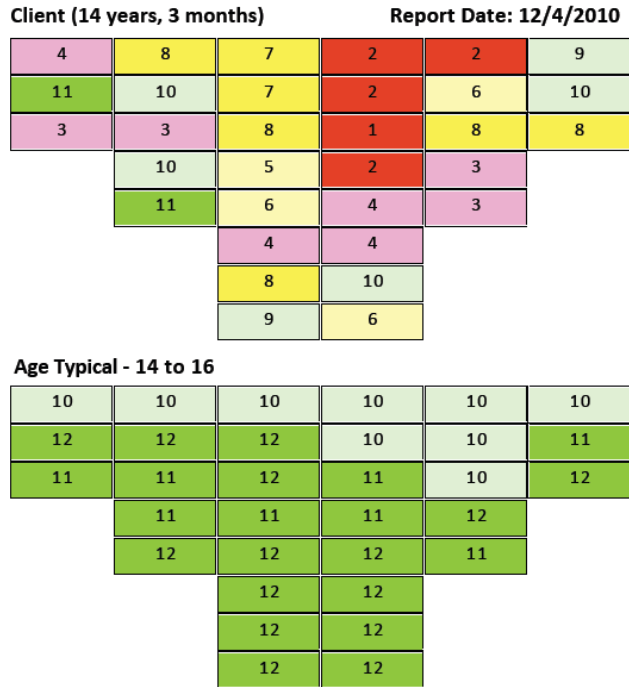


Figure 1: *Neurosequential Model of a Traumatized vs. a Typically Functioning Brain*

A brain map of the specific emotional sectors correlated to the above images. This has profound effects on school discipline and zero-tolerance school policies. These policies often set students up with strict behavioral guidelines that require mature emotionally processing. For example, a student who impulsively leaves the classroom is met with a behavior contract that states no leaving the classroom. As soon as the student leaves the classroom, he is encountered by security who radios for the dean to intervene, escalating the severity of the situation. The student becomes combative and is suspended for the emotional outburst, rather than the original incident itself. Repeated trigger/response incidents could eventually result in expulsion for “habitual disruption to the school environment,” causing the student to become a self-fulfilling prophecy (Steele, 1997) and contributing to the pervasive ‘vicious cycle’ of student

discipline (Okonofua et al., 2016b). With an expulsion for disruptive behavior, the student is not likely to be received into another school. As schools adapt their discipline policies to meet the needs of more students, trauma and its effects on student behavior should be taken into consideration.

Alternative Forms of School Discipline

Alternatives have been found to address exclusionary discipline practices, particularly considering the racialized gaps in discipline. We know from research that contributions to out-of-school suspensions come from the type of infraction, student characteristics, and school characteristics (Skiba et al., 2014, Skiba, 2018). Student characteristics (gender, race, socioeconomic status) and school characteristics (principal discipline perspective, proportion of black enrollment, average student achievement), most likely do not change. Thus, it takes a radical paradigm shift to view infractions with a different lens or implement strategies to lessen the number and severity of infraction. Relationship-building, structural interventions, and building emotional literacy have been shown as viable alternatives to out-of-school suspensions (Skiba, 2018). One way that has been shown to increase relationship-building is in the realm of teacher mentoring. Researchers studied the implementation of the “My Teaching Partner” professional development program at the secondary level that paired teachers with a coach who reviewed videos with teachers focusing on their relationships with students. A randomized control trial showed that students in the “My Teaching Partner” program teachers’ group had a lower probability of exclusionary discipline than students in the control classrooms (Gregory et al., 2016b). Over the years, research has shown that it is the foundation of trust that has fostered these relationships (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Other alternatives to exclusionary discipline policies have been studied that fall under the category of structural interventions. Schoolwide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) is a structured multitier system of supports that relies on the review of data and clear explanation of school expectations. When implemented correctly, SWPBIS have been shown to lead to a decrease in office referrals and a higher rating of PBIS has been shown to decrease office disciplinary referrals and has led to an increase in perceived school safety (McIntosh et al., 2018; Skiba, 2018). Due to claims that PBIS is not culturally compatible for all students, there has been a new push to incorporate more culturally responsive elements into PBIS.

Recently, researchers have incorporated restorative practices into PBIS models and have developed a new model called “Schoolwide Positive and Restorative Discipline,” which introduced restorative practices into PBIS schools (Vincent et al, 2016). Results indicated improvement in perceived racial fairness, and lower rates of office disciplinary referrals in general. Similarly, there have been marked improvements in both student behavior and staff attitudes when empathic discipline measures were implemented among staff (Okonofua et al., 2016a). Researchers found that teachers could be encouraged to adopt empathic discipline practices over punitive ones, which allowed teachers to sustain relationships while encouraging better behavior. This also enabled students to feel more respected by their teachers.

In that same study, a randomized field experiment tested an online intervention for teachers encouraging an empathic mindset regarding discipline, and found suspension rates reduced from 9.6% to 4.8%, half the regular number of suspensions (Okonofua et al., 2016a). This data supports the general understanding that teacher mindset about

discipline directly affects the quality of student-teacher relationships and the number of behavior referrals that lead to suspensions. Though beyond the scope of this dissertation study, teacher mindset about discipline is the key to undoing our present reliance upon punitive disciplinary measures. While research regarding the effects of disciplinary interventions is growing, there is a noticeable gap regarding the *process* of implementation of these alternative discipline models (Skiba, 2018).

This study focuses on the relationship-building alternative to school discipline through restorative practices, with ‘relationship’ being defined using Noddings’ (2005) expanded definition of the term. In considering the ethic of care in schools, Noddings (2005) emphasizes “caring as relation” where caring is seen as a reciprocal action, a way of “being in relation” with one another (p.17). This is in contrast to our general acknowledgement of caring as an individual virtue, something belonging (or not belonging) to individuals. Yet, Noddings is promoting a radical shift in understanding and use of the term, particularly in schools. The emphasis on ‘relation’ can be understood as reciprocity, a mutual benefit to both student and teacher. In regard to school discipline, the dean role has not been studied from a relational standpoint.

Restorative Justice in Education

Restorative practices have been gaining widespread traction in schools as a way to address both relationship building and structural intervention alternatives to school discipline. Since restorative justice is a process to address harm inflicted on another person or community, relationships are a key aspect of the restorative process. Relationship building is primary to this process, which allows for repair and healing to benefit all participants in the process (Gavrielides & Artinopoulou, 2014; Rodenbush,

2015). Restorative justice can be used in schools as a way to activate more affective processes. The affective domain encompasses the social-emotional aspects of learning, which maintains the restorative justice philosophy that those who are affected by harm can generate accountability by working collaboratively through the matter (Kilde & Alfred, 2011). Increasingly, educational leaders are looking for processes beyond learning content and academic cognition to support more students. Schools are preparing more teachers in restorative practices, as well as developing programs to legitimize voices (Cavanagh et al., 2014; Silverman & Mee, 2018).

A growing body of literature places a higher emphasis on the attention to and development of affective educational factors for all students (Heidorn, 2010; Hopkins, 2015; Mehta, 2017; Mulcahy, 2012; Paris, 2012). However, implementation of restorative programs can occur in a myriad of ways. Some schools have placed emphasis on transforming school culture through school-based leadership teams and committees (Hantzopoulos, 2013; Mansfield et al., 2018; Mirsky, 2007). Other schools looked at implementing restorative programs through modified classroom management practices (Jones et al., 2013), as well as giving teachers new instructional tools (Kaveney & Drewery, 2011). Students who experience restorative practices in classroom settings report fewer discipline referrals and better student-teacher relationships (Gregory et al., 2016a). These restorative practices in the classroom can be restorative conversations, restorative circles, or other conference-style mediations to address harm done within the community.

Restorative Programs in Colorado

In a recent report on the state of restorative justice programs in Colorado schools, there is a large variation in program and degree of implementation in Colorado schools (Silva, 2019). The report notes that 14 of Colorado's 22 judicial districts have seen implementation of restorative frameworks in at least one school district, though it should be emphasized these are generally elementary schools. Most of these districts report utilizing whole-school approaches, including contract agreements, restorative circles, and the use of restorative language.

With the prevalence of school-based restorative practices in Colorado, several university and school district partnerships exist to focus academic research on current restorative practices (Anyon, 2016; Anyon et al., 2016). For example, partnerships between Denver Public Schools and the University of Denver's Graduate School of Social Work highlight the growth of restorative practices throughout the district. Dr. Anyon and her colleagues (2016) studied DPS district wide professional development training in restorative interventions and found that students who participated in the restorative interventions were less likely to be referred to the office or suspended the following semester. In a separate study utilizing the same discipline data, researchers found that student participation in restorative interventions "substantially reduced the odds" of that student receiving out of school suspensions (Gregory et al., 2018). Restorative interventions open up space for communication and processing to take place to address harm when injustices occur. Restorative interventions reduce punitive discipline measures, which has an overall positive effect on school climate and culture.

Recently, the federal government recently implemented changes to reduce the use of out-of-school suspensions (Skiba, 2018). Several states are also changing their laws surrounding out-of-school suspensions for certain infractions and the use of exclusion as a last resort. Moreover, school districts across the country, including Denver, have revised their disciplinary practices to reduce suspensions (Skiba, 2018). From my own experience as a Colorado public educator since 2009, “Restorative Justice” and Trauma-Informed” trainings have been offered annually in the form of classroom management practices. Seemingly to satisfy a cultural or diversity component of some state mandate, teachers generally resist the trainings as it is deemed information that is “already known” or material they have “been through for years” previously. The trainings themselves are often a regurgitated amalgamation offered by the same school psychologist or social worker who delivered the same information the previous year. Having served in three different Colorado school districts over ten years (2010-2020), I experienced these half-hearted professional development presentations in every district to varying degrees of fidelity to any model.

Restorative Discipline: Content and Process

Restorative approaches to school discipline can refer to several different practices on the prevention-intervention continuum (Gregory et al., 2018). Prevention practices try and stop disciplinary infractions from taking place through community building, while intervention responses are applied after a disciplinary infraction has taken place (Costello et al., 2009); McClusky et al., 2008). As a restorative justice dean of students, I tried to incorporate both prevention strategies and intervention responses into my discipline practices. This dissertation project focuses on restorative conferences and mediations as

restorative interventions. Foundational and parallel to these interventions is relationship-building, which are discussed later as a prevention practice.

The content of restorative interventions is based on restorative justice philosophy. Restorative justice is a useful educational model for teaching about choices and consequences, which is beneficial at any educational. The emphasis is on community and restorative practices can work to strengthen the community structure at the foundational level. Though time-consuming as it may involve a break from the regular lesson plan and school curriculum, restorative justice can foster true learning opportunities as students are able to resolve conflicts in real time. Accepting responsibility for one's actions should be considered an acceptable 'educational' opportunity in any learning environment.

In schools, this often runs counter to the deficit narrative on student misbehavior. The deficit narrative or old paradigm often blames a student for breaking the rules and doles out punishments intended to stop the behavior from happening again. Largely a public spectacle, the student is pitted against the school and given a harsh consequence to discourage other students from engaging in similar behaviors. On the other end of the spectrum is restorative justice, which offers a new paradigm for non-punitive student discipline. In restorative justice, the focus is on repairing harm done between an individual and another in the community. Dialogue and problem-solving are used to restore the relationship by acknowledging interpersonal accountability. The following table compares these two paradigms at play in school discipline today.

Old Paradigm: Retributive Justice		New Paradigm: Restorative Justice
Misbehavior defined as breaking school rules or letting the school down	1	Misbehavior defined as harm (emotional/mental/physical) done to one person/group by another
Focus on establishing blame or guilt, on the past (what happened? did he/she do it?)	2	Focus on problem-solving by expressing feelings and needs and exploring how to meet them in the future
Adversarial relationship and process – an authority figure, with the power to decide on penalty, in conflict with wrongdoer	3	Dialogue and negotiation – everyone involved in communicating and cooperating with each other
Imposition of pain or unpleasantness to punish and deter/prevent	4	Restitution as a means of restoring both parties, the goal being reconciliation and acknowledging responsibility for choices
Attention to rules and adherence to due process – ‘we must be consistent and observe the rules’	5	Attention to relationships and achievement of the mutually desired outcome
Conflict/wrongdoing represented as impersonal and abstract: individual versus school	6	Conflict/wrongdoing recognized as interpersonal conflicts with opportunity for learning
One social injury replaced by another	7	Focus on repair of social injury/damage
School community as spectators, represented by member of staff dealing with the situation; those affected not involved and feeling powerless	8	School community involved in facilitating restoration; those affected taken into consideration; empowerment
Accountability defined in terms of receiving punishment	9	Accountability defined as understanding impact of actions, taking responsibility for choices and suggesting ways to repair harm

Table 1: *Retributive and Restorative Justice in Schools*

Restorative justice can play a role in mitigating the negative effects of school discipline when implemented with fidelity. This latter requirement cannot be understated. Researchers have identified fidelity as a key factor in achieving the necessary buy-in to support innovative programming (McIntosh et al., 2016; McIntosh et al., 2018). As shown, several studies have coalesced around school discipline as a system, with many shedding a light on the pervasive school-to-prison pipeline and the potential of restorative

interventions and other discipline alternatives from a whole-school perspective (Gregory et al., 2016a; Okonofua et al., 2016b; Skiba et al., 2014). Few studies have looked at the role of high school dean of students specifically. A growing number of doctoral dissertations have specifically looked at the dean role in a K-12 public school setting, with the use of the “dean model” as an intervention and deterrent to the use of exclusionary discipline practices (Govey-Allen, 2011; Gutierrez, 2016). Still, the role of high school dean of students has little presence in academic scholarship.

Teachers are missing practical strategies for utilizing restorative processes in classroom management practices and teaching approaches. Often divorced from curriculum and instruction, restorative practices remain tied to school discipline based in most organizational structures (Zehr, 2002). The new way of thinking about student misbehavior is that it is a gap in skills that most students learn along the way, coping skills, emotional regulation, distress tolerance, and other social-emotional aptitudes. Classroom-based instructional strategies have been developed to address these gaps in behavioral skills (Forbes, 2014; Greene, 2016). Teachers can adopt a facilitator framework based on constructivist approaches of active learning, group work, and interactive workshops to strengthen behavioral skills among students.

Restorative Justice as Social-Emotional Learning

This dissertation serves as a bridge between student discipline and curriculum studies. The majority of studies cited in this dissertation are from school discipline research in the fields of behavioral psychology and educational psychology, with criminology being another area that looks at the connections between school discipline and the criminal justice system (Payne & Welch, 2010). Curriculum studies has not

largely been concerned with the root causes of student misbehavior. Based on my experiences in public education, I am of the mindset that student discipline is as much a curriculum issue as it is a psychological issue. Behavior skills must be taught, particularly where students are showing deficits – like reading or math deficits. The same holds true for restorative justice skills in teachers. Researchers suggest that psychological skills such as perspective-taking and individuating can help educators reduce racial disparities in school discipline (Isapa-Landa, 2018). Further research shows strong patterns between classroom-based interventions and a reduction in racial and ethnic disparities in school discipline (Skiba et al., 2014). Though these practices are not universal, they can be viewed as an implementation of social-emotional education. This dissertation situates restorative justice at the intersection of social-emotional learning and school discipline.

Social and emotional learning focuses on the more affective components of education. There are five competencies that encompass social-emotional learning (SEL), which are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020). Coined as a concept and phrase in 1994, ‘social-emotional learning’ has been gaining momentum over the last several years in school improvement plans. SEL is defined as:

The process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel, and show empathy for others, establish, and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions (CASEL, 2020).

The definition goes on to discuss collaboration across families, schools, and communities and the co-creation of schools as a safe, healthy, community. CASEL emphasizes the need for SEL to be interwoven into the fabric of a school, from the curricular and

instructional domains to administrative domains as well, particularly focusing on discipline and reducing out-of-school time.

If implemented with fidelity, SEL can be used to support more students at the classroom level. As such, most school discipline issues originate in the classroom as well. Similar to SEL, restorative justice has five domains of its own: relationship, respect, responsibility, repair, and reintegration (Title, 2014). Restorative justice directly aligns with two SEL competencies: relationship skills and responsible decision-making. In a sense, school discipline is about a balance of all five SEL competencies and can be strengthened through a focus on these building blocks of restorative practices. From a curriculum standpoint, social-emotional learning fits within the context of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-billings, 1995) and culturally sustaining pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014).

Social-Emotional Learning as an Asset Pedagogy

Asset pedagogies are those that “repositioned the linguistic, literate, and cultural practices of working-class communities – specifically poor communities of color – as recourses and assets to honor, explore, and extend” (Paris & Alim, 2014). Under culturally relevant pedagogy, culture is manifested as an asset to be honored; so much so, that Paris (2012) deemed “relevancy” not enough and introduced the culturally “sustaining” paradigm to perpetuate cultural pluralism. Culturally relevant pedagogy involves critically examining course content, classroom preparation, and organization of curricular materials in relation to the varying backgrounds and learning needs of students, while also utilizing students’ assets and strengths in the learning experience.

The existing literature on culturally relevant pedagogy and variations such as culturally responsive teaching traces back to James Banks and the growth of multicultural education in the mid-1990s (Banks, 1993; Delpit, 1995; Gay, 1995, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995; Nieto, 1992; Sleeter, 1995). Culturally sustaining pedagogy is a more modern conceptualization that takes this a step further by seeking to “sustain linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling and as a needed response to demographic and social change” (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 88). For example, sustaining ‘heritage’ and ‘community’ practices are an important component of “culture as dynamic, shifting, and encompassing both past-oriented heritage dimensions and present-oriented community dimensions” (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 90). In this way, culture is constantly evolving from and responding to that which is around it and brought to it, particularly considering the vast experiences of both students and teachers in school settings today.

Under the banner of social-emotional learning, culturally sustaining pedagogies can manifest restorative justice practices by centering relationships and relationship-building as a pedagogical practice. As a critical element of student learning and success, restorative justice intentionally prioritizes the relationships by repairing harm in the community of learners. Conrad (2012) expresses a gap in the literature for understanding the *process* educators take to becoming culturally responsive in their practice (Gay, 1988, 2018). It is generally understood that certain qualities are present in culturally responsive teachers; however, an understanding of how these qualities are developed is needed. Additionally, Osher et al. (2012) notes that SEL research is limited and there is a need to

focus on the extent that “teachers’ social and emotional capacity potentially impacts their ability to effectively administer SEL programs” (p. 290).

While it is seen that teachers’ social and emotional behaviors can affect student outcomes (Jennings & Greenburg, 2009), little is known about how educators go about acknowledging this within their individual practices. A recent study on culturally responsive school discipline acknowledges that there is a growing need of the implementation aspects of the *culturally responsive* nature of such discipline programs (Bal et al., 2018). What exactly constitutes both *cultural* and *responsive/relevant/sustaining* actions when disciplining students from diverse backgrounds? Though not one of the questions driving this dissertations study, this question speaks to the heart of the lived experiences of a restorative justice dean of students. Disciplining through a culturally informed pedagogy requires time, space, and vulnerability on the part of the practitioner, in this case the dean of students. It also requires permission from school administration and district officials responsible for programming, data, and reports.

This literature review showcased restorative justice as both a philosophy that informs the criminal justice and educational fields, and a set of practices used to resolve conflict and repair harm. Though school discipline still serves a punitive function that perpetuates the school-to-prison pipeline, there is evidence that alternative forms of discipline are beginning to take hold, with restorative justice being one of those forms. Though few studies exist on the high school dean of students’ role specifically, studies on disciplinary alternatives such as relationship-building and restorative practices show positive outcomes for both students and teachers.

I connect restorative approaches to the broader concept of social-emotional learning and situate both within the theoretical framework of culturally informed pedagogies, which has the “dual responsibility of external performance assessments as well as community- and student-driven learning” (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 83). Because of this, restorative justice can serve to strengthen relationships at the classroom level to enhance academic engagement and learning opportunities. What happens on a disciplinary level has an impact on the classroom environment. This dissertation study addresses this process through a deconstruction of restorative justice as a school discipline framework, with a focus on the relationship that sits at the core of each disciplinary interaction. Ultimately, restorative practices can enable educators to build relationships through both school discipline and classroom instruction.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Restorative Justice Praxis

Considering the choice of an auto-criticism methodology, this dissertation project encompasses a very personal journey of applying restorative justice practices in a highly impacted school environment. Ethical considerations exist at every juncture as I convey the lived experiences of a restorative justice dean of students administering discipline in a public high school. The project spans August 2018-July 2020, the two years I worked in this capacity. I analyzed data collected during this time to complete the qualitative study.

Restorative Justice as Qualitative Research

As a researcher, I am interested in the process of implementation of restorative practices at the school level. This dissertation project is concerned with this implementation through the lived experiences of a restorative justice dean. Restorative justice holds the promise of a paradigm shift towards new ways of teaching and learning. Restorative justice lends itself to qualitative research because it follows a set of questions and protocol that can be evaluated and modified to address the behavioral needs of all students. In a general sense, restorative justice seeks to understand what happened, what are the effects of the offence, what could have been done differently, and what is the solution or a way to repair the harm caused? Restorative justice considers the offender, the victim, and the larger community in every situation with the goal of moving forward with a set of unified behavioral expectations. Robust restorative justice programs are

designed to capture original data as infractions occur, which allows school officials the capacity to build authentic school discipline programs with fidelity. This approach considers the operational principles driving restorative justice: accountability, competency development, and community safety (Hopkins, 2015).

Why Auto-Criticism?

Auto-criticism is an emergent qualitative methodology that employs analytic categories to help describe, interpret, evaluate, and identify themes about a lived experience. For this project, the lived experience of a restorative justice dean of students is under study. An auto-criticism allows me to document my approach to “restorative justice deaning,” which relies heavily on advocacy-based concepts derived from the field of social work. This research study highlights the process educators can use to support students through emotional intelligence and relationship building. I recorded daily interactions between myself as the dean, and students, teachers, and other staff members, and I explore these interactions through an advocacy-based lens. Told from the educators’ perspective, this project documents the trite and seemingly innocuous incidents of student misbehavior that often escalate into punitive suspensions, and expulsions under current zero-tolerance school discipline system.

Utilizing an auto-criticism methodology offers a unique perspective in the daily experiences of a public high school educator. While this method allows for an in-depth exploration of the self-as-advocate in a highly impacted-educational setting, there is little to no existing research in which to situate the study. Several dissertations have been completed at the University of Denver that primarily use an auto-criticism methodology (Rezak, 2019; Witt, 2020) and the number is growing. Auto-criticism methodology is

strengthened with every contribution. This dissertation project adds to the growing field of auto-criticism as a method for exploring lived experiences that reveal the inner-workings of the systems that contribute to public education.

Auto-criticism is like auto-ethnography and other auto-qualitative research methods that use the self to show “how individuals’ culture, gender, history, and experiences shape all aspects of the qualitative project” (Creswell, 2013, p. 55). Offering the unique perspective of the daily lived experience of working in this environment allows for effective connoisseurship and criticism to take place. Like auto-ethnography, auto-criticism is both product and process. It looks to systematically analyze personal experience to better understand a larger educational experience (Ellis et al., 2011). Yet, unlike the auto-ethnography that embeds the researcher in the culture of the experience, auto-criticism prioritizes the subjectivity that sustains the core of the study.

An auto-criticism touches on both approaches through the development of the educational connoisseur having deep knowledge of the situation at hand. Auto-criticism brings in analytic categories to aid in interpretation and evaluation (Uhrmacher et al., 2017). The goal is to share about the lived experiences of a dean of students who utilizes restorative justice practices. In writing about these experiences, I also interpret them through categories that reveal the complex dynamics of school discipline.

Elements of Auto-Criticism

Data for this project pertains to the lived experiences of a restorative justice dean of students. Office logs, restorative justice mediations, and discipline notes were analyzed alongside multiple researcher journals and notes from professional practices. The data was collected over a two-year period that I served as a restorative justice dean,

August 2018-July 2020. Knowing I wanted to develop my dissertation from my own professional practice as a social justice advocate, I systematically kept researcher journals, field logs, and reflective notes, while also collecting documents that pertained to my day-to-day work as a dean. From the data sources, I have developed restorative portraits to showcase the essence of repair that is at the core of restorative practices. One goal of this method is to “make the familiar strange” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 5). This provides context for the four main dimensions of an educational criticism to emerge: description (account of), interpretation (account for), evaluation (what is of value as it relates to those involved), and thematic (coalescence of big ideas). There are embedded intentions within every aspect of the school structure. This study deconstructs restorative justice processes in ways that support holistic academic engagement. The auto-criticism is the means through which I relate the educational experience.

This auto-criticism features the main elements of an educational criticism.

Description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematic ideas are used to further understand the data – a means through which to disclose the lived experiences of a dean of students.

Description. The description dimension is an account of the experience, a way of getting to know the setting in intimate detail. It is an explanation and display of the subtle qualities in the situation, as a way of ‘seeing’ deeper into the situation. The text should “enable readers to participate vicariously in the events described” (Eisner, 1998, p. 89). This dimension utilizes the insider (emic) perspective to take account of the rich details to provide a thick portrayal of the experience. In this study, I provide several descriptions in the form of portraits to showcase snapshots of the lived experiences of a restorative

justice dean of students. Throughout the research phase, I kept detailed journals supported by field notes and school documents.

Interpretation. The interpretation dimension is an account for the experience, developing ideas about the data. This dimension brings in theories and models as a means for understanding educational events, employing theoretical ideas where necessary. I aligned each portrait to current and theoretical literature to apply deeper meaning to the lived experiences.

Evaluation. The evaluation dimension determines what is of value to those involved. It recommends improvements through identified action plans as a way of revealing missed perspectives. This dimension brings in the outsider (etic) perspective to see the whole of the educational experience. The evaluation pushes beyond the interpretation. I evaluated the lived experiences of a dean of students who utilized restorative justice practices holistically, pushing beyond a connection to contemporary theoretical assumptions. The meaning beyond the lived experiences of a dean of students is connected to individual values and affective preferences. Successful implementation of restorative practices requires emotionally intelligent adults to operate with patience and compassion in stressful disciplinary situations.

Thematics. The thematics element provides discernment and understanding of the major themes that run through the matters under study. Themes are derived from the descriptive, interpretive, and evaluation dimensions of the educational criticism. The themes are “distillations” of what has been encountered in the educational experience, and they summarize the “essential features” of the phenomena (Eisner, 1998, p. 104). For this study, the data yielded eight themes from the lived experiences of a dean of students

to inform the role of dean of students, as well as classroom teachers and student learning environments. The themes also speak to the overall culture and climate of school communities, as dictated by the treatment of students.

Rationale

The rationale for studying the restorative justice dean of students' role is that restorative justice is a better approach than what is currently being done in student discipline. We need to better understand what restorative justice is and the educational implications it has for curriculum and instruction. There is not much research on deans in general, particularly those who incorporate social justice practices in school discipline. Much research highlights the punitive practices that continue to exist in public schools today, and recent scholarship points to the ways in which schools themselves harm students (Petroni & Stanton, 2021). This study can serve as a protocol for how other deans can incorporate restorative justice practices in school discipline programs and classroom management systems. Though punitive measures abound in public schools, there is a push at the policy level to move away from "zero-tolerance policies" that have resulted in "unnecessary expulsions, suspensions, and law enforcement referrals" (HB12-1345). The dean of students' position is one of flexibility and includes the capacity to implement programs and interventions tailored to the needs of the larger community.

Research Questions

The overarching research questions guiding this study characterizes restorative justice as a foundational way to frame teacher-student interactions.

What are the lived experiences of a dean who incorporates restorative justice practices in a poverty impacted public high school? How did a dean of students incorporate restorative justice in their role?

Sub-questions include:

- 1. What are the implications of restorative justice for the role of dean of students in high schools?**
- 2. What are the implications of restorative justice practices for classroom teachers as perceived by the dean?**
- 3. What are the implications of restorative justice practices for school climate and culture, and student learning environments, as perceived by the dean?**

This study used an auto-criticism methodology to explore these questions in the context of day-to-day interactions in a poverty impacted public high school.

