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Educators' Perspectives on the Use of Restorative Practices in Urban High Schools

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Walden University

College of Education

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Janora M. Holmes

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Walden University

2022

Abstract

Educators' Perspectives on the Use of Restorative Practices in Urban High Schools

by

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MS, Walden University, 2020

MA, Kaplan University, 2011

BA, Fisk University, 1993

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Education

Walden University

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Abstract

African American youth are suspended and expelled at a higher rate than their nonminority (White) counterparts. Punitive processes such as zero-tolerance policies result in suspensions and expulsions, removing African American youth out of the classroom, and increasing the risk of dropping out and diminishing opportunities for academic success. The purpose of this study was to explore the role of restorative practices in urban high schools through the perspectives of urban educators. For the purpose of this study, the term *urban* was defined as predominantly African American. The theoretical foundation of this basic qualitative research was Canter and Canter's assertive behavior model. The research questions guiding this study focused on the perspectives on school discipline of educators regarding the use of restorative practices; the ways that restorative practices influenced educators' attitudes toward the role of school discipline; and the ways that perspectives of teachers, deans, and administrators differ on the use of restorative practices with urban high school youth. Data were collected through semistructured interviews with 10 participants who used restorative practices in urban high schools. Data analysis included coding and the identification of themes. Findings revealed that educators most often used restorative practices for physical or verbal altercations; restorative practices had some influence on disciplinary decisions; and there were pros and cons to using restorative practices. This study may influence positive social change by informing other educators in urban high schools who use restorative practices, of ways to improve staff and student relationships, which could minimize negative behaviors and out-of-school suspensions.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my children, Jazmin, Jaylon and Julian, and my mother, Catherine. Through this entire journey, they encouraged and supported me during the late nights and early mornings I worked to accomplish my goal. I appreciate you all for taking on additional responsibilities and do know, that without each of you, this would not have been possible. I LOVE YOU!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Researchers have indicated that exclusionary discipline practices, such as out-of-school suspension and expulsion, are not equitable or practical approaches to improving student behavior and school safety (Lamont et al., 2013). Nationwide disproportional school discipline for African American students has prompted policymakers to push for healthy instructional environments, to close the gap of disproportionately high discipline for African American students (Hannigan & Hannigan, 2019). Throughout the past two decades, statewide and nationally, suspensions and expulsions increased as a result of zero-tolerance policies (Skiba, 2014). In this chapter I will discuss the problem of the disproportionate, exclusionary discipline of African American students in urban, predominantly African American high schools, and why educator perspectives of working with restorative practices within these schools are necessary to understand.

Background

The meaning of the word discipline derives from the Latin word for pupil, *discipulus*, and the Latin word, *discipere*, which means to teach or comprehend (Skiba et al., 2000). From the time students learned in a one-room schoolhouse, teachers have been attempting to find ways to discipline students for negative behaviors (Morris & Howard, 2003). Reyneke (2015) posited that punitive disciplinary methods are aggravating, unacceptable behaviors, and children need discipline in a psychologically, healthy way. On January 8, 2014, The United States Department of Education issued guidance, *The Supportive School Discipline Initiative (SSDI)*, on school discipline (States

News Service, 2014). This guidance prompted local and state educational agencies to begin utilizing alternative approaches and placing restrictions on the use of exclusionary discipline. One of the alternative approaches discussed in this study is restorative justice/practices.

Restorative justice originated in the 1970s as mediation or reconciliation between victims and offenders (Wachtel, 2016). According to Wachtel (2016), in 1974, a probation officer in Canada arranged for two teenagers to meet with their victim following a vandalism spree. The positive outcome of the meeting was the first of many victim-offender reconciliation programs (Wachtel, 2016). To date, current restorative justice practices include communities of care, comprised of victims' and offenders' families and friends participating in collaborative processes called conferences and circles (Wachtel, p. 2). These conferences address how best to repair the harm caused by the offender.

Within restorative justice, there are three primary stakeholders – victims, offenders, and communities of care. The degree to which all three are involved in the meaningful, emotional exchange and decision making is the degree to which any form of social discipline approaches being fully restorative (Wachtel, p. 3). The following literature provides additional background on the application of restorative justice within academic settings as a response to discipline.

Background Literature

Restorative practice is a social science that studies how to build social capital and achieve social discipline through participatory learning and decision-making (Wachtel,

2013). The principles from restorative justice provided a platform for restorative practices that spread from criminal justice to other social sciences such as education, social work, and counseling (Pavri, 2016). Zehr, 1990, as cited in Nolt, 2006, posited that restorative practices stemmed from restorative justice, a way of looking at criminal justice that emphasized repairing the harm done to people and relationships rather than only punishing offenders. The following section includes various studies about ways in which educators use restorative practices within educational settings.

A mixed-methods study by Hunt (2018), involved 10 teachers, a principal, and restorative practices counselors from an urban central California high school. Surveys were given to participants to get their perceptions of school discipline, student interactions, school climate, and the implementation of restorative practices. Findings indicated strong relationships between teacher perceptions of teacher/student interactions and both campus climate and restorative practice implementation. This study provided another perspective for guidance on possible research questions related to restorative practices.

Anyon et al., (2016) examined whether there was an association between restorative interventions provided to minority students, at an urban public school in Denver during the first semester, and incidence of disciplined students receiving additional office discipline referrals or out-of-school suspensions in the second semester. Findings indicated first-semester participants in restorative interventions had a lower incidence of receiving office discipline referrals and suspensions in the second semester. However, the suspension gap between Black and White students persisted. This study

provided insight into the application of restorative practices in urban school districts among Black youth and White students. Data documented can be used to gain ideas regarding restorative interventions and how schools can decrease the number of disciplinary referrals.

To identify restorative justice as a belief system and not a process or behavior modifier, a quantitative, exploratory, nonexperimental study, was conducted by Alger (2018). He compared the justice ideologies of cooperation, healing, and restoration between groups of school administrators, teachers, and parents in a regional area of the United States. Outcomes identified alignment or lack of alignment between the groups. Findings also indicated there was a statistically significant difference between the group of administrators and parents in the restorative justice belief of restoration and the restorative justice ideology. This study provided further insight into the need to research the perspectives of educators on the role of restorative practices in urban, predominantly African American high schools.

Seeking to identify the differences in perspectives of administrators, teachers, and deans, in a single case study, Brooks (2018) documented the perceptions of urban high school teachers and administrators regarding their preservice and in service conflict resolution and violence prevention education. Findings indicated that preservice teacher education programs were not addressing conflict resolution and violence prevention in schools among preservice teachers and that teachers and administrators were experiencing student health-related antecedents to conflict and violence in school. These findings provided another area for consideration when interviewing teachers and

administrators about their training and knowledge of the use of restorative practices before deciding to suspend.

Subsequently, Losen (2013) previously posited that suspensions and expulsions were counter-productive to the academic success of African American students. In a qualitative single case study conducted by Waldon-Johnson (2015), on how an urban high school conflict resolution program impacted high school students trained as peer mediators, results were positive. The key finding was that the conflict resolution program positively impacted peer mediators because they learned cultural competency skills, which helped participants fulfill their desire to help peers resolve conflicts and to resolve personal altercations with friends and family. This finding provides insight into contributing factors leading to the success of urban, predominantly African American, high school youth.

A quantitative nonexperimental study conducted by Christy (2018), compared the impact of 218 various school districts in New England approaches to school discipline on suspension rates while controlling for race and socioeconomic status. Findings showed school districts implementing alternative approaches to school discipline, were found to have significantly lower suspension rates than areas that continued to follow standard state policy. A key factor was district control of racial and socioeconomic composition. This study provided background knowledge on the effect of race and out-of-school suspensions in urban, predominantly African American, high schools.

Lastly, in a quantitative, longitudinal study, Murray (2018) explored factors that influenced academic success among African American youth. Twenty-six students from

800 schools across the United States, from grade 10 in 2002, through high school, and transitioning on to postsecondary or the workforce in 2006, were the focus of the study (Murray, 2018). Murray (2018) revealed statistically significant positive relationships between academic resilience and student, family, and school factors. Although there was no discussion on the role of restorative practices, it was important to understand the formation of positive relationships between teachers and students. These studies, in one way or another, addressed the three main research questions for the study. It was necessary to further explore perspectives of educators on the use of restorative practices, to gain an understanding of the determination to suspend or expel students who disrupt the classroom or school environment.

Research Problem

The problem to be addressed in this study is that punitive processes such as zero-tolerance policies result in suspensions and expulsions, removing African American youth out of the classroom, and increasing the risk of dropping out and diminishing opportunities for academic success. Research has shown that African American youth are suspended and expelled at a higher rate than nonminority students (Anfinson et al., 2010). The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, 2014, as cited in Loveless, 2017, released data showing that the suspension rate for African American students was three times that of their White counterparts. According to Lamont et al., (2013):

Research continues to demonstrate that so-called zero-tolerance policies and out-of-school suspensions and expulsions used too readily in schools, are ineffective deterrents to inappropriate behavior. Punitive policies become harmful and

counterproductive to the student, the family, the school district, and the community. (p. 1005)

Minority youth are suspended and expelled at a higher rate than nonminority students (Loveless, 2017). The impact of such suspensions and expulsions of these youth potentially lead to increased rates of recidivism and school dropout (Barrett et al, 2021). Ineffective disciplinary methods in schools have helped to perpetuate violence resulting in rising rates of suspension, detention, and incarceration in students (Morrison, 2006). Out-of-school suspensions and expulsions imply that a serious act or behavior has been punished and therefore sets a standard of unacceptable behavior according to policy. The school to prison pipeline is a process that engenders negative life trajectories and social reproduction, as persistently disciplined students become less invested in school because they feel disconnected from the very institutions that are responsible for bolstering their success (Gregory et al., 2010). The school to prison pipeline suggests that “zero-tolerance” or stringent, punitive school policies (inclusive of suspensions and expulsions) push students out-of-school, increasing the likelihood of contact with the juvenile justice system (Blake et al., 2018).

Throughout the United States, educators increase the use of restorative approaches to their approaches to school discipline attempting to reduce reliance on suspension and expulsions, as well as eradicate the racial discipline gap (Gregory et al., 2016). It is essential to understand the role of restorative practices and how educators think about the use of these practices as an alternative to punitive discipline. Restorative practices include strategies to both prevent rule infractions before they occur and to

intervene after an infraction has occurred (Gregory et al., 2016). According to Standing et al., (2012) restorative practices in education involve educators working exclusively with student offenders to resolve conflicts and build relationships through restorative circles based upon student conversations. Restorative circles provide a space for those involved in a conflict to repair harm through a facilitated dialogue process.

As an additional resource to punitive consequences such as zero-tolerance policies, and as another way of dealing with disciplinary infractions to prevent the school to prison pipeline, schools utilize restorative practices. The gap in research exists because currently, there is minimal research that focuses on the perspectives of educators in urban, predominantly African American, high schools who implement restorative practices as an alternative response to discipline. According to Muhammad (2018), there is a need for further research regarding alternatives to suspensions and expulsions in schools. Losen and Martinez (2013) found that reports on disparities in school discipline often fail to capture the high percentage of urban secondary school students who are suspended or expelled. Educators implement restorative practices to provide alternatives to punitive responses to misbehavior and replace them with relationship building tactics, empathetic conversations, and humane approaches inclusive of the community, including the offender.

Existing literature on restorative practices focuses mainly on how and why these practices are advantageous as compared to zero-tolerance policies (Lustick, 2017). Mallett (2016) pointed out that schools have a responsibility to incorporate practices which minimize suspensions and expulsions. Including practices creates a more

productive learning environment, and students potentially become more successful. Research suggests that urban schools have stricter school punishment practices, higher grade retention rates, and that there are racial/ethnic disparities associated with school punishment practices and academic progress (Blake et al., 2018).

Research from the past two decades showed that exclusionary discipline practices were inequitable (Rainbolt et al., 2019). The likelihood of African American students receiving suspensions was two to three times greater than White students, and students with disabilities were twice as likely to face exclusionary discipline when compared with their peers (Carr, 2012; Crenshaw et al., 2015; Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Kinsler, 2011; Maag, 2012). Extensive prior research showed a disproportionate distribution of school punishment among student bodies (Kupchik, 2010). Response to discipline questions may be questioned by students and families when students are suspended and expelled without administrators, deans, teachers, etc. acknowledging why the misbehavior by the student occurred. In this research, through interview responses, I explored the perspectives teachers, deans, and administrators had about the role of restorative practices as an alternative to punitive discipline in urban high school settings. Research conducted may potentially decrease suspensions and expulsions, which remove African American youth from the classroom, increase the risk of dropping out and diminish opportunities for academic success. This study contributed to educator's perspectives on the use of restorative practices in urban high schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative research was to explore the use of restorative practices through the perspectives of urban educators who utilized restorative practices in urban high schools as an alternative response to discipline. For the purpose of this study, the term *urban* represented predominantly African American. Restorative practices prompt systemic changes in how educators think about the purpose of school discipline and how to administer disciplinary responses. Since the early 2000s, school systems and personnel have acknowledged the power of restorative practice in theory but have had difficulty implementing restorative practices in classrooms and schools (Darling & Monk, 2018). The Indiana Department of Education (2012) passed legislation requiring schools to address the social and emotional state of students who misbehave as opposed to seeking to suspend or expel as a first option.

Maag (2012) and Carr (2012) suggested that school administrators continue to use exclusionary practices because the "get tough approach" on crime (and misbehavior at school) was in our society's psyche and had been for the past two decades. The result was that sometimes school administrators were ethically conflicted, caught between doing what they believed was best for students, and conformed to their supervisors' expectations (Rainbolt et al., 2019). Understanding the perspectives of urban, high school educators utilizing restorative practices provided further insight on the role of restorative practices and provided a basis for suggested best practices in building relationships with students and creating a positive school climate for other schools with similar demographics.

