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Justice And Change: An Exploratory Case Study Of The Early Implementation Of The Restorative Justice Whole-School Model And Reculturing In A High School In The American South

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AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY OF THE EARLY IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE WHOLE-SCHOOL MODEL AND RECULTURING IN A
HIGH SCHOOL IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH

A Dissertation

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Doctor of Philosophy

By

Amber Weyland Rodenbo

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Approved 23 January 2023

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all the students I taught at Patrick Henry High School, New Orleans Military and Maritime Academy, Woodside High School, and Armstrong High School. Thank you for teaching me more than I could ever hope to teach all of you. Thank you for growing with me, for letting me love you, and for loving me too. Thank you for every bit of joy you shared with me. I cherish every single moment I was allowed to spend with you, and I know that I am lucky to have known all of you. Thank you to the families and community members from all four of these schools and cities who shared their most precious children with me, who supported me and built relationships with me throughout my teaching career. And to all the students I will teach and interact with in the future—I dedicate this work to you too. I may not know you yet, but I know that what I learned in this program and in this research will guide me to treat you fairly and equitably and to rebuild our schools into places that do that same.

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For my parents, who both instilled in me the power and importance of education, who grew my love of books, knowledge, justice, and love, and who believed in me when I did not believe in myself—thank you. I would not be who I am without your sacrifices, and I am grateful for everything you taught me and everything you gave me.

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Abstract

Discipline inequities across racial, gender, and socioeconomic barriers are a constant in the United States, persisting long after the desegregation of schools in the last century. School divisions and schools across the United States have implemented restorative justice as an alternative to traditional punitive discipline as a potential remedy for discipline inequities. To institute whole-school restorative justice, a change in school culture, or reculturing, must occur, per Fullan's culture of change and coherence models. Using Fullan's models, this research was a practice-oriented exploratory case study. The following sources of data were collected: interviews with administrators, an at-will survey sent to all teachers, and a content analysis of the student handbook. Data from all the sources supported the finding that the case school is in the early stages of becoming a culture of change and of the reculturing process. Themes important to the implementation of this initiative included: relationships, disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline, preventing harm, building moral purpose and relationships one-on-one, building moral purpose and relationships through group settings, the importance of (positive) leadership traits, instructional collaboration, and lack of collaboration around restorative justice practices. Continuity of leadership proved an important factor in culture change. There is room for improvement and progress in all areas studied. Recommendations in the areas of school/division policy, planning, and leadership to improve implementation and continue the process of reculturing are included.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

"Education has both enslaving and emancipatory possibilities, especially during this period of economic restructuring and rapid change in our social life, and may, in turn, forge new ways of thinking about social life" (Brown, 2003, p. 148*).*

In Dylan Garity's well-known spoken word poem, "Rigged Game," he discusses inequity in public schools through the eyes of his sister, a teacher of English Learner students in Boston. Most notably, he says:

> I know I am lucky enough to be one of the winners of this game. I was handed a head start and a rulebook in my own tongue, but the winners of a rigged game should not get to write the rules. (Garity, 2013)

Despite his sound reasoning, the public K-12 education system was created and, with few exceptions, has been maintained by the winners of the rigged game (Anderson, 2021). The United States is rife with inequities that penalize students of color and exclude them from taking advantage of the same opportunities as their White peers (Lipman, 2011). In this study, I will focus on an area in dire need of solutions-based research and reform: discipline practices in public K-12 schools.

Statement of the Problem

In a report published through a joint effort of the Center for Civil Rights Remedies of University of California, Los Angeles' (UCLA) Civil Rights Project and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Southern California, discipline data from "actual reports from nearly

every public school in the nation" (UCLA & ACLU, 2018, p. 2) were disaggregated to paint a

portrait of discipline disparities in public education. One shocking conclusion was that students

across the United States lost more than 11,000,000 days of instruction due to out-of-school

suspension during the 2015-2016 school year. Unsurprisingly, UCLA and the ACLU came to the

same conclusion that most other national reports have come to, including most notably, the

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES): Black students and students with disabilities

miss far more days from the classroom, due to disciplinary exclusion, than any other race and

subgroup (NCES, 2019; UCLA & ACLU, 2018). Students who fall into both groups are the most

likely to be excluded from the classroom due to disciplinary action (NCES, 2019).

  The UCLA/ ACLU report broke down the days missed during the 2015-2016 school year

per 100 students for each subgroup to examine the days lost per school year to examine the

impact of lost instruction across subgroups (UCLA & ACLU, 2018). This approach accounted

for differences in population size for each subgroup. In rank of lowest number of days lost to

highest number of days lost, Asian students lost 4 days of instruction, White students lost 14

days of instruction, Latino students lost 17 days, students without disabilities lost 20 days,

Pacific Islander students lost 30 days, Native American students lost 31 days, students with

disabilities lost 44 days, and Black students lost 66 days of instruction in the 2015-2016 school

year per 100 students (UCLA &ACLU, 2018). The average for all groups was 23 days of

instruction lost per 100 students. Figure 1 depicts these lost days for each subgroup.