These research questions were answered through an auto-criticism. This provides an understanding of the role of the dean from the first-person point of view. Utilizing the self as a valid instrument of knowing is essential for understanding the forces at play in highly impacted schools and communities. I addressed the main research question through the three sub-questions. The implications of restorative practices on the role of the dean, classroom teachers, and school climate and culture were identified through the restorative mediations protocol developed through two years of implementing restorative justice practices. Detailed office logs, internal office emails, disciplinary notes, and field journals were analyzed for the lived experiences of a restorative justice dean of students.

An auto-criticism can inform the larger understanding of restorative practices through the detailed study of self.

Conceptual Framework

I approached the research questions using a justice-oriented conceptual framework. When considering restorative justice in education, it is best to situate it within existing pedagogical structures. Restorative justice practices do have curricular implications. The figure below depicts the restorative justice paradigm central to this study, which places restorative justice at the center of care theory (Noddings, 2005), culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2014), and social-emotional learning. I assessed the data through these lenses, with a focus on relationships as being central to each arena. Restorative justice is founded on several values that relate to these pedagogical areas. These values play a central role in answering the research questions and are one of the categories for analysis.

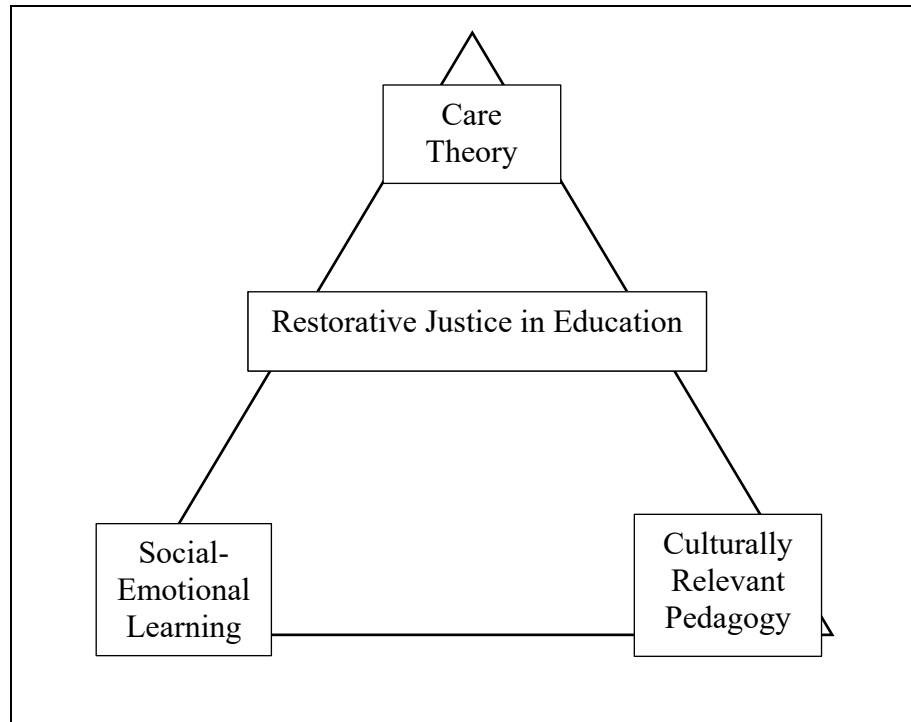


Figure 2: *Restorative Justice Conceptual Framework*

Interpretive Framework

The restorative justice paradigm has an advocacy orientation, which means that supporting students comes first. The dean of students' role has various classifications depending on the school district, with some districts classifying deans as administrators, while others classify deans as "teachers on special assignment" more programmatic flexibility. I was a dean of students classified as a teacher on special assignment and used the flexible capacity to incorporate restorative practices. This is the foundation for this auto-criticism to unfold. Through analysis of my own experiences as a dean of students, I show how restorative justice operates in school discipline, and in maintaining a balance in the larger school climate. The interpretive framework to guide the data analysis is in Table 2 below.

	Analytical Category		
	Relational Trust	Personal Values	Instructional Praxis
Research Questions	Data Reflection Questions		
What are the lived experiences of a dean who incorporates restorative justice (RJ) practices in a poverty impacted public high school?	How did a dean of students incorporate RJ practices in their role?	How do personal values influence the work of the dean?	How are elements of instruction revealed through RJ mediations?
	What are the aspects of relational trust that align with RJ practices?	What personal values are most apparent in RJ mediations?	What dimensions of instruction benefit from RJ implementation?
Sub-Question 1	Relational Trust	Personal Values	Instructional Praxis
What are the implications of RJ for the role of dean of students in high schools?	How does the dean of students' role utilize relational trust?	To what extent are personal values a necessary component of school discipline?	How can instruction be utilized as an asset to school discipline?
Sub-Question 2	Relational Trust	Personal Values	Instructional Praxis
What are the implications of RJ practices for classroom teachers as perceived by the dean?	How does relational trust connect to RJ practices for classroom teachers?	How can personal values be structured as an RJ practice for classroom teachers?	How does a focus on instruction increase the occurrence of RJ practices in the classroom?
Sub-Question 3	Relational Trust	Personal Values	Instructional Praxis
What are the implications of RJ practices for school climate and culture, and student learning environments, as perceived by the dean?	How can a relational trust framework inform a shift toward RJ practices in school climate and culture, and student learning environments?	How can personal values be used drive a shift toward RJ practices in school climate and culture, and student learning environments?	How can instructional praxis be leveraged to increase RJ practices in school climate and culture, and student learning environments.?

Table 2: *Guiding Questions for Data Exploration*

Restorative justice is approached through the categories of relational trust, personal values, and instructional praxis. These categories emerged throughout the two years I worked as a restorative justice dean of students and provide an analytic framework to capture the ways I implemented restorative justice practices in school discipline. Naming of the categories took place during data collection and analysis, as clear lines emerged early. I followed the “trinity” strategy from Saldaña (2009), and I landed on these three categories that stood out from the data. Researcher journal entries, email correspondence, and restorative justice mediations were then used to craft restorative portraits.

An auto-focused study allows me, the researcher, to use my own story as situated in a specific socio-cultural context to understand restorative justice through the unique lens of self (Chang, et al., 2013). Naturally, this lends itself to feminist interpretations of the dean experience, particularly considering most deans are male as observed anecdotally throughout my career. The female lens provides a unique approach to the dean role and diverts from the historically punitive nature of the position. While female, I also connect with my Chicana background and find my intersectional experiences more aligned to the womanist writings of Alice Walker (1968, 1983), Audre Lorde (2017), Toni Morrison (2019), and Gloria Anzaldua (1987).

Throughout my work as a dean, my decisions and thought processes revealed aspects of my own gender, personal values, and instructional praxis that form my identity as a teacher. The womanist approach is important to this process, as it helps to create a space for self-definition. The journey from internalized oppression to the free mind of a self-defined ‘womanist consciousness’ is aligned to the self-through-work in the context

of my dean experience (Collins, 2009). The self-in-relationship to the community and larger world captures my own racialized experience as a woman of color in a conventional educational system. My internalized self-oppression as a societal-learned-behavior became exacerbated throughout the two years I was a dean of students. For me, this traverses the ethic of care defined by Noddings (2005), in that a moral reason underlying teaching careers and advocacy practices becomes stronger and more pronounced.

Data Collection

This auto-criticism tells the story of a single participant in an educational setting. Thus, data collection methods include self-observations, self-reflections, and personal office records from my direct experiences as a restorative justice dean of students in a highly impacted high school. The rationale for using an auto-criticism with a single perspective is to explicitly tell the individual lived experience as one tale of many. An institutional auto-criticism may be applicable since the nature of school as an institution is considered (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The educational system is a bureaucratized institution whose very design inhibits growth, progress, and meaningful attempts at real reform. Thus, the lived experiences of a dean of students in a large comprehensive public school cannot be separated from the larger school system itself.

The main data sources are materials collected over two academic years, August 2018-July 2020. Knowing that my dean position would yield data for my dissertation project, I collected anything and everything during my tenure as a restorative justice dean of students. Comprised of personal reflections, field journal entries, restorative emails, and office logs throughout two school years, this material contains the implementation of

restorative practices, including evidence of praxis and pushback against the broader restorative justice philosophy. I kept several different journals and work logs, as well as collected notes and artifacts from professional development trainings, staff meetings, district workshops, and disciplinary situations. The dean's office logs include documents from disciplinary interactions, restorative justice mediations, and teacher support meetings. All data was collected with the potential of using it for this dissertation project, taking into consideration the confidential and sensitive nature of the story. Artifact collection is necessary to shape the values inherent in the study and serve to "become part of the story the critic is telling" (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 33). Because I did not seek permission to use specified school documents, some of the collected materials could only be used in a collage art project as an alternative forms of data representation. I analyzed these experiences through the researcher journals, restorative emails, dean's office records, schoolwide documents, and reflexivity practices.

Routine data collection practices included active daily journaling and logging of dean activities. I maintained four journals from the start of my work at this high school, knowing I would be using the material for my dissertation project. I journaled daily or every other day, particularly after a restorative mediation or disciplinary event took place. My detailed entries went into one of the four journals, depending on the content of the entry: personal reflections/emotional venting, professional recordings, doctoral connections, or meta reflections regarding deaning and writing from a philosophical angle. I also maintained office logs of every phone call, restorative mediation, and disciplinary event that came across my desk. I collected anything that pertained to my work as a dean to be used as artifacts. Year one data is less robust due to the

establishment of a broader schoolwide disciplinary systems. Year two data is marred by the COVID-19 pandemic, as we never returned to the building after spring break 2020.

The rationale for a mass data collection strategy is to ensure that I collected enough material to create an accurate narrative of the dean of students’ experience implementing restorative justice practices. Below is Table 3 of the data sources analyzed for this project.

<i>Qualitative Data Sources</i>		
Researcher Journals	Dean’s Office Records	Schoolwide Documents
Personal Emotional venting of job and issues with teachers and students.	Office Logs Logs kept of phone calls, student conferences, and other meetings – 3 logs Phone Calls: 172 Student Conferences: 149 Student Mediations: 28	Suspension Laws State laws regarding school suspensions and expulsions. Presentation provided by the school district, including threat assessments and remedial discipline plans.
56 entries	349 entries	28 documents
Professional Notes from work interactions, team meetings and PD trainings.	Email Correspondence Emails from me to teachers intended to provide behavioral support or intervention ideas.	Restorative Justice Mediations Detailed notes of RJ mediations held between teachers and students.
60 entries	64 emails	31 RJ mediations
Doctoral Research ideas and other ways my work connects to academia/PhD work.	Discipline Referral Notes Notes from permanent discipline record (entered into the school district behavior management system). *	Schoolwide Discipline Matrices Schoolwide discipline flow chart with consequences. Also known as the “Discipline Ladder,” a progressive form of discipline. *
60 entries	26 applicable notes	9 artifacts
Meta Process of writing about the emotionality of the work and writing.	Discipline Artifacts Written student statements and dean notes from various student disciplinary situations. *	Classroom Teaching Expectations Universal cell phone rules and various teacher artifacts (posted in classrooms). *
91 entries	103 artifacts	18 artifacts
Total: 267 journal entries	Total: 542 records	Total: 86 documents

Table 3: *Qualitative Data Sources*

From August 2018, I systematically journaled about poignant moments, printed emails that reflected my restorative suggestions, wrote copious field notes, and collected all material that pertained to my daily work as a dean of students.

Throughout the data collection process, I divided the materials into three categories: researcher journals, dean's office records, and schoolwide documents. I then sub-divided each category into groups. Each type of sub-group was defined and counted, as can be reviewed in the above table. The data sources marked with an asterisk (*) can only be assessed through an alternative form of representation (Eisner, 1994). Without explicit and direct permission to use this data, I consider it an ethical obligation to transform the data to protect the source, in the event it is to be used in the final presentation.

Researcher Journals

Throughout the two years as a dean of students utilizing restorative practices, I maintained various researcher journals of work incidents, restorative interventions, and doctoral ideas. I also spent considerable time reflecting on my colleagues' lack of initiative to implement restorative interventions due to differing philosophical beliefs on school discipline. In year two, I began an additional researcher journal focused on the turnaround process with the CDE-designated external management company selected to partner with the school district. This journal represents the meta-analytical process of change regarding implementing effective schoolwide disciplinary structures. All journals remained with me throughout my workdays, and I often found myself turning to them to capture both specific and general observations about school discipline. This served as a means of observing everything while looking at nothing in particular (Mills, 2011;

Wolcott, 1994). My intention was to see the relationship between student behavior and disciplinary pedagogy with an outside pair of eyes. I created the journals without a framework in mind to capture a variety of disciplinary events. Documented instances of restorative justice contribute to a curricular understanding of school discipline.

Dean's Office Records

Dean's office records are those that I originated, created, and maintained during my work as a dean of students. These are made up of office logs, emails to colleagues, and discipline notes and artifacts from various behavior incidents. I maintained office logs of all phone calls, student conferences, and low-level student mediations. The emails included in this project give the restorative perspective for behavioral incidents. I sent the emails to various colleagues to document and track teacher interventions and support, as many of the emails contained ideas for classroom-based restorative interventions. I also amassed student discipline statements gathered during many of the student conferences held in office. These documents are considered artifacts and are used to inform the research, although most are not used in the final data presentation. I did not obtain IRB consent for written email responses from colleagues or student statements.

Schoolwide Documents

Schoolwide documents are work documents that I did not create. They are made up of restorative justice mediations, schoolwide teacher/classroom expectations, schoolwide discipline matrices, and state suspension laws. These documents were used to contextualize teacher expectations and attitudes toward school discipline. Other school discipline documents were used to strengthen the description of school culture, including

Colorado state suspension and expulsion laws. The restorative justice mediations between teachers and students make up some of the restorative portraits in the data presentation. The other documents contributed to the creation of the restorative portraits through substance and detail.

Data Analysis

Various data collection methods enabled a holistic analysis of the materials to take place. Data analysis procedures followed the data collection process: concurrent and ongoing. Since the beginning of this project in 2018, I utilized praxis as a form of data analysis since I reflected on collected data to inform my practice. Elements of action research helped to support the on-the-ground nature of the dean of students position through the constant pattern of reflection and implementation (Mills, 2011). Beginning analysis manifested in sorting and coding the data. I sorted the data by type and created codes to categorize the data and look for any emerging patterns. The line between data analysis and data interpretation becomes blurred when creating stories, themes, and patterns from fragmented pieces of data (Chang et al., 2013; Creswell, 2013; Saldaña, 2009). All data was sorted into piles and manipulated by hand throughout the on-going data collection and analysis process.

After setting the data into preliminary coding frameworks, I employed the art criticism technique of annotations as a deeper and more meaningful way to reflect on the data (Uhrmacher et al., 2017). Annotations can focus on the more literary aspects of textual data, calling attention to features such as voice, tone, diction, and syntax. This is appropriate when analyzing journal entries, emails, and other workplace documents. I used both global annotations to survey the data as a whole, and pattern-finding

annotations to look for “configurations of meaning” (Uhrmacher et al., 2017, p. 57). Since educational criticism stems from the arts, annotations are a complementary alternative to the more scientific aspects of coding. A few themes emerged early during analysis regarding restorative practices and trauma-informed interactions, and those themes aligned to my prior professional experiences as both a teacher and an advocate. I assigned preliminary names to the developing patterns. These aligned to the prefigured categories of data questions that I used to guide data exploration.

Rossmann and Rallis (2012) offer a helpful distinction between categories and themes, identifying a ‘category’ as a word that describes a more discreet segment of data, while a ‘theme’ is a sentence that describes patterns, connections, or insights (p. 277). In the first cycle of analysis, I coded the journal entries, restorative emails, office logs, and restorative justice mediations using descriptive codes and holistic codes (Saldaña, 2009). I also used emotion and values coding due to the nature of the journal entries. Affective methods of coding are appropriate for studies that explore interpersonal and intrapersonal participant experiences (Saldaña, 2009). I next used second cycle coding to identify patterns of restorative justice interventions connected to discipline situations.

During the second cycle of analysis, I practiced creating episodic vignettes using rich, thick description. I created various portraits of the dean of students’ lived experiences. I open with the job interview and my approach to the position. I include the typical daily routine of a dean of students, as well as several interactions with students and other adults in the school. I created more portraits than I present in chapter four. I selected these stories as representative of lived experiences of a dean of students.

Often in data analysis, the description intertwines with interpretation that blurs the lines in the process. I used restorative portraits to display the lived experiences of the restorative justice dean of students. Evaluation of the data and larger thematic understandings were explored for the ways in which restorative practices manifested in student discipline. These restorative portraits represent the quintessential lived experience of a restorative justice dean of students in a highly impacted public high school. These analyses were assessed for implications for the general role of dean of students. The implications of restorative justice practices for classroom teachers and whole school climate and culture were also considered. University IRB approval is not needed for this autocriticism, and an exemption from full IRB review was granted in August 2020.

Self as Participant

For this study, I am the main participant, and I refer to myself as both the author and researcher. As with other auto-qualitative approaches, this auto-criticism had the “central positioning of the author in relation to the social, cultural, or political with the assumption that the narrator-researcher’s experience is illustrative of the wider phenomena” (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 94). As a trained social studies educator, I have moved into the realm of “deaning” via a ‘teacher on special assignment’ (TOSA) designation. Though the dean role is historically reserved for staunch disciplinarians, I approach the role through restorative practices. The TOSA position is able to establish alternative forms of school discipline that stems from the curricular domain. Thus, I often employ questions first and give students the chance to de-escalate before I assess a situation through disciplinary lens. Moreover, relationships are centralized in any

interaction with students. Utilizing restorative practices means extra time spent dissecting situations to prioritize relationships.

I have documented instructional practices and interactions with students through on-going observations. I document various aspects of what I have described as an advocacy-based framework using restorative practices. As a connoisseur of school discipline, an advocacy approach to school discipline is the most appropriate model to both implement alternatives to punitive school discipline, while maintaining the integrity of the “dean of students” position – which is disciplinary in nature. An advocacy framework serves to establish relationships with both students and teachers, while actively engaging in aspects of a “Reflexive Practitioner,” (Mills, 2011) identified as:

- Desire to improve instruction
- Internal reflection of instructional effectiveness (utilizing both formal and informal student assessments)
- Modifications of pedagogical practices and curricular activities to improve student learning
- Engaging in collaborative practices/PLCs
- Request for instructional support/feedback.

Developing the skills of a reflective practitioner is an active and on-going process that can be the main tool teachers use to engage students and mitigate classroom disruptions. Most disciplinary infractions occur because of a breakdown in classroom management. Transitions between curricular activities leaves room for student distraction, and off-task talk can easily become unproductive in a matter of seconds.

Though I consider myself a reflexive practitioner, there is some potential for researcher bias in this research project, as seen in my raw research journal. My early entries are layered with frustration and the emotionality surrounding dean work in a punitively structured school environment. My orientation as a classroom teacher is advocacy, which stems from the social justice perspective. As an advocate, I embed myself in the community and I work alongside students and families to increase their educational success. My position as a social justice advocate is always acknowledged up front in an effort of transparency to frame the work that I do. I opened chapter one of this dissertation with a vignette of my interview for the dean of students position at this high school. During that interview, I made it very clear that my training and expertise was in truancy reduction and dropout prevention, which translates into behavioral interventions and alternatives to suspension programs as a school discipline framework. My social justice perspective was well-received in the interview, but that sentiment did not seem to translate into the day-to-day work of the dean of students. I was employed at the high school as a restorative justice dean of students for two years.

Restorative Portraits

Auto-criticism is reflective in nature. Like other auto-qualitative methods, reflexivity plays a key role in this method. Both reflective (turning back of thoughts) and reflexive (unexamined reactions) practices are necessary to formulate an understanding of the data (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Reflection is an act of contemplation, which strengthens the connoisseurship. This dissertation study presents the data in the form of restorative portraits. Though portraiture is a separate and distinct qualitative method of its own merit, I drew upon facets of this method to “capture the richness, complexity, and

dimensionality of human experience in social and cultural context, conveying the perspectives of the people who are negotiating those experiences” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 3). This assists in the telling of the restorative justice dean experiences. Researcher journals, personal emails, and field notes from restorative justice mediations were used to formulate the snapshots into the experiences of the dean of students. Portraiture stems from the joining of science and art, blurring boundaries between empiricism and aesthetics (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Combined with the dimensions of auto-criticism, portraiture was used to bring depth to the restorative justice narrative and lived experiences of a dean of students.

The restorative portraits are developed from instances of restorative justice deaning, including restorative justice mediations, dean office meetings, teacher support conversations, and other instances where justice needed to be restored in a relationship. As a dean, I used mediations between teacher and student, and between students. Some teachers were more receptive than others, with a few teachers flat-out refusing to participate in a mediation. In restorative justice practice, the parties must be willing to participate, as the mediation centers on the following questions:

- What happened?
- What are the effects?
- What could I have done differently?
- What is the solution or repair?

The victim, offender, and dean (representative of the larger community) come together to engage in the process of healing. Though the questions are central to restoring justice, the process can look different. As the restorative justice dean, I consulted colleagues with

restorative justice experience to support in the mediation process. Fortunately, there was a special education teacher at the high school who had recently completed his PhD on the restorative justice implementation process (or lack thereof) in a large Colorado urban school district. His expertise helped structure the restorative justice mediation process at this high school. My intention as a restorative justice dean was to use restorative mediations to address low level classroom conflict.

Restorative justice ascribes to social-emotional learning and larger frames of educational advocacy. This advocacy exists in an abstract third space, which honors an educators' affective experiences and allows for instructional transformation. Yet, I did not anticipate the fact that teachers may not want to engage in instructional transformation. Working at a turnaround school applies another layer of pressure to teachers, which causes their teaching ability to be under attack. Each "professional development" session calls into question teachers' abilities to engage students in relevant curriculum. Issues of classroom management always become secondary and overlooked. Asking about a teachers' classroom management style became a shaming device that added insult to injury by naming "classroom management" as a cause for concern in the first place. Many teachers took offense to the idea of meeting with a student to debrief and reflect on a disciplinary incident. There are many educational implications when working from an advocacy orientation that articulates restorative practices for classroom teachers; however, this requires buy-in from each individual educator to be effective.

Trustworthiness and Generalizability

For this qualitative research project, issues of trustworthiness (the extent of the validity and truthfulness) and generalizability (the extent it can be reliably aligned with

the general population) were considered. Validity not only refers to the extent something is true, but also to its utility. Trustworthiness was achieved through prolonged engagement, persistent observation and reflection, and referential adequacy (Uhrmacher et al., 2017). Two years collecting data as a dean of students speaks to the prolonged engagement and persistent observation of restorative justice practices. Referential adequacy was aligned to larger educational trends implicating school discipline, such as the school to prison pipeline. Structural corroboration seeks links between each piece of data to form a coherent whole. Another term that aligns to this is resonance, or the authentic portrayal of an experience that is believable, that makes sense, and that causes a ‘click of recognition’ in the audience (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

Generalizability was assessed in line with the degree of transferability, or the extent of application to new situations considering various contexts (Uhrmacher et al., 2017). The lines of demarcation between these terms are blurry, with overlapping properties and evolving definitions. Issues of validity remained in the foreground and were assessed throughout the full analytic process.

Eisner (1998) writes that since our knowledge of the world is the product of the transaction between our subjective experiences and the objective world, he suggests an alternative to the subjective-objective dichotomy. He uses the term “transactive” to refer to this space of exchange, where the objective entity cannot be separated from the subjective interpretation by nature of the experience (p. 53). In this way, coherence, consensus, and instrumental utility become the criteria for measuring believability (Eisner, 1998). These concepts expand the parameters of validity to allow for broader interpretation of the individual experience. At the center of this auto-criticism are the

lived experiences of a restorative justice dean of students that informed the larger understanding of current school discipline practices.

Subjectivity

Subjectivity is a necessary component of the research process. After all, Peshkin (1988) concludes that subjectivity is the “basis of researchers making a distinct contribution” when they merge personality with data (p. 18). For this project, my subjectivity is at the forefront of the restorative justice deaning experience. As Peshkin further asserts, there is an “enhanced awareness” that results from a “formal, systematic monitoring of self” (p. 20). I experienced this awareness throughout the two years of data collection, as I knew I was engaged in this dissertation process. Though I was not fully aware how the details of my experience would be used, I maintained four different field and reflective journals to capture the engaged roles of dean, observer, and researcher (meta-observer). Following Peshkin’s framework, the monitoring of myself revealed three of my own “Subjective I’s” (Peshkin, 1988): the Adhocratic I, the Values-oriented I (the Principled I), and the Activist I. These are discussed as a theme in chapter five to inform the analysis and findings of the study.

Auto-criticism relies on subjectivity to inform the criticism aspect of the method. The connoisseur employs the “virtue of subjectivity” to “tell the story [one is] moved to tell” (Peshkin, 1985, cited in Uhrmacher & Mathews, 2005, p. 130). These subjective lenses informed how I analyzed the data. The interpretive framework used pre-figured categories to take the research questions to a deeper level of inquiry. The categories for this project are gender, values, and instructional practice. These categories represent aspects of my practice that inform the implementation of restorative justice practices, and

thus, the lived experiences of the dean of students. These categories align to the subjective I's for an important discussion on the implications of restorative justice on the classroom environment and for the role of dean of students. An auto-criticism allows for this in-depth analysis of restorative justice practices to focus the conversation on school discipline on more restorative practices and less punitive ones.

Researcher Positionality

I have always been a proponent of social emotional learning. I consider it inseparable from the cognitive act of “learning” academic content. As a young educator, I was inspired by the work of scholar Denise Pope. I, too, experienced the perspective of “doing school” as both a student and a teacher, knowing how to navigate the unspoken system and hidden curricula of schools (Pope, 2001). I maintain a distinct advocacy orientation and apply theories of social work to my professional teaching practice. Advocacy practices are revealed in cultural relevant pedagogy as manifested through culturally responsive teaching. Advocacy plays an increasingly vital role in student engagement, particularly when students and teachers often carry vastly different perspectives. I positioned myself as a teacher, an advocate, and a Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) in my work as a dean of students.

My positionality directly affected how I carried out the work of the dean of students. By using restorative justice practices, I interacted with students on a deeper level of mutual understanding and respect. The students came to know I was there for them because I worked to remove barriers to their educational access. I gave them school supplies, I connected them to wraparound supports and community services. My view of advocacy is central to my work as an educator. Advocacy is most effective for students

on the margins or those living in highly impacted communities. In educational settings, advocacy follows a wraparound approach framework to better serve disenfranchised families and re-integrate them into the educational system. The frameworks for culturally relevant pedagogy and implementing wraparound services are similar. Advocacy is truly a combination of social work, teaching, and counseling. I approached the TOSA dean of students position from this orientation. This not only affected how I enacted the position, but it undoubtedly affected the findings and results of this dissertation study.

Research Limitations

The main limitation is the emotionality of the study. An auto-criticism required deep reflection and analysis of the dean experience, and this resulted in a project rife with unsettled emotions over unresolved conflicts from the toxic school community. Impossible to separate, the subjective approach helped shape the findings of this study through emotional resolution and personal healing. The biggest hindrance to the project was on the timeline, as it became quite difficult to write from an emotionally charged space, and it took time to honestly work through those spaces. Overall, utilizing an auto-qualitative methodology changes the perspective offered throughout the study. The researcher perspective is that of *testimonio*, an auto-methodology to support self-reflective critical consciousness (Anzaldúa, 1997; Freire, 1968; Huber, 2009). I came to view this dissertation process as a way of disrupting the narrative that zero-tolerance punitive school discipline policies are somehow an effective deterrent to student misbehavior. This requires the development of educators' critical consciousness, a rather vulnerable process altogether.