Research Questions

1. What are the perspectives on school discipline of educators in urban, predominantly African American, high schools regarding the use of restorative practices?
2. How have restorative practices influenced educators' attitudes toward the role of school discipline?
3. How do the perspectives of teachers, deans, and administrators differ on the use of restorative practices with urban high school youth?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was Canter and Canter's assertive behavior model. Canter and Canter's assertive behavioral model expressed that an educator who used assertive discipline had a clear sense of how students should behave for educators to accomplish their teaching objectives (Canter & Canter, 2005). The model also supported the logic that teachers had the right to teach professionally without disruption, and students had the right to learn in a safe, calm environment with full support from teachers. The relationship of Canter and Canter's assertive behavioral model to the study was that this research could potentially document how urban educators' perspectives of restorative practices related to their decision to suspend or expel a student.

Assertive discipline provided a system of dealing with behavior at the time it occurs, through a plan that made the learners responsible for their behavior and resulting consequences (Canter & Canter, 2005). The core of this model included the

acknowledgment that students had rights and needed a caring educator who was supportive and empathetic to their students' needs. A basic premise of assertive discipline was that educators participate in assertive training (Barrett, 1985) that focused on the concept that the educators' attitude influenced their behavior that, in turn, affected learners' behavior (Canter & Canter, 2005). The use of assertion training enabled individuals to stand up for their wants and feelings while at the same time not abuse the rights of others (Barrett, 1985) effectively. Additionally, teachers sought new and better ways to interact with students in classrooms. Those responsible for disciplinary systems were looking to restorative practice for new ways to resolve the increasing range and number of difficulties between teachers and students, students and other students, and between the school and parents (Drewery & Kecskemeti, 2010). The most effective teachers were those who remained in control of the class while always remembering the primary duty was to help students learn and behave responsibly (Canter & Canter, 2005). The Canter assertive behavior model provided a framework of analysis of the data from the study, gained from interviewing urban educators (teachers, deans, and administrators) and determining what perspectives guided decisions to suspend or expel students or implement an alternative to punitive discipline.

Nature of the Study

I used a basic qualitative method (descriptive and analytic) to explore the opinions and perspectives of urban high school teachers, deans, and administrators with restorative practices. For the purpose of this study, the term *urban* was defined as predominantly African American. As the researcher, I focused on understanding, describing, and

analyzing the complex processes, meanings, and perspectives that educators have and make within their experiences. I chose this method based upon my purpose statement and research questions to understand the perspectives of urban high school educators, who use restorative practices as a response to discipline. Participants were teachers, deans, and administrators who worked in urban high schools in a Midwestern state and were purposefully selected. Semistructured interviews with a list of predetermined questions (Appendix B) were conducted, and responses transcribed and coded. Transcripts were uploaded from Zoom and the Otter app to MAXQDA and printed to conduct a line-by-line review of participant responses. During the data analysis process, I kept notes and memos in a reflexive journal. I reread the transcripts to identify any overlooked words or phrases that were similar and grouped them according to their relationship. This process allowed me to structure identified themes. Creswell (2013) posited, that researchers should look for emerging codes during the data analysis process. In Chapter 4, I present the setting and demographics of my study, the data collection process, and my data analysis.

Definitions

Restorative justice: Restorative justice is a theory of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused by criminal behavior (Centre for Justice and Reconciliation, 2019). Restorative justice encompasses a growing social movement to establish peaceful, nonpunitive approaches for addressing harm, responding to violations of human rights and problem-solving (Hurley et al., 2015).

Restorative practices: Restorative practices is an emerging social science that studies how to strengthen relationships between individuals as well as social connections within communities (International Institute of Restorative Practices, 2015). It is a process that focuses more on repairing actual conflict rather than merely punishing misbehavior (Browne-Dianis, 2011).

School to prison pipeline: The school to prison pipeline describes the process by which high numbers of students who do not complete school—either due to exclusionary discipline practices or dropping out—ending up in the prison system (Carrino, 2016).

School climate: School climate refers to the quality and character of school life. The basis of school climate is on patterns of students', parents' and school personnel's experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures (National School Climate Center, n.d.).

Urban: For the purpose of this study, the term *urban* represented predominantly African American.

Zero tolerance: The term zero tolerance refers to the approach to discipline which emphasizes severe and uncompromising punishment (Curran, 2019).

Assumptions

Two assumptions made regarding this research were: (a) educators participating within the study were familiar with and utilized restorative practices, and (b) participants would be honest and speak freely on their perspective of school discipline and the use of restorative practices. It was necessary for the selected participants to be familiar with

restorative practices so that they can share their perspective on the implementation of restorative practices, and whether their attitudes towards discipline reflected the practice. Additionally, there was the assumption that the participants would be honest and speak freely to provide a trustworthy study. The intended results of this study were to provide greater insight into the perspectives of educators when deciding to suspend, expel, or seek to repair the harm done to and by African American students.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study included two urban high schools, with a total of 10 participants providing their perspectives on school discipline through an interview process. For the purpose of this study, the term *urban* represented predominantly African American. The goal was to discuss the perspectives on school discipline of those that were administrators, deans, or teachers, identify how restorative practices influenced their attitudes towards the role of school discipline, and identify how perspectives differed on the use of restorative practices among teachers, deans, and administrators. Gaining the perspectives of these educators on the use of restorative practices was significant because the research literature was limited. The study was limited to administrators, deans, and teachers who worked in urban schools that used restorative practices. I chose to include these three types of instructional staff because teachers work with students firsthand and encounter classroom behaviors. At the same time, deans and administrators potentially decide suspensions and expulsions. Furthermore, schools with similar demographics could gain insight into why educators, deans, or administrators in urban high schools, chose various responses to discipline.

Limitations

There were several limitations within my study. The Covid -19 pandemic prohibited in-person contact, limiting the recruitment process to email and phone contact. Second, the study was limited to a select population of participants who worked in urban high schools, and for the purpose of this research, *urban* was defined as predominantly African American. This was a limitation because practices and perspectives may differ for those who are in a different demographic. Lastly, a couple of the participants had preconceived notions and attitudes towards punitive discipline and second chances for students, creating their personal bias when answering interview questions. These limitations provided an opportunity for future research, and expansion of the current research.

Significance

A gap in research existed examining the perspectives of urban high school educators who used restorative practices as an alternative response to discipline. It was essential to understand the perspectives of these educators because their decision to recommend suspensions or expulsions potentially contributed to the school to prison pipeline, and academic success of African American students. This research was an original study providing further insight into how select educators responded to the misbehaviors of students in urban high schools, and how restorative practices contributed to the overall school culture and response to discipline.

This research has the potential to lead to positive social change by improving staff and student relationships based upon the perspectives of the urban educators interviewed.

It may also aid in retaining African American youth within the classroom, decrease the risk of dropping out, and improve opportunities for academic success. The International Institute of Restorative Practice (IIRP) identified several restorative processes that it viewed as most helpful in implementing restorative practices in the widest variety of settings (Wachtel, 2015). These included restorative conferences, circles, family group conferences, and the use of affective statements. Creating a model around these best practices to be shared within other high schools with similar demographics, may provide alternatives to suspensions and expulsions, which could potentially contribute to the school to prison pipeline. Documenting these perspectives demonstrated how restorative practices can improve schools and provide possible alternative actions geared towards building stronger relationships between educators and students, redirecting efforts to suspend and expel students, which contribute to the school to prison pipeline.

Summary

Chapter 1 introduced the study. The background section provided a definition of discipline as well as information on the origins of restorative practices. There was a gap in research that focused on the perspectives of educators in urban high schools about restorative practices as an alternative response to discipline. Research questions for the study were: (a) What are the perspectives on school discipline of educators in urban, predominantly African American high schools regarding the use of restorative practices?; (b) How have restorative practices influenced educators' attitudes toward the role of school discipline?; and (c) How do the perspectives of teachers, deans, and administrators differ on the use of restorative practices with urban high school youth? Canter and

Canter's assertive behavior model was the conceptual framework for the study. The nature of the study included a description of the basic qualitative research design, as well as the method of research, interviewing. Interviews included a total of 10 participants from two urban high schools: six teachers, two administrators, and two deans. Lastly, this section included definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and the significance of the study. Each section of the chapter, collectively supported why it was essential to understand the perspectives of educators who may have recommend suspensions or expulsions of African American students, potentially increasing the risk of dropping out and diminishing their opportunities for academic success.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Researchers have found that African American youth are suspended and expelled at a higher rate than nonminority students (Barrett et al., 2021). Zero tolerance policies resulting in suspensions and expulsions push students out of the classroom, increase the risk of dropping out, and diminish opportunities for academic success. The purpose of this basic qualitative research was to explore the role of restorative practices through the perspectives of educators who work in urban high schools and utilize restorative practices as an alternative response to discipline. As an enhanced replacement to punitive discipline throughout the United States, there has been an increase in the use of restorative approaches to minimize the reliance on suspensions and attempt to eradicate the racial discipline gap (Gregory et al., 2016).

The school to prison pipeline is partially contingent upon the response of educators to negative student behaviors (Elias, 2013). Exclusionary responses may potentially increase the likelihood of students going to prison, as opposed to graduating from high school and becoming productive students. When these students dismiss from their academic institutions, the motivation to attend school decreases, the drop-out rate increases, and the potential for increased post-secondary income earnings are limited (Flannery et al., 2014; Gregory et al., 2015). Recent studies (Gregory et al., 2015; Losen, 2013; McAndrews, 2010) on racial disparities in discipline, indicated that school-controlled factors were the strongest predictors of both frequency and disproportionate use of suspensions and expulsions. These include: (a) teachers' attitudes and tolerance

levels, (b) classroom management skills, (c) principal attitudes toward discipline, and (d) a positive or negative school climate. In this research, questions to be explored are: (a) What are the perspectives on school discipline of educators in urban, predominantly African American, high schools who utilize restorative practices in school discipline responses?; (b) How have restorative practices influenced educator's attitudes toward the role of school discipline?; (c) How do the perspectives of teachers, deans, and administrators differ on the use of restorative practices with urban high school youth?

In this review of the literature, I explored the perspectives of urban educators and their involvement with restorative practices based on current literature. The literature review was inclusive of the history of restorative practices, the school to prison pipeline, the application of zero-tolerance policies in urban schools, racial disproportionalities in-school suspensions and expulsions, school climate and discipline, and values and perspectives of urban educators regarding restorative practices and school discipline. Finally, this section discussed the conceptual framework and the literature search strategy.

Literature Search Strategy

In this literature review, I utilized the Walden Center for Research Quality Dissertations tab as a primary source for research. I conducted an exhaustive literature search strategy researching databases to validate the gap in the literature specific to the purpose of the study. Also, I gathered literature using the following educational databases (but not limited to) Google Scholar, SAGE Journals, and ERIC from the Walden Library. Searches were filtered as peer-reviewed and designated for the last five years to minimize

outdated research. Key terms and concepts most often used to narrow the search were urban school discipline, urban educators' response to discipline, restorative practices, restorative discipline, school climate, zero-tolerance, restorative justice, and educator perceptions of discipline. Additional searches involving a combination of phrases including educator views on restorative practices, conflict resolution, restorative practices in urban high schools, improving discipline in schools, and classroom management provided an extension of resources for the literature review.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was Canter and Canter's assertive behavior model. This research documented how urban educators' perspectives of restorative practices relate to their decision to suspend or expel a student. Canter and Canter's assertive behavioral model expressed that an educator who uses assertive discipline has a clear sense of how students should behave for educators to accomplish their teaching objectives (Canter & Canter, 2005).

Assertive discipline provides a system of dealing with behavior at the time it occurs, through a plan that makes the learners responsible for his or her behavior and resulting consequences (Canter & Canter, 2005). The core of this model includes the acknowledgment that students have rights and need a caring educator who is supportive and empathetic to their students' needs. The premise of assertive discipline is on the notion that the educator's attitude influences his/her behavior that, in turn, influences learners' behavior (Canter & Canter, 2005). Teachers are looking for new and better ways to interact with students in their classrooms. Those responsible for disciplinary systems

are looking to restorative practice for new ways to resolve the increasing range and number of difficulties between teachers and students, students and other students, and between the school and parents (Drewery & Kecskemeti, 2010). The Canter and Canter's assertive behavior model provided a framework of analysis of the data from my study as a result of interviewing urban educators (teachers, deans, and administrators) and determining what perspectives guided decisions to suspend or expel students or implement an alternative to punitive discipline.

Restorative Justices and Practices

Practices and beliefs based upon restorative justice began with indigenous populations worldwide (Roland et al., 2012). Restorative justice encompasses a growing social movement to establish peaceful, nonpunitive approaches for addressing harm, responding to violations of human rights, and problem-solving (Hurley et al., 2015). The restorative justice movement first took center stage during the mid-1950s as the criminal justice system's mandate expanded from detention and punishment to include rehabilitation and deterrence of future misbehavior (Calhoun, 2013). An important focus of the movement was changing the perspective of investigating offenses. Retributive questions such as: (a) What laws or rules were broken?; (b) Who broke the rules?; and (c) What do the offenders deserve? (Zehr, 2002) was restructured to focus restoratively. Accordingly, questions became (a) Who is hurt?; (b) What are their needs?; and (c) Who is obligated to address the needs and correct the harm?

In schools, restorative justice often serves as an alternative to school discipline, particularly suspensions and expulsions (Hurley et al., 2015). A characteristic of

restorative practices as a nonpunitive approach to handling ranges of conflict within schools potentially serves the entire school body or functions as an additional response to an incident or ongoing conflict. Restorative practices are the adverse action of traditional discipline, where a student who misbehaves within the classroom potentially goes to the principal's office for a consequence or punitive redirection.

Nationwide, educators utilize restorative practices attempting to minimize the need for suspensions and eradicate the racial discipline gap (Gregory et al., 2015). Restorative practices, as referenced by IIRP, include strategies for both proactive and reactive interventions for infractions. Three preventative elements of restorative practices, according to the IIRP, are affective statements, circles, and restorative conferences. Also, specific behaviors that disrupt the harmony of the school and classroom environment are addressed through problem-solving circles, conferences, and peer mediation (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012).