Figure 1

Days of Lost Instruction by Subgroup per 100 Days
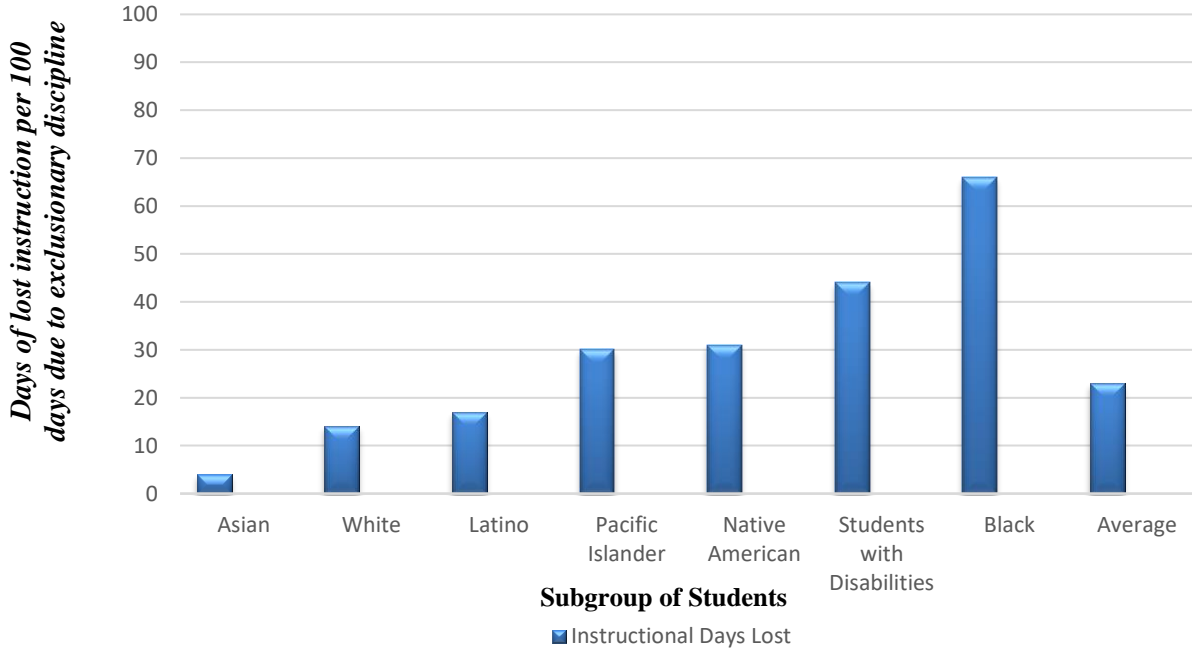
Figure 2 shows how severely different parts of the country discipline students by way of exclusionary practices. Figure 2 shows the number of days of lost instruction per 100 students based on location, as pictured with a map of the United States. The darker the color on the spectrum, the fewer days of lost instruction per 100 students. Dark purple represents fewer than 10 days lost while bright yellow represents 80 or more days of lost instruction per 100 students. Most students attend school around 180 days per school year in the United States.

Figure 2

Days of Lost Instruction Per 100 Days Due to Exclusionary Discipline
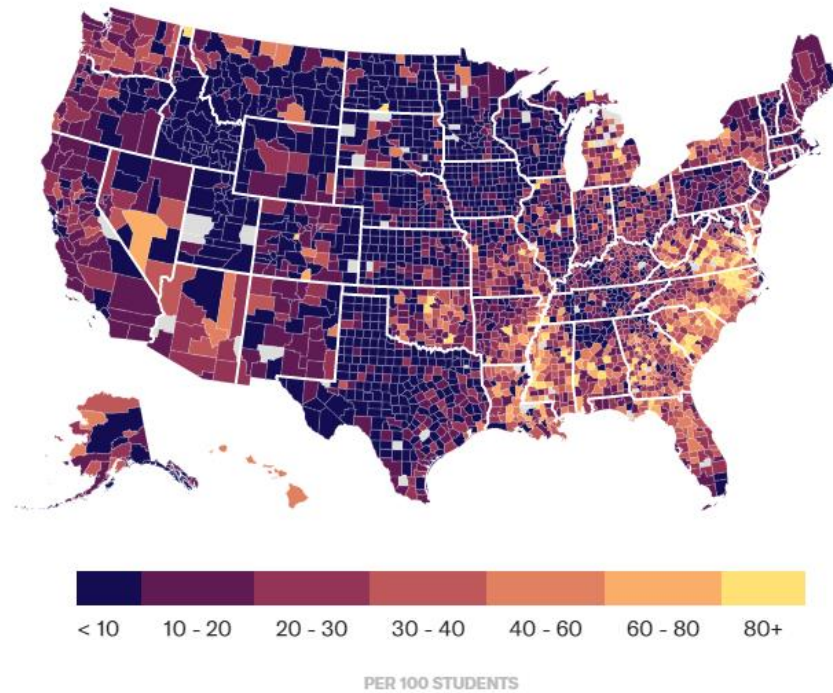
The data in Figure 1 in conjunction with the data in Figure 2 make it clear that Black children are excluded the most by traditional practices of discipline, and notably, all children are affected by exclusion. All children excluded from the classroom lose access to learning and risk slipping behind, an issue that is expounded for children who are repeatedly excluded from the classroom.

NCES (2019) shared similar findings from the 2013-2014 school year. The NCES report examined, among other things, the percentage of each subgroup of students who received out-of-school suspensions. This report excluded students with disabilities, but it included the breakdown by gender and race. Asian students had the lowest suspension rates with 1.1% overall; male students within this subgroup were much higher with 1.7% compared to 0.5% for female students (NCES, 2019). White students had the second lowest rate of days in out-of-school suspensions with 3.4% overall; White male students were 5.0% and White female students were 3.2%. Hispanic students and Pacific Islander students both had 4.5% overall with a noticeable difference between male and female students. Two or more races had the penultimate percentage with 5.3% overall; male students of two of more races were at 7.4% and female students were 3.1%. Black students had the highest percentage of out-of-school suspensions with 13.7% overall; Black male students had the highest percentage of any group, with 17.6% and female Black students had the second highest percentage of any group with 9.4% (NCES, 2019).

As noted above, in the 2015-2016 school year, students across the nation lost more than 11,000,000 days of instruction to out-of-school suspension (UCLA & ACLU, 2018). That number includes all students, which highlights that all students are affected by discipline practices that resort to excluding students from the classroom as a standard, common reaction to discipline problems. Yet, the disproportionate effect on Black children cannot be separated from the6ommon6l issue. Black children experience the greatest educational losses due to out-of-school suspension in the United States, and those educational losses are lifelong. In Ohio, Michigan, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Virginia, five of the worst states for out-of-school suspension, "Black students lost over 100 days per 100 enrolled" (UCLA & ACLU, 2018, p. 6). Similarly, most states in the area known as the American South, which generally applies of states

south of the Mason-Dixon Line and east of the westernmost Texas-New Mexico border and notably including all states formerly known as the Confederate States of America, have high rates of out-of-school suspension (Britannica, 2021; UCLA & ACLU, 2018). Even when compared to other subgroups experiencing inequitable discipline practices that remove children from the classroom, Black children spent far more time out of the classroom due to exclusionary discipline practices. It could be inferred that the effect on Black children, Black families, and Black communities is far reaching.

As evidenced in Figure 2, the states typically considered the *American South* have a high number of days lost per 100 students, as indicated by the yellow and orange shades present in the figure. For the purposes of this dissertation, the American South is defined as states south of the Mason-Dixon line, typically characterized by a long growing season and a complicated history in relation to Black slavery, Jim Crow Laws, and a resistance to the Black Civil Rights Movement in the United States; the following states fall into those categories: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia (Britannica, 2021).