A secondary research limitation has to do with the lack of student voice. The student perspective could offer valuable insight on their experiences with restorative justice and corroborate my work as a dean of students. Teacher input on the role of the dean of students could potentially provide helpful feedback regarding its disciplinary functions as well. I would have liked to incorporate student voice and perspective while receiving restorative justice interventions, particularly as students in poverty impacted school communities often show resiliency amid adversity (Ginwright, 2016). Administrator views on restorative justice practices could also prove insightful when considering the practical implications for schoolwide discipline programs.

Though not a limitation, ethical considerations proved contentious. In an effort to be overt about my role as a researcher engaged in auto-qualitative, I shared my background as a PhD student with administrator's and colleagues. Rather than help, this created friction with teachers and division among the dean team, as I felt viewed as a haughty academic. They dismissed research-supported strategies based on them as being "just someone's opinion," and they would not allow me to experiment with intervention strategies. While I assured them that I was only collecting data from my perspective about my own experience, they hesitated to collaborate with me on proactive restorative interventions or engage in restorative dialogue.

The next chapter presents the findings of this auto-criticism. The lived experiences of a restorative justice dean of students are juxtaposed against a rigid school discipline system that seeks to punish rather than educate. For students from highly impacted communities, caring relationships are paramount for those who struggle to engage with school in positive ways.

Chapter 4: Presentation of Findings

Restorative Justice and A Dean of Students

Being prepared to work in a public school situated in a poverty impacted community means a need for widespread understanding that students are going to come to school hungry, tired, defiant, angry, and easily dysregulated emotionally, with little-to-no coping skills developed. There are legitimate “experiential barriers” between the lived experiences of teachers and those of students. Teachers often underestimate the effects of poverty on a student’s ability to focus successfully on school (Forbes, 2012; Greene, 2016). A common indicator regarding the wealth of students in the school district is the number of students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. This district has a free or reduced-price lunch rate of 85% (compared to 42% statewide), and 90% of students identify as a racial or ethnic minority (compared to 45% statewide); 53% are English Language Learners (compared to 17% statewide). The dropout rate is 8.2%, which is significantly higher than the statewide average of 2.3% (CDE, 2020).

When I collected the data for this project, the school district had been in turnaround status for over eight years, with four schools on the state accountability clock. This is important to highlight because this creates a school culture driven by “unknowns” – unknown leadership and unknown fate of the school. Though a complete study of turnaround culture is beyond the scope of this dissertation study, the turnaround status of the school presented another challenge to implementing restorative practices.

Restorative Justice Deaning: Description & Interpretation

Deans often respond to crises or situations where emotional dysregulation is present; it is worth noting that this emotional dysregulation is present in adults as well. Greene (2016) acknowledges that most teachers want to impose harsh consequences on students, as if that somehow changes negative student behaviors. The main behavioral work with students involves the development of soft skills, which aligns student misbehavior with a lack of skill developmental in certain areas – students do not “choose” to behave badly. My experience as an educator has shown me the lagging skills most often present as a lack of “coping skills,” which can be disaggregated into the following:

- Distress tolerance: the ability to maintain stasis and make it through a difficult situation.
- Emotion Regulation: the ability to self-regulate one’s own emotions
- Interpersonal effectiveness: the ability to communicate wants and needs successfully.

Because of this, educators need to develop different ways of interacting with and responding to students in a behavior crisis. Previously, social-emotional learning was not considered much beyond students with identified educational disabilities, both cognitive and behavioral. However, since the release of the *Adverse Childhood Experiences* (ACE) study (Felliti et al., 1998), many educators are recognizing that students are bringing traumatized experiences with them that can make learning in a comprehensive school environment very difficult. Now cited in many educational trainings, this study was the

first of its kind to correlate a selection of negative childhood experiences to quality of life and severe medical conditions later in life.

Largely because of the ACE study (Felliti, et al., 1998), trauma-informed frameworks have become more commonplace in general education discussions (Hammond, 2015; Jensen, 2013; Milner et al., 2019). Teachers are now expected, if not required, to incorporate instructional practices that address the complex learning styles of all students. Moreover, teachers are also expected to utilize classroom management techniques to de-escalate students. The overriding issue is that few teachers have the tools to do this effectively. As the research around trauma becomes more aligned to educational discussions (Berger, 2015; Ludy-Dobson & Perry, 2010; Perry, 2006), it becomes increasingly necessary for teachers to have trauma-informed teaching capabilities as well. ‘Education’ is not just about learning knowledge; it is teaching students to care for themselves. It is cultivating a passion to live, to be curious, to respect, and to be respected. Sure, any adult in an administrative position can suspend or expel – but can they truly educate students so they can see that they matter? The following restorative portraits explores these philosophical debates through the lived experiences of a restorative justice dean of students.

Restorative Portrait 1: The Interview

Description. The sun burned the pavement as I drove northeast toward the large structure looming in the distance. Like a mirage crystalizing into being, the structure firmed, its wavering lines coming into focus. A school. A big school sits alone in a field surrounded by freshly paved parking lots, facilities out buildings, lively sports fields, and dilapidated tennis courts. A high school. A new high school I’ve arrived at for a job

interview on a sweltering hot July day in 2018. The position is for a “Culture and Climate Dean of Students” at a large comprehensive high school in a public school district outside of Denver. I saw the posting online less than 24 hours before and applied immediately, late on a Sunday night. I received a call the next morning. That morning. Asking if I could meet at 3:00 p.m. that afternoon. This afternoon. Now.

I sat in the cool air-conditioned outer office and waited to be called back. The clock ticked to 2:55 p.m. I made it on time. I glanced around the typical school office, a circular shape, with windows in place of an exterior wall. Sunlight flooded through the window-wall energizing the exterior office space. Three secretaries buzzed around with pre-school year activities, answering phones, making copies, registering students, and countless other nameless tasks. A man came from an interior office, “Ms. Vasquez? Come this way, please.” I followed him through the door and into a conference painted a warm light green, a minty olive. Black and white student photography adorned the walls. Another woman sat at the table. The two introduced themselves as assistant principals. I said hello and took a seat at the head of the conference table in a cold gray swivel conference chair with hard arms. The interview began.

The interview questions varied only slightly from those I’d had for other teaching positions. “Why are you interested in the ‘Culture and Climate’ Dean of Students position?” they asked. Listed as a “TOSA” position – Teacher on Special Assignment, the dean is responsible for student discipline issues and supporting teachers in classroom management. “Well,” I began, “I started out as a social studies teacher, then I moved into the realm of student support. Advocacy work. Truancy reduction and dropout prevention.” I then launched into my standard, yet principled, speech describing my work

for the past several years as a Community Advocate for a public high school in southern Colorado. Our work was entirely preventative, promoting early interventions and providing wraparound services in the form of family support. As advocates, we had access to tutoring and counseling resources for students, as well as resources to bus passes and King Soopers gift cards for families if necessary. Growing in number across Colorado school districts, these programs are often grant-funded and survive by the grace of those who champion the work. That is advocacy in its truest form and an important aspect of educational equity. At least to me. “It is my belief that school discipline can be addressed through an advocacy-based lens,” I concluded.

The two assistant principals nodded in agreement. They scribbled notes from their stations at the large mahogany conference table. A projector and phone sat in the middle of the table; they sat opposite each other. Afternoon shadows danced on the minty olive walls from the sun waving its approval through the west-facing windows. I swiveled slightly in the grey chair at the head of the table, eagerly awaiting the next inquiry. They volleyed question regarding work experience, skill sets, successful situations, and not-so-successful situations – learning opportunities – and each of my answers focused on social justice, advocacy, respect, accountability, and alternative forms of discipline. I talked at length about trauma-informed education and the role of empathy in education, including the school-within-a-school concept that focuses on behavior curriculum. They continued to write notes, attempting to capture my work style and philosophy in ink.

After meeting with them, I waited to meet with the principal. She and I talked for over an hour about trends in K-12 education, including the growing focus on trauma-informed education, the idea that student experiences in home and life have an impact on

their brain development and learning. We discussed Restorative Justice (RJ) and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), both applied in schools to address student behavior. “You’re going to be my Restorative Justice Dean! We need some female energy in the dean department,” she revealed toward the end of the conversation. “I have to wait and let the committee discuss it, but I’m going to recommend that it’s you.” I laughed, unable to contain my excitement. “This really is a dream job of mine!” I beamed. “I’ve been wanting a chance to work with students on truancy and behavior by providing intervention and support.” Finally, a chance to implement advocacy strategies to address student discipline from an intervention lens. I called it my ‘dream job’ because the high school dean position was characterized as a TOSA, and I believed this would allow me time and space to implement positive discipline through social-emotional curriculum and build skills with strengths-based strategies. I got the job.

The staff handbook they gave me contained the language of social emotional learning and created space for restorative practices to take place. The thin manual held the following information in the Table of Contents (p.7) that seemed pertinent to social emotional learning implementation:

- 6 R’s
- Restorative Approaches
- Creative Repair
- Students Needing Additional Supports
 - Phone Calls Home
 - Team/Student Conferences
 - Buddy System
 - College Readiness Room
 - Intensive Intervention with Support Staff
 - Behavior Contracts and Plans
 - Check-In/Check-Out
 - Student Recognition
 - Phone Calls and Contact Home for Positive Behavior

The section entitled “Student Support” (p. 44) contained the following information regarding resources for classroom management and disciplinary procedures for teachers to follow. Labeled as “major support systems and interventions” in place, the list gave me hope as to the potential resources already in place at the high school:

- Success Teams (SSTs)
- Restorative Practices
- Expulsion, Suspension
- Transition Team, Threat Assessments
- Engagement Center – Credit Recovery After School
- Referrals to Outside Agencies (e.g., Mental Health Centers)
- Suicide Risk Reviews, Self-Injury Protocol
- Special Education Assessment
- MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support)
- Attendance Mediation Workshops
- IEPs at-a-Glance
- Social Workers
- Health Clinic

The handbook then proceeded to list community partners, hardship supports, engagement strategies, and a guiding philosophy on an “intentional school culture” (p.46), which defined restorative practices in detail:

Restorative Practices is a model that promotes building relationships and strengthening community bonds, while supporting student growth toward self-discipline, accepting responsibility for behavior, and respecting the rights of others.

This school will transform its environment as demonstrated by a significant reduction in behavioral incidents. More amazingly, students will transfer the skills they were learning from their work with the adults, to problem-solve on their own.

Restorative Practices have demonstrated effectiveness in holding students accountable while helping students gain more adaptive problem-solving skills. There are ways to do this in simple hallway conversations with students, in classroom management practices, and in the context of larger behavioral concerns that need to be addressed by the deans and administrators. It will be important

for all staff to play a part in keeping the restorative culture at this school alive and thriving. There will be more about ways to do this further in this manual.

The staff handbook goes on to describe the above sections in detail, adding more explicit detail on all areas, including restorative practices. The “6:R’s” of classroom management are defined as Respect, Remind, Redirect, Reflect, Remove (Referral), Re-enter/Restore (p. 55). It concludes with a note on “Creative Repair” (p. 61):

An important aspect of any restorative approach session is the idea of repainting the harm done by the individual’s actions. Repair comes in many forms and is usually determined and agreed upon by the participants not the facilitator.

- Class apologies (all participants)
- Letters to each other
- Thank you to other teachers or students
- Make peace bracelets
- School based community service, i.e., clean school, work sporting events or other after school activities, activity set-up
- Eat lunch together
- Research impact of choices
- Build relationships with younger students
- Community based community service
- Make food for teachers

Though clearly not exhaustive, this list led me to believe that school administration wanted to support a restorative culture and encouraged teachers and staff to implement restorative practices.

Interpretation. The interview process was my opportunity to outline the philosophical beliefs that underscore my instructional practice. Standing on the shoulders of such scholars as Noddings (2005), Anzaldúa (1997), and Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995, 2015), I hoped to situate my practice within the ethic of care and social emotional learning. Dismantling systems of hierarchy is central to my pedagogical practice, and I aim to empower and encourage students to advocate for themselves. Self-advocacy is a

process that can be developed through behavioral interventions that addresses gaps in student emotional and behavioral development. Though some students are identified as needing special education services to address severe emotional disorders and behavioral needs, many other students lag in behavioral skill areas in general and often end up truant or dropping out of school altogether. I believe I expressed this in the job interview.

In reflection, the interview represented the ideal role of the Culture and Climate Dean of Students TOSA position and did not consider the realities of the exhausted school community and the depleted emotional resources of staff and students. Both of my interviews with the assistant principals and principal were anchored in current research trends such as dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline and buzzword concepts of “social-emotional” and “trauma-informed” practices, which both require strong educator buy-in and fidelity. This can be cultivated from strong administrative support, which is necessary for any initiation of change or implementation of new ideas Fullan (2016). This was perhaps the biggest blind spot and hindrance to the work of a restorative justice dean of students, which requires fresh ideas and radical solutions to creatively address student discipline with care and accountability.

Restorative Portrait 2: The Conflict Process

Description. My first day as a dean was full of anticipation. The twenty-minute drive to my new school-home gave me time to set my intention for the day. The hum of the car tires against the interstate pavement provided a soft backdrop to my meditation. “*Please, Lord.*” The words came naturally in the form of a prayer. “*Help this to be a safe and productive school year.*” In the weeks since I was hired, I learned everything I could about my new school building. The district was in a tumultuous turnaround process, with

community groups leading the dissent against the Colorado Board of Education and its mandates that local control of the school district be turned over to an outside management company. The conflict had been brewing over the last several years, with tensions threatening to boil over at any moment. A community group in opposition to the ‘new’ principal held monthly protests demanding she be replaced. Caught in a revolving door of appointed-administrators, complaints, and resignations, the district remained in a constant state of turmoil. This was the context I entered August 2018.

The first days and weeks of the school year brought more than the usual new-school-year jitters. The reality of the turnaround status and knowledge of the outside management issue permeated the wide halls of the enormous school building. The tension of the district management issues filtered down to the students and had a direct effect on school culture. My initiation into the district was guided by negative attitudes regarding the top-heavy school administration of one principal and five assistant principals. These authoritarian school leaders demanded compliance of the students and teachers, and I found myself caught in the crossfire as a culture and climate dean of students.

The conflict cycle emerged early. A student misbehaves, which often erupts beyond the capacity of the teacher, and a dean of students is called. Student misbehavior is subjective. The most common infraction is a student not listening to the teacher – defiance, disrespect, insubordination. The teachers are free to label the infraction on the referral however they see fit. Other common indiscretions are students talking out of turn, students having a cell phone out, students not completing class work. Any time the teacher feels undermined by a student can ultimately lead to a call to the dean. Of course,

this action dissolves any rapport or change of building rapport, as the teacher gives the power to the dean upon making the call.

Are warnings given? Unknown. Classroom management is mostly an assumed skill. It is rarely talked about in professional development trainings, as that time is generally reserved for data reviews and curriculum updates. Moreover, it almost seems a professional taboo to question what the teacher may have said or done to contribute to the negative behavior escalation. Heavy implications are that the teacher is always right and if they call for a dean or security, it is most certainly necessary. I remember believing that from my days in the classroom, and I had to take it upon myself to reflect on my own contributions to negative student interactions. Though I was given the benefit of the doubt in some of my early years of teaching, I have come to realize that teacher delivery of instruction and teacher tone of voice are the nuanced interactions where relationship and rapport are built. This became a point of contention between me and a few teachers early in the school year, as one of my first questions in response to student misbehavior invariably was, “What happened before the outburst?” or the more direct version, “How did you contribute to the incident?” Teachers do not appreciate being questioned.

Several teachers posted classroom signs early in the school year establishing authoritarian expectations:

Notice to All Students:

Leave the excuse at the door.

If you didn't do your homework, just admit it.

If you didn't understand the assignment, ask for help.

If you didn't study for the test, accept the grade, and resolve to do better

(with my help if necessary) next time.

If you refuse to follow my rules, accept the consequences.

This is not a democracy.

This is MY classroom.

Teachers are free to decorate their classroom space as they deem appropriate. Yet, signs such as this establish a dictatorship that leaves little room for student voice. As a former classroom teacher, I understand where this is coming from, as teachers are told to set expectations early and be firm in their delivery of consequences. Yet, these authoritarian attitudes run directly counter to restorative practices and undermine authentic relationship building. When a teacher calls for disciplinary support, they are giving their power to another authority and establishing a pattern of not directly handling student conflict. This lack of relationship building undoubtedly leads to more student misbehavior.

When a student misbehaves to the point of teacher frustration, the teacher calls for the dean. Not the dean directly, of course. The call is made to the main office secretary to send security to the classroom. A call goes out over the walkie-talkie system: "Security to room 232!" Sometimes the reason is given. "The teacher says the student is being disruptive." Sometimes not. Security retrieves the student and delivers them to the dean's office. A walk of shame, where both the teacher and the security guard want retribution for time wasted and energy spent. Classroom management is of little concern, as teachers want the student to receive consequence for disrupting the classroom environment, and the security guards often agree, at times even engaging in petty back-and-forth bickering with the student.

In the dean's office, the student sits. On the defense, the student is quick to explain the misunderstanding. There's always a misunderstanding. The student writes an official statement, standard protocol for any student entering the dean's office. Then it's the dean's turn to act. The teacher has the option of entering an official referral under the 'behavior' section of the school's electronic management system detailing the student's actions. They can label it with one of many infraction codes, the most common being: defiance, disrespect, disruption, insubordination, or actions disturbing the learning environment. Teachers expect dean's to be the heavy hand, they want the student disciplined so that the student learns to behave in the classroom. In the conflict process, the dean is used as the disciplinarian, the one to garner respect for the teacher. Yet, sending a student to the dean's office rarely impacts student behavior, even with the "official" record of a behavioral referral in the Infinite Campus system.

Once the student has finished writing their official statement, I read it over to understand the nature of the conflict between student and teacher. The first few sentences reveal the trigger event. "I was just sitting there, and the teacher started yelling" or "I was talking with my friends, and the teacher got mad and sent us out." My experience in a classroom helps me understand there is much more to the story that has not been written. Yet, this is where the grey area of student discipline lies. Does the student understand the perceived misbehavior? Does the student acknowledge the teacher's duty to maintain an orderly academic environment? Is the student explicitly aware of their responsibility to cooperate with the teacher? Do they know how to do this? There are many affective unknowns that shape the social-emotional learning environment. Without firsthand knowledge of the actual conflict, I begin my student conferences the same every time: "I

read your statement. Tell me more about what happened, from your point of view.” I frame it this way to let the student know I want to listen to them to try and understand the situation more fully.

After the student conference, the next step is to speak with the teacher. My aim as a dean is to always create space for dialogue. Using a restorative approach can potentially repair the relationship, but the teacher must be willing to have a mediated conversation with the student. Conflict between teacher and student must be handled directly with the teacher if behavioral changes are to occur. Thus, after a student is sent to the dean’s office, the dean reaches out to the teacher to see about scheduling a restorative conversation. Timing is everything. If the teacher is still teaching the whole class, they may not be in the right mindset for an individual conversation with the student. Even if class has ended, the teacher is most likely in “instructional mode” until their planning period. The best course of action is for the dean to hold the student for the duration of the class period and wait for a response from the teacher.

There are two individual holding rooms in the dean’s office suite for student isolation. The two other deans in the school automatically place students in those rooms when removed from class. From a social-emotional standpoint, I prefer to keep the students in my office if time allows to discuss their classroom behaviors and how to avoid returning to my office in the future. I take every opportunity to talk with the student and identify behavioral gaps to implement appropriate behavioral interventions. During this time, the teacher occasionally responds and says the student can return to the classroom to have a restorative conversation at that time. Whether or not I hear from the teacher at the time, I generally hold a debrief conversation with the teacher later. During

that debrief, I would arrange a time for a conversation between the teacher and student. Accountability cannot be established with or by someone other than the person affected. The conflict cycle implicitly undermines the student/teacher relationship through the introduction of a third party, represented by the dean.

Interpretation. My early interactions as a dean begged the question, where are the teaching components associated with student/teacher conflict and misbehavior? Conflict is sometimes a part of the relationship process, and the onus is on the adult in the situation to minimize this conflict. The idea that teachers can themselves become bullies has been on the rise since the early 2000s (Hyman & Perone, 1998; Hyman et al., 2002; Whitted & Dupper, 2008). Several studies indicate a new field of educational literature that considers the teachers' role in student misbehavior and the perception of teachers themselves as bullies. Though beyond the scope of this dissertation project, and without running the risk of so-called 'teacher-bashing' which is a popular position for anti-public education advocates, my task as an educational critic is to name this phenomenon.

The conflict process reveals that teacher personality and emotional affect play a role in student misbehavior and student-teacher conflict. The recording of most behavior infractions is subjective, as teachers have the power to label a behavior in any manner they want. This means if their frustration gets the best of them, anything can fall under defiance, insubordination, or the even more serious "detrimental classroom behavior," which can become part of the permanent student record. The dean can override any behavioral entry, but the teacher often becomes upset when changed.

Teachers can be supported to take more ownership of their classrooms. Among human capacity conditions for improvement, Fullan (2006) acknowledges professional

learning communities that include “forums for teachers to collectively reflect on and collaborate on the ethical and moral dimensions of their work and behavior” (p. 51). This is an important piece of identity development as educators learn to self-reflect in practical and transformative ways. Thus, professional learning communities use vulnerability to induce support as practitioners develop self-awareness. Fullan clearly speaks to this necessary role collaboration:

[Professional Learning Communities] should not be places for well-meaning but superficial exchanges. Especially in schools where emotions run high, these communities must foster an open exchange where teachers can explore elements of their own practice that they see as ethically responsive or problematic. The goal is to simultaneously empathize with teachers in difficult circumstances while calling for and reinforcing higher ethical standards (p. 52).

Space, both literally and figuratively, is necessary to delve into such vulnerable exchanges. Human spatiality in all its forms is a social construct (Soja, 2010). Therefore, the space devoted to vulnerable collaboration becomes a transformative space to support educators as they develop their instructional capacities. Resolving classroom conflict is an important part of the learning process and establishes the teacher as owner of their classroom. Dean involvement and office referrals should really be a last resort after the teacher has exercised all resources in their own personal teacher toolbox. Teachers need adequate space and time to reinforce their resources.

Fullan (2013) references this space in his description of an educational stratosphere, which is the integration of technology, pedagogy, and change knowledge in ways that democratize the learning process for the educational attainment of all students. One area Fullan discusses is use of students’ subjective experiences, as well as thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about school - the affective realm. Yeager and Walton (2011) found

that “stealthy” interventions (ones that tap into students’ mindsets) work because they activate social, psychological, and intellectual processes that both stimulate success and a greater sense of belonging and belief in their own abilities. However, educators need to have both the theoretical expertise to understand the psychological experiences involved, and a contextual expertise to understand the background and experiences of their particular students (Fullan, 2013).

The conflict process can be reduced to an exchange between the teacher and student. In restorative practices, the dean can be used as a mediating party to support the reconciliation process. Professional development programs and PLCs provide an avenue for teachers to cultivate their own restorative teaching practices in collaboration with others. Follow-up is key to ensure the teacher takes ownership of what occurred in the classroom. The dean takes on a supportive role of both teacher and students to support the development of that relationship. The dean can create support documents that aid in teacher communication: incident debrief forms, teacher reflecting guides, restorative follow-up forms, reparative follow-up forms, and teacher mentoring forms (if applicable). These help in establishing accountability for both teacher and student.

Restorative Portrait 3: The Daily Routine of a Restorative Justice Dean

Description. The events of the day string together in a disciplinary-stream-of-consciousness. Each hour melds into the next from the first morning bell at 7:30 AM until the final afternoon bell at 2:50 PM. Rarely time to breathe, the staff bathroom becomes a sanctuary. Lunch breaks are for the privileged. I arrive at 7:15 AM, park my car behind the building in the staff parking lot, and make my way to the back entrance. The walk to

my office is quiet, with few students in the hall. Twenty minutes from now, the hall will be flooded with young bodies trying to make their way to class.

I enter my office suite, pass the security guards' office. The door is ajar, but I cannot see anyone inside. "Good morning," I call out to no one in particular. One of the assistant principals shares the same suite. His door is open, but no one in sight. I unlock my office, pausing to survey my carefully decorated office door. Colorful pictures, *The Far Side* comics, a Miles Davis poster (trumpet in hand), and the cutout of *Be the change you wish to see in the world* greet me. The Gandhi quote is more for me than for the students. Once in my office, I quickly begin my morning routine: turn on the slender black floor lamp in the far-left corner in lieu of the harsh overhead light. Turn on the mid-century gold table lamp behind my desk creating a soft atmosphere. Turn on the small blue desk fan for white noise. Pour distilled water into my diffuser and add twelve drops of essential oil, rotating between peppermint, eucalyptus, and tea tree oils for relaxation. Turn on the small Himalayan salt lamp in the middle of my desk, inviting an amberish glow. I open my computer and click on the Outlook icon to activate my email. I glance for any emergency notifications. Finally, I turn on my walkie-talkie and prepare for the onslaught. The radio blares with morning reports. Bus 52 will be late. A breakfast spill in the cafeteria. I grab the walkie, close my office door, and make my way to the front of the school. Students walk sleepily through the halls, greeting their friends on their way to class. I take my morning post by the front entrance of the school. The trickle of students turns into a stream. The day begins.

Principal mad. 7:20 AM. Get students. Him. Her. Wearing red. Dress code violation. Take them to the office. If they don't comply, send them home. Students in the

halls. Bell rings. Students still scurry everywhere, security guards hollering at them to “Get to class!” Why are you late to class? Deans and security guards make rounds for the first 10 minutes of the period. Tell students to go to class. Check for passes. Take anyone to the office who argues. Backtalk is unacceptable. Escalation imminent. Culture and climate dean of students. Is culture created? Or accepted? I go to my dean’s office to check email and voicemail. Security brings a student in who was out of class. “Why not take him to class?” I ask. “He was rude,” came the curt reply. Adults are easily flustered. They want retribution. That’s supposed to be me as the dean of students. I’m the retribution. I chat with the student and take him to class. We discuss his attitude and I ask him to respect the security guard. “I’ll try, Miss,” was the response.

First period over. Hall duty. Stand in the hallway outside of my office suite. Greet kids on their way to class. They brush past. Some smile. Some ignore. Some run. “Slow down!” Two students make-out. My reaction varies. Sometimes I jokingly chide them. Other times I walk over and clear my throat. I usually interrupt. I never get mad. Say hello to teachers rushing to make last-minute copies. Offer to support. Can I deliver the copies down the hall when they finish running on the machine? Yes.

Passing period over. Periods two, three, and four blur together. Students get more energy as they wake up through the morning. Various students are brought to my office. One did not have his materials. One would not put her cell phone away. Another two got in a fight in the middle of class. The fight resulted in small room exclusion/in-school suspension. Standard protocol. A group was hanging out in the halls and not attending class. Incident after incident. The restorative approach is to have a conversation with each one of them. What happened? Not all disciplinary situations need to have a full

restorative mediation. Restorative practices offer a spectrum of response since all situations have a repair aspect to it. All students should be heard. The spectrum moves from an informal conversation with the student to a formal mediation with student and teacher, parents are notified but are not usually involved.

Lunch. The dean role is to monitor the students in the cafeteria, the long hall toward the main gym, and the foyer outside gym – the areas students are allowed during lunch. Deans rotate posts. Students also eat lunch outside where the security guards monitor them. Period five is split between the two lunches, with some students having class before their lunch, the others having class after their lunch. Two lunches for 1,700 students does not seem adequate. Closed campus. Many try to leave. Taco shops and two convenience stores across the street beckon the students over. Security waits with a golf cart and catches them as they come back to campus. Bring them to the dean's office. No protocols in place for minor infractions. No detention system. No intervention program. Develop one? Make up restorative interventions on the spot. Help in cafeteria after lunch. Frowned upon. Manual labor is not an appropriate consequence. Having Latino/a students performing menial labor in lieu of punishment is not culturally congruent. Brainstorm creative interventions. An open campus for juniors/seniors would help, provide incentive for younger students? Loss of lunch free time. That would require more staff. In the meantime, lecture them. Document it. Send them to class. Students repeat the behaviors the next day and day after that. Various strategies have been tried throughout the years of turnaround, each different principal administration bringing its own solutions to the lack of student consequences and behavioral interventions.