The IIRP (n.d.) defined affective statements as “personal expressions of feeling in response to specific positive or negative behaviors of others” (p. 6). Talking circles may involve staff and students and are used to target specific circumstances or relationships (IIRP, n.d.). Restorative conferences, which are led by a trained facilitator, brings together those involved to figure out what happened, who was affected, and what amends need to be made (IIRP, n.d.). Restorative meetings may be convened with varying numbers of people, ranging from just one person to a large group that may include family and peer support for both sides in a conflict (Macready, 2009).

Restorative practices originated from the restorative justice approach to crime with a focus on repairing harm and giving a voice to victims. The idea is that restorative practices develop student maturity by facilitating problem-solving, restitution, and reconciliation (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012, as cited in Rainbolt et al., 2019). The anticipated outcomes place a focus on accountability and social support, creating a foundation for relationship building. Restorative practice in education differs from restorative justice in the criminal justice system involving professionals working exclusively with young people who offended (McCluskey, 2008). Educators view student misbehavior within the restorative model as relationship violations between the victim and offender or the offender and an entire school community (Payne & Welch, 2015).

Armour (2016) supported the need for restorative practices in schools as a gateway to changing school climate, as well as educator's responses to students' behaviors, which in some cases led to the school to prison pipeline. A trend in the literature revealed that many schools using restorative practices reduced the use of out-of-school suspensions (Gregory et al., 2015). By the time students reached ninth grade, 42% of black males were suspended or expelled during their school years, compared to 14% of white male students (Wood, 2014). The disparity in the number of suspensions and expulsions could decrease as some schools continued to implement restorative justice practices to help address student misbehavior and as a different way to approach suspension and expulsion (Henderson & Buchanan, 2013).

Finally, according to Hurley et al., (2015) researchers have identified several reasons why schools and districts are more frequently embracing RJ practices, including

the following: (a) Zero-tolerance policies have led to more significant numbers of youths being “pushed out” (suspended or expelled) with no evidence of positive impact on school safety (Losen, 2013), (b) There is racial/ethnic disparity in what youths receive school punishments and how severe their penalties are, even when controlling for the type of offense (Skiba et al., 2002), (c) More school misbehavior is being handed over to the police (particularly with programs that have police in schools, such as School Resource Officers), leading to more youth getting involved with official legal systems — thus contributing to a trend toward a “school to prison pipeline” (Fronius et al., 2016) and (d) Research strongly links suspension and other school disciplinary actions to failure to graduate (Losen, 2013).

Similarly, Teasley (2014) emphasized that the appeal for using a restorative approach to discipline as an alternative to zero-tolerance policies is the gaining of respect, accountability, repair of harm, and community restoration as opposed to punishment and exclusion. In alignment with the beliefs of Hannigan and Hannigan (2019), Teasley (2014, p. 132) discussed his idea that implementation techniques for restorative approaches required school-based personnel, including educators, staff, and related service professionals, undergoing training sessions and skills development with a purpose of understanding restorative justice practices.

School to Prison Pipeline

The school to prison pipeline, which refers to the likelihood of students dismissed from their academic setting due to suspensions and expulsions, going to prison as opposed to graduating high school and becoming productive students, may be contingent

upon the response of educators to negative student behaviors. The dismissal of students from their academic institutions, the motivation to attend school decreases, the drop-out rate increases, and the potential for increased postsecondary income earnings are limited (Flannery et al., 2014; Gregory et al., 2015). A partnership between schools and courts has developed over the past 30 years, through a punitive and harmful framework (Mallett, 2016). This partnership, however, has been to the detriment of vulnerable children and adolescents (Mallett, 2016). Recently researchers of racial disparities indicated that school-controlled factors were the strongest predictors of both frequency and disproportionate use of suspensions and expulsions. These factors included: (a) teachers' attitudes and tolerance levels, (b) classroom management skills, (c) principal attitudes toward discipline, and (d) a positive or negative school climate. While Black youth account for only 16% of the youth population, they represent 28% of juvenile arrests, and 37% of the detained juvenile population (Wood, 2014). Structural inequalities composing the school to prison pipeline include: (a) school-based arrest policies, (b) presence of school security, (c) physical security and surveillance (d) use of exclusionary discipline practices, (e) racial disproportionality in school discipline, (f) denial of necessary services for students, (g) academic tracking, and (h) changes in school climate.

According to Payne and Welch (2015), contrary to the disciplinary practices of suspensions and expulsions, restorative practices shift the focus from punishment and isolation to reconciliation and community. The quantitative study conducted, examined whether student racial demographics of schools increased or decreased the likelihood of schools using restorative justice responses to student misbehavior. Payne and Welch

(2015) used a national random sample in logistic regression analyses. They found that schools with proportionally more Black students were less likely to use restorative justice techniques such as:

- Student conferences.
- Peer mediation.
- Restitution.
- Community service; and
- A comprehensive restorative justice discipline model that reflects the use of all the previous four responses to misbehavior. (p. 544)

Payne and Welch (2015) posited that schools would only be able to successfully implement restorative practices if the view of discipline was as an opportunity to build students' capacity. Taken into consideration is how the students' behavior affects the entire school community as opposed to punitive reactions to students disobeying rules. The findings of the study supported the racial threat hypothesis that the greater number of Black students within a school, the less likely the use of restorative justice techniques to correct misbehavior.

Brantley (2017) theorized that the educational environment of the peers of the offender was negatively affected using restorative practices (p.73). Brantley posited that disruptive students could not avoid consequences at the expense of the larger number of classmates, which was occurring in inner-city schools that utilized restorative practices. As a result, the quality of education received by students in those schools was worsening. In his research, which incorporated previous qualitative and quantitative research

findings by other researchers, Brantley concluded that the best approach to school discipline was incorporating restorative practices with traditional discipline. Both Brantley and Payne and Welch (2015) correlated the school to prison pipeline to ineffective implementation of restorative practices in schools; However, neither addressed how implementation was decided or by whom. The decision-making process may be an area identified through this study through interviews with urban educators. Documented responses may determine what perspectives guided decisions about using restorative practices as an alternative to punitive discipline.

Zero Tolerance

The term zero tolerance supports the idea that not properly addressing minor infractions and allowing them to occur will lead to more serious offenses. Several years after the nationwide implementation of the Gun-Free Schools Act, zero-tolerance policies in K–12 institutions expanded to include a variety of undesired behaviors. These policies initiated the transformation of urban US schools into places that resembled prisons (Bell, 2015). In 1994, the Clinton administration signed the Gun-Free Schools Act, which required a 1-year expulsion for students in possession of a firearm, thereby creating a pipeline between the Department of Corrections and K–12 institutions (Bell, 2015). Consistent with the "get tough on crime" (i.e., mandatory sentencing, Castle (2019) attitude that swept the country in the early 1990s, schools began to implement stricter disciplinary policies to increase school safety (Wood, 2014). Eventually, schools adopted metal detectors and armed security guards, further creating an atmosphere of the penal institution. Some schools also took security and safety preventive measures such as

installing fences, locks, cameras, conducted physical searches, or employed security and police officers to monitor students' behavior (Jean-Pierre & Parris-Drummond, 2018). As this practice increases across the United States, so does the increased disparity among the number of Black males suspended or incarcerated as compared to their white counterparts (Bell, 2015) at a rate of four times the latter.

According to Skiba (2014), controversies about promoting safety and discipline in our schools are not about whether to address those issues but how to best address them. Skiba posited that the notion of increasing force within schools to preserve the safety of children motivated the social experiment called *zero tolerance*. Noted in Skiba (p. 28), the experiment failed to demonstrate a correlation between school exclusion and increasing levels of punishment, keeping schools and streets safer. Skiba also noted that no data was existing to show that zero tolerance practices such as out-of-school suspension and expulsions reduced disruptions or improved school climate. Moreover, an exclusionary discipline has not improved the safety or quality of a school's learning environment, nor has it reduced misbehavior (Rainbolt et al., 2019).

McAndrews (2010) conducted a quantitative study and presented the pros and cons related to schools implementing zero-tolerance policies. McAndrews pointed out that the goal of zero-tolerance policies was to combat the increase in school violence. The Center for Educational Statistics found that zero-tolerance policies had little effect on schools previously deemed unsafe (Wood, 2014). Schools that reported positive results such as a decrease in fights and violent behaviors saw an increase in enrollments stemming from the perception of being safe. On the contrary, the enactment of zero-

tolerance policies opened the door for lawsuits arising from the inability of the offender to have due process and left no room for administrators' discretion (Wood, 2014). The absence of the administrator's discretion would possibly contribute to expulsion unless there was a disciplinary alternative, such as a restorative practice.

Racial Disproportionality in School Suspensions and Expulsions

Research has shown that African American youth are suspended and expelled at a higher rate than nonminority students (Anfinson et al., 2010). The disproportionate out-of-school suspension of African American students is a persistent racial and social justice issue nationwide (Gibson et al., 2014). Mendez et al., (2002) conducted a study of a Florida middle school district and found rates of suspension included: (a) 25% of White males, (b) 34% Hispanic males, and (c) 49% of African American males, at least once in an academic year. Various ethnic groups use disproportionate discipline practices that exclude students from the educational setting. As a result, exclusionary discipline continues to be a problem for African American students.

According to Mizel et al., (2016) most prior research has only included suspension and expulsion as outcome variables. A smaller number of studies (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Rocque, 2010; Skiba et al., 2002) have also found office referrals for students disproportionately based on race, socioeconomic status (SES), and gender. An important note in the study was that differences in student behavior did not justify the disparity in school discipline across race (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Skiba et al., 2002). In another study (Peguero & Shekarkhar, 2011), there was no association between SES and student misbehavior; however, increased SES reduced the likelihood of

suspension/expulsion (p. 103). According to the researchers, this qualitative, longitudinal study added to the existing literature by examining associations of individual and family factors with two key disciplinary outcomes: (a) Student office referrals, and (b) Suspension and expulsion (Peguero & Shekarkhar, p. 104). Results were comparable across a broader spectrum of findings and examined interactions between each of these variables inclusive of parent education (p. 104). The overall purpose was to test whether individual and family factors could reduce the disproportionality of school discipline across demographic factors.

Similarly, Skiba et al., (2000) questioned whether racial bias was a factor for determining the types of discipline administered in schools across the nation. The primary purpose of the article was to discuss disparities in discipline between African American students and White students. The example (as documented in Skiba et al., 2002, pp. 317-318) utilized was a brawl that occurred at a high school football game involving seven African American students. The school board felt the fight put fans at risk, and they decided to expel the seven African American students for two years. This expulsion was more severe than a weapons punishment, and six of the seven students filed a lawsuit. A judge, however, rejected the case stating the school board was well within its rights.

Reaction to the incident led to a consideration of the general issues of zero tolerance and racial inequity in discipline by both the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and the Secretary of Education (Koch, 2000). Additionally, states across the nation shifted toward schools having to address inequities in school discipline utilizing other

means of correction or alternative discipline methods, rather than exclusionary discipline practices such as school detentions, suspensions, and expulsions (Hannigan & Hannigan, 2019).

In another article attempting to understand the disproportionality in African American students' suspensions and expulsions, Townsend (2000) examined how factors such as socioeconomic status, underachievement, low achievement, and residence in urban areas placed students at high risk for school suspension. As noted by Townsend (2000, p. 384), disproportionality occurred with the suspensions or expulsions of African American students, and the frequency with which they received punitive consequences was higher than their percentage in the population by 10%. To counter this disproportionality and mitigate school suspensions and expulsions of African American students, Townsend suggested implementing culturally responsive instructional and management strategies within schools. Implementation would require schools to examine discipline data and policies, instructional practices, and school personnel to begin to understand behaviors and communication systems that may be unique to African Americans.

School Climate and Discipline

School climate is one of the significant factors determining educational achievement; however, racial disproportionality (between African American students and White students) in the use of exclusionary and nonexclusionary discipline has persisted over decades (Huang & Cornell, 2018). Despite the negative consequences of African American students receiving suspensions and expulsions, these forms of discipline

continue to rise (Losen & Martinez, 2013). Huang and Cornell (2018) conducted a study that tested whether a positive school climate was associated with a lower likelihood of suspensions. School climate is based on trends of one's personal school experiences and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures (Huang & Cornell, 2018, p. 379). Keiser and Schulte (2009) concluded that school climate is created through shared cultures of teachers and students and extends to include the diverse culture that individuals bring from home to school.

This study was unique because previous studies investigated out-of-school suspension rates using data from both the student and school levels but had not specifically reported on school climate (Keiser & Schulte, 2009, p. 379). The framework for the study premised authoritative school climate theory. The authoritative school climate (ASC) theory (Cornell & Huang, 2016, as cited in Huang & Cornell, 2018) is a conceptual model based on parenting typology and authoritative parenting research. Throughout the State of Virginia, 410 middle schools participated in the study, and 110,000 students, grades 6 through 8, were invited to participate in an anonymous survey. Students responded to whether they thought the school rules were fair, strictly enforced, and how many suspensions they received (Huang & Cornell, 2018, p. 380). Students also responded to if they were answering the survey truthfully in addition to completing demographic information. Results indicated that a more positive school climate was associated with a lower likelihood of receiving an out-of-school suspension. Nevertheless, approximately 3.9% of White students were suspended compared to 13.2% of Black students, and 8.7% of Hispanic students (Huang & Cornell, 2018, p. 383). This

study further substantiated the disproportionality of suspensions among African American students and White students considering school climate as a possible factor.

Welsh (2000) noted that The National Institute of Education conducted a safe school study and reported that school administration and policies affected school disorder. An analyzation of the research identified the following as contributors to poor school climate:

- Unclear, unfair, inconsistent rules.
- Educators and administrators using ambiguous or indirect responses to behavior.
- Teachers or administrators were not aware of the rules or disagreeing with responses to student misconduct.
- Educators and administrators ignored student misconduct; and
- Students not believing in the legitimacy of the rules (p. 93).