Exclusion from instruction due to misbehavior accounts for 20% of the achievement gap for Black students (Morris & Perry, 2016) and the increased likelihood that excluded students will become a part of the school-to-prison pipeline (Petrosino et al., 2012). Students who are suspended or otherwise excluded from school are 100% more likely to drop out, 44% less likely to graduate, and 49% less likely to attend a post-secondary institution (Balfanz et al., 2015). In many ways, a child's entire life is being decided in public schools before they are even adults, given the outcomes reported in the research above. If that child is Black, they are more likely to

have worse outcomes than their non-Black peers. To be clear, the future of Black children is, in many cases, being decided by public schools in the United States.

The solution that many schools across the nation have employed to deal with discipline issues is bringing more police officers into public schools (UCLA & ACLU, 2018). A report published by UCLA and the ACLU (2018) found that 10s of thousands of schools were ill-equipped to meet the needs of their students when it came to social-emotional, and behavior needs. Due to the prioritization of increased policing in public schools and the de-prioritization of the mental and emotional health of students, students across the United States lack access to a counselor while having guaranteed access and run-ins with police officers in the halls of their schools. UCLA and the ACLU (2018) reported that more than 27,000 police officers work in schools across the country while only 23,000 social workers work in American schools. Likewise, more than 36 million students in 55,000 schools did not have enough counselors per the recommendations of the American School Counselors Association (a recommended ratio of 250:1); instead, the national student-to-counselor ratio is 444:1 (UCLA & ACLU, 2018). The ratio of counselors to students highlights how counselors are severely overworked, stretching them so thin that they cannot possibly meet the needs of all students (UCLA & ACLU, 2018).

The increased presence of police officers in schools leads to a term mentioned above: the school-to-prison pipeline. The school-to-prison pipeline is the disproportionate arrest of students of color (particularly, of Black young men) in public schools across the United States and this relationship between schools and prisons is well-documented (Hamer & Johnson, 2021). Students who are suspended or expelled are far more likely to end up in the juvenile prison system and thus, in the prison system as an adult (Hamer & Johnson, 2021; Rosenbaum, 2018). In a study that linked suspended Black students with non-suspended Black students in a 13-year

longitudinal study, suspended students were 40% more likely to have been arrested 5 years into the study; after 12 years of study, suspended youth were 30% more likely to have been arrested once, 51% more likely to have been arrested 2 or more times, 23% more likely to have been to prison, and 49% more likely to have been placed on probation (Rosenbaum, 2018). According to Maynard and Weinstein (2020), exclusion in the form of expulsion or suspension affects Black students in a way it does not affect non-Black students. Thus, Black students are arrested in "staggeringly disproportionate numbers" and are sent to prison in even more staggeringly disproportionate numbers (Hamer & Johnson, 2021, p. 77) compared to their non-Black peers. The effect is so 9ommonlace and disproportionate that is has been dubbed the school-to-prison pipeline (and in some cases, the prison-to-school pipeline when discussing students coming back into school after being incarcerated; Hamer & Johnson, 2021; Koon, 2020). The term *school-to-prison pipeline* is generally attributed to research conducted by socialist and criminology theorist Robert K. Merton in the 1930s (Sheldon, 2011).

Many researchers have moved from the term *school-to-prison pipeline* to the term *school-prison nexus*. This term has changed as it becomes clear that schools and prisons are not two separate entities shuffling Black students back and forth, nor is it a one-way pipeline between schools and prisons; but rather, schools and prisons are two parts of the same larger system that "works to criminalize and dispossess" Black communities and other communities of color (Meiners & Reyes, 2008; O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020, p. 522). The arrest and subsequent incarceration of Black children feeds into the overrepresentation of Black adults in the prison system and is seen by many as an extension of the Jim Crow era (Hamer & Johnson, 2021).

Cultural deficit theory is one cause of this nexus (Hamer & Johnson, 2021). Cultural deficit theory is supported by the concept of cultural deprivation (Persell, 1981). Cultural deficit

theory is the belief that Black culture is characterized by "weakness in the home environment, family structure, child-rearing patterns, values and attitudes, linguistic capability, and cognitive development," and these weaknesses as seen as stemming from genetic differences in Black Americans (Persell, 1981, p. 27). Cultural deprivation theory acknowledges these same perceived weaknesses but blames the environment for these weaknesses, which are sometimes blamed on societal inequities (Persell, 1981). Supporters of cultural deprivation posit that the cultures of people of color are cultures of poverty and that these deficit cultures are the reason for inequality and inequity in public school outcomes (Persell, 1981). A more modern view has policy makers viewing the cultures of lower-class, students of color through the lens of the *cultural difference model* (Persell, 1981). This model views the cultures of minorities as valid, different cultures from the majority culture, but it also posits these cultures as competing with majority culture rather than finding ways for different cultures to work together in the classroom to supports the needs of students (Persell, 1981). Most public and educational policies are made with one or more of these cultural deficit theories supporting these policies (Persell, 1981).

The result of theories that examine cultures as *lesser than* or as competitors to the majority culture results in deficit thinking that may inform educational policy, including discipline policies and practices, and proponents of these theories continue to view the cultures and homelives of Black children as deficient when compared to their White peers (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020; Persell, 1981). The solution is multi-faceted, but one proposed solution is the restorative model of discipline that focuses in part on how the system and the school-prison nexus have negatively affected and harmed Black children and how it must be overhauled to destroy the processes and practices that prioritize the incarceration and exclusion of Black

children over the education and greatness of Black children (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020).

Conceptual Framework

This study investigated how restorative justice might provide a solution to the problem of disproportionate loss of time in school by Black children. This study was a case study to look at how restorative justice is used in practice. Restorative justice is a discipline approach and a cultural shift that, above all, seeks to repair the harm caused by or that led to a person's misbehavior (Maynard & Weinstein, 2020). Restorative justice is posed as a solution to and a replacement for the punitive discipline system that finds someone to punish and does not give the offender a voice (Maynard & Weinstein, 2020). In K-12 schools, restorative justice relies on strong teacher-student and administrator-student relationships. It can easily be described as a five R core value system: respect, relationships, responsibility, repairing the harm, and reintegrating (Maynard & Weinstein, 2020).

Replacing the traditional, punitive system of discipline with restorative justice is time-consuming for many reasons. In this study, I focused on one of the most difficult hurdles this replacement of discipline systems poses: the necessity of changing the culture of a school to a restorative culture. To that end, I used Michael Fullan's (2001) concept of *reculturing*. Reculturing is the process of transforming the culture of a school by doing the hard work of instilling and cultivating moral purpose of faculty and community, building strong, positive relationships with faculty as the cornerstone of the change process, and coherence making (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

The end goal and the focal point of reculturing is a complete transformation of the culture (Fullan, 2001). The punitive discipline system as a means of punishment is ingrained in

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American society. Read the comments on any news article about someone who committed a crime, and one can see how deeply personal the idea of punishment for crime (any crime) is to many Americans. Transforming and refocusing that ingrained societal belief necessitates the hard work of reculturing. In the words of Fullan (2001), "reculturing is a contact sport that involves hard, labor-intensive work. It takes time and it never ends" (p. 44). Reculturing in support of restorative justice requires hard work and labor to replace a punitive discipline practice that relies on *the way things have always been done*.