Afternoon classes. Periods six, and seven. They roll by faster than the morning classes. Student energy is up. Period six sees the most students out of class. Security brings students from the parking lot attempting to leave the school. Conference with them, send them to class. Teachers call the office for security. Two girls ready to fight. They are brought to my office. Give them time to calm down. I speak to each one individually. Both agree to a short mediation. Conference room gives us room to spread out and dialogue. Each side shares her story, and we identify the misunderstanding. The girls find a way to move forward. One of the girls returns to class, the other chooses to stay in the dean's office suite to complete her work. I respond to emails from teachers and the attendance secretary. The final passing period of the day, between periods six and seven is rowdy. Students rambunctious, ready to leave. Teachers are tired, ready to leave.

Behavioral referrals flood the electronic records system throughout the afternoon. "Disrespect," "Defiance," and "Insubordination" are repeatedly listed down the screen. Some referrals are written for the same student. Most of the time, the student is brought to the office before the referral is even written. Teacher discretion. Deans can delete the referrals. Most of the time I edit them. Teachers become offended if their referrals are deleted. They feel unsupported. Are they? Does supporting students mean not supporting teachers? Teachers view it as an "us vs. them" scenario. I am on the side of the student. Does this make me against teachers? School is out. 2:50 PM. Catch up on paperwork. Organize desk, turn off lamps. I leave at 5:00 PM., the last one to leave the office suite. I walk down the empty hall, retracing the morning path. Most students off campus by the time I leave, yet faint voices can be heard in far corners of the school. The fresh air greets

me for the first time since that morning. I find my Subaru Outback right where I left it. Repeat this all again tomorrow.

Interpretation. One strategy to working in a system with so many moving parts is to build community each day. Constantly working toward harmonious interactions lends itself to a cultural shift toward caring. There is not enough time in the school day for only one person to care. All adults in the school must be shaped to care in effective capacities. The school system is rigid, and adults are there to help guide students through the steps of various learning processes, including both academic content and social-emotional skills. This becomes increasingly important for first-generation college students and students of immigrant parents. The need for an ethic of care is increasingly more important to successful transmission of information, regardless of academic subject. Using Noddings' (2005) notion of care as relational, caring can be cultivated in those teachers who have difficulty showing care, or perhaps, need ideas for ways to show care.

Teaching and learning create a dynamic system that is constantly changing by nature of its design. There are systemic qualities that often make reform items difficult to sustain (Fullan, 2016). It is necessary to be “best equipped with capacities that increase the chances of being dynamically precise in the face of problems that are unpredictable in their timing and nature, largely because they arise from human motivation and interaction” (Fullan, 2006, p. 2). It is impossible to predict the nature, temperament, and need of students before a new class begins. Thus, best instructional practices incorporate time and space that is devoted to the development of rapport and relationships to learn more about students on an affective level.

This section was written with some semblance of stream-of-consciousness to illustrate the chaotic nature of the day-to-day work. Often, several students would be brought to my office at a time for the same infraction: being out of class. It was the same with the other two culture and climate deans. Though I took on the responsibilities of restorative justice duties in my dean work, my supervising assistant principal also assigned me the freshmen class to monitor, as the other two deans (who had seniority) monitored the sophomore and junior classes respectively. The senior class was monitored by the counselors, with the principal stepping in for severe disciplinary situations. The deans' offices resembled revolving doors, as the lack of schoolwide systems like tardy management went by the wayside so that deans were having to intervene in these situations one at a time. As a classroom teacher, I managed my own tardies and held students for detention or contacted home as needed. Yet, this was not a practice at this high school. With few tools at our disposal to work at identifying and mitigating the root cause of tardy behavior, for example, few students will change their behavior patterns.

One of the first books I read as an aspiring teacher in graduate school was *Savage Inequalities* (Kozol, 1991). The harrowing details of impoverished school children in some of the most segregated school districts shaped my outlook on teaching. I began reading his other works and realized his work on behalf of impoverished children ran deeper than passion; it was his mission to paint the images for educators and the broader public alike in hopes of affecting some sort of *change*. From his descriptions about students so poor they ate lead-based paint chips that caused them to have learning deficits, to teachers so frustrated that they took out their anger on the young people they were entrusted to educate, Kozol's words hit my core. His vivid portrayals of segregated

schools that serve students with minimal resources, while some of these same students struggle to find security in dilapidated living conditions solidified my place as a social justice educator (Kozol 1967, 1995, 2005).

One of his earlier works, *The Night is Dark, and I Am Far from Home* (1975) validated what I saw in my first rounds of teaching observations (prior to student teaching) and helped articulate my own personal teaching philosophy. Indeed, Kozol created a role I aspired to through that of an “internal rebel,” a role designed to “transform our deepest values and beliefs, by direct actions, into concrete deeds” (1975, p. 153). It is my professional belief that schools have a responsibility to address these issues; if not outright fix them, at least mitigate them as best they can. I ascribe to the community service model of schools, including food programs, after school programs, family support programs, wraparound service programs, and any other programs that strives to meet the needs of the communities in realistic ways. With inspiration from the Free Schools Movement, there are ways in which public schools can serve the needs of the community in real and effective ways with direct and authentic community input (Kozol, 1972; Ayers, 1996; Miller, 2002).

Restorative Portrait 4: Anatomy of Student Escalation

Description. The historical dean of students’ role is one of power and privilege. In some school districts, this role is filled by a young administrator, someone who has recently earned their school principal’s license and needs to build administrative experience through low-level decisions concerning student discipline. It is within this context that I approached the dean of students’ role with a classroom teacher’s sensibilities. I do not have my principal’s license, nor is that a part of my career

aspirations. I took the position as a Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) and planned to execute my dean work through both curricular and instructional capacities of a seasoned classroom teacher.

Early observations and assessment of student discipline issues reveal that it is a relational issue. Student discipline centers on discord between student-teacher, student-student, or student-school. A relationship lies at the center of all three areas of potential conflict. When administrators, teachers, and other support staff bark orders at students, parallel levels of conflict are created. This mostly occurs before school, at lunch, after school, and during passing periods. It is at these times that students congregate in large groups and the potential for conflict increases exponentially. Still, the onus is on the adults in these situations to monitor their own emotional resolve to engage students with respect and encouragement. Student discipline is an issue of behavioral skill-building.

As a dean of students, it becomes easy to predict conflict by observing emotional interactions. During passing periods, the students have four minutes to move from one class to the next. In a large comprehensive high school with multiple floors and wings, students tend to drag their feet while going to their next class. This opens space for adults to trigger students several times throughout the day. Moreover, as the school year unfolds and rolls into holidays, tensions and emotions can run high and result in heated interactions. An oft-observed student-administrator interaction is described below.

“Why are you standing there?”

The bewildered students looked around, taking a few seconds to realize the assistant principal was talking to them. She repeated in a slightly elevated tone, “Why are you standing *there*?!” She emphasized ‘there’ indicating the location was perhaps the problem. The group of three students looked at one another in confusion, then surveyed the surrounding area in front of the stairwell, still confused by the AP’s vague question. Several onlookers gathered, including myself, as the AP was approaching the students from the other side of the larger open hallway.

“You’re blocking the stairwell!” The assistant principal scolded, getting louder as she got closer to the students. “*MOVE!*” Their startled confusion faded, replaced by anger slowly creeping across their faces. One male student steadily removed his oversized green headphones, tempering his frustration. The lone female student brushed her blue hair out of eyes, revealing darts of teenage glare.

The third student, a senior male, responded with a tone that matched hers, “You can ask *NICE*ly!” This opened a back-and-forth between the assistant principal and student, resulting in the student being taken to the office and reprimanded. The bell rang, and the crowd dispersed, me and other staff ushering the students to class.

“Ms. Vasquez, please come to the principal’s conference room,” squawked a voice over the walkie-talkie. The same voice that had shrieked at the students in the hallway. I made my way to the front of the school, anticipating the issue to be the same I had witnessed moments before in the hall. I tried to hide my frustration as I entered the conference room. The student sat quietly on one side of the large conference table with a look of discontent. As soon as I arrived, the assistant principal left to assist with tardy sweeps. “Make sure he sees the principal,” she directed on her way out. The student

shifted his gaze from the assistant principal to the conference table with a downcast stare. We waited.

The tardy bell rang, breaking the silence in the conference room. I used this as an opportunity to address the student. I did not know the student from previous discipline encounters, and he was not known as a ‘high-flyer’ – a student who frequented the dean’s office due to maladjusted conflict with numerous teachers and students.

“Do you want to tell me about what happened?” I opened, even though I had witnessed the entire interaction.

“She’s so rude! We weren’t even doing anything but standing there talking. Other students were standing around and talking too, and she didn’t say anything to them!” He huffed in frustration.

“I agree,” I affirmed. “And yet, you’re the one sitting in the principal’s conference room. What do you make of that?”

The student chuckled. “She’s an AP, we have to do what she says.”

At that moment, the principal came in. “Ms. Vasquez, what are we doing in here? The class period hasn’t even started yet.”

“Well,” I began, telling her a shortened version of what happened. Obvious signs of irritation crossed her face as she considered my words. “She wanted to be sure the student saw you before he went to class,” I concluded. I tried to paint a neutral picture, emphasizing that the students were chatting with one another when approached by the assistant principal.

“Well, I would say she’s right, we don’t tolerate disrespect at this school!” The principal picked up where the assistant principal had left off, making sure the student

knew his place in the school rank: assistant principals maintained an upper hand over students. The principal did not give the student time to offer an explanation, instead opening her computer to check his school record.

“What’s your name?” She barked, firmly clicking the mouse to open Infinite Campus to view his attendance, behavior, and credits – the ABCs of early warning systems for students at-risk of drooping out of high school. Hardly thorough, it offers a quick snapshot of student progress without considering much context.

“You’re a senior. You’re on track to graduate, and your attendance isn’t bad. Make sure your grades stay up. And make sure you’re respectful to adults in the building.” The student met her eyes and nodded.

She then turned to me. “Ms. Vasquez, take this student to class and monitor his behavior. I want to know if something like this occurs again.” I nodded.

I walked the student to class, disappointed that restorative practices were not used to diffuse the situation between assistant principal and student. The first step in employing restorative approaches is acknowledging that assistant principals may be wrong in their approach. Unfortunately, this was not the norm for these types of common interactions. The behavior of the AP or offending adult is not considered, and the student is met with a principal-lecture in pure bravado, designed to shame the students and make them feel inferior. This type of “consequence” is the preferred approach, knowing there really is not cause for the AP to talk to students in that manner, and also not cause for an out-of-school suspension. Yet, the principal’s unwillingness to try a restorative conversation inevitably allow the AP to continue behaving in similar aggressive and unproductive ways.

I have found the best philosophy to understanding the social-emotional needs of students is to let them reveal what they need in their own due time. The classroom is the best place to assess this – students unfold amidst the routines and expectations established by each individual teacher. Yet, in a schoolwide setting, the movement of teenagers is different than that of a classroom. They move in packs. They play loud music on speakers hidden in a backpack or oversized coat-pocket. The easiest way to rile one of them up is to correct them in front of their peers. Or rather, correcting them in a condescending tone in front of their peers. This will elicit cold stares, a sarcastic quip, or the occasional eyeroll. Acknowledging the emotional affect of teenagers is an important part of building relationships that supports skillful classroom management, which extends to the larger school building community.

When the emotional affect of students is not considered, situations can escalate dramatically and unnecessarily. These types of escalations occurred so often, that I provided written documentation to the principal of what I had witnessed. Though she never much acknowledged my reports, I felt compelled to document the interactions of my colleagues and the damaging ways they talked down to students, in the event it would be needed for future reasons. This type of meta-deaning came to represent much of my emotional consternation and eventual burnout as a restorative justice dean of students. Maintaining these notes became an emotional outlet and allowed me to reflect on the purpose of the dean of student's role wholeheartedly. These notes documented what I witnessed daily in the dean position. I detailed one particularly dramatic situation for the principal via email, constructed below.

From: Vasquez, Alicia
Sent: Friday, April 5, 2019, 8:13 AM
To: Co-Principals
Subject: Re: Meeting

Hi Team,

My apologies for missing this email the Friday before break. I believe I was in the main office during this time, but I did not go into your office for the meeting. My statement regarding the incident from that morning is as follows:

On Friday, 03/22/2019, at approximately 9:30 AM, I was sitting in the main office waiting for a meeting with the principal. Sitting in the main office, I heard an adult shouting in the main entry foyer. I got up to investigate the yelling, and I saw one of the deans rushing through the breezeway. Simultaneously, I saw two students (one male, one female) walking through the breezeway toward the CTE wing. The attendance supervisor and registrar also witnessed the commotion and saw me follow the dean and the students.

Once in the CTE area, the dean continued to follow and yell at the students, who continued to walk away. One of the security guards was in the CTE area, and he walked closely with the students to de-escalate the situation. The female student was completely triggered, and the male student and security guard were trying to calm her down.

However, this did not appear to be working, as the dean continued to yell at and follow the students. He yelled things such as, "You're not making this better on yourselves!" "You will be suspended, keep walking, and you will no longer be at this school!"

I was following about twenty-five feet behind, and I was by the media center at this point. The students and security guard were past the CTE area and heading toward the auditorium, with the dean still following and threatening suspension and expulsion.

Several students came out of the media center to see about the commotion, but I told them it was alright, and I sent them back. The IT specialist saw this happening as well and came to intervene. I quickly explained the situation, and he went to keep the students in the library corralled. Meanwhile, the escalated students went out of the school through the auditorium door with the security guard, and the dean went out after them. I decided to follow out as well.

Once the female student went out the door, the male student turned to the dean and declared, "Why are you yelling?! You can see she is upset. Why are you making it worse? Leave us alone!"

The other dean tried to respond, but at this point, I intervened. I said to the students, "Go over there to the benches, and take some deep breaths. Sit with security, and we'll figure this out. Have her call her mom to come and get her."

The student replied quickly, "She already called her mom and she's on her way. We've been trying to leave this whole time."

The other dean and I exchanged a few words. He felt as if I was somehow "undermining" his authority. My position was that I was trying to de-escalate the situation. As a trained direct service provider for behaviorally challenged students, the best practice is not to follow students who are escalated. Additionally, adults need to recognize when they are the ones triggering the escalation of student emotions. This is what happened that day, and that is why I followed the dean as he followed and yelled at the students. This behavior is inappropriate, and I stand by my decision to intervene.

Lastly, I'm not sure what was meant in the meeting request when you stated, "Please feel free to bring your union rep with you." I do not think this is necessary.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully submitted,

Alicia Vasquez

I found out later that the other had filed a complaint against me, and it was the principal's preferred method to deal with those matters with union representation. I did not engage with the complaint other than providing my written statement, and it fell by the wayside, lost amidst other dramatic escalations. The students received a suspension for defiance of authority and disrupting the school environment.

Interpretation. Given the prevalence of the school-to-prison pipeline, schools need a culture that is welcoming and open. My early experiences as a dean of students found the exact opposite. The school institution is always predicated on strict compliance and obedience. The notion that schools "teach" students how to be in schools is non-existent. The expectation is that students show up ready to learn, and those who are not ready are punished for it through harsh words and demeaning treatment. Current educational trends call for more emphasis on trauma-informed capacities in school discipline frameworks (Joseph et al., 2020).

Early in my observations of this highly impacted school context, it became apparent that students were being triggered in emotionally unsettling ways, resulting in punishment for those emotional reactions rather than the initial behavior infraction (either real or perceived). Often occurring in a matter of seconds, once a student erupts, the original triggering event becomes dissolved beneath the emotional outburst in quite

interesting ways. The focus then becomes on the emotional outburst itself (deemed inappropriate), and not the original event that led to the outburst. Figure 3 deconstructs this escalation to capture the students' experience, which often results in misplaced punishments (punishments that do not address the underlying causes of the behavior).

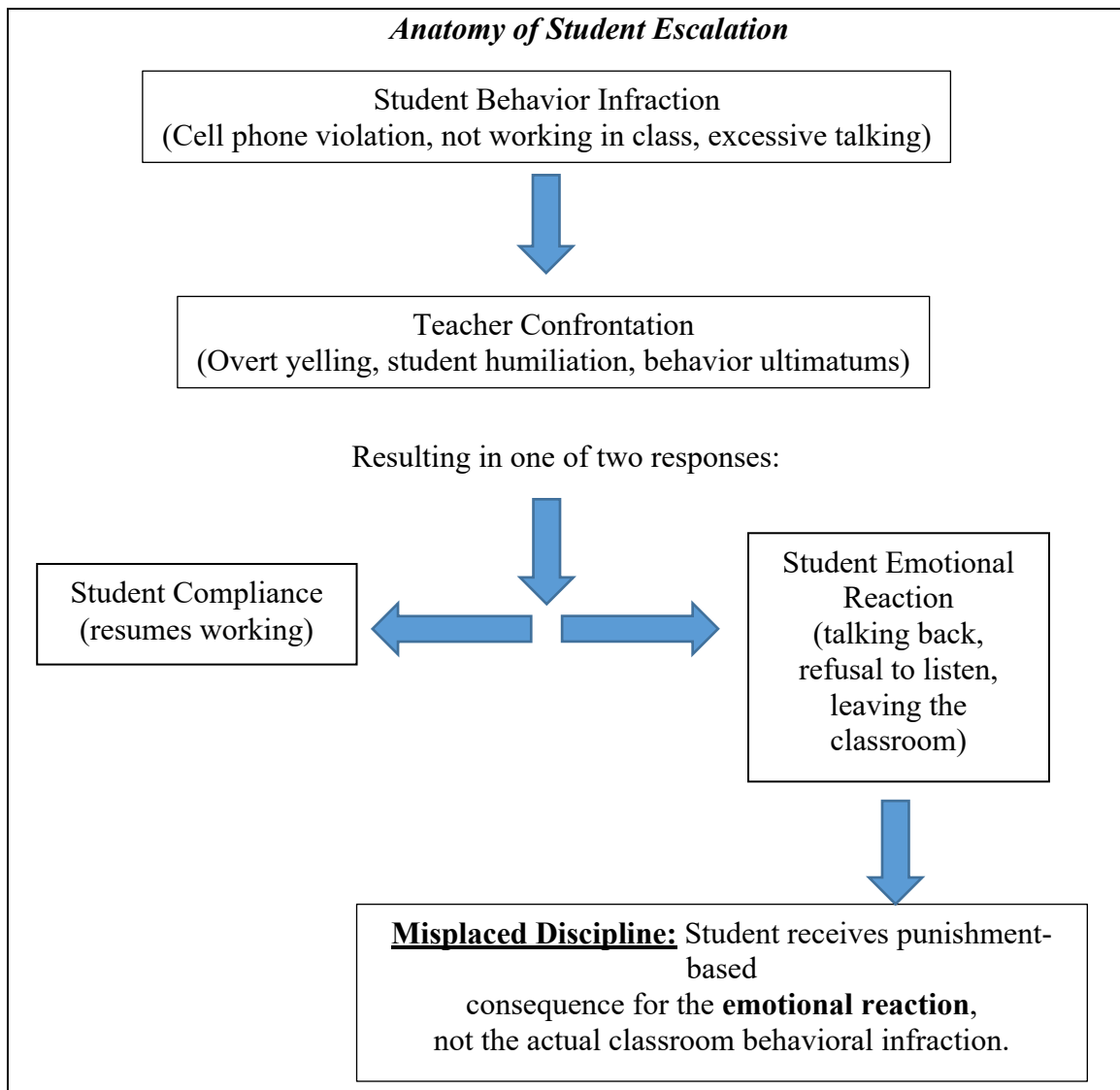


Figure 3: *Anatomy of Student Escalation*

This pattern of escalation happens almost daily in teacher-student interactions, which results in students being removed from the classroom, and often suspended for

inappropriate displays of emotion. Often, the student will have a negative emotional reaction to the teacher confrontation, which will result in punishment for that emotional outburst, rather than the initial behavioral infraction. Auto-criticism allows for these nuanced interactions to be problematized in important ways. Often difficult to document, these escalations are one of the main ways in which marginalized students are ostracized from the learning environment, potentially becoming pushouts and at-risk for contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline (Balfanz et al., 2014).

When a dean of students is called to intervene, the conflict has already occurred. Whether between teacher and student or student and student, the conflict needs to be addressed before the parties can resolve the issue. This is the core of restorative justice practices as related to school discipline. The dean mediates the conflict to allow the parties to move forward. The framework of restorative justice takes a two-prong approach of “What happened?” followed by the arguably more important “How can it be repaired?” The latter is where the learning takes place to implement reparative steps so the parties can move forward. As a dean of students, I was less concerned with student-student conflict, and more concerned with student-teacher conflict. Often, I observed assistant principals and other teachers trigger students in a way that causes emotional outbursts, then they punish the student for the emotional outburst. I observed several ways adults triggered students:

- walking up to students to tell them they cannot stand where they are standing
- following students around the school halls
- standing near students, either alone or in a group
- taking them to the assistant principal’s office without telling them why

- threatening to have them suspended, then expelled on the “3-strikes” rule
- threatening to call their parents for minor indiscretions
- threatening to “send them home” for not following directives.

These are a few examples of the ways adult educators commonly trigger high school students. Most of these actions would be inappropriate towards adult colleagues, yet I am not sure why they are used on students. Perhaps these educators have an ‘old school’ mentality where power and control are paramount. The modern student does not thrive in these pressures, and the adult educators should take care not to intentionally trigger students or punish on grounds of emotionality.

Restorative Portrait 5: A Restorative Justice Mediation

Description. Security brought a student to my office during third period. The teacher had called security to have the student removed for not working and contributing to a disruptive environment. Frequently brought to my office, the student was cordial and admitted to not working with a shrug of his shoulders. At seventeen years old, he knew there was not going to be much of a consequence due to his IEP. “How about we try a mediation with your teacher?” I asked. He shrugged again, then agreed. “Yeah, OK. I do want to talk to her about it.” I knew the teacher would participate, the number one requirement for a mediation. “Great!” I replied, “I’ll try and schedule it for tomorrow.” The mediation took place the day after the incident before the next class session occurred. The timing is important, as not too much time should lapse between incident and reconciliation. This can cause unsettled emotion to percolate, particularly when the parties have class together again.

We met in one of the conference rooms. The student, teacher, mediator, and I were present. The mediator can be anyone trained in restorative justice or familiar with restorative practices. This mediator helped develop the restorative justice mediation protocol, as well as used restorative approaches regularly in his own teaching practice. The process takes approximately one hour and must take place when the teacher has availability. As a senior, this student was able to miss any of his classes for a mediation (he communicated with his teacher for the period he missed, and we excused his absence). We scheduled it during the teacher's planning period, per her request.

The mediator opened the mediation by stating the purpose of the meeting. "We are here to talk about the situation that occurred and improve communication choices for next time." He established norms of no judgement and active listening, and explained his role was to facilitate a conversation between the two. The student explained his side first:

"All I said was, 'get out of my face!' I wanted to work, and you were yelling at all of us, then called security. I didn't think it was fair that I didn't have any work to do. You told them I was eating and, on my phone, but I didn't have any work. I was absent, so I didn't have a packet. You don't ever enforce the rules, but you did this time. I'm sorry I cussed at you, but I was mad that you hadn't made copies and I didn't have any work to do."

After the student finished, the mediator asked the teacher to explain her perspective of what happened. The teacher had listened attentively to the student's side with open body language. The teacher started with a universal teaching truth, "Students' are responsible for keeping their own copies. I make them the [reading] packet, but they are responsible for keeping them. If you were absent, you could have asked for a copy. I

couldn't leave the class to go make more. I admit, I let the class get away with a lot – the other students get away with a lot!” Embarrassed, she quickly looked at the mediator and me, her tense chuckle not masking her flushed cheeks. She turned back to the student, “I mean, I give you guys a lot of leeway when you're working, but this time it got out of hand! It was dramatic. And you were defending other students when I was trying to re-direct them. Once you called me a 'bitch' I was done. That was completely inappropriate! Other teachers were poking their heads into the classroom to check on things. I had to call security to come remove you!”

Once the teacher finished her side, the mediator then summarized both perspectives: the teacher had a rowdy class, and the student had missed class and feels he didn't get his work. The mediator asked a follow-up question to the student, “Why did you feel the need to jump to the defense of the other students?” The student responded about teenage camaraderie and the ‘teacher-vs-student’ paradigm. The mediator then asked the student, “What could you have done differently in that situation?” The student replied, “Follow my IEP accommodations and used my pressure pass to go to my partner class if I feel upset.” The mediator then asked the teacher the same question, “What could you have done differently in that situation?” The teacher replied with the benefit of hindsight, “Held my breath and not reacted.” Though both teacher and student debriefed the situation from their perspectives, the matter of the student calling the teacher an inflammatory name had yet to be addressed.

The mediator asked additional questions of the student to bring up this matter, “Could you have tried phrasing anything differently? You admitted to cussing at your teacher. How do you think that made her feel when you said that?” This caused the

student to pause in reflection, then share a sincere perspective. The teacher then disclosed that she had been a victim of domestic violence and being called names was a trigger for her. The mediator brought it back to the relationship between the two and underscored the need to preserve respect as a foundation for their teacher-student partnership. The mediator concluded, "This always brings us back to perspective. We all have things in our own lives that we carry with us, so it is important to always consider another's perspective in any situation." The student sincerely apologized for upsetting the teacher and calling her derogatory name, and the teacher accepted his apology.

Moving forward, the teacher requested the student use his pressure pass to leave the room whenever he is feeling upset or is distracting the classroom environment. The teacher will consider student needs and try to have all copies available for absent students. The mediator ended the mediation on a positive note and asked both teacher and student to say one thing they liked about the class. The teacher went first, followed by the student. The mediator then restated the agreements to the mediation, and both the teacher and student confirmed agreement. The mediator asked if there were any final questions or concerns, but there were none. Both teacher and student expressed relief to move past the incident and joked with one another as they left the room.

In total, 31 restorative mediations between teacher and students were held during the 2019-2020 school year. We developed the protocol around restorative justice best practices, which includes giving time for students to express their version of events, time for the teacher to share their perspective, and a discussion about the event. I conducted most of the mediations, some with a modified format depending on the severity of the incident. Some teachers refused to participate in a mediation; some teachers saw it as an

opportunity to lecture the student. Still, creating the opportunity for dialogue helped repair the relationship to allow learning to take place. Formal mediations with students were less common, as components of the mediation process were addressed through behavior intervention plans and behavior contracts.

Interpretation. This restorative justice mediation became our intervention for when conflict occurred between teacher and student. An informal conversation always takes place before the formal mediation, as both parties must be willing to participate, the practice aspect of care theory (Noddings, 2005). The first year of data collection was spent creating a culture for mediations to occur. Teachers were not used to being asked “What happened?” after they sent a student to the office. In previous years, the culture was for the teacher to send the student to the office, and the student received a consequence. Restorative justice practices require the teacher to admit some culpability in the situation and work *with* the students toward a resolution. Immediate consequences were rarely administered unless a serious safety infraction occurred.

Restorative Justice Protocol. The most effective way to implement restorative justice practices is to weave them into every interaction with students. In this way, restorative justice becomes a system of relationship building driven by a mutual understanding in purpose.

The following steps can be used in restorative justice mediations between teachers and students. They can also be modified to fit any conflict situation requiring repair.

- Introduction – Introduce mediator role and state the purpose of meeting.
- Set mediation norms – Establish norms of non-judgement and active listening.
- Hear student’s side first, then teacher’s side.

- Mediator summarizes perspectives and engages the parties in reflection.

The mediator summarizes the two perspectives by validating both the teacher's and student's stories. The mediator asks both parties, "What could you have done differently?" The mediator names issue at core of the harm and simultaneously incorporates empathy skill-building, "How do you think the other person felt when you said/did that?"

- Moving forward – Both parties state their needs for future interactions.
- Mediator asks each party to say what they like about the class.
- Mediator re-states agreement; asks if there are questions or concerns.