In contrast, school climate was improved by:

- Decreasing size and impersonality of the school;
- Making school discipline more systematic;
- Decreasing arbitrariness and student frustration;
- Improving school reward structures;
- Increase the relevance of schooling; and
- Decreasing student's sense of powerless and alienation (p. 93).

In summary, schools must be both safe and supporting for effective teaching and learning to take place (The United States Department of Education, 2014). Schools with clear and

concise policies regarding student misconduct may contribute to minimizing the disproportionate number of suspensions and expulsions among African American students nationwide (Welsh, 2000, p. 88). Perhaps, ongoing training of school staff could lead to equitable and fair responses to student misconduct without regard to a student's demographics, or past experiences.

Teacher and Administrator attitudes Towards School Discipline

In traditional societies, the perception of discipline is martial law, authority, compliance, rules, and demonstrating behavior according to the directives (Sadik & Yalcin, 2018). The way teachers and administrators think and respond to negative student behaviors is possibly a key to the number of suspensions and expulsions students receive (McLeod, 2018). Negative classroom behaviors among students can interfere with the learning process and impede teachers' instructional delivery (Price, 2017). One of the roles of a teacher, administrator, or dean is to ensure a safe school environment and to manage student behavior (McLeod, 2018).

Sadik and Yalcin (2018) conducted a phenomenology study determining the views of high school students and teachers about discipline problems and their perceptions of discipline. The teachers were a group of 18 who worked at a vocational high school in Adana, who provided data via semistructured interviews (Sadik & Yalcin, 2018, p. 99). Inquiries included: a) How are the perceptions of teachers and students related to what discipline is?, (b) How are the perceptions of the teachers and students related to how discipline is defined?, (c) Which behavior is qualified as a discipline problem by teachers and students?, and (d) Which discipline problems are experienced

mostly in their schools/classroom according to the students and teachers (p. 98)? A summarized conclusion was disagreements or conflicts are inevitable in classes if there is a misunderstanding of the aim and requirements of the discipline expectations. Consequently, effective classroom management and behavioral management becomes more difficult (Sadik & Yalcin, 2018).

In another study conducted by Ugurlu et al., (2015) the views of teachers towards the perception of discipline, perception of student discipline, and the expectations about the parent, school management, teacher, and family-environment elements in constituting discipline in schools, were the focus. From 10 elementary schools, 20 teachers were the participants within this qualitative case study, and the interview process was fact to face open-ended questioning. The most significant response from teachers regarding their perception of discipline was order, followed by rules. When questioned about student discipline, obeying rules and taking responsibility for actions were the most common responses (Ugurlu et al., 2015, p. 126). The conclusion of the study supported teacher views as not wanting behaviors that are not accepted by society as a part of the academic setting (p.126). The result of the study could potentially support further research on the racial disproportionality in suspensions and expulsions among African American youth in which African American youth and their nonminority counterparts.

Taking a further look into the attitudes and perceptions of teachers and administrators on school discipline, McLeod (2018) listed four functions of attitudes of teachers and administrators that were integral parts of the behavior and decisions they made when dealing with discipline issues. The four functions of attitude were: (a)

knowledge, (b) self/ego-expressive, (c) adaptive, and (d) ego defense. Exploring these functions led to a clearer understanding of urban educators' perspectives on restorative practices. Utilizing research questions to relate the four functions of attitude to the purpose of the study, creates a possibility that the attitudes of the participants may influence their behavior and response to discipline.

The first function, *knowledge* referred to a person's attitude providing the meaning (knowledge) for life (McLeod, 2018). In other words, knowing a person's attitude might help us to predict behavior (p.1). Second, the *self/ego-expressive* reflected who we are and how we communicate based upon our attitude. An educator's response to discipline may very well rely upon his/her self-expression of attitude. Third, adaptive function of attitude affords educators the ability to follow social norms as a means of fitting into a particular social environment – inclusive of upholding a zero-tolerance school policy or adapting restorative practices in conjunction with the school discipline policy. Lastly, the *ego-defensive* function refers to holding attitudes that protect our self-esteem or that justify actions that make us feel guilty (McLeod, 2018). In other words, as it pertains to the study, teachers and administrators may mediate between their own inner needs (expression, defense) and the outside world (adaptive and knowledge) to reserve their self-image. Understanding these functions may support suggested best practices in building relationships with students and creating a positive school climate for other urban high schools struggling with high suspensions and expulsions.

Restorative practices can be a powerful means to strengthen relationships and reduce the number of students receiving exclusionary consequences (Rainbolt et al.,

2019). Berlowitz et al., (2017) posited that teachers and school administrators often struggle to see alternatives to zero-tolerance as effectively able to deal with behaviors that they believe to be grounded in the cultural norms of racial minorities. However, according to Drewery and Kecskemeti (2010), teachers seeking better ways to interact with students in their classrooms, and those responsible for disciplinary systems, are looking to restorative practice for new ways to resolve some difficulties experienced between teachers, students, administrators, and parents.

McCluskey (2008) in a mixed-methods study suggested school administrators and teachers held a more authoritarian perspective of adult power. This power, which meant getting tough using suspensions and expulsions, was viewed as the most effective response to student misbehavior. How an administrator or teacher interpreted a situation and viewed their role in administering discipline, had consequences on the treatment of those who misbehaved. A perspective such as those mentioned above could defy the underlying premises of restorative practices surrounding the opportunity for the offender, victim, and mediator to understand why the misbehavior occurred and how others were affected. This study was in alignment with the research conducted by Ugurlu et al., (2015). Ugurlu et al., researched the overall influence of the perception of discipline on teachers, teachers' general views on student discipline, and the differences of the disciplined and undisciplined students. The researchers posited that discipline depends on the perception of the person and that teachers view behaviors not wanted within the society as not also wanted within the classroom discipline.

On the other hand, Canter and Canter (2005) posited that if an educator wanted a student to portray a particular behavior and cooperate with them, the student needed to know that their personal lives and school success were of genuine concern. Canter and Canter encouraged teachers to express this concern as the way they perceived the student and the way the teachers acted towards the student, placing them in the position to make some significant changes and help the student succeed in school. Canter and Canter's assertive model focused on the rights of students to have teachers help them learn in a calm, safe environment, and the rights of teachers to teach without disruption (Canter & Canter, 2005). Canter and Canter documented that teachers have a right to supportive actions from their administrators and full support from parents in helping students to behave according to policies and procedures put into place. In addition, teachers possess one of three characteristics: hostility, nonassertiveness, and assertiveness. The first two characteristics, hostile and nonassertive teachers, yielded poor, nontrusting relationships between the student and teacher.

The last aspect, the assertive teacher, created an environment of respect and a culture of adhered expectations for both the teacher and student. To be more specific Canter and Canter (2005) provided descriptors as the following:

Hostile teachers – Educators who were hostile teachers viewed students as adversaries. They felt they must maintain order and teach appropriately by having the upper hand. These teachers use commands and display stern facial expressions, as well as give strong admonishments (Canter & Canter, 2005).

NonAssertive teachers – Teachers identified as nonassertive, take an overly passive approach to teaching, fail to help the class create reasonable expectations, are inconsistent when dealing with student classroom behaviors, and come across as wishy-washy/inconsistent (Canter & Canter, 2005).

Assertive teachers – Teachers categorized as assertive, clearly and consistently model expectations, work hard to build trust, teach students how to behave, are mindful of students' needs for warmth and encouragement, and help students understand which behaviors lead to success and those that lead to failure (Canter & Canter, 2005). To summarize, Canter (2010) posited that good discipline does not depend on a lot of rules linked to harsh corrective actions but out of mutual trust and respect.

Next, Hannigan and Hannigan (2019) identified through research that school administrator beliefs regarding alternatives to discipline relate to their behavior towards school discipline approaches. A mixed-methods design was to carry out the investigation. The theory of planned behavior was the framework lens for understanding the effects of factors such as relationships between attitudes toward practices and beliefs (Hannigan & Hannigan, 2019, p. 80).

According to the theory, the more favorable attitude concerning behavior, the stronger the individual's intent towards the action (Hannigan & Hannigan, 2019, p.91). A total of 52 administrators participated in the study. The participants answered open-ended questions about their perceptions of factors that supported or impeded the implementation of alternative discipline in their schools. Findings of the study suggested that administrators need to: (a) Participate in workshops to understand how to implement

alternative discipline in schools, (b) school administrators must feel competent in explaining the need for alternative disciplines within schools, (c) ensure staff receive education around the reasons for implementing alternative discipline, (d) ensure follow-through of implementation of the alternative discipline framework, (e) make the school and district handbook support the alternative discipline practices, (f) provide training for the community and school board on alternative discipline practices, (g) strengthen communications between teachers and stakeholders about alternative discipline practices, (h) develop tiered systems of supports for needed interventions, and (i) use schoolwide behavior data and SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely) goals to ensure implementation and progress monitoring of alternative discipline practices (Hannigan & Hannigan, 2019, p. 85). This study further supported how a shift in the mindset of educators correlated to behavior towards school discipline.

A similar viewpoint, however, through the reflection of students, Case et al., (2018) argued that adopting a restorative approach allowed students to reflect upon their behavior, problem solve, correct mistakes, and learn about the kind of behavior acceptable in the future. A critical factor in ensuring a productive school environment, student behavior, and student achievement was the relationship between students and educators (Case et al., 2018). What was vague, as noted in their research, was the longer-term impact of restorative practices implemented as a whole school approach and the effect on relationships between students and staff.

Another study conducted by Rainbolt et al., (2019) was research on one high school's adoption of a restorative practices discipline program with a focus on teachers'

perceptions of their experiences and the efficacy of the program. In this qualitative study, the researcher asked high school staff to complete an online survey. Findings based on convenience sampling constituted just over 50% of the faculty. The specific focus was findings on teacher's perceptions of their experiences with restorative practices. Responses of participants reported on a Likert-type scale yielded insight into the work setting, the teacher-student relationship dynamic, and illuminated the stakeholder group's perception of success. Findings supported literature confirming exclusionary discipline does not curb misbehavior or improve the quality of the school environment. Additionally, 80% of respondents indicated that restorative practices did indeed contribute to positive relationships at the high school conducting the research.

Similarly, in the mixed-methods study, *Don't suspend me! An alternative discipline framework for shifting administrator beliefs and behaviors about school discipline* by Hannigan and Hannigan (2019), the purpose reflected the research. Hannigan and Hannigan wanted to understand school administrator beliefs around discipline, identify perceptions of factors supporting or impeding the use of alternative discipline, and additionally, evaluate a workshop implemented on how the outcomes of the workshop shifted beliefs around alternative discipline. A total of 52 administrators across the state of California participated in the study. Participant views surrounding school discipline, and factors supporting or impeding the implementation of alternative discipline, were documented gauging beliefs and factors three months prior and after the initial workshop. Findings from the study yielded shifts in administrator beliefs decreasing in views of traditional discipline and increasing in beliefs geared toward

emergent and innovative discipline. There were three themes for factors that supported and four main topics for factors that impeded the implementation of alternative practices in schools (Hannigan & Hannigan, 2019, p. 84). This study, although mixed methods in nature, supported the drive towards using alternative discipline in schools. It revealed that the use of an alternative discipline framework required both the beliefs and behaviors of school administrators working in alignment to be meaningful in changing student behaviors and confronting factors that impede implementation (Hannigan & Hannigan, 2019, p.86).

In summary, the studies discussed in this literature review on restorative practices and school discipline that used methodologies different from a basic qualitative research design generally included mixed-methods and quantitative research designs. The basic qualitative approach is the best method for this research because this design is descriptive and analytic. It requires the researcher to understand, process, and analyze the perspectives and opinions of those participating in the research.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter included a review of the literature related to the reasons behind the disproportionate suspensions and expulsions of African American students. There was also a discussion on the role of restorative practices as a response to discipline. The following topics addressed in this chapter included: (a) the literature search strategy, (b) current research related to the conceptual framework based on Canter and Canter's assertive model and social constructivism, (c) the origins of restorative justice and restorative practices, (d) the school to prison pipeline, (e) zero-tolerance policies, (f)

racial disproportionalities in-school suspensions and expulsions, (g) school climate and discipline, (h) teacher and administrator attitudes towards school discipline, and (i) a review of the use of different methodologies.

There were several themes to emerge from the literature. The first was that exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions and expulsions, did not reduce misbehavior in schools. Armour (2016) encouraged the use of restorative practices in schools as a gateway to changing school climates. Armour suggested that a positive school climate deterred suspensions and expulsions, which potentially lead to incarceration. Gregory et al., (2015) posited that many schools using restorative practices reduced the use of out-of-school suspensions. If schools continued to use restorative practices as a different approach to discipline, disparities in the number of suspensions and expulsions would decrease (Henderson & Buchanan, 2013). As Losen (2013) noted, research strongly linked suspension and other school disciplinary actions to the failure of students to graduate.

The second theme that emerged from this literature was that teacher's and principal's attitudes towards discipline were influential factors for the frequency and disproportionate use of suspensions and expulsions. According to Payne and Welch (2015), successful implementation of restorative practices could only occur if the view of discipline was an opportunity to build a students' capacity. The premise of Payne and Welch's (2015) thoughts was that student's behavior affected an entire school community and not just those involved. Brantley (2017) theorized that if educators did not use restorative effectively based upon their view of effective discipline, the education

environment would worsen. McLeod (2018) went further to add that the way a teacher or principal responds to negative behavior is possibly a key to the number of suspensions and expulsions students receive. Skiba et al., (2000) questioned whether racial bias played a part in the decision of educators to discipline students differently. Racial differences, however, in parental education and income were noted to have shown little accountability in the disparity of discipline (Hannon et al., 2013). Ugurlu et al., (2015) concluded in a study on the views of teacher's perceptions of discipline that teachers wanted students to display behaviors accepted by society, which did not lead from school to prison.