Figures 3 illustrates a conceptual model I created that illuminates how Fullan's change process and coherence model interact and how that interaction looks for restorative justice. Both processes fall under a term Fullan called *reculturing*. Moral purpose, relationships, and coherence all fall into the reculturing process. Coherence is multi-faceted as well, necessitating focused direction, collaborative culture, and clarity as integral parts of the coherence-making process. Coherence is the final part of the culture of change process, or reculturing (Fullan, 2001). Fullan expanded on the coherence aspect of this process with his coherence model (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Figure 3 lays out the basics of what each of these components look like and necessitate from successful leaders.

Figure 3

Reculturing, Change, and Coherence

Reculturing

The process of transforming the culture of a school by doing the hard work of instilling and cultivating moral purpose of faculty and community

Relationships

Emotionally intelligent leaders constantly engage with followers to navigate opposition and ensure followers are mobilized to work together towards the common goal

Coherence

Shared depth and understanding exemplified by change leaders who focus direction, ensure clarity, and cultivate a culture of collaboration

Moral Purpose

The "why" or "the North Star" behind a cultural change that is cultivated by intelligent, thoughtful leaders to create a central goal and pathway to change

These components are applied to instituting restorative justice at the whole school level as part of a culture shift toward restorative justice in Figure 3. Reculturing is an integral part of restorative justice implementation, just as changing the school culture must occur for implementation to occur. Reculturing is the overarching principle with the following concentric circles from outermost to innermost: coherence, moral purpose, and relationships (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). This model combines two of Fullan's books and models: *Leading in a Culture of Change* (Fullan, 2001) and *Coherence* (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Coherence includes three parts: focused direction, collaborative culture, and clarity. All parts of this conceptual model must be present for a culture of change to be in place and thus for a culture to be changed. Though change is not a destination, it is most certainly a direction in which a system is going or

not going (Fullan, 2001). Figure 3 depicts this model with further explanation for each part of the change and coherence processes. In-depth information for each circle and tenet is also expanded below Figure 3 and throughout this manuscript. This conceptual model was used in this dissertation and research study. I chose to revise the existing Coherence Model to include the model shared in Fullan's *Leading in a Culture of Change* text (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016), viewing the 2016 text as an extension of the 2001 text. One of the changes I made to Fullan's existing change model was moving relationships to the center, rather than moral purpose. His more modern books reference the need for strong relationships in order to cultivate moral purpose (Fullan, 2019; Fullan & Gallagher, 2020).

Moral Purpose

Moral purpose is the *why* or "the North Star" behind a cultural change that is cultivated by intelligent, thoughtful administrators to create a central goal and a central pathway to change (Fullan, 2001, p. 27). There are many reasons that a school might focus on shifting to a restorative model of discipline. The possibility of the *why* for restorative justice is multifaceted. For example, the following are all reasons to institute restorative justice in K-12 schools: to increase equity in discipline practices, to disrupt the school-prison nexus, to teach children to handle strife and overcome adversity without resorting to violence or aggression, to close the achievement gap exasperated by exclusion from school, and to show children how to mend relationships and their community from violence, aggression, and strife. Any combination of these points could be the unifying moral purpose and goals for the implementation of restorative justice in a school.

To work towards the central reason, the moral purpose behind the reasons for implementation of restorative justice in a school, school leaders/ administrators must do more

than just state the moral purpose. A clear statement of moral purpose must be accompanied with strategies and actions that help to realize the moral purpose while also energizing the people "to pursue a desired goal" (Fullan, 2001, p. 19). Effective educational leaders engaging in reculturing to implement restorative justice practices must ensure that teachers, counselors, paraprofessionals, administrators, and all the many people who work in a school and participate in school discipline practices feel they are a part of the success story, that they are the heroes of the mission to overhaul and change discipline practices to benefit all students (Fullan, 2001).

Relationships

Just as restorative justice emphasizes relationships between school personnel and students, families, and communities, reculturing requires that emotionally intelligent leaders constantly engage with followers to navigate opposition and ensure followers are mobilized to work together towards the common goal(s), and Fullan (2001) explains that emotionally intelligent leaders are a crucial component in a culture of change. For the purposes of instituting restorative justice in a school, followers are the people who work in a school, and the leaders are typically school-based administrators (though this can certainly and does certainly include district administrators and informal leaders in varying capacities). Fullan (2001) explains that moral purpose and relationships are job one and two (p. 51). You must have both in order to change the culture of a school.

In a culture of change, the presence of dissenters and emotional responses to this change are almost inevitable (Fullan, 2001). According to Fullan (2001), "people express doubts or reservations and sometimes outright opposition to new directions" (p. 74). An effective change leader must accept and welcome this sort of opposition because dissent can lead to "new ideas and breakthroughs" in the change process (Fullan, 2001, p. 74). The process of reculturing is a

process that cannot be static. It must be fluid and solutions to obstacles must be fluid, and it must include followers. In the case of a school, teachers and counselors must be on board with a large cultural change for it to work. Students spend most of their time in classrooms, not in the offices of administrators. Changing the culture of the few school-based administrators without changing the culture of the teachers will not lead to authentic change.

Coherence

Fullan and Quinn's (2016) Coherence Model is, in practice, an extension of Fullan's (2001) Culture of Change Model. The last part of the Culture of Change Model is coherence. The Coherence Model expands upon that portion of the earlier model. Coherence is shared depth and understanding exemplified by change leaders who focus direction, ensure clarity, and cultivate a culture of collaboration (Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

The process of coherence-making, as with the change process, is never complete. You "never arrive once and for all" in this process (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 2); it is ongoing to ensure coherence is maintained and that new followers achieve understanding and become a part of the collaborative culture. The first part of coherence is focusing direction by continuing to instill moral purpose, build and strengthen relationships, and ensure clarity as a change leader (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). School administrators must "create conditions to connect around" the moral purpose they develop and cultivate" (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 19). This will both focus direction and build relationships amongst and with faculty and staff. People working together toward a common goal they all embrace are logically more likely to want to build strong bonds together as a part of the change process.