The mediator will follow-up with both teacher and student to ensure both are adhering to the terms of the agreement. The real impact of restorative practices is in the aftermath. Informal check-ins with the teacher on an on-going basis will help ensure the lasting impacts of the mediation.

The second year of data collection saw a growth in restorative justice mediations. The restorative justice protocol was developed out of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and strengths-based approaches of development (Leadbeater et al., 2004). It can vary depending on the situation and be modified for both formal and informal mediations. The difference between the two is based on the length of planning; informal mediations can occur spontaneously if all parties are available. The power of a restorative justice mediation is in creating a space for harmed parties to be heard and validated that will lead to a resolution. Throughout the course of 2019-2020, we attempted 31 restorative justice mediations between teachers and students. This is not counting the informal restorative conversations led by teachers. Because these mediations

arose out of disciplinary situations, I led all mediations and could not annotate the details. The process indicates success when both teacher and student had the willingness to engage with the restorative justice mediation. Some teachers decided mid-mediation they did not like the process and did not complete the mediation. Moreover, some teachers flat refused to participate in mediations altogether. It became apparent that implementing restorative justice practices was a matter of personal choice, reflective of their professional values and teaching philosophies. Not all teachers want to implement changes to their practices.

Restorative Portrait 6: Emotional Will

Description. Research Journal, 11/09/2018:

Today I wanted to quit. Not, 'quit my job' in a short-sighted sense. But, 'quit' in a soul-tired sense. Quit the field. The endeavor. The stress. Quit the social justice work. Now, I know this isn't possible for me. Yet, I can see that this has become one of my common reactions when doing this type of work in a new school. I always have high, ideal hopes at the beginning of any new job, hoping that this time the school will be different, primed for social-emotional learning. Then I always seem to be rudely awakened by the human element of the practice...my Pollyanna tendencies getting the best of me. It always follows the same pattern for me:

The ideal vision.

The reality of the practice.

The epiphany that this time will not be any different than before.

The mental and emotional fallout.

The re-building of my own professional capacities.

The re-centering of my strengths to focus on what I can control.

The gains of consistent over-time work spent collaborating.

The leveling-up professionally to recognize my growth pattern.

It would be nice if this emotional pattern followed a yearly cycle. Lately, it seems to be following a monthly one, but that's likely the distortion of the high-stress environment. I feel isolated, like I'm swimming upstream against the prevailing current. I'm not sure how much longer I can last, and it's not even Thanksgiving...

Several of my researcher journal entries are full of emotion. During my first year as a dean, I would get into daily disagreements with my other two dean colleagues and five security guards regarding student attitude and misbehavior. The majority opinion is that students need to be “punished” for disrespect (i.e., not listening to the adult), and if the students did not like the harsh treatment, they could find another school. This linear thinking is incongruent with social-emotional development and runs antithesis to the learning process. In their sense, school attendance is viewed as a privilege not a right or even necessity to have an educated citizenry. These attitudes from my colleagues would provoke visceral reactions from me and cause me to question the work. I never anticipated that restorative justice practices would elicit so much hostility and pushback from peers. The 2018-2019 school year started off at such a high speed, that by November, I felt defeated. The months melted into one another, and journal entry after journal entry noted the recurring variable: an increasingly toxic work environment.

By February, I was making pro and con lists regarding staying at the school. The pro side garnered five bullet points, with “kids” being at the top. Yet, the con side easily outweighed the other with nine bullet points, and “principal leadership” situated at the top. There was more chaos throughout the spring, leading to another career reflection late in the year. Research Journal, 04/30/2019:

This has been another ‘wilderness’ year of my career. Terrible administrative leadership and poor systems. Turnaround schools have a chaotic energy to them, and it’s as if you can never get ahead of the storm. There’s always something, and it’s always draining. Everyone is emotionally and verbally reactive, and the stress is compounding. It’s tiresome. I think these feelings can be categorized under burnout, compassion fatigue, and maybe even vicarious trauma.

‘Compassion fatigue’ came up several times throughout the journaling process. I connect this to emotional will, since having an emotional willingness to rise above any perceived adversity is necessary for resiliency. Locating safe spaces inside the work environment became paramount to get through the day-to-day stress. It became important to find those other educators who felt similar subversive pangs to commiserate and build camaraderie. It is imperative to understand co-conspirators can be identified and used for emotional support in times of need. Two overarching truths plagued my conscience while I worked as a restorative justice dean of students:

1. The system is not designed for everyone to succeed.
2. The system is emotionally bankrupt.

The only way to rise above the harsh realities of an impersonal system is to cultivate sparks of light from those colleagues who do understand the work. Though sometimes

few, there are passionate others in the far corners of the school who can be a sanctuary of calm amidst the chaos.

I started seeing a therapist in May 2019. I felt I barely survived the academic year, and I wanted to ensure I received emotional support and validation for what I had experienced. My therapist helped me have a better understanding of organizational systems to normalize some of stagnant energy and seeming lack of progress. I also learned to separate my emotional reactions from the neutrality of the situation to alleviate some of the emotional stress brought on by my passionate approach to the work.

By the middle of the 2019-2020 school year, my second year at the school, I experienced more of the same from the previous year. There had been several staffing changes, but the same punitive sentiments regarding school discipline remained. The turnaround status of the school did not change, and the presence of an outside management company was seen and felt on day one. The outside managers immediately made administrative decisions that revealed they did not want to experiment with progressive forms of school discipline.

I started identifying my experiences as a restorative justice dean of students and the subsequent pushback from authoritarian colleagues as a moral injury. The term came to me from a second therapist I started seeing in September 2020, to address increasing professional stress. Research Journal, 01/14/2020:

Moral injury of the public education system. How to keep one's own morals in an amoral system? I'm in a system squeeze. I feel like this amoral system won't let me even say that the work I do is ok! I question everything I do, as if I must qualify my work, defend my actions, justify every decision to multiple people,

repeat the steps I took to reach a decision.

I'm constantly questioning myself and my work. I'm frustrated to the point that I want to buck the whole system, but the same system convinces me that I'm wrong. I feel trapped.

Individual students and teachers are on the micro-level, the place of implementation and change. There are so many challenges of working in a system that is flawed and doesn't cater to the needs of individual students. I must accept that the educational system is not designed for everyone to receive support. It is possible to have large-scale micro-level changes (versus small-scale macro-level changes)? I feel the crush of an uncaring system, damage to my psyche. This system won't change, it is impermeable to any outside influence. I had previously thought it was individual people making decisions or not following through with ideas. Now, from this vantage point, I can accept it is the system that is punitive, the system that is flawed. The present-day school system is manifesting as cold, harsh, and impersonal. Do I accept that it is this way everywhere?

I use the term 'system' to refer to the bureaucratic confines of a turnaround school that has limited resources, and limited willingness to radically change how students are approached. The principal and assistant principals who make up the macro-level of school administration are closely monitored by the district administration in day-to-day operations. This turnaround school district had the added layer of an external management company reviewing every decision, both inside and outside of the school building. The outside managers replaced the superintendent and several other district officials, in addition to adding support positions at the district level to oversee operations.

The high school received a senior partner to work with the co-principals. The external managers also provided an instructional coach to work with the five assistant principals already situated within the school. The top-heavy alignment of administrators is not new to turnaround leadership, although it reduces direct supports to the teachers and students who could benefit from more paraeducators, counselors, and social workers.

The willingness of an individual to positively contribute to a collaborative work environment is directly related to the organizational system itself. Once it is deemed that the system is incompatible, hope wanes. I experienced this throughout my two years as a restorative justice dean of students. Once I realized what I was up against, I could not change my feelings. Research Journal, 02/29/2020:

More of the same on Friday. I hit that point in the last 48/72 hours (since Thursday morning), where something clicked. Something finally hit me like a repeated smack to the forehead – I can't work in a place that isn't designed to support students. By "place" I mean the specific school/building in this district that needs so much work to be put back in order. I'm not sure I'm in it for the long haul. That's not my forte – building-level changes. It's too chaotic and unmanageable. There are too many moving parts that rely on all players to work together to fidelity. Yet, whose vision are they being faithful too? A unified vision seems impossible under current conditions and has not at all happened yet this school year. The stress is insurmountable, and you can't devote your entire life to the endeavor and stay emotionally afloat. This is especially true if you have children, a family, a second job, graduate school. Only so much energy can be diverted to work in a broken system. Are they up for that challenge? Am I?

I was sad to come to terms with this reality. I was miserable going to work every day, as the negativity was palpable. Every teacher seemed exhausted. I checked-in with several different faculty members, and many felt the same way I did, soul-tired. Student-teacher conflict increased as spring approached, and teachers felt unsupported when students were not harshly disciplined. I felt helpless because my ideas for positive interventions and alternatives-to-suspension were met with derision from my assistant principal supervisor. I tried as best as I could to offer positive supports, but it was an uphill battle.

Interpretation. Cultivating the will to support students is the primary value required to implement restorative practices. Yet, this willingness can be compromised in the system squeeze, as the willingness to battle the system takes precedent. Fullan (1993) articulates this through a look at the forces that contribute to a change mindset. He writes of educational change:

It is a world where one should never trust a change agent, or never assume that others, especially leaders, know what they are doing – not because change agents and leaders are duplicitous or incompetent – but because the change process is so complex and so fraught with unknowns that all of us must be on guard and apply ourselves to investigating and solving problems (Fullan, 1993, p. viii).

A strong willingness to engage in the change process is what makes a change mindset possible, which includes implementation of restorative practices. The success lies in the willingness and intentionality of the practitioner. The primary challenge to implementation of any program is a schoolwide commitment to the vision. Community buy-in must be coupled with sustained professional development to shift professional culture to a change mindset. Fullan (1993) lays out the mindset as centered on moral purpose and managing change agency. Both contain a set of skills that simultaneously develop individuals and the institution. Though moral purpose is complex due to the

equity and power dynamics, it is about making a difference in the life chances of all students (Fullan, 1999). Principal vision and commitment can go far in cultivating buy-in from all levels of school staff. Fullan (1993) writes that once each educator commits to being an effective change agent, then the reflective practitioner can be developed through inquiry and experimentation.

When it comes to the act of will, the philosopher Schopenhauer (1995) writes that will represents “the inner nature which is vital as its *sine qua non* [essential condition] to imparting meaning and validity to all real necessity (i.e., effect following upon a cause) ... When it is known immediately, it is called *will*” (p. 58). In this way, will contains within it an action component to enact the meaning and validity of one’s essence. Utilizing the will is the only way to enact change, to develop a self-reflection protocol to improve one’s professional practice.

An example of utilizing emotional will is in the implementation of restorative practices into every student interaction. During the 2018-2019 school year, a special education teacher and myself developed a protocol for student interaction based off time and space. This protocol asks teachers to give time to students who are emotionally escalated and get them to a safe space in the building. We had designated dean office space to use as a “cool down” room for escalated students. Regardless, the exact steps of the protocol can vary, as it is the *will* to follow the protocol that matters the most. The general steps to follow when working with an emotionally escalated student are:

1. If you find the student in an escalated state, please immediately notify the main office to radio the deans. Escalated students work much better with people they have a relationship with, particularly on first encounter.

2. If you see a student in the hallways, outside of the building, or anywhere they are not supposed to be, please leave them alone and give them time to calm themselves down. Stay in the general area, but do not approach the student. Escalated students are good at calming themselves down in a supported environment (i.e., under adult supervision), after given some time.
3. If the escalated student is seen walking/running, please do not follow. The student is attempting to safely leave a situation and calm themselves without escalating further. If you see them leave campus, please notify the dean immediately to contact the parent or guardian.

Many teachers have expressed discomfort at students who are emotionally escalated. Yet, working in a poverty impacted school community brings many educational challenges that activates the social-emotional side of teaching. We know students respond to teachers they like and have a relationship with – all learning happens in a social context. This is the direct result of the teacher’s willingness to incorporate strategies to bolster social-emotional education. This requires openness, flexibility, and authenticity. Social-emotional teaching comes from within, and an educator must want to incorporate student experiences. They must create spaces and educational opportunities for students to open and share about themselves. This is a parallel process with the teacher as well. Like reciprocity in a relationship, a mutual understanding of the relationship is at the foundation of social-emotional teaching and learning (Noddings, 2005).

Fullan (1993, 1999, 2003) developed his *Change Forces* series around chaos and complexity theory applied to school settings since they are like other dynamic systems. Change culture centered around a moral purpose is essential for any change to occur. As

an individual, I can try for all the changes I want. Yet, if there is no change culture, then few changes are going to happen. Enacting change is difficult enough; without the moral imperative behind change established, then change most likely will not happen. Why would teachers change? Change usually happens when people are not actually fond of the system and are moved to change the system for the better.

Restorative Portrait 7: Vulnerability

Description. Implementing restorative discipline practices takes vulnerability, particularly in highly impacted school communities. The impact can come from social factors like poverty and chronic illness in the community and from school factors like high teacher-turnover and unstable leadership. The ‘turnaround’ status of the school causes any ill to be highlighted with a bright spotlight. The trauma of the toxic school environment can have severe effects on the people working in said environment, both teachers and students. The vulnerability comes with trying new things and taking a risk when there are no other identifiable options. Often, these new things arrive in the middle of an incident when there is no obvious solution, so the teacher tries something new, and it works. These are sometimes referred to as “aha” moments by educators if they work particularly well and can be applied again in the future.

One area of vulnerability came in the form of a soft-handoff of a student between two supporting adults. This particular student was known as a “high-flyer” due to a high frequency of negative interactions with teachers, security guards, deans, and principals. Several adults suspect the student had a behavioral disorder (e.g., bipolar disorder), but none had been identified. The student often had frequent emotional outbursts and lashed out at adults who tried to re-direct or correct him. This student had been suspended

multiple times, so I did not use that as a form of punishment. The restorative justice approach identifies the harm caused to the community. Because the harm was mostly on an interpersonal level, the school psychologist and I decided to try and work with him individually to build behavioral skills and support his social-emotional learning.

When he had an outburst in class or another area of the school, I received the student from security guards. I would de-escalate him with breathing strategies and writing activities until the school psychologist was ready for him. Occasionally, the student could self-regulate and come to my office on his own, and then we would follow the same process. Once calmed, I would radio the school psychologist to see if he was ready for the student. Even if busy, the school psychologist had a suite of offices for student de-escalation and monitoring. I would always deliver the student to the school psychologist, never send him alone. We termed this a ‘soft-handoff’ because the student was being transferred directly from one adult to another. We implemented this practice for this student as a tier three intervention, which are interventions designed for a small number of students in the Response to Intervention model (RTI). In the RTI tiered model shaped like a pyramid, most students are in the bottom tier, with fewer students in the middle, and even less at the top of the pyramid. It is a misconception that educational interventions should be universal. The RTI model utilizes interventions to support learning and behavior needs of students in both the classroom and schoolwide community, including disciplinary situations. Interventions should be designed regarding specific situations and are often subtle. The students at the top of the RTI pyramid receive the most intensive services.

Many students need support in ways neither they nor I even know. That line jumped out of my researcher journal. No date, just “9:11 AM” written at the top of the page. I saved it, knowing it contained more truth than any school professional would care to admit. While sitting at my desk one day, I made a list of the various ways I built rapport with students throughout my dean work.

- I smile.
- I open with kind words.
- I tell them I am happy to see them at school.
- I use ‘school talk’ and academic language to prepare students for the school day and help them transition into school-mode.
- I re-connect to previous conversations.
- I ask questions. I validate answers.
- I affirm success for the school day and send them to class.

The vulnerability is in the asking of the questions, the listening for the answers.

Building rapport with students is the basis for all restorative practices.

Interpretation. Regardless of the incident, the real impact of restorative justice practices is in the aftermath. When being vulnerable, a dean tries many different tactics to support student behavior. This brings in the modeling and confirmation aspects of care theory (Noddings, 2005). I modeled the process I wanted to students to follow and used dialogue to ensure understanding. Many educators know that showing vulnerability can deepen respect students have for teachers (Ginwright, 2016). Some teachers feel comfortable sharing aspects of their lives with students, while others show vulnerability by asking questions and getting to know the students.

There is a parallel process at play where being vulnerable with students is positive and being vulnerable with adult colleagues is negative. When implementing behavioral interventions, communication with teachers and other adults involved is important to ensure everyone understands the purpose of the intervention. This communication contains its own level of vulnerability because it can cause negative responses from teachers and security guards who feel the students are not receiving consequences. Many of my attempts to support students were met with one of two reactions from colleagues and supervisors:

- ***Coddling***: Security guards and administrators, have used this term to loosely describe my supportive interactions with students. It appears they confuse kindness, compassion, and respect as negative things to be detrimental to student development. I do not know how to address this fallacy with those who believe that treating students with kindness and respect is somehow detrimental. “Compassionate accountability” is a psychological concept that describes the benefits of support with respect to the affective domain.
- ***Babysitting***: One assistant principal often used this term to describe students who were in any of the office suite areas, after they had been removed from class for minor incidents (e.g., swearing in class, refusing to take off their hoodies, talking when the teacher was talking, etc.). Many authoritarian-style administrators do not appear to understand social-emotional learning supports. In a school setting, these supports manifest

through intentional social and emotional skill development. Examples of this include:

- Incident debriefs through individual, supportive reflections (1-1)
- Small group discussions on positive behaviors (2-4 students)
- Mediations with teachers (when requested by teacher or dean)

Building these skills requires time and space for student reflection, which also requires students learn how *to* “reflect.” This can only happen in spaces that are established as safe, whereby students feel comfortable enough to engage in higher order thinking skills, such as self-reflection.

These negative reactions became the definition for any restorative work regarding implementing social-emotional supports for students. Teacher vulnerability involves placing others’ perceptions aside and taking risks anyway. It is being self-aware, allowing someone else to ask you, “What did your face look like when you said that?” We know from research that students and teachers’ perceptions of school-based relationships directly affects students’ potential to achieve (Valenzuela, 1999). Teacher vulnerability is activated in the debrief with colleagues about the interventions and follow-up steps that worked. It is asking the tough questions to develop authentic solutions to support students: what will ultimately change the students’ behavior? Restorative practices must be implemented with fidelity to sustain a shift in school culture.

Fullan (1993) acknowledges this as a part of the change model. Knowing where the idea fits allows us to become skilled at it, this is central to praxis. This praxis is further enhanced through collaboration, which is the ultimate driver in the change process, as “there is a ceiling effect to how much we can learn if we keep to ourselves”

(Fullan, 1993, p. 17). Being skilled in the capacities of change agency allows teachers to enact the moral purpose of the teaching profession. All behavior means something. The trauma-informed response is to find out the nature of the behavioral response, a quick ‘root-cause analysis’ assessment can achieve this purpose.

Restorative Portrait 8: Trust of a ‘School-Mom’

Description. It only took four months, December 2018, for the students begin to call me School-Mom. Several students sat in my office before school one morning, sleepily drinking the fruit punch Gatorade and rice crispy treats I kept in my office. I regularly brought in snacks for hungry students that dragged themselves out of bed before dawn to arrive to school on time. Like most teachers, I used my own money to pick up the drinks and snacks – gestures I felt compelled to do as part of my nurturing teaching philosophy. Sometimes I did not have snacks, having gotten too busy to refill the snack stash. The students still came to my office to check-in and chat about life. Check-ins are my favorite restorative practice, as it builds a constant dialogue that can be used whenever highly volatile students become triggered. “You’re like our School-Mom,” one of the students quipped that morning, in between gulps of bright red Gatorade. The others laughed, but all concurred: I’m their School-Mom.

I appreciated the moniker, as it tells me they know I care for them. I have created a space around me that they feel comfortable to be themselves. These students are not easy to teach, and frequently get sent from class and brought to my office by security for minor infractions. Yet, by using humor and rapport to build relationships, these students cooperate with me when given time and space to process their emotions under adult supervision. This is the nature of a pedagogy of presence. For some students, the

curriculum is not the most important aspect of schooling. For marginalized students, sometimes it is enough that they show up, make contact with a school official, receive a meal and a kind word. For some students, this is the best we can hope for, as they are often in survival mode and are not able to access their executive functioning and higher order thinking skills.

Fast forward to the end of January 2019. Two of the students frequently in my office had come looking for me like they did every morning. I liked to check-in with these students first thing in the morning and set them on a good note for the morning. These two students in particular have chaotic home lives involving the loss of a custodial parent. Though they are from separate families, their lives are similar in that they suffer from grief at the loss of one of their parents. In addition, their families experience a lot of chaos to seemingly distract them from the grief and loss. I check-in with these students before school and between each class. Easily triggered, they are often suspended by other deans and assistant principals (APs) for having emotional outbursts. On that January day, the students were having a relatively calm day. I made sure to check-in with them throughout the morning and at lunch. I walked them to class after lunch and proceeded to go to make a few rounds in the halls and then head to my office.

After circling the first floor, I passed the downstairs dean suite, and I noticed these exact same two students being reprimanded by my supervising AP and a security guard. I noticed their eyes were red, and I immediately thought the students must have left the school after I dropped them off at class and smoked marijuana. Though this seemed illogical, as it had not been more than ten minutes since I took them to their class. I entered the office suite ready to reprimand them, when I noticed that both students were

crying – that is the reason why their eyes were red. The students gave me a pleading look, wanting the tirade to end.

My entering the office interrupted the AP, who was mid-yell, his sweaty face revealing his own emotional dysregulation. “Ms. Vasquez, this does not concern you!” The AP turned his anger toward me, “These students are in severe trouble, and it does not concern you!” I was confused and taken aback, and I could feel my own blood pressure start to rise as I contemplated what to do. “I just took them to class at the start of the period, how can they be in here already?!” My voice raised with emotion. “I’m the freshman dean and I work with these students.” The AP ignored my response and told the two students to go inside the office suite to be placed in two isolated rooms used for student seclusion. This caused the students to become more agitated and increasingly upset, but they complied and went into the interior offices. I immediately followed them into the interior office space, as I was now concerned about their social-emotional safety.

The AP told me to leave, but I would not move until he told me what they had done wrong. I positioned myself outside the two seclusion rooms with my back toward the students. I was in a standoff with the AP. “Ms. Vasquez, I am requesting that you leave the area immediately. You are seriously jeopardizing your career, and I request that you remove yourself immediately!”

I wouldn’t budge. “I’m not leaving until you tell me what these students have done wrong. I have behavioral plans in place for them and you know they are easily triggered.” The students were becoming increasingly agitated inside the rooms and started shouting at the AP.

He threatened them with expulsion, and again demanded I leave the area. “Ms. Vasquez, I’m going to ask you one more time to leave the area immediately. This does not concern you, and these students are in serious trouble.” I again stood my ground and repeated what I knew to be true. “I just took these students to class. What did they do wrong that warranted them being brought down here within that short amount of time? They are easily triggered and doing this sets them off even more.”

By this time, other deans and support staff had trickled out of their offices to join us all in the hallway. Seeing the situation grow larger, I decided to remove myself. “Alright, I’ll leave. And I want it documented that I object to what is happening here.”

I turned to go, and I heard doors push open behind me. The two students followed me out of the office. The AP did not try to stop them, but I know we had to go to a physically and emotionally safe place immediately. The two students and I went directly to the SROs’ (School Resource Officers, law enforcement officials assigned to schools) office to report what had happened. The SROs utilize restorative practices and build an easy rapport with most staff and students, including these two students. Upon entering their office, I immediately broke down, tears cooling my flushed cheeks. The officers listened sympathetically as we detailed what had happened. Powerless, they could only commiserate and offer support. They advised the students to bring in their parents. They advised me to talk to someone in the human resources department. The distrust among staff was stifling and created a hostile work environment.

While the students and I had gone to the SROs office, the AP went to the principal. I was immediately radioed over the walkie talkie, “Ms. Vasquez, please report to the principal’s office immediately.”

“Copy,” I replied. I took a few deep breaths and left the students with the SROs and told them to call their parents. Upon entering the principal’s office, I was met with accusations of insubordination, and claims I interfered with an on-going investigation. Allegedly, the students had weapons on them, and the AP was in the process of organizing a threat assessment. I wanted to know the charge, as I know both students, and I highly doubted they would bring a weapon with them to school. Often truant, these students simply left school when they no longer wanted to be there and would not jeopardize their already-fragile standing by bringing a weapon to the building. At least that’s what I believed. I told both the principal and AP that the students were with the SRO and could be searched at a moment’s notice. The school did not assign lockers, and the students did not have cars and did not carry backpacks. Thus, if they had a weapon, it would be on their person. Both the principal and AP ignored my request to have the students searched.

After being reprimanded, I was left with a vagueness about what to do next. Feeling isolated, I decided to follow the SROs advice and I contacted the district Human Resources department. I received an employee complaint form to document what I had experienced with the students. Out of concern any future disciplinary action against me, I wanted my side of the story documented. I took the opportunity to document the growing antagonism between my supervising AP and myself throughout the school year.

File: E2 Employee Complaint Form

When an employee feels there is a basis for a complaint concerning an alleged violation of discrimination or harassment, a written complaint may be filed with the principal, immediate supervisor, Chief Human Resource Officer, or other executive administrator.

Name of Complainant: Alicia Vasquez, Dean of Students

Date Alleged Violation Occurred: 01/30/2019, approximately 2:00 PM

Statement of Complaint: (Please describe the nature of the complaint including what happened, where and when the incident occurred and any witnesses who may have observed the incident.)

As my immediate supervisor, my assistant principal (AP) ceased speaking directly to me in the middle of last semester, as documented in a statement given 12/12/2018 (submitted to the District Manager of Safety and Security for another matter). Since that time, my AP has become increasingly combative and antagonistic, which has created a hostile working environment – for both myself and the highly impacted students we are charged to serve.

This specific complaint stems from an alleged incident that occurred on 01/30/2019, involving my supervising AP and two freshmen students who had become extremely escalated, resulting in out-of-school suspensions. In my attempt to de-escalate the situation, my AP reprimanded my work. Subsequently, I found myself in the principal's office to discuss the issue. My supervising AP claimed that I was 'not following directives,' and that my intervening was 'inappropriate' since I did not know the details of the situation. He claimed one of the students had made 'significant threats' that proved to be a 'safety risk to the school,' and that a full threat assessment had to be completed, with recommendation for expulsion. He further stated that my attempt to talk with the students put 'everyone's safety at risk' as the students could have had 'a gun or other dangerous weapons' on them. If this was the case, shouldn't the AP have contacted the School Resource Officer right away, and followed the school safety protocol for dangerous weapons?

This is the latest example of my supervising AP's attack on my professional practice, and on my decision-making abilities when working with students. Additionally, it is a clear example of the trumped-up charges he leverages against vulnerable and traumatized students who have developed maladjusted behaviors. This AP brings hostility and aggression to his position. This creates a tense school culture for staff and certain students – seemingly, the marginalized ones I personally work hardest to support. I sent an email request to the principal on 01/14/2019, asking for her to mediate a conversation between my supervising AP and myself. I wanted to discuss the growing tension of our work-relationship. She never responded and a mediation never happened.

Relief Requested:

I would like for my supervising AP to cease hostile and aggressive actions towards myself and students. Specifically, I would like this AP to cease using the term “baby-sitting” when referring to the work I do with students. Apparently, this AP has little regard for social-emotional learning practices, which are necessary if traumatized students with highly impactful life experiences are expected to make academic gains. In a poverty impacted school-setting, these supports manifest through intentional social and emotional skill development. Coping skills, interpersonal awareness skills, and emotional regulation skills are major areas of focus for students with maladjusted behaviors. This high school has a trauma-informed support partner as a part of a Healthy Schools grant. This partner is a licensed social worker and psychologist who offered to work with my supervising AP on understanding trauma-informed supports. Unfortunately, he has not expressed an interest in, nor capacity for, understanding these student needs.