There were research gaps identified concerning this literature review. The first was that there was no literature to confirm that exclusionary discipline practices minimized or improved the academic environment. A second gap was few studies discussed how teachers and principals decided disciplinary responses for African American students. Third, there was little literature on the perspectives on restorative practices of urban educators.

To conclude, the purpose of this study was to explore the role of restorative practices, through the perspectives of educators who work in urban high schools and who implement restorative practices as an alternative response to discipline. I used a basic qualitative study to understand the perspectives of educators who work in urban high schools and the utilization of restorative practices as a response to discipline. A basic qualitative approach supported the interview process.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative research was to explore the use of restorative practices, through the perspectives of educators who work in urban high schools and who utilized restorative practices as an alternative response to discipline. For the purpose of this study, the term *urban* was defined as predominantly African American.

Understanding the perspectives of urban, high school educators utilizing restorative practices provided further insight on the role of restorative practices in urban high schools, and potentially provided a basis for suggested best practices in building relationships with students and creating a positive school climate for other schools with similar demographics.

The chapter was organized into five sections to outline the methodology used in the study. The first section, Research Design and Rationale, includes the research questions, the central concept of the research, and the rationale for the chosen research approach. In the second section, the role of the researcher was defined, responsibilities of the researcher as the data collector and analyzer were explained, along with the researcher's role and relationships with participants to minimize professional and personal bias. The Methodology section identified the population and sampling strategy, provided data collection procedures, and the process for analyzing data. Next, the section on Issues of Trustworthiness, was included to discuss credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical procedures used to access participants and gather data. Lastly, the chapter was summarized as a conclusion.

Research Design and Rationale

The research questions reflect the minimal amount of information available on the perspectives of urban high school teachers and their use of restorative practices with urban, high school African American students. Research questions were: (a) what are the perspectives, on school discipline, of educators in urban, predominantly African American high schools, regarding the use of restorative practices?; (b) how have restorative practices influenced educator's attitudes toward the role of school discipline?; and (c) how do the perspectives of teachers, deans, and administrators differ on the role of restorative practices utilized with urban high school youth?

Central Concept

Central to this study were the perspectives and attitudes of teachers, deans, and administrators who worked in urban high schools that utilize restorative practices as a response to discipline.

Research Tradition

To understand the perspectives of educators regarding the use of restorative practices in urban high schools, a basic qualitative approach, with semistructured interviews, was the plan for the study. Basic qualitative research is descriptive and analytic, and as a researcher, the focus was on understanding, describing, and ultimately analyzing the complex processes, meanings, and perceptions that educators had and made within their perspective of their experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 9). According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research is about exploring and understanding the meaning individuals and groups attribute to a social or human problem (p. 4). Semistructured

interviews require the researcher to have a specific topic to learn about, a limited number of questions prepared in advance, and plans to ask follow-up questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Rationale for Chosen Design

A basic qualitative approach with semistructured interviews was the chosen approach based upon the purpose statement and research questions. This approach allowed me to understand the perspectives of urban high school educators regarding the use of restorative practices as a response to discipline, the influence of restorative practices on the attitudes of educators, and the difference in perspectives of educators on the role of restorative practices. Other qualitative approaches such as phenomenology, ethnography, or grounded theory would not fit this research since these approaches examine the lived experiences, related cultures, or systems and advancing a theory by studying a process, respectively.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the role of the researcher is to talk with participants about their experiences and perceptions (Shakman et al., 2017). From the data collected, the researcher explains in detail discoveries, and provides insights about the topic under discussion (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). For the study, the identities of participants were anonymous and responses confidential. As the researcher, it was my responsibility to effectively communicate with the participants and inform them that participation was voluntary with the option of withdrawing at any time. School closures within the district over the years created a possibility of previous interactions with participants through

school board meetings, conferences, or past employment. For the integrity and purpose of the study, interactions with the participants were solely for the research. Because I worked previously as a director of school culture and made decisions about student suspensions, my role included remaining neutral and not allowing my personal beliefs to affect the research. To minimize the chance for bias within my research, I bracketed my feelings by setting aside any ideas or preconceived notions I may have had. I also had to self-reflect and document those thoughts in a journal. This process was called journaling. To establish relationships, I notified participants of their role within the study, shared the purpose of the study, reviewed the interview questions, and answered any questions.

Methodology

A total of ten participants from two urban high schools - six teachers, two administrators, and two deans, were the planned participants for this research. The avenue of inquiry, interviewing, provided insight into the perspectives and opinions of the 10 participants (teachers, deans, and administrators) from select urban high schools regarding the use of restorative practices. Purposeful sampling permitted the use of small sampling which is considered a strength in qualitative research (Shakman et al., 2017). Shakman et al., (2017) also posited there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry: "The sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the research, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and how to utilize the available time and resources" (p. 311). The sample size, in qualitative research, varies with the nature of the study (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, the five participants from

each school currently worked within urban high schools, which incorporated restorative practices within disciplinary responses.

The plan for data collection was semistructured interviews. Semistructured interviews are structured around data that the researcher wants to obtain and may well be reconfigured in accordance with the statements of the interviewee (Kaliber, 2019). This technique was best because, in participant observation studies, the researcher's level of activity might impact what the researcher sees (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). If the researcher was to observe before interviewing, there could be a chance for researcher bias. Interviews served as the primary data source, and the participant responses were read and reviewed, transcribed, and coded by hand through the utilization of QDA software as a form of data analysis. The section on Instrumentation provides more detail on the QDA software.

Lastly, data saturation, as opposed to theoretical saturation, was a determiner to conclude interviews. This view of saturation centered on the question of how much data (usually the number of interviews) was needed until nothing new was apparent (Saunders et al., n.d.).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The best resource for finding participants who fit the sampling criteria was through the school administration. The process began by obtaining a Letter of Permission/Cooperation (See Appendix A) granting permission to conduct the study from the select school principal or school Board designee for the district. Once approved by the Walden University IRB, I emailed a letter of consent to access participants to the

principals of two Midwestern urban schools. In the message, I shared the purpose of the research, which was to explore the perspectives of educators in urban high schools, who utilize restorative practices as an alternative response to discipline. I requested that suggested participants have a minimum of 2-3 years experience as a teacher, administrator, or dean within a high school setting. Once consent was granted from the principals, and potential participant information was received, I exhausted my participation list based on the stated criteria. Potential participants received an email introducing myself, stating my purpose, and requesting their participation. Contacts willing to participate emailed me a response of consent. To distribute the announcement or invitation, I requested approval from Walden University's IRB, utilizing the request forms found on the university's IRB website.

I conducted semistructured interviews with two principals, two teachers, and two deans from two urban high schools in a Midwestern state. In the semistructured interview, I had a specific topic of focus, along with a limited number of questions prepared in advance (Appendix B). To elicit potential participation, I sent a letter of participation to potential participants, and after receiving confirmation of participation, I set up interviews. The preference was to conduct face-to-face interviews, commonly known as responsive interviews. This method would have provided the opportunity to watch the interviewee, and to guide interactive processes (Shakman et al., 2017) during the interview. Since face-to-face interviews were not feasible, alternative methods included video conferences, and emailed interviews. The restriction of emailed

interviews resulted in the absence of visual cues, as well as the loss of contextual and nonverbal data.

Finally, I incorporated the exact verbiage provided by Walden's IRB Office of Research and Compliance in the introductory letter and interview. Allocated time for interviews were no longer than one hour. If the need for additional time arose due to further clarification of responses or participant questions, I scheduled a follow-up interview. Before scheduling the follow-up interview, however, I provided a copy of the interview transcript to the participants to allow for review, comments, or corrections. This process is known as member checking.

Instrumentation

Instrumentation for the research included research questions, audio-recorded interviews, and transcriptions, providing data related to the perspectives of urban high school teachers, deans, and administrators who presently utilized restorative practices. Before collecting any data for my research, principals of each school were contacted for consent to conduct the research. I was granted consent and approved by the Walden University IRB, and principals received an emailed letter requesting consent to contact participants (See Appendix A). I submitted Form A (Description of Data Sources and Partner Sites) to the Walden University IRB. Once Walden University's Institutional Review Board approved my request to conduct my research, I invited participants via email. The invite included the following information:

1. An introductory paragraph describing the purpose of the study
2. A brief description of participation

3. The projected timeframe for interviewing
4. Any risks or inconveniences
5. Benefits of the study
6. A privacy statement explaining how the data will be protected as well as the confidentiality of the participant

Those who agreed to participate, signed the informed consent form established by Walden University.

The primary source of data collection was video recorded interviews through Zoom. The use of semistructured interview questions allowed new ideas to be discussed during the interviews and based on participant response's themes were created. Due to the pandemic, a pilot test/road test was not conducted. The interview questions and prompts were clear, relevant, and addressed the purpose of the study.

Interview questions were open-ended to help engage participants in discussing their perceptions of the use of restorative practices as a response to discipline. I developed 12 interview questions (Appendix B) to support my three central research questions.

Before asking specific questions, I began the interviews with demographic questions to gain insight into the role and background of the participants. Notes were taken for potential follow up in conjunction with the audio recording. A handheld device was used for the audio recording and recordings were immediately transcribed utilizing Microsoft Word™ transcription application.

Data Analysis Plan

I listened to the interview recordings and transcribed each interview. A copy of the transcript was sent to each participant for member checking, and upon confirmation of accuracy, I hand coded the data. Transcripts were read and hand-coded to identify shared perspectives, matching beliefs and patterns, and similar explanations. I reread the transcripts in search of keywords and phrases. I conducted an analysis and coding of transcripts and notes initially using MAXQDA however, I transferred transcript responses and notes to an Excel file and coded accordingly for ease of understanding. Codes were assigned to refine and consolidate the data. These notes were saved in Microsoft Word and placed in a chart and categorized according to the research question answered.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Using a qualitative methodology, I used interviews as the data collection method establishing trustworthiness. To ensure credibility and transferability, and discuss the topic, participants chosen for the interview had experience related to the purpose of the research (Birt et al., 2016). It was essential for me to provide background information on restorative justice to discuss the applicability of restorative practices in schools denoting transferability. As cited in Solomon and Amankwaa (2017) all research must have a truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality to be considered worthwhile. The result of establishing rigor or trustworthiness, for each method of research required a different approach. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were all important for establishing trustworthiness (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Credibility

I established the credibility of the research through the methods of probing, iterative questioning, member checking, and audio recordings of interviews. As cited in Merriam and Tisdell (2016), credibility is the establishment of results from qualitative criteria that are credible from the perspective of the research participants. The qualitative analysis aimed to make sense of qualitative data: detecting patterns, identifying themes, answering the primary questions framing the study, and presenting substantively significant findings (Shakman et al., 2017). Probing or iterative questions were presented to participants as necessary, to substantiate data collected through interviews.

Member checks, require researchers to provide their data, the interpretation of the data and conclusions to the participants to ensure the information gathered is accurate (Ellis, 2019). Checks occurred at the end of the interviews. After the first transcription, the interviewee received the transcript via email and confirmed or corrected the transcription. The participant was encouraged to review and make necessary corrections before I attempted any coding or identification of themes. Once confirmed, the verification of accuracy allowed for analyzation and coding.

Transferability

Transferability is a second means to establish trustworthiness. Providing a sufficient, thick description of the problem under investigation to the readers, and gaining a proper understanding, created transferability (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This understanding enables readers to compare the documented conversation with what they may have experienced or perceived in their comparable setting (Austin & Sutton, 2014).

To ensure transferability, the establishment of themes, based upon participant responses, and relevance to the research questions, allowed readers to use the findings as comparatives to other educator perspectives, in future studies. Aspects of the research design and detailed context serve as a guide for replication.

Dependability

According to Miles et al., (2014) qualitative studies are dependable if they are consistent and stable over time. The design of the research in detail was disclosed and reported to establish dependability, allowing a future researcher to repeat the research. Methods used to establish credibility assisted in creating dependability. Also, data from the research aligned with and answered the research questions. The above factors, as well as peer-reviewed feedback from my dissertation committee (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) established dependability.

Confirmability

One goal of confirmability is to acknowledge and explore the ways researchers use data to interpret personal biases and prejudices. Another goal is to fully mediate personal biases and prejudices possible through structured reflexivity processes (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Upon analyzing the research, it was important for me to interpret the data in an unbiased way. The utilization of the transcription software (Microsoft Word) and the QDA software aided in creating an accurate and reflective study. I kept a reflexive journal in which I recorded notes and memos during data analysis as well as during each interview. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) posited that reflexivity is how the research process affects the researcher. Reflexive data generated included the researcher asking a series of

questions of him or herself (Ravitch & Carl, 2016) as it pertains to the personal impact on the study. Within the analysis, I discussed beliefs, underpinning decisions, and methods chosen for the study. Additionally, included within the research was the reasoning for the research design selected, reflections of the research documented through notes and reflective journaling, as well as data choices.

Ethical Procedures

I contacted school principals from each select school to discuss potential participation and the requirements of participant selection for the study upon completion of the Walden University Research Review (URR) process. Consent was granted and I submitted the online request for Institutional Review Board guidance regarding required forms and documentation for the study's data sources and partner sites. Initiating the research process required respective school districts, and Walden University's IRB to approve the research before contacting any participants or collecting data. Upon approval, I solicited invitations. Educators who were purposefully selected to participate in the research encountered no perceived harm or threats. I provided each participant with a consent form inclusive of the notification that they can decide not to participate at any time during the research. This information, along with a verbal and written statement of confidentiality, was provided before any interviews occurred. Data collected had Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, and upon completion and formal approval of the dissertation, I provided participants with a summary of the findings. Participant identities were kept anonymous, and interview transcripts and notes were kept

within a locked file and stored on an external drive. Copies of this information will be destroyed five years after the study's completion.