Clarity is a subjective ideal, varying person to person (Fullan & Quinn, 2016), but it is a crucial part of focusing direction in followers as a change leader. Change leaders must be sure

that clarity is evident in "people's minds and actions" (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 24). Administrators must build capacity in their faculty and staff before clarity can be achieved, and clarity must precede coherence (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Developing capacity and building "new skills" thus "increases clarity and, in turn, commitment" of teachers and other followers (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, pp. 24-25). In terms of restorative justice, clarity could be seen as an in-depth understanding of what restorative justice is, why it is being implemented, and how it is being implemented.

According to Fullan and Quinn (2016), "change is a process, not an event" (p. 27) and in schools, it is the administrators' job to move educators from the "current to the future state" (p. 28). Fullan and Quinn (2016, p. 28) provide a metaphor known as the "fishbowl metaphor" (p. 28) to explain this process of moving people to the future or goal state:

- Foster clarity of the purpose for the leap and the specificity of the destination.

- Support the early leapers and learn from their attempts.

- Build the capacity of others to leap with support.

- Create a culture of collaboration where leaping can be nurtured.

- Recognize successes at leaping at all points of the journey. (p. 28)

Figure 4 is a visual that explains the fishbowl metaphor. This metaphor and explanation of the process makes it clear that administrators must "make the journey of change vivid for people—bring it to life" (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 28). One of the crucial components of this metaphor that might easily be overlook is recognizing leaps throughout the journey (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Even late adopters or late leapers must be celebrated for making the leap at all. Likewise, those who leap early should be a learning opportunity for leaders to help ensure others follow suit. Whenever followers embrace the process and take the leap is worthy of celebration.

Figure 4

Familiar and Unknown

Familiar
-Comfortable, known
-Familiar, even if followers are dissatisfied
-Expectations are traditional
-Collaboration level is status quo/ known
-Followers know how to survive
-Rewards are understood

Unknown
-Full of unknowns
-Expectations are unclear
-Collaboration is not established so support structures are unknown
-Dangers of moving to the unknown are present
-Rewards are unknown or not specific

Note. Adapted from Fullan, M., & Quinn, J. (2016). *Coherence: The right drivers in action for schools, districts, and systems.* Corwin.

Figure 4 highlights this process in terms of familiar/unknown. There is real, present danger to moving from one way of doing thing to another. The rewards are unclear (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Collaboration is unknown so support systems are unknown. Expectations are unknown—moving to a new culture or system is full of unknowns, and thus, full of fear and many people are hesitant to *take the leap* (Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

Administrators must exemplify and instill in their followers a culture of collaboration by modeling learning and a growth mindset to reshape an individualistic culture into a collaborative culture working toward a common goal. A culture of collaboration can be achieved by building capacity amongst faculty and learning and working collaboratively at every level of the school (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Principals and other administrators must move into the position of lead learner if they are not already there. They model the continuity of their own learning for teachers

to follow (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). For restorative justice implementation, this means expounding upon surface-level understanding and working with teachers to continue to improve and master restorative justice in practice. It means being patient and understanding as educators shift a key part of public-school culture and traditional practice. A change in traditional discipline practices can be hard for leaders, but it is also a necessity.

The degree of collaborative learning is a "continuum from completely individual" to "integrated collaborative work" (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 61). According to Fullan and Quinn (2016), "improving whole systems requires that everyone shift their practice" (p. 60). All the fish must eventually take the leap into the unknown for change to occur at a system-level. Logically, as more fish leap and leave fewer and fewer fish behind, the unknown quickly becomes the known and hesitant leapers can follow the example and cultivated expertise and capacity of their colleagues (Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

All change in education must also keep students and teachers at the center of all conversations (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). The goal for change in education must always be maximizing the impact on learning, at least in part (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Restorative justice, at its core, ensures students can continue learning in the classroom by mending relationships and communities and preventing further harm. For teachers, this means approaching classroom disruptions and student misbehavior with the goal of getting to the root of the disruption or misbehavior to fix the root issue and prevent future incidents. For administrators, this change could be used in the effort to improve student outcomes. Students spending more time in the classroom is a very sensical way to maximize a positive impact on student learning.

The shift from individualistic to collaborative is an important part of the change process, but in many ways, it goes hand-in-hand with the change of paradigm needed to institute

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restorative justice (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020). Similarly, restorative justice changing the object of punishment from the individual wrongdoer to the effect on others and the community, is a paradigm shift in that it changes the approach and challenges underlying assumptions about students and discipline. Reculturing can also been seen as a paradigm shift that changes how a system operates and is perceived by followers. The shift from traditional, punitive discipline to a restorative justice discipline model is an example of reculturing. It shifts from focusing on how to punish the individual to focusing on how to mend the community and prevent future harm. This parallel between the Coherence Model and restorative justice makes the cultivation of collaboration paramount to instituting the restorative justice model in a school.

Research Questions

Ashwood High School (AHS), a pseudonym for a high school in the American South, is in the early stages of the implementation of restorative justice. To implement whole-school restorative justice, the process of reculturing is necessary, as the foundations of the culture of change and coherence models is a shift in culture (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016); in the same way, instituting restorative justice requires a "paradigm shift" for educators (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020, p. 525). Thus, it is culture which was examined in this exploratory case study.

The overarching research question for this study was: In what ways does Ashwood High School reflect a culture of change in support of restorative justice?

There are three underlying research questions which were investigated in this study:

1. How has the moral purpose been shared and cultivated at in support of restorative justice?

2. In what ways have relationships been cultivated to support restorative justice?

3. In what ways is the process of coherence making evident in practice?

Methods

This study was an exploratory case study with practice-oriented purpose (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Haverkamp & Young, 2007; Yin, 2018). This exploratory case study studied the *how* and the *why* of restorative justice implementation and reculturing at AHS. Two interviews were conducted with each of the four administrators, a survey was sent over the AHS listserv asking teachers to participate at-will, and a content analysis of the student handbook was conducted. Transcripts of administrator interviews, teacher survey responses, and the student handbook were analyzed through the a priori analysis approach to look for themes that were then put into bins aligned with restorative justice practices and/or the reculturing process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). These data points were compared and analyzed through method triangulation to develop a comprehensive understanding and test validity by examining data from different sources (Carter et al., 2014).