Nothing ultimately came of the HR complaint. I met with a human resources person, and she listened to my grievances. She asked for more concrete evidence and specific instances of discrimination towards students who are in a protected class. I did not have the concrete information she was looking for, as emotional targeting and bullying is difficult to prove. It was in my final email to her that I realized that my philosophical disagreements with my supervising AP is the product of a dynamic school system, and unfortunately, nothing more. I wrote,

I have come to terms with the fact that this is the operational reality of dynamic public education systems. This has been a good learning opportunity for me regarding how systems operate, and a great growth opportunity regarding how I want to operate within such systems. I love the educational work I do for the impact it has on students and their futures. I truly believe education is a valuable commodity that must be acknowledged, shared, and protected. Working in poverty impacted communities is a double-edged sword for me, as there is a lot of tragedy amidst the triumphs. Our work is to build resiliency and promote protective factors in individuals so they may push through any circumstance. This experience has helped me to toughen up and normalize the chaos that is a product of the high-stakes-pressure placed upon turnaround schools in poverty impacted public school districts. Understanding what those words actually mean in the context of my complaint situates it as nothing more than a by-product of a chaotic and broken system.

I was left frustrated and disillusioned. Change does not seem possible amidst hostile working conditions where there was ultimately no recourse. The school year was winding

down to a chaotic end, and I could only hope that the next year would bring more support for restorative programming and not the opposite.

Interpretation. The emergence of a “School-Mom” amidst hostile working conditions was only possible through trust. This trust grows out of the social respect and discourse that takes place in school communities (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). As trust flourished among students and me, it disintegrated among my colleagues. Though I was the restorative justice dean of students, every attempt to implement those practices was met with derision and contempt from supervisors. Participating in a discipline culture of suspensions, threats of expulsions, and active intimidation was incongruent with my principles and beliefs. I could not engage in work that I believed to be harmful to students. It was at this point in my dean work that I actively objected to this work. I refused to implement practices that targeted students, framed students, triggered students, or created bigger behavioral issues than any original disciplinary infraction. I became increasingly frustrated with my colleagues and their lack of knowledge surrounding social-emotional supports. Perhaps it is an assumption that it is a lack of knowledge, as it could also be a lack of will.

On many occasions, I concluded that several colleagues and I suffered from nothing more than philosophical differences regarding school discipline. One teacher asked in a professional development meeting on social-emotional learning, “Why do we have to worry about that? Can’t math just be math?” Today’s teacher cannot separate the social-emotional dimension of learning from the academic dimensions. Cuban (2016) writes that the fundamental dilemma facing teachers is how to balance the academic and emotional sides of teaching. Though even today, some students do not want to buy into

social-emotional learning. One recent article in *Education Week* echoes this sentiment and has had positive feedback, particularly amidst the emerging pandemic pedagogy (Wilkerson, 2022). Restorative justice presents a framework for incorporating both social-emotional and academic learning capacities, but it does require a willingness and vulnerability to implement them with fidelity.

The 2018-2019 school year was marred by the AP incident and the overall hostile working environment. Although the 2019-2020 school year saw a change in administrative staff and my supervising AP was no longer at the school, the attitudes remained the same. By March 2020, I was assigned to the school parking lot to ticket any car that did not have a high school parking pass on it. Knowing the financial status of many students, it would be a best practice of the school to not require paid parking passes. Yet, the administration and outside management partner wanted to curb the practice of non-high school student vehicles accessing the parking lot. While commendable, the school stands alone in an open field off a busy highway; the only unauthorized cars in the lot would be friends of students. If the intent was to stop non-students from using the lot, then the school could issue parking passes for student vehicles free of charge or a nominal fee. Instead, they wanted me to be a heavy hand and financially punish the students for not following their rules. I would not do it, as it runs counter to the moral imperative strategy of education (Fullan, 2011). Central to the moral imperative strategy is a moral imperative mindset, distinguished by respect and the creation of “conditions that make people lovable, mainly by creating circumstances that favor success” (Fullan, 2011, p. 7).

Advocacy becomes important when considering that students are easily targeted, particularly if they have not historically been model students. The role of advocacy in educational settings is active and lively. Advocacy is taking a student's side when no one else will, investigating all sides of an incident to give each situation due process. Advocacy is actively standing up for someone who is being targeted and bullied. Advocacy is refusing to implement flawed school policies that are detrimental to student success and create barriers to educational attainment (i.e., the parking lot policy). Advocates offer unconditional support and acceptance, and they do whatever it takes to help students graduate. Advocates give breaks, bend rules, and make exceptions out of the principle of helping someone else gain valuable skill building through mercy and grace. Advocacy embodies the crucial elements for "whole-system improvement" as identified by Fullan (2016, p. 42): intrinsic motivation, instructional improvement, teamwork, and 'allness' (affecting all teachers and students).

Restorative Portrait 9: The Rise of Trauma-Informed Education

Description. 2019 Fall Trauma Informed School Conference. The uncomfortable plastic chairs, the wide muffled yawns, and the smell of brewing coffee arouse the conference-goers. The first keynote session starts at 8:45am. My body fights tiredness, *it's too early!* my mind declares. Though I would have been at work for almost two hours by now, the change in schedule erases all memory of waking up early. The tiredness on the other faces is contagious. The freshly brewed coffee and sometimes-fresh pastries disappear and make their way into the conference ballroom, balanced precariously on conference folders or iPads. The keynote speakers enliven the flat atmosphere. The psychiatrist and child trauma expert Dr. Bruce Perry is one of the speakers, who focus on

the neuroscience behind child trauma and its implications for education. Social worker and creator of a leading behavior-skills assessment “Collaborative & Proactive Solutions Model,” Dr. Ross Greene is the other keynote speaker. He characterizes student misbehavior as having a lag in skills and encourages skill-assessments to identify these gaps in behavioral skills (Greene, 2016).

Conferences focusing on trauma-informed and trauma-sensitive schools have been gaining in popularity over the past decade, though the concepts and inherent theories have been around long before that. With common titles such as “Learning & the Brain,” these conferences focus on educating anxious brains through emotion regulation and mindfulness practices. A quick scan of various programs features workshops from clinical psychiatrists, child psychologists, adolescent mental health counselors, and educational researchers. The keynote is often the same Dr. Bruce Perry who is at this conference. The latest in social-emotional qualitative educational research incorporates a trauma-informed lens that can inform schools, classrooms, curricula, strategies, and teacher educator programs. Though these conferences use the latest language of ‘trauma-informed’ schools and ‘trauma-sensitive’ classrooms as the central conference theme, one manifestation of trauma-knowledge in schools is through restorative practices. The latest conferences present the psychological side of trauma and education—rightfully so considering the neurological relationship between trauma and student behavior. However, this only reveals the *why* behind student behavior but does not necessarily tell educators what to do about it. Workshop titles such as “Building Emotionally Resilient Educators” focus on ‘self-care’ – an overused concept that lacks any real meaning or support for a classroom that erupts in disarray daily.

The *Personal Agenda for Alicia Vasquez* records workshops ranging from “The Impact of Adverse Experiences on the Developing Child” to “Empowering Teachers: Coaching for Schoolwide Implementation.” Two workshops on restorative justice offered solutions: “Implementing and Practicing Restorative Practices in Schools Every day” and “Restorative Circle Demonstration and Practice,” which included an interactive exercise. As a trained teacher, I know restorative practices start at the classroom level and are employed through each individual educator. As a restorative justice dean, I choose to use restorative strategies and approaches with students in disciplinary situations. Conferences such as these help those of us interested in changing and enhancing our practice, and it helps to share some of the latest research pertaining to social-emotional learning. Yet, these conferences do little for those who do not ascribe to trauma-informed or restorative philosophies. There are some teachers who do not ascribe to these philosophies or the notion of care in schools. They remain an impediment to any real and lasting change.

The conference yielded good information on brain science and motivating educators to shift their perspectives on students and schools. Yet, most people who attend these conferences believe in the topics presented. As an educator, I believe social-emotional learning should be considered at every level of schooling. Restorative justice is a way to incorporate emotional development and reconciliation into the regular course curriculum. Moreover, restorative justice is a way to apply curricular concepts to the realms of behavior, discipline, and classroom management. Curriculum studies generally focuses on teaching and learning academic content and skills. From the curricular perspective, ‘discipline’ offers its own set of standards and objectives connected to behavior skills. Behavior-directed content can complement academic content in the larger

curriculum. Almost a parallel process, behavioral skills can be presented in conjunction with academic skills through avenues such as group work and project-based learning.

Interpretation. Trauma-informed means having an awareness that students experience trauma. At its most fundamental, ‘trauma-informed’ literally means being informed about trauma and its connection to student behavior, which has implications for the way students are disciplined. Trauma can be thought of as a spectrum, ranging from macro-level natural and human-created disasters, such as hurricanes and war, to more micro-level trauma, such as various types of abuse or sudden accidents. The event does not have to be big to have a traumatic impact, as trauma is an individual reaction that affects everyone differently. Moreover, we know that trauma compromises the brain and leads to actual changes in brain chemistry (Perry, 2006; van der Kolk, 2014).

Though ‘trauma-informed’ is the latest trend, it can also be framed as another iteration of affective education. To be trauma-informed is to be aware, which is a core process of social-emotional learning and restorative practices. In addition to Noddings (2005), there have been additional calls for care in urban education for over twenty years (Groulx & Thomas, 2000), as well as care in all classroom subjects, including math (Philipp & Thanheiser, 2010). These are not new ideas; they are old ideas applied in new ways. The activation of personal and professional values can lead one to incorporating trauma-informed frameworks as an evolution of their professional practice. The philosophical underpinnings of initiative can be connected to larger social justice and critical movements in education to dismantle the oppressive forces that maneuver the invisible currents impacting public school decisions. Though much of those decisions are

beyond the control of the individual classroom teacher, that teacher still has a duty to educate to the best of their abilities.

Learning how to turn diversity into strength is the way begin this dismantling process, for the “master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house...they will never enable us to bring about genuine change” (Lorde, 2017, p. 19). This subversive attitude can serve as inspiration for seeking out new and innovative ways to support and educate students. As seen through the change framework presented by Fullan (1993, 2016), moral associations and change agency allow a student to feel centered in their learning, through a sense of belonging, and having their needs and interests met. Hope can be another value that can be utilized to engage marginalized students in the social-emotional learning process (Ginwright, 2016; Riele, 2006). Working in tandem, these values can inform the implementation of social-emotional practices on a larger scale.

As a dean, I incorporate trauma-informed frameworks into the restorative aspect of my work through relationships. I prioritize these relationships and use respect as a foundation to address student discipline. Affirmed by the work of Bryk and Schneider (2002), trust is paramount when considering school discipline and the probability of punishment leading to a change in student behavior to avoid future disciplinary infractions. Restorative justice “deaning” takes time to investigate all aspects of an event to determine the best course of repair when a perceived harm has been committed. Moreover, when taking care and consideration for the relational component of the interaction (either to develop a new relationship or preserve an established relationship), ample time is needed to provide disciplinary intervention with fidelity (Noddings, 2005). I approach my work through a restorative lens. I use a trauma-based framework, and

though this concept is more prevalent in annual professional development trainings for teachings, most public school teachers and administrators are not thoroughly trained on these practices other than being introduced to the *Adverse Childhood Experiences* study (Felliti et al., 1998). To be implemented with fidelity, these practices require a shift in thinking and practice that many educators need time to embrace. Though “trauma-informed” professional development trainings are now appearing in school-mandated annual training, little of this work has translated into practice.

It is important for me to situate myself within the cries of educational reform literature and growing educational criticism that emerged by the 1970s. Purported as a reaction to the failed promises of the *Brown* decision that was evident throughout the 1960s, these critiques “laid bare the faults of unresponsive bureaucracies, the despair or suffering of those at the bottom of the social and educational system, the violence in city schools, the awesome scope of educational failure” (Tyack, 1974, p. 283). Within the context of *Up the Down Staircase* (Kaufman, 1964) and the already mentioned *Death at an Early Age* (Kozol, 1967), these books ignited a low fire of indignation that began to burn in my professional core regarding educational inequities that have been so firmly maintained throughout the years, that it must be intentionally embedded within the educational system. The works of Kozol and other writers like Freedman (1990) helped me understand the charge of balancing the human element within the confines of the mechanized educational system. These stories resonated with my intentions as a scholar-activist and helped provide a historical context for the reality of educational inequities that still exist within schools today – most notably in the areas of student discipline. This

presents one main educational challenge of the next decades, which is to increase this awareness among individual educators.

Restorative Portrait 10: The Last Straw

Description. Research Journal, 03/06/2020:

I'm feeling apathetic. Underlying cause = self-preservation. I'm shifting my perspective to what I can control – myself and my emotional reactions.

The last straw for me as a restorative justice dean of students happened on a Friday in March 2020. A pep assembly was scheduled as part of the annual “Make A Wish” program the school participated in, where a young person with a terminal illness was granted a wish. Wanting to make a grand showing for the participant and his family, all students were required to attend the pep assembly taking place at the end of the school day. The schedule for the day was modified to shortened classes, leaving approximately an hour at the end of the day for the school-wide assembly. In years past, assemblies were scheduled at the end of the day so that students who were not interested in attending could leave campus without having to miss out on any class instructional time. Putting the assembly at the end of the day gave students a choice as to whether they wanted to participate in the assembly or not. This system worked well the previous year, but we now had the external management company making the decisions, which reportedly included the protocol of the afternoon pep assembly. We received directives about the logistical organization of the event via email on the morning of the assembly.

For whatever reason, the new external management partner determined that students could not leave the building before the day ended, thus requiring everyone to attend the pep assembly. Like a militarized strategy, subsequent emails were sent

throughout the day identifying checkpoints and updating stations to situate staff to prohibit students from leaving campus before the pep assembly started. The first email came before school, only to have it updated throughout the day due to staff absences and emergency situations. My station was outside in the corridor near the large gymnasium, the site of the assembly. My task was to guard the glass doors to ensure the students did not leave the building without permission.

Five minutes before the students were released for the assembly, we received the call over the walkie-talkies: “All administrators and supporting parties please make your way to your stations.” I walked toward the gym to my station. Several students were milling about, preparing for the assembly. A few dean’s office “regulars” came and found me at my post.

“Can we leave, Ms. Vasquez?” They asked excitedly.

“No, unfortunately, you all have to stay here or else they’ll mark you absent for the entire school day.” Though illegal, the school administration often threatened consequences for students such as changing attendance or grades, even though they legally could not implement them. Without their own legal knowledge and limited opportunities for recourse, the students and their attendance records were at the whim of the administration’s threats.

The bell rang to officially release all students, although many were out of class prior to the signal. On activity-days, teachers often take advantage of a varied schedule and release students early to gain a few minutes of reprieve in their day.

I positioned myself in front of the glass doors and braced myself for students trying to leave. Though many students complied and went into the pep assembly, some of

my high-flyers came to my door to try and leave the building. I resisted the temptation to allow them to leave and encouraged them to go into the gym. Instead, they congregated outside of the gym. After a few minutes, the congregation grew larger.

As the gym filled, the congregation of students would not move. Administration from other parts of the building made their way toward the gym as their areas of the school cleared of students. Their task was to lend extra support in and around the pep assembly after their areas had completely cleared. As administration drew closer, they noticed the students congregating outside the gym.

“Move into the gym, *NOW!*” One assistant principal shouted. The students did not budge. The AP repeated his command, and the students grew more defiant. Their anger and frustration cemented their feet firmly to the floor. I pressed my back into the glass doors. The AP radioed for more support to that area of the gym.

More administrators and security guards arrived at the area, bringing with them the energy of authority. An assistant principal, the head football coach, and a security guard arrived first. Orders such as “Move!” and “Let’s go!” permeated the foyer. Their attempts to strong arm the students fell on deaf ears.

“Whoever doesn’t get inside the gym will be suspended!” Threats. Two more deans moved down the hall, “You heard the principal, get inside the gym!” Intimidation. The students did not move, and neither did I. Paralyzed by the unnecessary drama, I pressed my back further into the glass doors and dug my heels into the ground. I made eye contact with one of the students and he slowly shook his head back and forth, resentment building in his eyes.

More teachers and security personnel descended on the area outside of the gym. Seething with anger, they looked ready to pounce. Teachers started pushing students into the gym, which, ironically, was full to capacity and there were no more seats. Not to be proved wrong, the teachers tried to make the students sit on the floor. Several resisted, and this started an even bigger (and unnecessary) escalation. The principal saw me with my back against the glass doors, but I was still too paralyzed to move. I looked at her and shrugged my shoulders. I was a conscientious objector, and I was not going to participate in this manner of unnecessary rudeness and ill-treatment towards students.

The administrators and teachers continued to move toward the students, pushing them into a corner outside the gym. My anxiety increased as a showdown emerged between the defiant students and infuriated adults. The principal delivered the final ultimatum, “Whoever does not get in the gym right now will be suspended indefinitely and recommended for expulsion!” Though beyond the legal scope, the students balked at the mention of ‘expulsion’ and began to move into the gym. I was frozen against the glass doors, unsure of what to do. Is this how we treat kids? Is this how we promote education and encourage social-emotional learning? My head swirled with the incongruence of the purpose of this type of actions toward students. I received glares and anger from colleagues, but I ignored them. I was able to contain my emotion for the time-being. Yet, as soon as the gym filled and teachers filled the gym doors, I retreated to my office to try to decompress and document what had occurred. Powerless, the only thing I could do was document what I had seen.

The following week, I took two days off for mental health days to re-group. Though close to spring break, I needed to separate myself from the toxic school

environment. Spring break occurred the following week, and then the COVID-19 outbreak happened. We never returned to the building. Like every other school in every district in the country, COVID-19 created a chaotic situation full of unknowns. This school did its best to tread water without any real knowledge of or ability to plan around the COVID-19 situation. Yet, my decision to resign was made before the pandemic and had little to do with our new shared reality. I knew I could no longer work for a school where compassion was a liability, and where student maltreatment was supported, and seemingly encouraged. I submitted my letter of resignation in early May 2020.

Interpretation. The pep assembly was the last straw. It was the culmination of the strong visual imagery that accompanied the authoritarian-disciplinary attitudes that triggered a flood of moral incongruence. That was the last straw. No more. No more bullying, no more threatening, and no more pushing kids out of the school system. My experience as a restorative justice dean of students was witnessing students being systematically disenfranchised from the school system, while the administrative team did everything it could to justify habitual suspensions for minor infractions, that could ultimately culminate in expulsion on the grounds of “habitual disruption” to the learning environment – a rather arbitrary distinction. I had seen behind the curtain and witnessed first-hand how school officials go out of their way to stack the deck against vulnerable and maladjusted students. I could no longer participate in such a system.

I witnessed and participated in a system that contributed to moral injury. Originally used to describe the lasting disastrous effects of war, moral injury is a betrayal of what is morally correct by someone in a legitimate position of authority, generally taking place in high stakes situations (Jensen & Childs, 2016). A more poignant

definition describes moral injury specifically as the result when “soldiers violate their core moral beliefs, and in evaluating their behavior negatively, they feel they no longer live in a reliable, meaningful world, and can no longer be regarded as decent human beings” (Brock & Lettini, 2012). Though I am not trying to deny the severity of wartime actions and decisions of the psyche, I am drawing a parallel between moral injury in war and moral injury in other ethical professions, such as teaching. Often, work on the ground in schools is described as “in the trenches” to denote the physical and emotional toll of such difficult work. Without taking anything away from the insurmountable stress of wartime conditions, I do consider it an accurate comparison.

There is a continuum of moral work when considering service professions. Moral efficacy refers to people's beliefs in their abilities to positively deal with ethical issues at work and tackle hurdles regarding the development and application of ethical solutions to ethical problems (May et al., 2014). Moral courage is a recently explored term in health care, and it refers to people doing the right thing ethically even in the face of adversity (Murray, 2010). Moral courage can be defined as the fortitude to translate moral or ethical intentions into actions despite pressures not to do so (May et al., 2014). Lastly, moral attentiveness is defined as the “extent to which an individual chronically perceives and considers morality and moral elements in his or her experiences” (Reynolds, 2008, p. 1028). Further, it requires an innate sensitivity that allows for the recognition of moral issues. Moral attentiveness includes “a perceptual aspect in which information is automatically screened as it is encountered and a more intentional reflective aspect by which the individual uses morality to consider and reflect on experiences” (p. 1028).

Moral attentiveness sits at the pinnacle of moral understanding, as it taps into the unconscious application of moral rendering.

As a restorative justice dean of students, I found myself under moral attack. I adopted the stance of a conscientious objector, as my own personal and professional values would not allow me to betray my own moral proclivities. I stopped engaging in dean activities and directives that was morally incongruent and damaged student's self-esteem. Harsh and often unnecessary disciplinary measures inflict a moral injury that is difficult to repair. The human brain organizes intense emotional experiences and memories into a narrative that is stored in the prefrontal cortex, the location of reasoning, self-control, and executive functioning. Patterns emerge from these memory fragments, which reconstructs an edited version of events that the emotional brain can process. This version is often limited and skewed, as the brain organizes and evaluates experiences based on the ability "to think about moral values and feel empathy at the same time" (Shin et al., 2006). Once injured, the brain must re-create neural pathways to be able to fully process intense emotional experiences.

More and more teachers are experiencing the onslaught of moral injury, particularly since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pressure has been on the school system as a whole, and teachers in particular, even before the pandemic. The necessary pivot to different ways of engaging with students exposed gaps in the educational system at an even faster rate. Not only is there an increase in stress for school personnel and building leaders, teachers who experience mental health issues engage less with their work (Schwartz, 2018). Mental health stressors effect one's professional

sensibilities, even without the added layer of changes because of developing pandemic needs over the last two years.

When the pep assembly occurred and I saw the full extent of the administrators' authoritarian agenda, I knew I could not work there any longer. The pep assembly occurred directly before spring break in March 2020, which coincided with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. When we left for spring break, we never returned to the school building. Like most other school districts across the state and country, we moved to online learning for the remainder of the school year. I submitted my resignation in mid-April as conversations for the next year took place. As my data collection for this project was mostly complete, I could close the door on that experience with bittersweet certainty. Restorative justice practices have a place in school discipline programs and should be more intentionally used to support teacher instruction.

Evaluation: The Affective Arc

Restorative justice and its various components exist within the operational realm of the instructional arc (Uhrmacher et al., 2017). In curriculum theory, the instructional arc is a framework to situate educational practices and names three separate aspects of curriculum: the intended curriculum (of the teacher), the operational curriculum (in practice), and the received curriculum (for the students). The intended curriculum is the intentional plans of the teacher, while the operational is what actually took place in practice. The received considers the experience of the students and what they learned. This instructional arc is visualized in Figure 4. As Uhrmacher et al. (2017) state, instruction can be analyzed regarding the whole arc, or one or two aspects of the arc, which can be important when trying to understand the goals of an instructor or school (p.

24). The work of the restorative justice dean of students is enacted mostly in the operational realm, though it manifests in the intended and received curricula as well.

Figure 4: *The Instructional Arc*

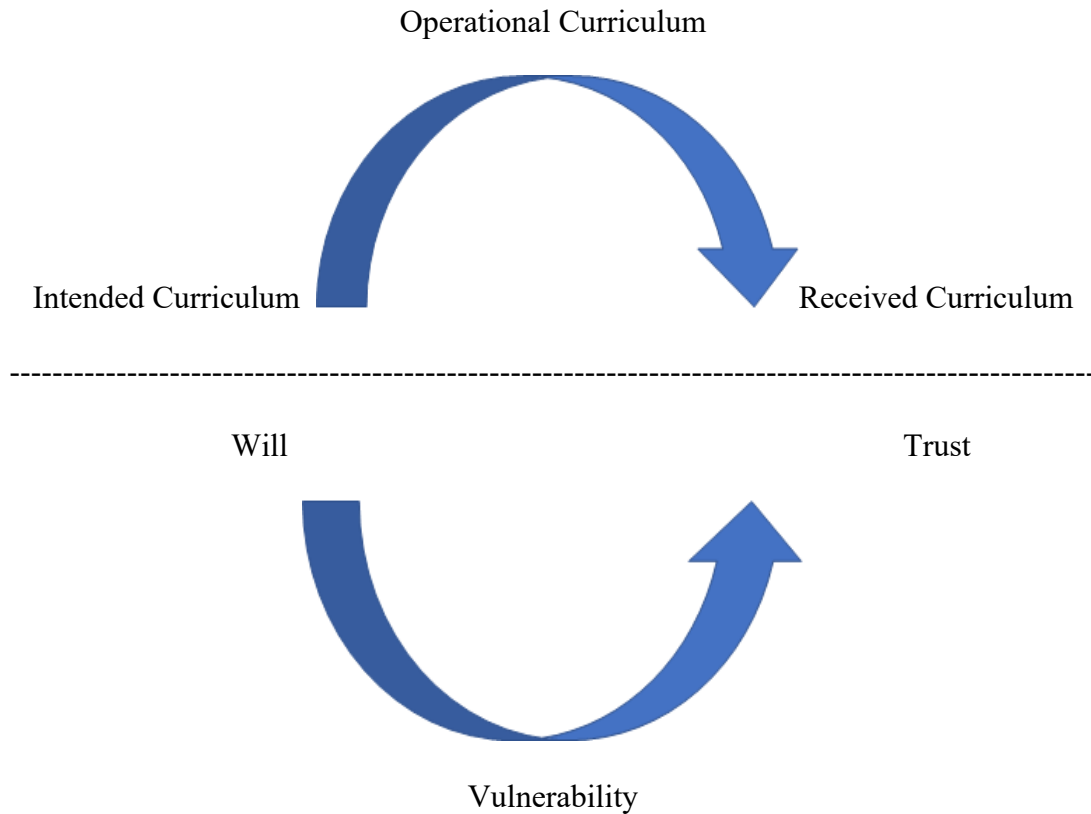


Figure 5: *The Affective Arc*

I propose an affective arc to support the instructional arc, as seen in Figure 5. The use of the term “affective” implies all psychological feelings and emotions that are activated due to the educational experience. Wood and Harris (2013) identify several variables that can fall under the affective, non-cognitive domain of learning, such as sense of belonging, self-efficacy, and identity. Moreover, it has long been understood that there is also an affective realm to instruction that can improve student performance (Fu et al., 2019). The affective arc mirrors the instructional arc and represents affective

components that are a part of the intentional, operational, and received. The affective realm is activated through teaching and learning, the enacted transmission of educational materials and content information. Instructor will (Schopenhauer, 1995) encompasses one end of the affective arc, which moves through vulnerability (Brown, 2006), and finally to a space of trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Course content is operationalized as instructors deliver the content in meaningful ways, thereby activating feelings and emotions. This arc spans the space of relationships and rapport, and manifests in student engagement (Hazel et al., 2013). I view this as the space of social-emotional learning.

Will. I use the concept of ‘will’ to identify one end of the instructional arc. This aligns to the intended curriculum. A teacher’s intentions for classroom instruction are ultimately determined by individual will. The development of will involves a “sequence of actions” that arises from intense self-reflection (Schopenhauer, 1995, p. 166). Becoming a reflective practitioner requires the willingness to be vulnerable and a strong understanding of the self. This can be developed through a constant process of existential reflection of self, community, and practice (the embodiment of *educator will*). Intersectionality addresses overlapping aspects of values and identity that effect lived experiences, perceptions, and perspectives (Crenshaw, 1991). Though beyond the scope of this dissertation analysis, self-reflection can link to identity development and a growth in interpersonal awareness. Professor bell hooks (2000) writes that [love is] “the will to extend oneself for the purpose of nurturing one’s own or another’s spiritual growth (p. 4). Intentionality drives will and makes it possible to enact. The affective arena of will represents the emotional underpinnings of intention and the intended curriculum.