Summary

This chapter described the design and methodology I used for the study on educators' perspectives on the use of restorative practices in urban high schools. Within this chapter, I discussed specifics on how I conducted and analyzed the research. A breakdown of the topics included research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, data instrumentation, recruitment and data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations. Finally, I carried out the methodology discussed in Chapter 3 and documented the results in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative research was to explore the role of restorative practices, through the perspectives of urban educators who utilize restorative practices in urban high schools as an alternative response to discipline. Analyzing the perspectives, of urban high school educators who utilized restorative practices, provided further insight on the role of restorative practices, potential best practices in building relationships with students, and creating a positive school climate for other schools with similar demographics. The following research questions guided the research:

1. What are the perspectives on school discipline, of educators in urban, predominantly African American high schools, regarding the use of restorative practices?
2. How have restorative practices influenced educator's attitudes toward the role of school discipline?
3. How do the perspectives of teachers, deans, and administrators differ on the use of restorative practices with urban high school youth?

The chapter is organized into the following sections: Setting, Demographics, Data Collection, Data Analysis, Evidence of Trustworthiness, Results by Research Question, and a Summary of the Data.

Setting

My qualitative study was performed during a worldwide pandemic – COVID 19. Within my selected urban, Midwestern region, schools were forced to close because of

the pandemic. The schools I chose for the study were within the same urban city and had a majority population of African American students. Participants within the study each had 2-3 years working within an urban high school and were either an administrator, a teacher, or a dean. The Covid-19 pandemic prohibited in-person learning, and educators had to implement virtual instruction to students. This unforeseen issue eliminated the possibility of face-to-face interviews. Obtaining contact information for participants was a challenge. Schools were closed and content on certain school websites was limited. I was however able to retrieve school staff emails, and once contact was made, interview options for participants included virtual, over the phone, or email. The participants were able to choose the method most convenient for him or her.

Demographics

A total of 10 participants who work as an administrator, teacher, or dean, within an urban high school in the Midwest, were included in my qualitative study. The following is background information on each participant:

Participant 1

Participant 1 was a high school administrative counselor of three years, who made sure the students were on track for graduation and prepared them for post-secondary options. Additionally, Participant 1 was responsible for high school testing, assisted seniors with college applications and FAFSA and performed other duties as deemed necessary for the administrative team.

Participant 2

Participant 2 worked in the capacity of a K-12 dean, and assistant athletic director. Other duties included providing supervision for security. The primary job responsibilities as dean focused on making sure a positive school culture and climate was established.

Participant 3

Participant 3 taught for 17 years and was an administrator for 13 years. The present work position was as a counselor however, former titles included: dean, department chair, director of operations, turn-around administrator, assistant principal, and principal.

Participant 4

Participant 4 was a principal for a K-12 school. In this role, the major responsibility was to oversee the school campus and staff.

Participant 5

Participant 5 was an 11th and 12th grade ethnic literature teacher. In this role, responsibilities included curriculum planning, curriculum mapping, lesson planning, grading, administering lessons, as well as making any accommodations or differentiation as needed for students.

Participant 6

Participant 6 was a lead teacher for 12 years. During those years, Participant 6 taught middle school math, science, English and language arts (ELA), and social studies. For the past five years, Participant 6 taught 6th-8th grade math and was a science teacher.

At the time of the interview, Participant 6 was an 8th grade math teacher and 9th grade squad/advisory teacher. Participant 6 worked at four schools in the selected region, and all were urban charter schools.

Participant 7

Participant 7 was a director of school culture and attendance tracker. Primary responsibilities consisted of hosting restorative conversations and re-entry meetings when a student was suspended, and to follow-up on attendance for scholars.

Participant 8

Participant 8 was an elementary director of school culture, special education director, and had a middle school advisory group and a high school advisory group, which were called squads. Primary responsibilities included monitoring teacher compliance, supporting the elementary and the high school director of school culture, maintaining visibility across the academy, and implementing any systems and structures that needed to be in place, pertaining to the discipline system. In addition, Participant 8 was responsible for developing the restorative and social emotional learning curriculum.

Participant 9

Participant 9 was a principal of a middle school and high school. In these roles, responsibilities included everything from instruction, discipline, and personnel matters.

Participant 10

Participant 10 was a high school algebra II instructor and homeroom teacher.

Data Collection

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of restorative practices, through the perspectives of urban educators who utilized restorative practices in urban high schools as an alternative response to discipline. Before I collected any data, I received approval from Walden University's IRB (approval # 07-29-20-0743639). In this study, I collected data from 10 high school educators, with 2-3 years' experience working in an urban high school in a Midwestern state. For the purpose of this study, the term *urban* was defined as predominantly African American. These participants worked in the capacity of either an administrator, dean, or teacher. Purposeful sampling was used, which permitted small sampling and minimized bias, potentially caused when using random sampling (Shakman et al., 2017).

Before collecting any data for research, an attempt was made to contact principals of three Midwestern state, urban high schools by phone. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, school closings presented a challenge in making direct contact via phone; and therefore, email information was obtained from respective school websites. Consent to participate requests with background info on the study were emailed to district leaders, and upon confirmation, principals were informed of the requirements to participate. District approval was required for two of the three schools selected, and of those two, one school did not follow through with a response to participate. With prior approval from the Walden IRB, I sent an invitation to another urban school within the same city and received confirmation of their participation.

The pandemic restrictions eliminated in-person interviews therefore, semistructured interviews were conducted via Zoom, telephone, and email. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), when conducting semistructured interviews, there is a specific topic to learn about, a limited number of questions prepared in advance, and plans to ask follow-up questions. For virtual interviews, the platform Zoom was used to provide visual and audio recording. The interviews were conducted within a 30–60-minute timeframe. Both Zoom and the speech to text app Otter, which I used from my phone, were used to record the interviews. I interviewed participants in a noise free area of my home where interviews could not be overheard. A printout of the interview questions was used to document additional notes during the interviews. Two participants were interviewed by phone due to availability. Computer Zoom audio was used to record the interviews and a transcript was produced and downloaded. Additionally, one participant, interviewed via email as a preference and due to non-Zoom access. In all cases, interview responses were recorded, transcribed, and reviewed with no further clarifications. Appendix C displays the interview questions that correlate with each of the guiding research questions.

Data Analysis

Once the interviews were transcribed, I printed each transcript to conduct a line-by-line review of participant responses. I imported transcripts from Zoom and the Otter app to MAXQDA. Although I purchased MAXQDA software for data analysis, due to its complexity, I opted to create an Excel spreadsheet. There was a total of 12 interview questions presented to each participant. According to their relevancy to my three guiding

research questions, these questions were documented and categorized within the Excel spreadsheet. Original transcripts included timestamps therefore, the responses were formatted without timestamps for ease of coding.

Organizing the Data

Participant responses for each interview question were hand coded by listing and highlighting recurring terms and phrases. The responses were then added to an Excel spreadsheet according to the interview questions. Upon completion of the first data analysis step, I reread the transcripts to identify any overlooked words or phrases that were similar and grouped them according to their relationship. This process allowed me to structure identified themes. Creswell (2013) posited that researchers should look for emerging codes during the data analysis process. I re-examined the groups and extracted responses that were similar in context and coded them for emerging themes based upon my three guiding research questions.

Data Coding

After reading each transcript several times, I conducted a first cycle of coding by placing respondent answers into an Excel spreadsheet according to the interview questions. This first cycle yielded a total of 17 codes. Next, I performed a more focused coding, or second cycle, by re-examining responses to see if there were similar or common terms which I categorized based upon my research questions. Research question number one had two categories; research question two had three categories; and research question three had five categories. These categories became my 10 subthemes. Lastly, I

examined my subthemes and identified three refined themes. This process is known as axial or thematic coding.

Axial/Thematic Coding

Axial/Thematic coding is a technique in qualitative research which involves taking larger segments of data and seeing how they relate in smaller categorical themes. Each transcript was read closely, and common words and phrases were highlighted to create three themes from the initial 17 segments coded.

Table 1

Themes and Subthemes Identified From Participants' SemiStructured Interviews

Themes	Coded Subthemes
Uses of Restorative Practices	Typical Day Previous Experiences
Influence/Effects of Restorative Practices	Influence on School Culture Influence on Student Behavior Influence on Relationships (Between Staff, students, and administrators)
Perspectives on Restorative Practices	Uses Pros and Cons Difficulty in responding to negative behavior Difficulty in responding to negative behavior Personal Views/Additional Remarks

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) posited that credibility is the establishment of results from qualitative criteria that are credible from the perspective of research participants. I interviewed a total of ten educators who had a minimum 2-3 years' experience working in a high school setting. Each educator shared their perspective on the use of restorative practices within the high school they worked in, and how restorative practices influenced relationships and culture within the school. For member checking, participants were provided a copy of the transcript if there was a need for clarity or a follow-up interview.

Transferability

Transferability provides a sufficient, thick description of the problem under investigation to the reader (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Thick description refers to the description of the study and the participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In this chapter, I discussed the participants' responses so that the reader enables them to compare the documented conversation with what they may have experienced or perceived in their comparable setting (Austin & Sutton, 2014). Additionally, to ensure transferability, the establishment of themes, based upon participant responses, and relevance to the research questions, allowed readers to use the findings as comparatives to other educator perspectives, in future studies.

Dependability

Miles et al., (2014) posited that qualitative studies are dependable if they are consistent and stable over time. I kept careful records throughout the research and

disclosed the research design in detail to establish dependability. Video, audio recording and handwritten notes were used to accurately capture data. In addition, I kept a reflective journal throughout the study to limit any chance of personal bias.

Confirmability

One goal of confirmability is to acknowledge and explore the ways researchers use data to interpret personal biases and prejudices. Another goal is to fully mediate personal biases and prejudices possible through structured reflexivity processes. Reflexive data generated includes the researcher asking a series of questions of him or herself (Ravitch & Carl, 2016) as it pertains to the personal impact on the study. In this research, I sought to gain the perspectives of educators who had 2-3 years experience working in an urban high school. Through a series of 10 interview questions, I established confirmability by analyzing and relating all participant responses to my three research questions. The interview process was free from any personal biases or my previous experiences. I contributed reflexivity through notetaking and reflexive journaling.

Results

Theme 1: Uses of Restorative Practices.

RQ1. What are the perspectives on school discipline, of educators in urban, predominantly African American high schools, regarding the use of restorative practices?

A study conducted by Armour (2016) supported the need for restorative practices in schools as a gateway to changing school climate, as well as educator's responses to student behaviors, which in some cases led to the school to prison pipeline. This theme

contained two specific subthemes reflecting: (a) how educators used restorative practices on a typical day in their high school, and (b) how educators previously used restorative practices.

Theme 1a: Typical Day

Seven out of 10 participants responded that a typical day when restorative practices were utilized occurred when there was a conflict among students or a student and teacher, and for behavior issues. According to Participant 9, “We would use restorative to intervene if there was word that an altercation might take place, or if an altercation nearly took place that was not physical.” Similarly, Participant 6 stated that when a conflict between students or teacher/student would arise, we would hold a circle using questions provided on a business card-sized paper. The other three participants responded that restorative practices were typically used when students were in any trouble, to train students on restorative practices, or had not seen restorative practices used in their current high school but at a former urban high school.

Theme 1b: Previous Experiences

An assumption I made prior to conducting my research was that the educators participating within the study were familiar with and had previously utilized restorative practices. In response to the four of the ten participants who did not have *prior* experience, all participants within the study were currently using restorative practices as a response to discipline in their current roles as teacher, dean or administrator; Six of the ten participants *previously* used restorative practices in a former setting. One participant did not receive the prospective interview question due to an oversight by me, the

interviewer. Participant 1 had previous experience and stated, “My experience in seeing restorative practices used was in a previous setting that I worked for four years ago.”

According to Participant 3, previous experience using restorative practices consisted of restorative conversations when serious situations arose between students and teachers.

Participant 10 responded in alignment with Welsh (2000), where he noted that The National Institute of Education conducted a safe school study and reported that school administration and policies affected school disorder. As stated by Participant 10:

“Rules are rules. To have culture, and in order to set the culture, it must be consistent.”

Theme 2: Influence/Effects of Restorative Practices.

RQ2. How have restorative practices influenced educator’s attitudes towards the role of school discipline?

In schools, restorative justice often serves as an alternative to school discipline, particularly suspensions and expulsions (Hurley et al., 2015). Three specific subthemes were developed from the interview responses of participants when questioned on how restorative practices have influenced culture, behavior, and relationships.

Theme 2a: Influence on School Culture.

School climate is created through shared cultures of teachers and students and extends to include the diverse culture that individuals bring from home to school (Keiser and Schulte 2009). Each participant was asked interview question eight: How has restorative practices influenced school culture? Of the 10 responses, seven stated restorative practices helped to build school culture in a positive manner; two of the 10 participants were unsure or felt there were other influencers on school culture in

conjunction with restorative practices; and one out of the 10 participants felt restorative practices had a negative influence on school culture. As shared by Participant 3:

Restorative practices is a great part of the school culture because the students build the culture. If the students are policing themselves, that is one of the best cultures because the students are responsible for their learning and they're taking ownership for their learning through that process.

Similarly, Participant 8 responded:

Anytime there's a fight, the culture takes a hit, and we all must rebuild from that situation. I think that has a positive impact on how students view, the culture system, and what the mission and vision is of the school culture, and how important it is to maintain that school culture as best as possible.

Although many of the participants felt restorative practices had a positive impact on school culture, in contrast, Participant 5 felt that restorative practices may paint the picture that there are no limitations to things and therefore was not good for the culture. The two participants who were unsure or stated that there were other influencers on school culture in conjunction with restorative practices, shared:

I think students know the biggest influence, if there is one, is that students know that if they do want to resolve an issue or repair a situation, they know it's possible, and that we have the staff in place that are willing to have the skills to be able to facilitate those types of conversations.