Significance of the Study

Many schools have incorporated restorative justice as a discipline-only policy or to be used with students who are repeat offenders; repeat offenders are more likely to be Black students and/ or students with disabilities (Rosenbaum, 2018; UCLA & ACLU, 2018). In turn, this applies restorative justice practices primarily to Black students and students with disabilities and exasperates discipline inequities (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020). Restorative justice as a stand-alone model or put into practice in conjunction with traditional, punitive discipline practices is better than sticking only to punitive, exclusionary practices, but there is a growing call to incorporate restorative justice as a whole-school model (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020). In addition, reculturing is necessary for a whole-school model but may not be necessary for an add-on program or through partial implementation. The end goal of

instituting restorative justice in K-12 schools and juvenile courts and maybe one day, the larger

criminal justice system, is to change society to better meet the needs of the individual and the

community, and, of course, to reduce harm on a societal level (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020).

This research provided a look into a school instituting a whole school model at the

beginning stages, focusing on changing the culture, or reculturing, to institute restorative justice

for all students. This precise perspective has not been explored so far as the research shows.

There are very few case studies of restorative justice in K-12 schools, and none look at the

cultural changes as a focal point (rather than the specific practices and restorative justice

activities in place). Restorative justice resources and studies are very current in the research. In

many ways, most restorative justice studies are groundbreaking and fill a hole in the research.

This study will help to fill that gap in the existing research. The understanding of how a school is

reculturing to support restorative justice and how that process can be improved upon through

recommendations and calls for further research will benefit other schools in terms of planning for

and/ or improving upon their own implementation of whole-school restorative justice.

Furthermore, the impact of reducing exclusionary practices will benefit students across the

country, and ideally, lead to a societal shift away from punitive practices that disproportionately

affect minority students.

Definitions of Terms

Coherence - Shared depth and understanding exemplified by change leaders who instill

purpose (moral purpose) and ensure clarity and a culture of collaboration (Fullan, 2001; Fullan &

Quinn, 2016)

Culture of Change - a culture wherein a leader fosters leadership in others, making

leaders of followers and making herself dispensable; a culture in which a leader and her

followers seek to enact positive change in an organization for the better of the people within and

around that organization (employees and customers, or teachers and students; Fullan, 2001)

Cultural Deficit Theory - a model that claims the cultures of people of color are cultures

of poverty and that these deficit cultures are the reason for inequality and inequity in public

school outcomes; blames genetic differences for these perceived deficits (Persell, 1981)

Cultural Deprivation Theory – a model that acknowledges all the same perceived deficits

in Cultural Deficit Theory but blames the environment for these perceived deficits (Persell,

1981)

Cultural Difference Model - a model that views the cultures of minorities as valid,

different cultures from the majority/ White-dominated culture; it posits these cultures as

competing with majority culture rather than coexisting to support the needs of all (Persell, 1981)

Exclusion (from the classroom/ school) - any form of punishment that removes a student

from the classroom (Maynard & Weinstein, 2020; Morris & Perry, 2016)

Expulsion - a punishment that removes a student from the school/ unenrolls them

completely (Balfanz et al., 2015; Maynard & Weinstein, 2020)

Moral Purpose - the "why"/"North Star" behind a cultural change that is cultivated by

intelligent, thoughtful leaders to create a central goal and a central pathway to change; the ends

and the means (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016)

Punitive punishment - a punishment that focuses on punishing the wrong-doer for

infractions (rather than helping the wrong-doer or the victim; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020;

O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020).

Out-of-school suspension - exclusionary punishment that removes students from the classroom for rules violation and sends them home for a specified amount of time (Balfanz et al., 2015; Maynard & Weinstein, 2020)

Reculturing - transforming the culture of a school by instilling and cultivating moral purpose of faculty and community, building strong positive relationships as the cornerstone of the change process, and coherence making (Fullan & Quinn, 2016)

Relationship building - the process that emotional intelligent leaders constantly engage in with followers to navigate opposition and ensure followers are mobilized to work together towards the common goal (Fullan, 2001)

Restorative justice/ restorative justice practices - an approach to conflict that focuses on the mitigation of harm by finding the cause of the conflict, focuses on relationships between individuals and within a larger community, and emphasizes accountability for harm to the individual and the community (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020)

School-to-prison pipeline - phenomenon in which students of color and students in poverty become incarcerated in part due to harsh school discipline policies and police presence in K-12 schools across the United States (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020)

School-prison nexus - rejects that schools are the beginning of a one-directional pipeline to prison but accepts that schools are a part of a network of institutions, policies, and practices that send Black young people to prison at disproportionate rates (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020)

Traditional discipline practices - refers to punitive punishment models that regularly exclude children from the classroom as a form of punishment; are often coupled with Zero Tolerance Policies (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Maynard & Weinstein, 2020)

Zero Tolerance Policy - a strict ban of behaviors, items, or substances that schools deem unacceptable and undesirable; coupled with strict, harsh punishment for violations of these polices such as suspension or expulsion (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020)

Chapter Summary

Discipline inequities disproportionately impact Black male students across the United States (NCES, 2019; UCLA & ACLU, 2018). These inequities lead to an increased likeliness that students will go to prison, supporting the school-prison nexus (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020; Rosenbaum, 2018). Traditionally, the school-prison nexus has been referred to as the school-to-prison pipeline, but the use of the term school-prison nexus rejects the notion that this relationship between schools and prisons are a unidirectional pipeline and instead views schools and prisons as a part of a same system that sends Black young people to prison at disproportionate rates (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020).

This dissertation study was an exploratory case study with practice-oriented purpose, examining a school in the early stages of restorative justice implementation and, as a part of that implementation, Fullan's reculturing process to change the culture of the school to a restorative culture (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Haverkamp & Young, 2007; Yin, 2018). Data from administrator interviews, a teacher survey, and a content analysis of the student handbook were triangulated to develop a comprehensive understanding and test validity by examining data from different sources (Carter et al., 2014).

This study was both timely and significant in its potential to help schools understand the reculturing process and restorative justice implementation as these processes go together and to learn how to overcome obstacles through research recommendations for improvement and further implementation. Further, this study has the potential to help students across the country

avoid school exclusion and help to disrupt the school-prison nexus in the United States. At the completion of this study, data from all the sources supported the finding that the case school may be in the early stages of becoming a culture of change and of the reculturing process. However, change is a complex, multi-faceted process. It is not a destination at which one arrives; similarly, coherence is complex and hard to get right. Teacher turnover and competing district, state, and federal initiatives and mandates make this already-difficult process more difficult. There is room for improvement and progress in all the areas studied, particularly in the area of coherence. Some of this complexity can be self-inflicted and will be explored in the final chapters of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The need for restorative justice practices in K-12 schools across the United States is two-fold: the failures of the traditional, punitive discipline practices (Maynard & Weinstein, 2020) and the successes of restorative practices (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020), both historically and in current application in K-12 schools across the country. Restorative justice is not a new philosophy, even if the branding and the use seems very modern compared to the traditional way of doing discipline. Cultures that value repairing the harm and preventing future harm for the good of the community exist in indigenous cultures around the world, most notably, indigenous peoples of the Americas and New Zealand (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020; Sandwick et al., 2019). The tenets of punitive discipline policies do not repair the harm, but they do seek to punish and exclude the offender. Zero tolerance policies, exclusion from the learning environment, and the resulting school-prison nexus continue to plague public schools across the nation, harming Black students and students with disabilities the most egregiously (NCES, 2019; O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020; UCLA & ACLU, 2018). The effectiveness of restorative justice extends beyond the historical roots into modern use in New Zealand, Australia, Oakland, and New York City, among others (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). This review of related literature will make the case for restorative justice and for this study.