Vulnerability. Will is the foundation of vulnerability. To be vulnerable, one must have the necessary willingness to expose parts of ourselves otherwise unexposed. Brown (2006) first defines vulnerability through the dictionary definition of “open to attack or damage” and “capable of being wounded” (p. 48). This makes vulnerability an uncomfortable conversation in educational circles. It is an emotion we feel during time of risk, uncertainty, and emotional exposure (Brown, 2015). Vulnerability can be a building block of unlimited trust, as well as a source of excessive anxiety. In the field of education, vulnerability can be both a tool and a liability. In a recent study on teacher emotion, researchers found that being intentionally vulnerable can be viewed as a subversive activity amidst challenging work conditions (Dunn et al., 2020). This can be empowering as teachers recognize and name professional injustices in the face of their own humanity. Rapport can be seen an embodiment of vulnerability when connecting with others in small, intangible ways. Making eye contact, sharing a smile, engaging in casual conversation allows one to open themselves to vulnerability in increasing amounts.

We must be willing to become vulnerable to open ourselves to the emotional experiences of another person, which is one component of empathy (Wiseman, 1998).

Empathy is a skill that is processed through four components:

1. See the world as others see it.
2. Understand another’s current feelings.
3. Taking a non-judgmental stance.
4. Communicate those understandings.

A nursing scholar, Wiseman (1998) came to this seminal research through a concept analysis of empathy. Social work scholar Brené Brown expounds on Wiseman’s work

through the areas of shame and vulnerability (Brown, 2006, 2015). Empathy requires an immense amount of vulnerability.

This highly impacted school community perpetuated subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999), whereby the dominant structures of society and school system requires Latin students to subtract, or give up, some of their cultural identities to have the opportunity to advance and be successful. I witnessed this as a restorative justice dean of students through the unrealistic expectations for student behavior and zero-tolerance discipline practices. The reason vulnerability aligns to the operationalized curriculum is that educators need to operationalize student behavior expectations, and this requires vulnerability. Through modeling and establishing a practice of caring, educators can use vulnerability to enact restorative practices.

Trust. Both will and vulnerability can be used to build a strong foundation of trust. This aligns to the received curriculum because the trust is developed with students. As we know from care theory (Noddings, 2005), the reciprocity between the cared and cared-for is established through trust. The cared-for must accept the care; if they do not *feel* cared for, then in effect, there is no care. Bryk & Schneider (2002) ascertain that trust is built through daily social interaction in schools. Educators use words and actions to express their “sense of their obligation towards others,” and the recipient of those words and actions “discern these intentions” (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 118). When there is alignment between stated obligation and action, then trust is built. Additionally, trust can grow exponentially as small actions reinforce and lead to larger actions to further establish trust. This reinforces the student-teacher relationship, which is important in the received curriculum.

In the restorative justice dean of students' role, I had the opportunity to build trust with students in two ways. First, my work as a dean involved teaching behavioral skills and expectations, which holistically employed all arenas of the instructional arc: intended, operational, and received curriculum. These behavioral skills are manifested through will and vulnerability. Taking the time to work with a student, following up with teachers, and providing on-going support to students establishes trust. On-going support refers to a readiness to assist when needed. Examples of this can be using a supportive stance (open body posture), conducting morning/afternoon check-ins, performing crisis interventions, maintaining open-door policies for both students and teachers, and making time to listen to others. The same support given to students can also be extended to teachers. Conducting hallway check-ins, brainstorming behavioral interventions, and completing mediations can all be ways to build trust with teachers.

The main teacher issue is balancing relationships (depending on the number of students per class) with the curricular and testing requirements handed down from administration. This activates the value-based moral imperative of education. The onus is on the school to shift the professional development focus to teacher well-being so that teachers do not feel unsupported in the process. Since the experience of COVID-19 the last school year, much of the national conversation has shifted to teacher self-care and teacher empowerment. This opens the door for an increased focus on social-emotional learning and restorative justice approaches aligned to classroom instruction.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Overview of the Study

With emotional and programmatic insight, this auto-criticism provided testimony to on the ground actions and advocacy-based support provided by a restorative justice dean. As experienced, the high school “dean” historically deals with discipline by providing swift and often harsh consequences to minor student infractions. With a restorative justice lens, I approach my deaning with careful consideration of all the factors at play in the situation. What happened between the student and teacher? What was the emotional affect of the student before the situation? What was the teacher doing prior to the situation? What was the trigger in the situation? What were the other students doing? These questions provide insight into the entirety of the situation and allows for a more complex story to be told. However, even opening space for discussion of antecedents, triggers, patterns of behavior, emotional dysregulation, and adult culpability can lead to emotional upset and negative reactions on the part of the adult. In the punitive discipline equation, the role of the adult is generally not examined.

For this qualitative dissertation study, I wanted to look at the dean of students’ role through a restorative justice lens. I used auto-criticism to explore the lived experiences of a dean of students who utilizes restorative practices in their daily work detail. My research took place at one public high school, in a small school district located northeast of Denver, CO. My data collection covered a two year period, from August

2018-July 2020 and ended just as the COVID-19 pandemic was gaining momentum. To that end, COVID-19 did not impact the data collection for this project. Researcher journals, internal work documents, and external work documents comprise the analyzed data.

Restorative justice practices and trauma-informed approaches only work in educational settings that are trauma-acknowledged. As introduced through Restorative Portrait 9, trauma-informed educational conferences are growing in popularity and the number of professional development trainings offering social-emotional learning connections have grown exponentially. School leaders and educational practitioners are finally acknowledging what researchers have known for decades: trauma has effects on student behaviors (Felliti et al., 1998; Perry, 2006). Because trauma is experienced by everyone in a myriad of ways, being ‘trauma-informed’ requires a certain degree of vulnerability. When trauma is the object of discussion, the problem of practice, as well as the solution for change, it can be a very overwhelming process to those new to the discussion. This can trigger elements of secondary or vicarious trauma on the part of practitioners (van der Kolk, 2014). Moreover, fundamental to the work of restorative practices is an understanding that not all students have the developmental agency or educational wherewithal to support themselves (Berger, 2015; Bride & MacMaster, 2008; Ginwright, 2016).

Discussion of Themes: Restorative Practices & Classroom Instruction

Social-emotional learning is at the forefront of the work of being a dean of students. The role of the dean of students has not been studied in relation to restorative practices as a disciplinary framework. This is significant because it shifts the disciplinary

paradigm from retributive to restorative, as we saw in chapter two. Throughout the coding process, I landed on several themes that became central to the study. Some themes can be seen in the titles of the restorative portraits:

Relational Trust

- The Conflict Process
- The Daily Routine of a Restorative Justice Dean
- Anatomy of Student Escalation
- A Restorative Justice Mediation

Personal Values

- Emotional Will
- Vulnerability
- Trust of a ‘School-Mom’
- The Last Straw

Instructional Praxis

- The Interview
- The Rise of Trauma-Informed Education

Though these ten portraits are representative of the data to reveal the lived experiences of a restorative justice dean, larger themes eventually emerged throughout the analysis process. During second cycle coding (Saldaña, 2009), I compared the categories of codes generated from the first cycle to identify overarching themes that ran through the data and were answered with the research questions. The lens of social-emotional learning emerged throughout the identified themes and are discussed below.

There are substantial ways that restorative justice practices can be used as a framework to support affective interventions. By supporting students in a caring capacity, the school becomes a place of hope, support, and encouragement. Effective implementation of restorative interventions can occur. Advocacy-based instruction that focuses on affective processes is at the core of this analysis. This creates implications for schoolwide frameworks to support shifts in climate and culture. Restorative coaching takes the victim/offender/community model in restorative justice philosophy and applies it to a schoolwide culture and climate framework. We know from past research that trauma affects children's development and functioning of their neurological systems, including immune, neuroendocrine, and nervous systems (Felliti et al., 1998; Perry, 2006). This has been known for years in the psychological, neuropsychological, and social work fields. Though applicable, the trauma-informed movement has only recently shifted to education (Forbes, 2012). The goal is to cultivate a school culture that recognizes when learning and behavior challenges may have trauma as a root cause.

Research Questions

This qualitative dissertation study centered on the role of care practices while implementing school discipline policies. I examined the lived experiences of a restorative justice dean of students through four overarching research questions, discussed below. The purpose of this research is to explore the role of care in school discipline through a social-emotional learning lens. I consider myself an empathetic educator; therefore, social-emotional thinking stays at the forefront of my mind when working with students. Student misbehavior is skill-based, or lack thereof. Through restorative justice practices, school discipline can be delivered in ways that support actual changes in student behavior

because the “discipline” is centered on interventions to build behavior skills, not merely punish. The research questions inadvertently look at social-emotional learning from various angles. Each of the research questions are addressed in the following sections. Two themes have been identified for each question and are discussed with the relevant inquiry. Social-emotional learning showed up in different ways that are looked at in the following sections.

What are the lived experiences of a dean who incorporates restorative justice practices in a poverty impacted public high school? How did a dean of students incorporate restorative justice practices in their role?

This auto-criticism project is centered around my lived experiences as a restorative justice dean of students in a poverty impacted public high school. I addressed the daily work on the ground with an “in the trenches” lens. I implemented restorative practices by modeling these practices in my daily interactions with students and colleagues. I performed the work directly with students, in a bottom-up approach to effect change. It was a daunting process, and much of the data revealed the challenges and possibilities of implementing restorative justice with bottom-up processing. In my work as a dean of students, I attempted to implement a robust restorative justice program within a punitive school discipline framework.

When utilized with fidelity, restorative justice discipline approaches allowed me as a dean to focus on the relational and advocacy aspects of teaching. Central to behavioral changes in students is the development of soft skills. Through the incorporation of restorative frameworks, the school can become a site of emotional support and social growth that enable students to develop resiliency. Deans generally

respond to crisis situations where emotional dysregulation in students is present (Forbes, 2012; Greene, 2016). As noted previously, this emotional dysregulation is often present in adults as well, which often causes the situation to spiral beyond normal control (Fullan, 2016).

The restorative portraits provide a glimpse into the lived experiences of a restorative justice dean of students. I organized the restorative portraits as I experienced the dean of students' position. The beginning portraits articulate the job duties and essential functions of a dean of students. The later portraits reveal my emotional responses and reactions to the punitive dean expectations that were revealed to me throughout the course of my work. Although I was designated a restorative justice dean of students, this was in name only and the expectation was for me to maintain a punitive dean role. Table 4 summarizes the restorative portraits and the through-line of emotionality.

	Description	Interpretation
1	The Interview	Fidelity to the model is paramount, as real change stems from administrators willing to initiate change (Fullan, 2016).
2	The Conflict Process	A conflict cycle exists between teacher, student, and dean, creating a disciplinary triangle effect that limits teacher ownership and credibility (Fullan 2006, 2013).
3	The Daily Routine of a Restorative Justice Dean of students	Stream of consciousness insight into the daily expectations of the dean of students. Chaotic and fragmented, the dean of students is a reactionary position (Fullan, 2011; Kozol, 2005; Noddings, 2005).
4	Anatomy of Student Escalation	A pattern emerged where students were disciplined for a secondary emotional reaction when triggered by adult staff, which then became the focus of disciplinary action rather than the original

		disciplinary infraction. Not aligned with tenets of social-emotional learning.
5	A Restorative Justice Mediation	A loose protocol for restorative justice mediations was developed based on student and teacher participation. The restorative justice dean of student conducted thirty-one mediations between willing parties. The protocol can be modified based on participant needs.
6	Emotional Will	This emerged as one of the overarching values necessary to incorporate restorative justice practices to increase emphasis on social-emotional learning (Fullan, 1993; Schopenhauer, 1995).
7	Vulnerability	This emerged as another overarching value necessary to execute restorative justice practices with fidelity (Fullan, 2011; Noddings, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999).
8	Trust of a ‘School-Mom’	This emerged as a third overarching value necessary to build rapport and relationships with all students, which is necessary to be a successful dean of students (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Noddings, 2005; Rendón, 2014).
9	The Rise of Trauma-Informed Education	The larger educational community has recognized the need to implement trauma-informed frameworks for the betterment of all students. Trauma-informed practices are an extension of the broader push for an increased focus on social-emotional learning in schools (Greene, 2016; Perry, 2006, 2014).
10	The Last Straw	Insurmountable pressures from the turnaround school community combined with and a lack of administrative buy-in to restorative practices and programs resulted in my resigning from the dean of students position after two years due to moral injury (Brock & Lettini, 2012).

Table 4: *Restorative Portraits Summary*

The Art of Restorative Discipline

Restorative justice practices run counter to the punitive notions of school discipline. Out of school suspensions are often a first resort, as teachers often want a stern resolution when a student is removed for minor classroom disruptions and defiance. Restorative justice is a process of differentiated discipline. It incorporates differentiated language to address lagging skill areas that can manifest in academic and behavioral deficits (Greene, 2016). A common myth of punitive school discipline is that you have to ‘break’ students who are non-compliant and strong-willed. Some adults believe all students should always obey all adults; this is the expectation behind zero-tolerance policies. These policies are carried out through “habitually disruptive” contracts that places students on a three-strikes-then-expulsion pathway.

In contrast to zero-tolerance mentalities are restorative practices, which does not utilize suspension models of school discipline. Restorative deaning uses compassionate accountability as a disciplinary approach to address skill deficits. The foundational components of compassionate accountability are courtesy and respect, which are necessary for changing student behaviors. Coined by a clinical psychologist, compassionate accountability (Regier, 2017) can be applied to education in direct ways. Treating students with kindness and respect can still involve a level of accountability that allows for positive changes in behavior. In fact, it is *through* these kind and respectful acts that students can see themselves in a more positive light to lead to incremental changes in the belief and acceptance of self. Throughout the two years as a dean of students, I created several protocols, reflection sheets, and frameworks for helping students manage their emotions to learn self-regulation techniques. Strong advocacy

skills combine with intervention ideas to establish the basis for building these skills with students. This is true application of compassionate accountability.

Dating back to the seventeenth century, discipline was seen as an “art of correct training” (Foucault, 1977, p. 170). In schools, the purpose of discipline is to make students follow school rules and adult directives. As such, the ‘correct training’ should be a much a part of the curriculum as academic content. Behavior expectations must be explicitly taught if students are expected to follow certain standards of behavior. When students misbehave to the point of breaking ambiguous school rules such as “defiance,” the expectation is for a punishment to be enacted. Like the “art of correct training” there is an “art to punishment” as well. According to Foucault (1977):

To find the suitable punishment for a crime is to find the disadvantage whose idea is such that it robs forever the idea of a crime of any attraction. It is an art of conflicting energies, an art of images linked by association, the forging of stable connections that defy time: it is a matter of establishing the representation of pairs of opposing values, of establishing quantitative differences between the opposing forces, of setting up a complex of obstacle-signs that may subject the movement of the forces to a power relation (p. 104).

The art of punishment lies in creating a system that deters one from wanting to commit a crime in the first place. Thus, the ideal punishment is unique to the specific crime and varies by circumstances. Most teachers are in favor of harsh punishments when they feel a wrong has been committed. In this way, restorative justice exists in the shadow of punitive suspension-driven models of school discipline. Uhrmacher (1997) writes that “any particular curriculum has a shadow that one could observe by reflecting on what the curriculum privileges and what it disdains” (p. 318). In this context, if student behavior is thought to have a curriculum, it would be one of compliance and obedience. A punitive discipline curriculum disdains process and discussion; it disdains dialogue and

repentance. The restorative justice portraits in the next chapter represents a contrasting view of school discipline that exposes the shadow side of suspension models of school discipline. The art of restorative discipline is successfully negotiating repair to deter the harm from being committed again, which can be achieved without harsh punishment.

Deconstructing Care

The analytic categories used to drive data analysis were relational trust, personal values, and instructional praxis. Several themes emerged from these categories, which is supported in the next chapter. One way of conceptualizing the main themes is through a deconstruction of care. Noddings (2005) discusses the role of care in education. She describes care as relational – a reciprocal process between teacher and student, both occupying the roles of “carer” and “cared-for” in mutual exchanges. This establishment of ‘care’ as a process of mutual engagement defines any relationship. This often gets conflated with caring as a virtue, an individual attribute (Noddings, 2005). It would be easy to only think of caring as a state of being nice, but there is a more accurate way of describing caring from a relational capacity.

There are specific components that make-up this version of care. Noddings (2005) offers four elements that make up the ethic of caring: modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation. Employing these elements allows teachers to cultivate a relational approach through their work. Derrida (1974) writes that the process of deconstructing “aims at a certain relationship, unperceived by the [researcher], between what [she] commands and what [she] does not command...[It] attempts to make the not-seen accessible to sight” (p. 158 and p. 163). Deconstructing the elements of ‘care’ leads us to vulnerability and rapport. Both components are practitioner skills that foster relationships. Rapport is the

ability to connect with individual others in meaningful ways. Authenticity is the source of vulnerability and rapport. Any time a teacher can authentically connect with students via the lesson plan or formal curriculum adds to the development of rapport. Vulnerability takes practice.

Rapport and relationships exist on a continuum, where various rapport strategies lead to relationship outcomes. Table 5 provides examples of how different strategies can lead to desirable outcomes. Rapport can exist in a vacuum without the establishment of a strong relationship, though they generally evolve into full relationships. However, relationships do not exist without rapport.

<i>Rapport Strategies</i>	<i>Relationship Outcomes</i>
Campfire the class (intimate sharing)	Center student perspective
Class Meetings (formalized sharing)	Center student voice
Meta-discussions (analytical sharing)	Center student experience
Nonverbal indicators (body language)	Nonthreatening communication
Para-communication (tone, volume)	Shortens distance between two people

Table 5: *Rapport Strategies to Relationship Outcomes*

Deconstructing the teacher-student relationship helps acknowledge important features of rapport, which includes a deep understanding of empathy as an instructional tool to help build resiliency in students. When first entering the field of teaching, it is not known how much one must give of herself. When you care wholeheartedly about someone or something, this takes a toll on the mind, body, and spirit. Care is a personal endeavor, requiring the moral imperative to underscore all facets of the practice. Often,

the act of caring places one in opposition to status quo daily operations and requires a strong sense of self to keep the moral conviction alive.

Throughout the research process, several subjective identities emerged to express the dynamic process that occurs when exploring the “self” as both the researcher and subject of the research. This dual role invites reflection on the differing aspects of self that rule the lived experience. This auto-criticism centered on the lived experience of a dean of students who utilizes restorative justice practices. I self-ascribe to restorative justice practices, and this allowed me to move into the position of restorative justice dean of students at a highly impacted high school. Throughout the data collection and analysis phases of the project, I was able to identify, organize, and name parts of the dean of students lived experience that can be used to further understand the role of care in school discipline programs. I conducted a “subjectivity audit” (Pushkin, 1988, p.18), and uncovered seven subjective I’s at play. Three emerged as most pertinent to and representative of the restorative justice dean of students’ perspective.

- Adhocratic I – Flexible, adaptable, informal approaches to the work of the restorative justice dean of students. This subjective lens provides a specialized multidisciplinary approach to the realm of school discipline.
- Values-oriented I (principled I) – Each disciplinary situation offers its own challenges and assumptions that must be identified to offer adequate solutions.
- Activist I – Taking a position that aligns to personal and professional values that undergird the action-oriented work of the restorative justice dean of students.

American historian Howard Zinn famously postulated that neutrality is pointless. Having been an activist for over thirty year, Zinn states,

I don't believe it's possible to be neutral. The world is already moving in certain directions. To be neutral, to be passive, in a situation like that, is to collaborate with whatever is going on. And I, as a teacher, do not want to be a collaborator with whatever is happening in the world. I want myself, as a teacher, and I want you, as students, to intercede with whatever is happening in the world (Ellis & Mueller, 2004).

Subjectivity cannot fully be considered with acknowledging vulnerability. One's values are exposed when reflecting with the subjective lens.

What are the implications of restorative justice for the role of dean of students in high schools?

This dissertation project addresses the affective realm of "deaning" through the presentation of restorative justice portraits. This contrasts with the punitive dean of students' role. Varying restorative responses to school discipline explain the ways that restorative justice deaning is distinctive (and transformative) compared to punitive school discipline frameworks that contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline (Osher et al., 2012). The direct implication for the role of dean of students is the focus on personal values that inform professional practice. Empathy is necessary to this praxis. Wiseman (1996) asserts empathy can be taught to others. Like other skills, it can strengthen through repeated practice of suspended judgement and perspective-taking. Four defining attributes characterize empathetic interactions: seeing the world as others see it, practicing non-judgement, understanding another's feelings, and communicating that understanding to the other person (Wiseman, 1996).

Moral Imperative of Restorative Practices

Implications of this project can also extend to the broader category of educational reform, particularly as it relates to change knowledge and the moral imperative (Fullan, 1993, 2003, 2011). The moral imperative in education is described in terms of a strategic list of moral action steps to increase fidelity: make a personal commitment, build relationships, focus on implementation, develop the collaborative, connect to the outside, and be relentless (Fullan, 2011). At face value, these steps do not necessarily speak directly to issues of morality or increasing a moral imperative. Instead, as Fullan (2011) continues, the issue of morality arises when considering not the *what* of morality, but the *how* to prioritize the moral imperative in educational settings. Fullan (2011) writes that it is this *how* that “requires continuous practice under conditions of feedback, support, and high expectations” (p. 35). Considering the role of student behavior in the learning process, the moral imperative applies to both the content and process in this exchange. There are implications for culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2014) and liberation theology (Freire, 1968). Any academic content is filtered through behavior processes congruent with student development. Social-emotional learning standards exist to supplement academic content standards under the Colorado Academic Standards of the Colorado Department of Education (CDE, 2020). Housed under “comprehensive health,” these standards focus on students knowing and being able to analyze specified behavior guidelines.

The underlying reason for incorporating restorative justice practices into school-wide systems of management is a moral one. At the core of an ethic of care (Noddings, 2005), is the moral obligation of treating one another with dignity. In educational

settings, this can manifest in establishing rapport to build relationships. Noddings (2005) acknowledges that the central component to an ethic of care is the mutual reciprocity to define the boundaries of that caring relationship. When working with students of color in poverty impacted communities, this ethic of care is strengthened to adopt an even greater need for support of the other.

The core rationale for not only recognizing a moral imperative, but also acting in ways that acknowledges its importance lies in the face of the other (Levinas, 1962). Transformation of one's being occurs when one can recognize the suffering, the pain, and the lived experience of another human being, regardless of their identity, age, or circumstance. This is empathy. Acknowledging the humanizing love for another individual opens space to safely access another's lived experience, which allows dignity to develop between one another. This is how deep and lasting transformation occurs.

Love → safety → dignity = transformation

This simplistically complex linear formula applies to both students *and* teachers. This parallel process of support, supporting teachers to support students, is the goal. This happens through restorative justice practices. As Cornel West has stated time and again, “Justice is *love* in public” (West, 2015). Transformation can only occur after we dissolve our former selves, both literally and figuratively. We must step out of our own frame of reference to a place of nothingness (Sartre, 1947). Whatever the length of time, it is in that single point of ‘nothingness’ that allows for something new to be created. Only through complete and total disintegration of our former lived selves and formulated thought processes can we build a new foundation for understanding.

Another Note on Moral Injury. I experienced a system squeeze of how to maintain personal morals in an amoral system. I refer to “the system” as the bureaucratic underpinnings of public education. Every school district I have experienced has a centralized office that manages the operational functions of an organization. Whether originating from there or the general discontent with the structure of public schooling, there is a pervasive and toxic narrative within social culture that public education is deficit-based pushout narrative. Researching the school-to-prison pipeline argument supports this from an academic standpoint, yet it also exists within the popular narrative as well. Everyone who has experienced public education has their own experience to draw upon to perpetuate or discontinue this narrative, and it continues.

I experienced an ineffective school system. No matter what I tried to implement as a restorative justice dean, nothing came to fruition without strong buy-in from key stakeholders like teachers and administrators. I sensed they felt betrayed by my insistence on restorative practices, as in the more I pushed for implementation, it revealed that implementation was not happening with fidelity. There are too many moving parts for the system to be run effectively in a highly impacted turnaround high school with 1,700 students without buy-in from everyone. Regardless of what tardy or detention systems were tried, the status quo maintained a system around punishment, exclusion, and the shaming culture that “make examples” out of student mistakes. There are many challenges to implementing restorative justice practice in poverty impacted high schools.

Though deserving of its own dissertation, moral injury emerged because of working in this system. Often attributed to veterans of combat, moral injury is defined in three parts: there exists a betrayal of what is morally correct, a person who is in a position

of authority commits the betrayal of what is morally correct, and the betrayal occurs in a high-stakes situation (Shay, 2011). Without the risk of diminishing the role of moral injury in war, I would like to use it as an analogy for what I experienced while working as a restorative justice dean of students' role for two years. I came to a place where I could no longer support work that harmed students. Often called the "Moral Compass" of the school, it becomes difficult to lead by example when all my perceived strengths are construed as weaknesses by others: kindness, compassion, and empathy. I almost feel as if I had to go through the stages of grief regarding the realities of a complex educational system that is not easily changed, and land in a place of acceptance before I could even fully complete this dissertation project. I feel I had to sift through sadness, anger, isolation, apathy, to ultimately find acceptance. Emblematic of a "roller coaster of emotions," the lived experience of a restorative justice dean of students in the context of a highly impacted turnaround high school is full of challenges and emotion. Others rely on advocates to stay ignited in this work, and this is difficult to sustain at times.

Advocacy as a Thirdspace

Implementation of restorative justice practices exists in an abstract third space. Rapport, relationships, and care are all formulated in the affective space between educator and student. Words, phrases, actions, reactions, and energy live within this space. The role of the dean of students provides time and space to creatively work with students in this space.

In both the field of spatial geography and spatial theory literature, much time is spent on the definition and use of space in socio-temporal ways. Urban geographer Edward Soja has devoted much time to the description of space in understandable ways

that help conceptualize its role in education. Soja (2010) traces the normative conceptualizations of space back to the work of French Marxist philosopher Lefebvre (1974), who describes social space in three distinct ways:

1. Perceived Space: Concrete, mappable, and empirically defined geographies; “things in space”; materialized and objectified spatial practices.
2. Conceived Space: Subjective representations of space in ideas, images, and ideologies; “thoughts about space;” scientific epistemologies and philosophies of space and place.
3. Lived Space: Humans are spatial beings, simultaneous to temporal and social beings; linked to biographical and historical notions of lived time (Soja, 2010, p. 102).

This third conceptualization of space is where connections can be made to the field of education and the very real use of space in teaching and learning contexts. Space is a valuable commodity that can be leveraged in a way to make connections with students and build rapport across cultures and around life experiences. Lived time and space unfolds in small increments by nature and definition of the lived experience. Thus, there is no way to plan or predict how this lived space manifests. Soja (2006) writes:

We can only learn about our lived times and spaces in increments, never satisfied with existing levels of knowledge but constantly moving on, almost like philosophical nomads, to search for the new, to push the frontiers of knowledge and understanding forward, and hope for the unexpected (p. 102).

This is a transformative consideration of space, and one that contextualizes theories of space in teaching and learning practices. The literal and figurative spaces among instructors and students are a vast sea of possibility when considering the nature of affective knowledge and the role that plays in higher education.

To further conceptualize advocacy through a philosophical lens, it is best to frame it through a third space in education. Soja (1996) defines thirdspace in postmodern geographic terms, which is:

Another way of understanding and acting to change the spatiality of human life; a distinct mode of critical spatial awareness that is appropriate to the new scope and significance being brought about in the rebalanced trialectics of spatiality, historicity, and sociality (p. 57).

This connects to post-colonial thought and has direct implications in the realm of education. The experience of student disengagement is a part of the larger context of a geographic space, historical underpinnings, and social existence. To unpack this notion of “thirdspace,” it is necessary to understand the first and second space realms. The first space can be seen as the student, and the cultural framework they bring to their schooling. The second space is the school itself and the culture it embodies as an organized system. In this sense, the third space is an abstract arena where advocacy exists to promote relationships and rapport to build-up student resiliency. As a culturally responsive educator, I activate the thirdspace to promote the ideals of advocacy to cultivate success within my students. I describe the thirdspace as an abstract, postmodern concept because it is difficult for many classroom teachers to conceptualize the necessity of advocacy and importance of resiliency to promote student success.