Theme 2b: Influences on Student Behavior

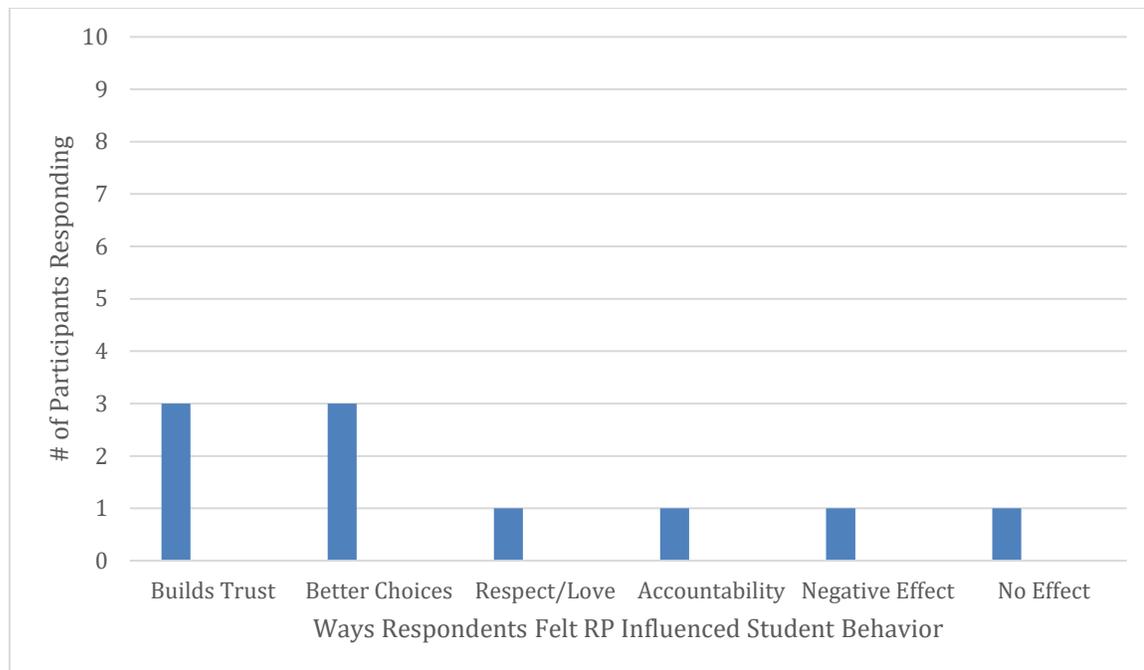
Negative classroom behaviors among students could interfere with the learning process and impede teachers' instructional delivery (Price 2017). Participants provided a range of responses on how restorative practices affected student behavior. Participants 1, 7 and 10 felt students were able to build trust in staff and the "restorative process."

Countering this perspective, Participant 9 stated that restorative practices could influence student behavior to go wrong because they knew nothing was going to happen to them but a good talking to. Additionally, remaining Participants 2, 3, 5, 6, 8 and 4 either felt that restorative practices had no influence, helped students make better choices, gave students a sense of respect and love, or held students accountable to each other.

Responses were documented and a figure created to show similarities and differences in how participants felt restorative practices influenced student behavior. Figure 1 shows participant responses to how restorative practices influenced student behavior. The horizontal axis represents the actual response from participants, and the vertical axis represents the total number of participants who responded.

Figure 1

Influences of Restorative Practices (RP) on Student Behavior



Theme 2c: Influence on Relationships (among staff, students and administrators)

Restorative practices can be a powerful means to strengthen relationships and reduce the number of students receiving exclusionary consequences (Rainbolt et al., 2019). According to Drewery and Kecskemeti (2010), teachers seeking better ways to interact with students in their classrooms, and those responsible for disciplinary systems, are looking to restorative practice for new ways to resolve some difficulties experienced between teachers, students, administrators, and parents. Nine of the 10 participants shared the belief that restorative practices had a positive influence on relationships between students, staff, and administrators. The sole participant who did not respond in alignment with the others was Participant 7 who stated, “I’ve never been a part of restorative with an

administrator and teacher, or teacher and a teacher, or an administrator and administrator.”

Theme 3: Perspectives on Restorative Practices

RQ3. How do the perspectives of teachers, deans, and administrators differ on the use of restorative practices with urban high school youth?

McLeod (2018) posited that the way teachers and administrators think and respond to negative student behaviors is possibly a key to the number of suspensions and expulsions students receive. The third theme contained six subthemes developed from interview questions related to the participant perspectives on:

- Uses of restorative practices
- Pros and cons
- Personal views
- Difficulty in responding to negative behavior
- Effect on out-of-school suspensions
- Additional remarks

Theme 3a: Perspective on uses

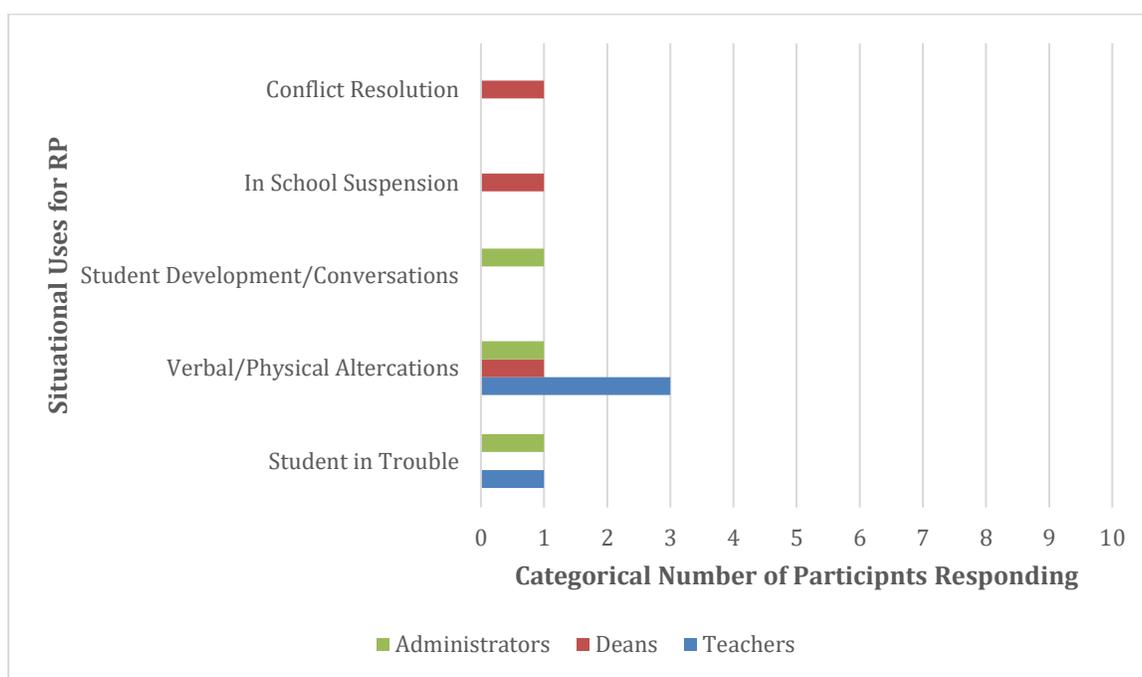
Four of the participants, 2, 6, 9 and 10 explained that restorative practices worked however it was not a “cure all” for behavior situations. Specifically, Participant 6 felt that certain actions resulted in certain consequences and at times suspensions were necessary however, there was still a need for restorative practices to integrate the student back into the school culture. Perspectives varied regarding situations where restorative practices were used. Figure 2 shows situations when participants felt the use of restorative practices were needed. The horizontal axis denotes the total number of participants who responded to a situation, and the vertical axis represents the various

situations where respondents used restorative practices (see Figure 2). According to participants, situations where restorative practices were used included:

- Students in trouble
- Verbal/physical altercations
- Student development/conversations with students
- In-school suspensions
- Conflict resolution

Figure 2

Participant Perspectives on When to Use Restorative Practices



Theme 3b: Pros and cons

Responses to the pros and cons of using restorative practices varied per participant. The pros included relationship building, appealing to higher level thinking, conflict resolution strategies, students gaining learning experiences, and reducing violence. The cons included perceptions of no accountability, restorative practices acting

as a “band-aid” to a problem, students taking advantage of the system, law mandates regardless of buy-in of staff, unrealistic consequences, and being too time-consuming.

Theme 3c: Difficult Decisions in Responding to Negative Behavior

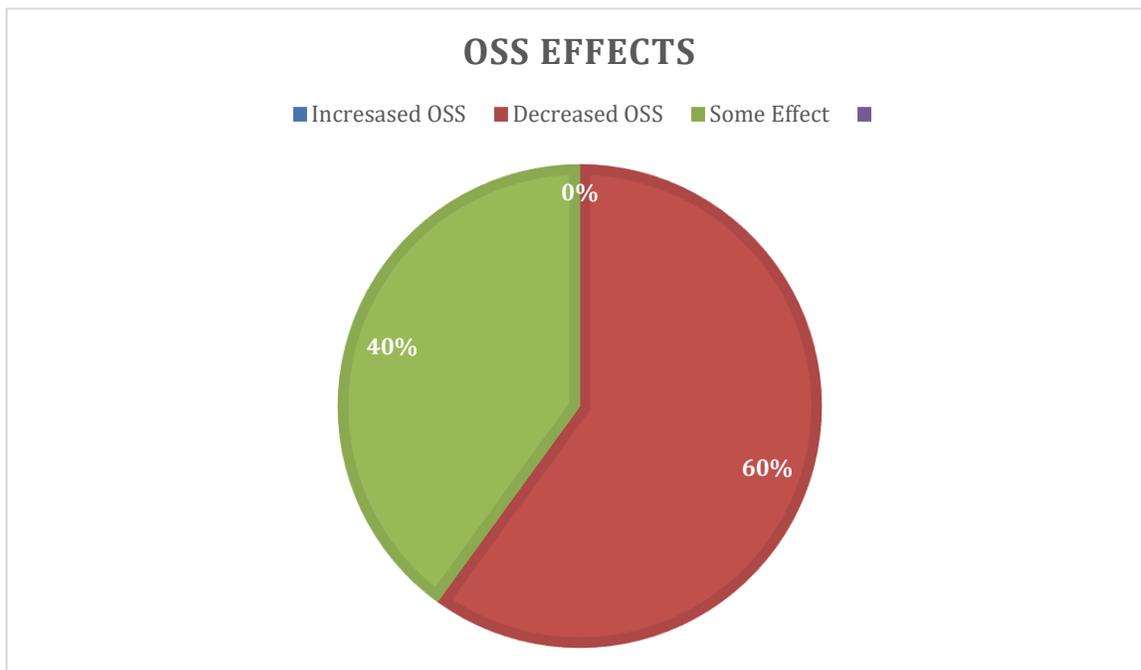
Participants were asked their perspective on the most difficult aspect in deciding how to respond to negative student behavior. Four of the participants (4,5,6 and 7) responded like Participant 3 who stated, “I will say the most difficult thing is you have to take your feelings out of it.” The remaining Participants (1,2,8,9 and 10) shared additional perspectives on the difficult decisions they must make in responding to negative student behavior such as not acting on impulse, not creating a one size fits all consequence, and finding what works. Participant 10 stated that the most difficult thing was deciding whether to keep students in the classroom or send them to the culture room.

Theme 3d: Effect of Restorative Practices on Out-of-School Suspensions

According to Gregory et al., (2015) nationwide, educators utilize restorative practices to minimize the need for suspensions and eradicate the racial discipline gap (Gregory et al., 2015). Six of the 10 participants shared the perspective that the use of restorative practices have reduced the number of out-of-school suspensions. The remaining participants responded similarly to each other stating that other factors and not exclusively restorative practices have reduced the number of out-of-school suspensions. Figure 3 which shows responses as percentages.

Figure 3

Participant Responses to the Effect of Restorative Practices on Out-of-School Suspensions (OSS)



Theme 3e: Personal Views/Additional Remarks

The conceptual framework for my research was based on Canter and Canter's assertive behavior model which stated that an educator who used assertive discipline had a clear understanding of how students should behave for them to accomplish the teaching objectives (Canter, 2010). Participants were asked to share their final comments or perspectives of the use of restorative practices. Three of the 10 participants (4, 5 and 6) shared additional final comments. According to Participant 4:

For restorative practice to function properly, it starts with the administration's buy-in. Once the administration has the buy-in, they work with the teachers

collaboratively to develop the program that is going to be used for the restorative practices. The teachers are professionally trained, the students go through their training, and they're educated on what the requirements are for whatever program you're going to use.

In contrast, Participant 5 shared:

I would just say my personal preference for restorative justice is not something that I would support. Children need to be held accountable, and I don't think utilizing restorative practices holds them accountable.” Lastly, Participant 6 stated, “I am not in full support of *only* restorative practices. I think there is a middle, that you can live in, and still thrive as a school.

Summary

In this qualitative study, I explored the perspectives of educators who worked within an urban high school which utilized restorative practices as a response to discipline. Chapter 4 presented the research questions and themes derived from semistructured interviews of 10 participants who were either high school administrators, deans, or teachers. The basic qualitative approach with semistructured interviews guided the research and data collection process.

Each participant interview began with obtaining background demographic data inclusive of their title, role(s), and years of working with a high school setting. The semistructured interviews were comprised of 10 open-ended questions formulated to gain the perspective of each participant on the use of restorative practices in urban high schools. Due to a nationwide pandemic, I could not meet face to face with the

participants and therefore conducted recorded Zoom sessions with nine of the 10 participants. One participant opted to conduct the interview via emailed responses. Recorded audio from the zoom sessions was transcribed and any notes documented were uploaded to a password protected external drive. I conducted an analysis and coding of transcripts and notes initially using MAXQDA. However, I transferred transcript responses and notes to an Excel file and coded accordingly for ease of understanding. Through coding and analysis, I developed specific themes and subthemes to accurately reflect my data.