What is Restorative Justice?

A WestEd report claimed that "neither a clear definition nor a widely accepted model" of restorative justice was evident in existing restorative justice research (Hurley et al., 2015, p. 2).

This lack of clarity can be seen in action as teachers, schools, and districts use and define restorative practices differently. In the time since this report was published, a cohesive, concise understanding of the aims of restorative justice can be found as one looks through the literature on the subject, namely: to repair and mitigate harm. There are many different techniques and practices, both in the classroom and at the whole school level, that can be employed to meet that aim. Restorative justice is an approach to conflict that focuses on the mitigation of harm by finding the cause of the conflict, focuses on relationships between individuals and within a larger community, and emphasizes accountability for harm to the individual and the community (Sandwick et al., 2019).

The common practices of restorative justice include victim-offender mediation conferences, group conferences (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020), "conflict-resolution circles, community-building circles, decision-making circles, democratic governance circles, celebration circles, and grief circles" (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020, p. 523), and peacemaking circles (Knight & Wadhwa, 2014). Restorative justice in schools involves listening to students, giving students a voice, building a culture of mutual respect, and building strong relationships with students, families, and communities (Maynard & Weinstein, 2020). For all of this to happen, school culture must shift to embrace such an overhaul of the current disciplinary system. Restorative justice is not simply a program that can be tacked on to existing policies; restorative justice is a "paradigm shift" that includes un-learning punitive discipline policies, addressing the "underlying structures, practices, and policies" that harm students, and rethinking disciplinary practices and classroom practices (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020, p. 525).

Table 1 shows a breakdown of the differences between restorative justice and punitive punishment. As noted by O'Brien and Nygreen (2020), the shift is a major shift in paradigms.

The goal of punitive punishment is to change the individual (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020); the goal of restorative justice is to change society and communities as the needs of the individual and the community changes (Maynard & Weinstein, 2020; O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020). Rather than emphasizing that the individual changes to better fit the institution, restorative justice seeks to change the community to better meet the needs of the individual (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020; Sandwick et al., 2019).

Table 1

Conflicting Paradigms

	Restorative Paradigm	**Punitive Paradigm**
Unit of Analysis	Community	Individual
Short-Term Goal	Healing	Punishment
Long-Term Goal	Social Change	Individual Change
Methods	Democracy	Coercion
Relationships	Egalitarian	Hierarchal

Note. Adapted from O'Brien, D., & Nygreen, K. (2020). Advancing restorative justice in the context of racial neoliberalism: Engaging contradictions to build humanizing spaces. *Equity & Excellent in Education*, *53*(4), 519-531. http://doi.org/10.1080?10665684.2020.17911768

History of Restorative Justice in Indigenous Cultures

The rise in restorative justice in educational discourse in the United States may be recent (as is most of the United States-based literature), but the roots are generally attributed to various indigenous cultures that are structured in non-hierarchal ways (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020). Most notably, indigenous peoples of the South Pacific and the Americas are credited with the practices that led to modern restorative justice practices (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020; Sandwick et al., 2019).

The cultures credited with the roots of restorative justice approached conflict from the community standpoint, rather than the individualistic (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). In

particular, conflict was viewed through the lens of the harm down rather than by the act itself (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). This approach is in direct conflict with the criminal justice system in the United States in many ways (O'Brien & Nygeen, 2020); most obviously, when one looks at victimless crimes, what harm is done to the community that demands punishment? Restorative justice practices also view conflict and crime as an expression of unmet needs (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020). Rather than judging what is right and what is wrong, these indigenous communities see "wrongdoing as a misbehavior which requires teaching or an illness which requires healing" (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020, p. 523). How can the community provide individuals with what they need to repair harm and mitigate further harm? How can the community teach individuals to mitigate further harm? These cultures also focus on accountability for the harm an individual caused, but that harm is not healed by exclusionary practices (in this case, exclusion from the community by means of prison; Fronius et al., 2019). Central to restorative justice is conflict circles and community circles that evolved from talking circles, which many indigenous cultures have "practiced for millennia" (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020, p. 523).

Further, these indigenous communities seek to repair the harm inflicted upon victims, which punitive punishment systems do not (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020). The indigenous approach to conflict is considered more humane and just than the current discipline model (Fronius et al., 2019; Sandwick et al., 2019). As Sandwick et al. (2019) explained:

Influenced by practices of indigenous peoples in the Americas and New Zealand, [restorative justice] is an approach to conflict that mitigates harm; attending to attending to root causes of conflict; and, fostering relationships, empathetic dialogue, and community accountability. As the U.S. grapples with the devastating racialized

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consequences of mass incarceration, the call for school-based [restorative justice] is one

part of a broader movement, with growing numbers of [restorative justice] initiatives in

community settings and the criminal legal system. (p. 3)

In the United States, the social and political climates, the growing social awareness of the

racialization of the criminal justice systems, and the part that schools play in these climates and

systems have brought restorative justice practices to the forefront of educational discourse

(Fronius et al., 2019; O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020). While countries like Australia and New

Zealand have been implementing restorative justice in schools and the juvenile court system

since the mid-1990s (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Fronius et al., 2019), this phenomenon has

very recently moved out of niche practice in the United States to broader application.

How Restorative Justice Works in K-12 Schools

There is an argument to be made for the use of restorative justice practices in K-12

school, but what does this look like in practice? Several different philosophical beliefs must

support the implementation of restorative justice in schools. Faculty and staff (followers) of a

school must see discipline as a means to reduce and mitigate harm, and there must be a

commitment to building community, which will most likely involve a time commitment from

teachers, counselors, and administrators to learn and continue to learn how to best implement

restorative justice and look at the needs of the community rather than the individual (Darling-

Hammond et al., 2020). A commitment to peace, peacemaking, harm reduction, and harm

mitigation is paramount to restorative justice (Claassen & Claassen, 2008; Maynard &

Weinstein, 2020). One of the basic tenets of restorative justice in practice is the use of various

kinds of circles. Circles here means groups of people standing or sitting together in a circle or

circular formation. These circles derive from circles used by indigenous peoples as a way to deal

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with conflict, make decisions, build community, celebrate, and grieve (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020).