Culturally responsive teaching and transformative pedagogy utilizes reflective action to continually assess student needs and engagement. This is fitting for work with students who have experienced trauma, as the main challenge is to convince teachers to expand their understanding of education to include more social and emotional factors that affect students’ ability to learn and be present. Though culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) can serve as a conceptual structure to support advocacy interventions, the theoretical framework extends to the realm of emancipatory education and individual empowerment through transformation (Banks, 2002). Transformative knowledge is

generated by marginalized communities in response to the mainstream knowledge that is constructed by those in power. Banks (2002) writes:

These communities enable individuals to acquire unique ways to conceptualize the world and an epistemology that differs in significant ways from mainstream assumptions, concepts, values, and epistemology. Knowledge is in important ways related to power (p. 11).

This transformative process is at the heart of emancipatory education, steeped in liberation, and has its foundation in Freire's (1968) notion of praxis.

Teacher preparation programs do not place enough emphasis on the actual students we are seeing in the schools, thus, teachers come to the profession ill equipped to handle many situations, particularly those involving students who have significant histories of trauma (Dallman-Jones, 2006; Rossen & Hull, 2013). Various reasons exist that explain why students may experience trauma, including immigration, homelessness, incarcerated parents, parents involved in substance abuse or chemical dependence, exposure to domestic violence, anticipation of the death of a loved one, unexpected death of a loved one, military experiences, abuse (sexual, physical, or emotional), and natural disasters/terrorism. My role as a restorative justice dean of students incorporated this use of a counterspace, or thirdspace, to facilitate understanding of marginalized and traumatized student experiences. In turn, this has helped me recognize the need for an advocacy approach to teaching that can serve as a model for students and families who are disenfranchised from the educational system.

What are the implications of restorative justice practices for classroom teachers as perceived by the dean?

Largely effecting classroom management, the discussion around restorative justice discipline practices ultimately begins in the classroom. Deans become involved when conflict takes place in the classroom, most often between teacher and student. This fits into larger and current discussions around trauma-informed practices in schools that can benefit all students, whether they have experienced trauma or not (*A rising tide lifts all boats* mentality). Fundamental to the discussion is how to support classroom teachers in addressing the affective realm more robustly. One way is through follow-up support. I define this as returning to the teacher to communicate the outcome of the discipline situation and the necessary steps to move forward – which always involves a restorative conversation, both formal and informal. The latter can have a more lasting impact because it takes place in the spaces between everything else. These instances of connection and check-in only last a few moments. However, these moments lay the foundation of ongoing rapport and collegiality necessary for true praxis.

Advocacy Approach to Teaching

The advocacy approach to teaching sits at the intersection of social work and pedagogy. Though social work and education are both service professions, they are opposite sides of the same coin. Social work focuses on the needs of the individual, and education has historically focused on the needs of the group and larger infrastructure of the factory model (Tyack, 1974). This has only increased in the era of accountability, where high stakes standardized testing factors into teacher effectiveness. Frustrated by

the powerlessness, some teachers are put off at the mention of social-emotional student needs and find it as an excuse to minimize and justify student misbehavior.

I used the term ‘advocacy’ to describe any time an educator goes beyond their duties to show concern for students in a variety of ways. The ‘advocacy’ is found in the *action* of one party *on behalf* of another; the root of the term comes from Latin for “to voice.” Embedded with an activist component, advocacy can take the form of moral responsibility and incorporate personal values. Teachers play a pivotal role in the development of young people, and they have a responsibility to incorporate a relational level of care with each student. A teacher reflects on this duty:

I’ve come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It’s my personal approach that creates the climate. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I ‘possess a tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or de-humanized (Ginott, 2003, p. 77).

The teacher is the first point of contact with students, and they can greatly influence the outcome of many situations. As a restorative justice dean of students, I used “conversation” as my initial response to student misbehavior. Often, the disciplinary situation arose out of a misunderstanding with the teacher or emotional outburst that could have been resolved with alternative behavioral interventions. Teacher contributions to student misbehaviors is complicated to navigate.

An advocacy approach to teaching requires an instructional intervention approach that addresses both the academic and emotional sides of teaching as they relate to student behavior. School discipline interventions begin in the classroom and can be implemented through restorative approaches. Modeled after a laboratory concept, an advocacy

approach encourages teachers to share ideas, brainstorm, collaborate, and experiment with restorative interventions tailored to their classrooms. This activates the affective arc and requires teachers use will and vulnerability to reflect on their practice. An advocacy approach to teaching asks the questions, “How have I contributed to student misbehavior in the classroom? What is the consequence I want the student to have? How can this be resolved in the classroom?” It takes a high degree of vulnerability to take ownership of classroom issues.

Developing brains that have experienced various traumas do not follow the typical patterns of emotional regulation or neurological response. Downy (2007) found that trauma impacts academic performance and social relationships by the following:

- Reduced cognitive capacity
- Sleep disturbance (causing poor concentration)
- Difficulties with memory (making learning harder)
- Language delays (reducing capacity for listening, understanding, and expressing)
- Need for control (causing conflict with teachers and other students)
- Attachment difficulties (making attachment to school problematic)
- Poor peer relationships (making school an unpleasant experience)
- Unstable living situation (reduced learning and capacity to engage with a new school)

Situated in a poverty impacted school community means the school is tasked with addressing a larger number of student needs than in other schools. Though beyond the scope of this dissertation project, the impact of trauma adds another dimension to

restorative justice approaches to student discipline. Research shows that school suspensions further harms students who have been exposed to traumatic events or experiences (Bottiani et al., 2017). This requires alternative forms of student discipline be implemented such as restorative justice practices.

The goal of the advocacy approach to teaching is to integrate the cognitive and affective realms of student learning. This means, teachers need to have the content knowledge to perform their duties, while also knowing how to support that delivery through efforts to build relationships. Students who are continually marginalized from the school system are generally facing some sort of existential crisis that is affecting their overall sense of well-being. For example, if the student stops attending school for a week, the advocacy response is to contact that student and implement plans to support their academic engagement. This most likely uncovers a larger crisis that could be affecting family functioning (e.g., death of a family member, loss of income, varieties of addiction, or patterns of abuse). These issues can then be addressed through more targeted and specified measures such as referrals to the school social worker or school-based therapy. Advocates utilize the wraparound approach framework to better serve students and re-incorporate them into the educational system. The advocacy approach is truly the merging of social work and teaching, which allows for a more holistic approach to student instruction.

As a restorative justice dean of students, I employed various techniques that can be incorporated into classroom instruction. Overt restorative justice practices reveal the personal and professional values. The following instructional practices can work to create classroom-based interventions to mitigate student discipline issues.

Differentiated Discipline. Differentiated language is the basis of differentiated discipline. Like differentiated instruction, a variety of disciplinary approaches can be used to meet varying student needs. Trauma-informed education dictates that students who exhibit problem behaviors have differing skill levels of and neurological development. They exhibit lagging skill areas in emotion regulation, interpersonal effectiveness, and general coping mechanisms. This contrasts with a common punitive discipline myth that students need to be “broken” through shame and humiliation for them to learn appropriate behaviors. Students need skill development in the behavioral areas they exhibit a skill lag. This can be determined by spending time with students and building restorative relationships.

Scaffolded Behavior Supports. Restorative justice interventions can be a form of scaffolded behavior supports for students. Teachers can develop meta-level classroom responses to address problematic student behavior right as it happens. These protocols can be brief and consistent such as check-ins between lesson activities, brain breaks in the middle of class, and modeling appropriate actions. Scaffolding behavior supports creates opportunities for teachers to use guided practice to show caring (Noddings, 2005). As a restorative justice dean, I helped students find the words to process their emotions and ask for help from teachers. Students who are not used to solving problems with language may need talking points and sentence stems as starting points for getting their academic needs met. Teachers can develop systematic procedures to show students how to ask for help in class and on homework, how to talk to teachers, how to mediate issues in the classroom, and how to de-escalate emotionally charged incidents, which would benefit all students in the class.

Variation of Response Protocol. In my role as dean, there were students I saw in my office daily. These students lack necessary behavior skills that keep them from cooperating in group settings. Though most have no identified mental health diagnosis or behavior disorder, something keeps them returning to the dean's office. I use conversation and connection to de-escalate students that can easily be replicated by other adults. I developed a scale for engaging these students, some have experienced trauma, and some have not. Implementing trauma-informed practices has positive benefits for all students (regardless of whether they have experienced trauma or not), and there is a movement in public education to incorporate these frameworks in schools (Forbes, 2012). Teachers can use dialogue to establish their role in the caring relationships with students in every class.

- Disarm – Deflect the emotionally-charged language of the student. Humor can be a tool to use when students are triggered into their “fight/flight/freeze” reactions.
- Safety – Provide physical space and attention to the paraverbal aspects of communication (i.e., tone, intensity). This will allow the student to return to calm.
- Regulate – Ensure student regains emotional regulation in a safe space.
- Converse – Build connection and rapport. Make direct conversation without threats of conversation.
- Mediate – Initiate restorative mediation and repair if the situation warrants it.
- Advocate – Develop rapport to build the relationship. Validate the student with consistent follow-up support.

It is not beyond the scope of classroom instruction to incorporate these steps into teaching practices. Many of these are already operationalized in practice. Generally unnamed, these become part of “good teaching” that connoisseurs easily identify.

The Parallel Process of Support

The first step of student support is teacher support. This creates a parallel process of support that extends to both students and teachers. Administration supports teachers, and teacher in turn support students. Yet, the role of the dean of students serves as a support for both students (validation and guidance) and teachers (curriculum and instruction). During the coding process of data analysis, emotion coding took on an important role as the need for affective codes emerged from the data. I began two separate lists of emotion codes that pertained to students, and emotion codes that pertained to teachers (these were separate from the emotion coding for the self as researcher). For a high school restorative justice dean of students, this means developing and implementing interventions that teachers can implement without becoming triggered themselves by the negative behaviors. Evidence of this parallel process of support was found throughout the data.

Colorado Academic Standards include social and emotional wellness outcomes under “Comprehensive Health” (2020). These include understanding mental, emotional, and social well-being, in addition to goal-setting and other arenas of emotionally intelligence. The advocacy process incorporates an aspect of safe presence and alternative space (e.g., dean’s office) for students to regulate their emotions and practice social-emotional skills. Teachers need support much in the same way students need support. Open communication and follow-through help to build strengthen teacher relationships.

I used the analytic categories of relational trust, personal values, and instructional praxis. These categories stood out from the data during early analysis. Emotion coding and values coding helps formulate these categories. Several themes emerged from the use of pattern coding to identify connections between categories of data (Saldaña, 2009). Three big themes emerged that all centered around some aspect of care and care theory (Noddings, 2005). There is a parallel process of support that exists in schools: while teachers are caring for students, the teachers need to be cared for as well. The first step of student support is teacher support. It is important to deconstruct the aspects of care that make it possible to replicate it in school settings. This leads to other themes, which exposes the affective realm of teaching and emphasizes advocacy as teaching practice.

What are the implications of restorative justice practices for school climate and culture, and student learning environments, as perceived by the dean?

School discipline exists on a spectrum. Differentiated discipline and behavioral scaffolds can be utilized to cultivate a school culture of relational communities. A whole school approach to behavioral differentiation is not the same for every student. In contrast, teachers and school administrators must treat interactions with students like curriculum modifications. The way we modify our teaching for students with academic needs, we must do the same to differentiate our classroom management and discipline approaches for students with behavioral needs. This is a harm-reduction approach to school discipline.

Yes, school discipline can be done differently, and restorative justice practices are a means to do it. When school administrators discuss improving the ‘school culture,’ it starts with the way they treat the staff and students. The students are not the only ones

responsible for maintaining their behaviors, as school culture is driven by adult interactions and the modeling of positive and collaborative relationships. The adults must work together like a well-oiled machine, following similar disciplinary protocols and intervention strategies.

Cultivating Advocacy Capital in Teachers

Like other forms of capital, advocacy capital is the ability to advocate for oneself and others. Aligning to activist frameworks, advocacy capital can further student engagement and achievement. Academic capital enables students to achieve in schools and other educational institutions. Academic capital in students is a by-product of advocacy capital in teachers.

Advocacy bridges the needs of traumatized students with instructional supports to create a trauma-informed framework for effective teaching and learning. The focus of an advocacy approach to teaching operationalizes student supports as a set of skills that educational practitioners can cultivate. The first step of student support is teacher support, and an advocacy approach to teaching allows for the scaffolding of behavioral skills for all students. As advocacy is a concept derived from the field of social work, it requires public support and community assistance for the betterment of students who want to improve their educational outcomes. Applied to general educational settings, advocacy pertains to the ‘soft’ skills that can supplement student learning. For example, advocacy relates to removing barriers to education for students who have transportation issues, family conflicts, mental health concerns, or other factors impeding their ability to focus on school. Restorative justice practices are a starting point for implementation.

Advocacy programs can direct school resources more appropriately to provide wraparound services for students and families who need specific resources and opportunities (Bruns, Walrath, & Sheehan, 2007). Implicit within this framework is attention to the affective side of learning, which teachers often ignore in favor of cognitive domains. No longer is it appropriate to offer a “one size fits most” model of instruction, as we know students arrive with many varying intelligences and ways of learning (Gardner 1991; Gardner, 1993), as well as differing funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992). Students who come from marginalized communities have a unique worldview and perspective, and their vast life experiences should be honored in the classroom.

A Heterotopia Vision of School Discipline

The themes of this dissertation study can best be understood as a heterotopia vision of school discipline. The heterotopia of restorative justice is only as successful to the extent that others buy into the philosophy. Philosopher Michel Foucault (1970) names such disparate ideas heterotopias. Though originally referring to language, Foucault writes, “Heterotopias are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it possible to name this *and* that” (p. xviii, emphasis in the original). Spatial philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1974) further describes heterotopias as “mutually repellant spaces” (p. 277). Restorative justice occupies a space of its own, both literally and abstractly. In the literal sense, restorative justice mediations require a private space and approximately one hour to complete, if conducted with fidelity to the model. Abstractly, restorative justice occupies a philosophical space that runs counter to punitive models of school discipline. Restorative justice presents a heterotopia, a different way of structuring school discipline. The identification of a “thirdspace” is an appropriate way of

contextualizing the heterotopia of restorative justice (Lefebvre, 1974; Soja, 1996).

Mediations create a thirdspace to enable restorative dialogue to take place.

The heterotopia of restorative practices is defined by care. It is implementing a different world of discipline than what has been previously known. Pushback immediately came from those who did not understand (nor appreciate or even accept) social-emotional learning frameworks. Those with limited experience working in educational settings fell back on knee-jerk reactions when interacting with students. These ‘knee-jerk’ reactions most often manifested in coercion, intimidation, and threats (such as repeated suspensions that lead to expulsion), with little-to-no behavioral skill development. Students who already lack these skills, generally exhibit numerous disruptive maladjusted behaviors (Greene, 2016; Kohl, 1994). They get defensive when corrected, lash out when redirected, attack when humiliated, and become unreasonable when they feel wronged. Several students emotionally shutdown and fail to recover from situations they have no control over. Kohl (1994) discusses these maladjusted behaviors as a developmental response to negative educational experiences, whereby students intentionally engage in adversarial student-teacher relationships as a form of ‘creative maladjustment’ – a way to maintain dignity and control (i.e., save-face) in situations where they are stripped of both.

Implications for Future Research

There are several areas where future research can continue to develop these themes from this dissertation project. Restorative justice practices align with curricular needs and there are several possibilities for both qualitative and quantitative studies that relate to classroom practices. Situated within the classroom management realm,

restorative justice can be easily incorporated into other instructional practices. Through advocacy-based frameworks, teachers can cultivate strong relationships to advance student engagement and educational empowerment. The ‘fundamentals’ of teaching can include the important practices of active listening, time to process, and space to reflect as central to effective teaching practice. Research is needed in teacher development of social-emotional practices in general. Moreover, further studies on social-emotional learning and principal preparation programs should consider the role of restorative practices in school discipline programs throughout all of K-12 schooling.

There are also implications for teacher preparation programs. Potential areas of research exist in the integration of social-emotional learning for pre-service teachers. The preparation of teachers is the leading way to confront the educational status quo and create lasting change. This guides us towards a more transformed future. Whether through teacher education programs or professional development opportunities, teachers need to be equipped with the skills necessary to engage the ever-evolving student learner, particularly in the affective realm.

Teacher mental health should be another area considered for future research. Normalizing this as an area of consideration would be step one, followed by a more concerted effort to look at the shifting landscape of teaching exposed through the COVID-19 pandemic. Surveys routinely find that teachers experience job-related stress and depression symptoms at a much higher rate than the general population (Steiner & Woo, 2021).

Though abstract, I want to push forward the notion of thirdspace as having a role in social-emotional learning and educational support. Advocacy is about presence and

creating a safe space for students to be vulnerable enough to practice distress tolerance and emotion regulation. Thus, attempting to contextualize and explain advocacy as existing in a space led me to develop the narrative in this way. Future research can advance the role of meta-analysis and reflexivity, central to the advocacy process and implementation of restorative justice practices. Anyone working with traumatized populations always operates below optimal functionality and emotional regulation. We all need an outside perspective, outside eyes, to gain some sense of normalization. We all have our own trauma-narrative, both teachers and students. The first step is to own our trauma stories. By doing this, we are more prepared to support others who are operating from their trauma-narratives. This is where the relationship aspect comes into being. By deconstructing relationships, we can easily see the thirdspace that exists to utilize rapport to promote vulnerability.

Overall, more research is needed on the two-pronged approach of restorative justice practices and trauma-informed education to curb the school-to-prison pipeline. Further studies on the role of care in public school discipline, as well as successful alternative to suspension programs help the push for reform of punitive and archaic school discipline programs. Social-emotional learning in schools has two components: the teacher focuses on the student and builds a strong, mutual, reciprocal relationship with them. Simultaneously, the whole school community re-prioritizes the cultivation of safe spaces in school culture where trauma-affected students (and sometimes teachers) can actively engage. Schools would benefit from adopting a universal approach when implementing restorative justice frameworks to support all students, whether they are trauma-identified or not. Being trauma-informed is a mindset change in adults.

Knowing that trauma in students often manifests in negative classroom behaviors helps teachers anticipate student conduct. An increased focus on brain science and the fight/flight/freeze model (Perry & Morris, 2014) can help teachers prepare restorative responses for some common student behaviors. For example, a student may exhibit hyperactivity or aggression (toward the teacher or peers) when in a “fight” survival state. Some students leave the classroom spontaneously and without permission when in a “flight” survival state. Shutting down during class work or engaging in peer conflict is evident of the “freeze” survival state. These challenging behaviors have usually been met with strong discipline and a punitive focus, which has contributed to the school-to-prison pipeline. Teachers engage in PLCs or restorative circles to understand the power of collaborative strength-based teacher support.

A philosophical question that guides my practice pertains to the dean’s role in transforming discipline systems. Does transformation occur through strategic planning and decision-making at the administrative level, or is it with ‘on-the-ground’ roles such as ‘dean’ and ‘classroom teacher’? If it is through administrative decisions and plans, then a knowledge of actual classroom practices, teachers, and students is needed by all involved. If it is the latter, then time and space are needed to build resiliency skills – for both students and teachers. Though beyond the scope of this exact dissertation project, this question sat unanswered at the back of my mind throughout my two years as a restorative justice dean of students and remains unanswered even as I write this.

Reconceptualizing the Dean of Students’ Role

The future work of the dean of students will be maintaining social-emotional supports throughout the school day. Administrator and teacher interaction with students

drives school culture. The dean of students is the first person called when conflict arises between teacher and student or student and student. A consistent and fair response will gain buy-in from all parties involved, and restorative practices holds the key to this consistency. To ensure the proper devotion of time and fidelity to the restorative justice model, the dean of students' role should be reconceptualized as a teacher on special assignment. The Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) role can utilize restorative practices to resolve conflict, while also having the capacity to help students develop emotional management and behavioral skills. To prioritize instructional support, the dean of students should no longer serve an administrative function. The dean of students should still be tasked with conflict resolution and attendance concerns. Yet, the formal paperwork that comes along with suspensions and expulsions should be left to the assistant principal or other school administrator. Instead, the dean of students should be free to support students with academic interventions and discipline alternatives. If approached from a philosophy of student support, the dean of students' role could build behavioral skills within students during each interaction.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the gaps in mental health and emotional support available to students. Though much depends on school funding and policy decisions, there are measures schools can take to mitigate some of these concerns. Administrators can get creative with staffing and curriculum decisions, making room for more social-emotional learning opportunities throughout the day. Students who lag social-emotional and behavioral skills often lack the language to describe their emotions. Giving students the language to process their emotions in a safe and productive way is a positive first step in implementing social-emotional learning. Considerations of teacher

mental health should also be incorporated as we move away from the fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. Initiatives to strengthen students' social-emotional learning can be applied to teachers as well. Social-emotional learning must first be cultivated within those who aren't naturally inclined to incorporate soft skills in their teaching practice.

Until the role of dean of students' changes, or until more student support positions are added into the budget, more work will fall on teachers to maintain positive relationships with students. Though it can be argued that the teacher spends most time with the student, and therefore, would be in the best position to build relationships. Still, it comes across as another thing added to teacher's already-full plates. Ideally, social-emotional learning can be woven throughout content lessons via positive interactions with students and maintenance of a learner-centered classroom culture. Teachers can be challenged to incorporate these skills into their professional teaching practice, but it may take a reflection on their own values and work with a teacher mentor or instructional coach to do so.

Methodological Significance

Auto-criticism prioritizes authenticity and experience. As a branch of educational criticism and connoisseurship, auto-criticism widens the scope of auto-qualitative methodologies by validating the lived experience. Through this study, I was left with insight into my professional practice that I would not have been able to reach otherwise. Auto-criticism allows for critique of memory, and raises philosophical questions related to practice. Is it better to try new and innovative school discipline interventions in a broken system, knowing they cannot work unless all the parts are implemented with fidelity? Or it is better to maintain status quo in a faulty system, allowing for self-

preservation and career longevity? I ultimately could not sustain in a broken system and was guided to that emotional decision through auto-criticism.

My main data sources are personal journals, human resource documents, restorative justice mediation notes, and other office logs. I gathered and developed these sources through the lived experiences of a restorative justice dean of students. Auto-criticism allowed for deep analysis to take place over two years that prioritizes the lived experience. Further qualitative research projects utilizing auto-criticism will highlight the endless possibilities of this emergent method. A method such as auto-criticism highlights vulnerabilities of the human experience central to educational processes.

The fundamental challenge in utilizing this methodology is how much of the story to tell. I had to separate myself as participant to centralize the research process with as much objectivity needed to identify the essence of the lived experience. Because so much emotionality went into creating this project, it felt as if the data was fluid and evolved throughout the coding process. I continue to try and resolve the emergence of the method with the evolving nature of constant reflection. The main challenge exists in doing this work in a system that is unchanging, and reflection on this makes it that much more apparent. The auto-criticism helps shape the identity of the participant and presents implications for the role of dean of students, the classroom environment, and school culture and climate. Auto-criticism provides a vehicle to guide readers through the lived experiences of a restorative justice dean of students. With much of a “behind the curtain” advantage, this auto-criticism allowed me to present the research in an authentic way.

This auto-criticism elevates researcher journals, authentic documents, and a variety of artifacts as data sources to ascertain the details of the lived experience. Auto-

criticism is the most appropriate method to access the lived experience and represent it meaningfully. Using portraiture, I created snapshots of the restorative justice dean of students experience in a way that represents my work. This method forces one to rely on personal strengths to show the findings in a unique way.

Conclusion

Restorative Justice is not a behavioral system, but rather a framework for interacting with others. Students who have behavioral issues are lacking “soft skills,” which can ultimately manifest in the lack of resiliency and the ability to cope. The onus is on teachers to drive their own internal ‘change process’ to meet the needs of highly-impacted students. The advocacy approach to teaching builds advocacy capital through rapport, vulnerability, and trust (Bryk, 2002). Behavioral interventions exist at the intersection of curriculum, instruction, and educational psychology. Students are often not emotionally developed for high school, and the school experience itself plays a significant role in this development.

I accepted the Culture and Climate Dean of Students role under the assumption I would run a school-within-a-school type of alternative programming for students who are considered “high-flyers” or repeat-offenders, identified by their frequent visits to the dean’s office. When that did not come to fruition, I developed my own “deaning” around restorative interventions. Utilizing the Restorative Justice philosophy and model, I attempted to implement restorative practices through an application of care theory (Noddings, 2005, 2013) and culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2017). Though the lived experience of this process was emotional and wounding, I strengthened my ideals as an educator. Through analysis of the data, I found that

- Social-emotional learning should be at the forefront of any school discipline program. Replacing outdated punitive modes of school discipline, social-emotional learning can be addressed through restorative practices. Student misbehavior is indicative of missing skills, and the dean of students is equipped to provide space and scaffolding to help students develop these skills.
- Student support begins with teacher support. A parallel process of support exists where teachers need to be supported, much in the same way as students need supported. Many teachers I encountered were emotionally dysregulated themselves and were not able to support students academically or emotionally.
- Restorative practices exist on a continuum ranging from informal to formal, with relationships being prioritized throughout the processes. Informal practices include stepping in to resolve impromptu conflict. Formal practices include scheduled mediations. The Restorative Justice approach of ‘what happened?’ and ‘how do we make it right?’ works to build trust and foster relationships through both informal and formal interventions.

Noddings (2005) sums it up best when she writes, “Caring teachers listen and respond differently to their students” (p. 19). This modest statement holds the key to educational change. Relational care must be at the center of the educational process, driven by motivation and will. Four elements make up the ethic of caring: modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation (Noddings, 2005). For students to be successful requires trust, particularly if they have not always been successful with education in the past. Many students walk through the school doors angry, hurt, emotional, and marginalized. These

students must trust in the teacher to surrender their defensiveness to access the learning process. This happens through moral authority, which is earned respect based on one's actions or behaviors. As a key component of care, moral authority can be used in the following way: modeling with open dialogue creates opportunities to enhance practice, which allows for confirmation, and thus, educational achievement.

Social-emotional learning matters in school discipline. In equitable discipline practices stem from larger systemic issues plaguing K-12 schools. Restorative practices can be used in school discipline to support students and strengthen their academic engagement.

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Appendix A

School Discipline Ladder (Reverse order of consequences for repeated offences)

Level F – Suspension Option

1. Same as Level E, except that Administrator may give In School Suspension (ISS) of 1-3 days and/or Out of School Suspension (OSS) for 1-3 days

Level E -Suspension Option

1. Steps "1" through "4" from Level D
2. Administrator may give ISS of 1-3 days and/or a 1-day out of school suspension (OSS) but if OSS is used, then maximum ISS is one day
3. Elementary school students shall not receive OSS for type one offenses
4. Consider use of behavior intervention plan

Level D – Administrative Level Referral

1. Documentation of interactions and interventions is provided
2. Student tells his/her side of the story
3. Administrator conferences with the parent/guardian and determines further consultation with support personnel is necessary
4. One or more interventions initiated as appropriate
5. If necessary, in-school suspension (ISS) of up to three days may be utilized
6. Consider use of remedial discipline plan

Level C-Teacher/Support Staff/Student/Parent

1. **Dean or designated staff determines whether to involve a social worker, nurse, guidance counselor, psychologist or any other member of support staff**
2. Student tells his/her side of the story, and teacher notifies the student's parent/guardian
3. Teacher and member of support staff (if accessed) conference with the parent/guardian, student, and students' other teachers, if appropriate
4. **One or more interventions initiated as appropriate**
5. **Document all interactions and interventions via I.C under behavior tab**

Level B-Teacher/Student/Parent

1. Student tells his/her side of the story
2. Teacher or designated staff may notify the students' parent/guardian
3. Teacher or designated staff counsels with the student
4. **One or more interventions initiated as appropriate**
5. **Document all interactions and interventions**

Level A- Teacher/Student

1. Student tells his/her side of the story
2. Teacher or designated staff counsels with student
3. One or more interventions initiated as appropriate
4. Document all interactions and interventions in IC