Based on the first research question, seven out of 10 educators in urban high schools shared the perspective that restorative practices were beneficial for resolving conflict. The remaining three participants were indifferent with the perspectives that restorative practices did not teach students a lesson or hold them accountable for their actions. All participants shared what they thought were the pros and cons of utilizing restorative practices and their perspective on difficult decisions encountered when deciding to use restorative practices. According to research question two, educators' perspectives on how restorative practices influenced their attitudes towards the role of school discipline, was based upon the school culture, student behavior and the relationships between students, staff, and administrators. These three factors led to stated perspectives of restorative practices providing a platform for students to talk through issues before resolving to physical or verbal harm which would typically lead to a punitive consequence; educator's appreciation of a student's ability to apologize for hurtful actions; and identifying restorative practices were not a cure all or one size fits all

approach to discipline. Lastly, question three provided insight into how teachers, deans, and administrators differ on the use of restorative practices with urban high school youth. Participants felt restorative practices were either a great aspect of school discipline, had a negative effect on school culture and discipline or no affect at all. Six of the 10 participants attributed the use of restorative practices to a decrease in out-of-school suspensions. Chapter 5 will discuss my interpretation of my findings, limitations to the study, future recommendations, implications for possible social change and a conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the role of restorative practices in urban, predominantly African American high schools, through the perspectives of urban educators, who utilized restorative practices as an alternative response to discipline. Ravitch and Carl (2016) posited that basic qualitative research is descriptive and analytic. The focus of my research is understanding, describing, and ultimately analyzing the complex processes, meanings, and perceptions that educators have and make within their perspective of their experiences. The conceptual framework of this research was based on Canter and Canter's assertive behavior model, which expressed that an educator who used assertive discipline had a clear sense of how students should behave, such that educators could accomplish their teaching objectives (Canter & Canter, 2005). This research was relevant because few studies discussed how educators decided disciplinary responses for African American students, and there was little literature on the perspectives of urban educators on the use of restorative practices.

Overall, participants shared the perspective that restorative practices were beneficial for resolving conflicts and helped reduce the number of out-of-school suspensions. Participants consisted of four administrators, three deans, and three teachers. Additionally, participants felt their attitudes towards the role of school discipline was based upon the school culture, student behavior, and the relationships between students, staff, and administrators.

Interpretation of Findings

My research findings confirmed the conceptual framework guided by Canter and Canter's assertive behavioral model. Canter and Canter's assertive behavioral model expresses that an educator who uses assertive discipline has a clear sense of how students should behave for educators to accomplish their teaching objectives (Canter & Canter, 2005). The research questions used to guide this research were developed to help me gain an understanding into how educators respond to the misbehaviors of students, and how restorative practices contributed to the overall school culture. This research addressed the following research questions:

RQ 1. What are the perspectives on school discipline, of educators in urban, predominantly African American high schools, regarding the use of restorative practices?

RQ 2. How have restorative practices influenced educator's attitudes toward the role of school discipline?

RQ 3. How do the perspectives of teachers, deans, and administrators differ on the use of restorative practices with urban high school youth?

The themes of this study included: (a) Uses of Restorative Practices, (b) Influences and Effects of Restorative Practices, and (c) Perspectives of Restorative Practices.

Much of the literature in Chapter 2 discussed current research related to the conceptual framework based on Canter and Canter's assertive model; the origins of restorative justice and restorative practices; the school to prison pipeline; zero-tolerance policies; racial disproportionalities in-school suspensions and expulsions; school climate

and discipline; and teacher and administrator attitudes towards school discipline. As presented in Chapter 2, the school to prison pipeline is partially contingent upon the response of educators to negative student behaviors (Elias, 2013). As referenced by the International Institute of Restorative Practice (IIRP), restorative practices include strategies for both proactive and reactive interventions for infractions.

One of the initial interview questions asked participants to tell me about a typical day when restorative practices might be utilized. A significant finding was that restorative practices were used more often for verbal and physical altercations. Additionally, my results showed that deans utilized restorative practices in more ways than teachers and administrators. What was not confirmed with my research aligned with previous literature reviews, was the point at which participants decided to use restorative practices. Seven out of ten responded to using restorative practices as a reactive response to discipline when solving conflicts. Two participants shared they would have restorative conversations if it was brought to their attention that a conflict was brewing; and 1 participant could not recall the use of restorative practices at the present due to Covid-19 school release.

Recent studies (Gregory et al., 2015; Losen, 2013; McAndrews, 2010) on racial disparities in discipline, indicated that school-controlled factors were the strongest predictors of both frequency and disproportionate use of suspensions and expulsions. These include (a) teachers' attitudes and tolerance levels, (b) classroom management skills, (c) principal attitudes toward discipline, and (d) a positive or negative school climate. My research did not fully support the trend in literature posited by Gregory et al.,

(2015) that revealed many schools using restorative practices reduced the use of out-of-school suspensions. When participants were asked about their perspectives on the effect of restorative practices on out-of-school suspensions, answers varied. Two administrators, three deans, and two teachers stated restorative practices decreased out-of-school suspensions; the other two administrators stated restorative practices did not affect out-of-school suspensions solely because there were additional factors. One dean stated that restorative practices did not decrease the number of out-of-school suspensions and had a negative impact on the school.

Moreover, an extension of previous research was confirmed when seven out of 10 participants stated that they relied on restorative practices for conflict resolution and to build relationships. As cited by Drewery and Kecskemeti (2010), those responsible for disciplinary systems are looking to restorative practice for new ways to resolve the increasing range and number of difficulties between teachers and students, students and other students, and between the school and parents. Additionally, participant perspectives on the use of restorative practices were reflective of a nonpunitive approach to handling ranges of conflict within schools potentially serving the entire school body as a response to an incident or ongoing conflict.

Limitations of the Study

There were a couple of limitations identified within my research. First, due to the Covid -19 pandemic, in-person contact was prohibited, and the recruitment process was limited to email and phone contact. Second, this study was limited to a select population of participants who worked in high schools within an urban community that was

predominantly African American, and therefore, practices and perspectives may differ for those who are in a different demographics. These limitations provide an opportunity for future research, and expansion of the current research.

Recommendations

Based on the results and limitations of my research, I would recommend this study be conducted with the inclusion of semistructured face-to-face interviews, and a larger number of participants. These two factors will possibly provide a broader perspective from teachers, deans, and administrators who implement restorative practices within an urban high school setting. I would also recommend expanding on the participants' perspectives based upon actual restorative practices implemented by each participant, and under what circumstances the choice of implementation is made. Participants in my study had varied experience with the utilization of restorative practices and therefore, perspectives on the effectiveness, as it pertains to relationship building, and the effects on out-of-school suspensions, were either shared by participants as substantiated or unclear. Additionally, anyone responsible for the delivery of restorative practices should have prior training or professional development, such that the effectiveness of implementation is positive change on behalf of those involved. Maintaining a positive school culture and climate may decrease the number of negative student behaviors and decrease the risk of high school students within urban areas dropping out, which may improve their opportunities for academic success. Although I did not focus on schoolwide perspectives inclusive of students and support staff, the results of this study provide a glimpse into the mindsets of those responsible for

developing and implementing discipline policy, as well as the pros and cons of relying on restorative practices as an alternative response to discipline. My last recommendation is for future researchers to include in future studies, stated policies on restorative practices from each school, to determine alignment of perspectives of participants, to the expectation of utilization.

Implications

Positive Social Change

Implications for change are supported by this study. Teachers, deans, and administrators felt restorative practices decreased out-of-school suspensions and had a positive influence on relationships among students, staff, and administrators. There is a need for the utilization of restorative practices as an alternative response to discipline, to build strong relationships among educators and students, and to improve climate and culture within schools. Teachers, deans, and administrators are faced with negative student behaviors daily and must decide how to respond to those behaviors. There is no one size fits all approach to discipline. Therefore, educators have the opportunity to establish various forms of disciplinary responses reflective of a school's population and demographics. School discipline may be addressed in different ways based upon school policies established and various behavior situations. Implications from this study showed that most participants utilized restorative practices reactively and not proactively. However, trust was built and in most cases, relationships strengthened, and out of school suspensions decreased. The utilization of restorative practices in urban high schools, can lead to positive social change by improving relationships among students and educators

who understand the purpose of restorative practices, and who seek to establish a positive school culture and climate. Gregory et al. (2016) noted that positive relationships between teachers and students of any racial ethnicity, play a strong role in creating an environment that is supportive and equitable, and does not rely on suspensions and expulsions as a response to behavior. Building these healthy relationships can redirect efforts to suspend and expel particularly, African American students and contribute to their academic success.

Conclusion

The results of this qualitative research provide insight into how administrators, deans, and teachers, who work within urban, predominantly African American high schools, and who utilize restorative practices as an alternative response to discipline, view the effectiveness of implementing restorative practices. Educators interact with students differently based upon their roles, and at times, must address negative behaviors which merit consequences. Not all may agree upon the resulting response to negative student behaviors however, restorative practices provide an alternative to out-of-school suspensions.

This research aimed to minimize the gap in existing literature examining the perspectives and experiences of urban, predominantly African American high school educators, who use restorative practices. It is inevitable to have disagreements within a school setting, whether among students, staff, or any other school personnel. Each person has their own belief in what is right or wrong, and what the responsive action should be, when confronted or engaged within a conflict or negative behavior. According to

participants within this study, adopting restorative practices with established school discipline policy can be beneficial. Additionally, there must be a realistic balance and logical consequence that addresses the negative behavior.

As noted in Berlowitz et al. (2017), teachers and school administrators often struggle to see alternatives to zero-tolerance as effectively dealing with behaviors that they believe to be grounded in the cultural norms. However, my research supports the perspective that the relationships established between students and educators, if positive, can lead to a positive school culture and climate, build trust between students and staff, and create positive social change.

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Appendix A: Letter of Cooperation

[Date]

[Organization Representative]

[Contact]

Dear [Organization Representative],

My name is Janora Holmes and I am pursuing my PhD. in Education from Walden University. I will be conducting a research study for my dissertation. The title of my dissertation is, “Educator Perspectives on the Use of Restorative Practices in Urban High Schools”. The participants in my study will be secondary administrators, teachers and deans who have a minimum 2-3 years’ experience in secondary education, and who have utilized restorative practices as a response to discipline. The purpose of this study is to understand the perspectives of educators who use restorative practices as an alternative to punitive discipline. Gaining insight into the perspectives of administrators, teachers and deans can provide guidance to establishing improved relationships between staff and students, as well as potentially minimizing the number of suspensions and expulsions among African American students.

Potential participants will receive an emailed letter of invitation/consent form to read and understand the study before agreeing to participate. If a decision is made to move forward, an emailed response of “I consent” will be needed. Participation in the research is totally voluntary and participants may decline or discontinue at any time. A decision to decline or discontinue participation in the research will have no effects on future communications or interactions between the researcher and the participant.

Data I am seeking to collect will be through semistructured interview questions. I will interview five to seven participants for 30 min up to one hour, in one-on-one sessions during a suggested time frame and platform. The preference for the interview is virtual however, telephone or email interviews are an option. Interviews will be recorded with a handheld device or virtually audio recorded, and transcribed verbatim. Participant interviews will be anonymous and confidential, and a copy of the transcript will be provided to each participant.

It is my goal to contribute to social change by understanding and sharing the perspectives of educators who use restorative practices in urban highs schools. With your consent to participate, my study can begin. Your willingness to participate within my study will be greatly appreciated. I will follow up with an email in two days and will address any questions you might have. You may also contact me at my email address janora.holmes@waldenu.edu. If you agree to provide me with the email contact information of potential participants at [participating school], please respond with “**I consent**” and “cc” this consent to IRB@waldenu.edu. Thank you in advance.

Please keep a copy or print for your records.

Sincerely,

Janora Holmes
Walden University

Appendix B: Interview Questions for Participants

1. Tell me about your role as an educator/administrator/ or dean.
2. Tell me about a typical day when restorative practices might be utilized.
3. Can you give me a specific example of how you have utilized restorative practices?
4. What is your perspective of that experience?
5. In your opinion, what are the pros and cons of using restorative practices?
6. From your perspective, what is the most difficult aspect in deciding how to respond to negative student behavior?
7. From your perspective, how would you say if at all, restorative practices have influenced relationships between staff, students, and administration?
8. How has the use of restorative practices influenced school culture?
9. What if any have been your previous experience(s) in utilizing restorative practices as a response to discipline?
10. What is your opinion on how restorative practices have influenced student behavior?
11. How would you say the use of restorative practices have affected the number of out-of-school suspensions?
12. Is there anything else you would like to share before we conclude the interview?

Appendix C: Interview Questions Corresponding to Each Research Question

Interview Questions

RQ1. What are the perspectives on school discipline, of educators in urban, predominantly African American high schools, regarding the use of restorative practices?

2 Tell me about a typical day when restorative practices might be utilized?

3 Can you give me a specific example of how you have utilized restorative practices?

4 What is your perspective of that experience?

5 In your opinion, what are the pros and cons of utilizing restorative practices?

6 From your perspective, what is the most difficult aspect in deciding a response to negative behavior?

9 What if any has been your previous experience in utilizing restorative practices as a response to discipline?

12 Is there anything else you would like to share before we conclude the interview?

RQ2. How have restorative practices influenced educator's attitudes towards the role of school discipline?

6 From your perspective, what is the most difficult aspect in deciding a response to negative behavior?

7 From your perspective, how would you say, if at all, restorative practices have influenced relationships between, staff, students, and administrators?

8 How has the use of restorative practices influenced culture?

RQ3. How do the perspectives of teachers, deans, and administrators differ on the use of restorative practices with urban, high school youth?

1 Tell me about your role as an educator, administrator, or dean.

3 Can you give me a specific example of how you have utilized restorative practices?

- 4 What is your perspective of that experience?
 - 5 In your opinion, what are the pros and cons of utilizing restorative practices?
 - 6 From your perspective, what is the most difficult aspect in deciding a response to negative behavior?
 - 9 What if any has been your previous experience in utilizing restorative practices as a response to discipline?
 - 10 What is your opinion of how restorative practices have influenced student behavior?
 - 11 How would you say the use of restorative practices have affected the number of Out-of-school suspensions?
-