There are two different approaches to restorative justice use in K-12 schools: whole school implementation and stand-alone or add-on programs (Hurley et al., 2015; O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020). The whole school model involves restorative justice as part of a school's culture, a "way of being" that applies to the culture and climate across the school or across the whole community, whereas the stand-alone model views restorative justice as a stand-alone, skill-based approach that can be used as an "add-on program" applied to individual discipline issues and situations (Hurley et al., 2015, p. 3).

Many schools use restorative justice as a stand-alone or add-on program used alongside other disciplinary approaches for specific students who have frequent disciplinary issues (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020), rather than focusing on a whole-school approach to climate and culture of a school (Hurley et al., 2015). This add-on approach is often applied in place of suspension or expulsion by engaging in the "harm repair circle," which helps students understand the true extent of the harm their behavior causes before taking steps to "repair the harm" and create a plan to ensure they do continue this cycle of harm (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020, p. 297). A whole school approach instead provides training for faculty and staff to ensure they are knowledgeable on restorative justice practices and their applications in the classroom (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Both whole school and stand-alone/ add-on models are typically part of school-wide goals or initiatives to promote Social Emotional Learning and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (Center on PBIS, 2022). PBIS is a tiered framework that supports the behavioral, academic, social, emotional, and mental health of students through evidence-backed practices and resources (Center on PBIS, 2022). Social Emotional Learning refers specifically to

a process used to develop self-awareness, self-control, and interpersonal skills of students, viewing these processes at necessary for students to succeed at school, work, and life (Committee for Children, 2023). In this study, I explored the whole school implementation of restorative justice.

The use of restorative circles is an important component of restorative justice and is often seen in schools implementing restorative justice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Knight & Wadhwa, 2014; Maynard & Weinstein, 2020; O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020). The circles used in schools are adapted, once again, from circles used by indigenous peoples credited with the original creation of practices that led to modern restorative justice practices.

Types of Circles in K-12 Schools

When confronted with conflict of any sort, a solution can typically be found by using one of the many kinds of circles utilized in the restorative justice model. According to Maynard and Weinstein (2020), talking is one of the most important components of restorative justice; this practice is modeled after the talking circles of indigenous peoples (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020). All circles can fall under the broad category of peacemaking circles (Knight & Wadhwa, 2014). In many cases, the practices of the peacemaking circles are heavily influenced by rituals from their indigenous roots (Knight & Wadhwa, 2014). For example, there is often a keeper and a talking piece. The keeper serves as the circle facilitator and is responsible for handing a talking piece to denote who is allowed to speak at a specific time (Knight & Wadhwa, 2014). The talking piece can be a stone, a shell, or any small item or token (Knight & Wadhwa, 2014), and since only the possessor of the talking piece is allowed to talk, the conversation remains a conversation rather than a yelling match or an argument. These elements are in place to ensure

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everyone has a voice and that the peacemaking circle is both peaceful and fulfills its purpose (to heal, mediate, build community, make decisions, celebrate, grieve, etc.).

Mediations or circles give students a voice in a way that punitive punishment does not. A circle is a conversation rather than a sentencing. Maynard and Weinstein (2020) made a pneumonic device to remember the steps that should be taken for an "effective mediation" to take place (p. 18). This process is referred to as the 5 Rs. The 5 Rs highlight the core values of restorative justice: respect, relationships, responsibility, repairing harm, and reintegrating (Maynard & Weinstein, 2020). The first step, respect, is a necessity for any kind of circle to take place: all parties involved must respect each other (Maynard & Weinstein, 2020). The second step, relationships, allows students "to tell their side of the story" so that everyone can understand each other's perspectives, allowing relationships to be grow and flourish through commonalities (Maynard & Weinstein, 2020, p. 18). The third R is responsibility; put simply, any parties involved in wrongdoing or harmful behavior must take responsibility for their action and be a part of deciding upon a consequence, solution, and future deterrent to further harm (Maynard & Weinstein, 2020). The fourth R, repairing the harm, can involve letter writing to the victim of the wrongdoing or between two feuding parties, an agreement of some sort, or any number of positive or constructive ways to repair the harm done to individuals and the community (which is often the classroom in schools). The final R, reintegrating, involves making a plan to return students to their normal routine or reintegrating them back into their community (Maynard & Weinstein, 2020).

Victim-Offender Mediation

The most commonly practiced circle aligned with restorative justice is the victim-offender mediation, healing circles, or peer mediation circles (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020;

Knight & Wadhwa, 2014; Maynard & Weinstein, 2020; O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020). If two

students have argued or physically fought, this works like a mediation in which an administrator,

teacher, or counselor mediates to help students explore what feelings and events led to the fight

and work toward remediation, healing, and reintegration.

There are different ways in which involved parties and a mediator can approach a

conflict. Claassen and Claaseen (2014) present different options, with different variables

representing a person involved in the conflict and an outside party. One person or group of

people "has the ability to control the situation or make a decision" that will affect both people

involved in the conflict (pp. 76-77). In Option 1, one person has that control to make a decision

affecting both people. This could be a situation where a small child wants something they cannot

have and a parent is not allowing it, or it could be "a firefighter clearing a building" (Claassen &

Claassen, 2014, p. 76). For whatever reason one person holds the authority in the situation. In

Option 2, an outside party not directly involved in the conflict holds the power. This person

could be a judge or jury deciding the fate of a defendant, "an arbitrator making the decision for

both parties," or an administrator making a decision involving two students involved in a conflict

(Claassen & Claassen, 2014, p. 77).

According to Claassen and Claassen (2014), Option 3 is one of the ideal options under

restorative justice. Option 3 involves two parties involved in the conflict and a mediator, but the

mediator is there simply to mediate rather than to make any decisions (Claassen & Claassen,

2014). A teacher mediating a peer mediation circle after an argument broke out in class or a

student mediator helping two students who had a public falling out in the hallway are both

examples of this. Option 4 does not include an outside mediator, which leaves the decision or

action taken up to the two parties involved in the conflict (Claassen & Claassen, 2014). It is

important to note that this "does not mean that their power was equal" because two people never have the same power (Claassen & Claassen, 2014, p. 79). It simply means that two people involved in a conflict can remedy harm in a safe setting involving cooperation from both sides (Claassen & Claassen, 2014). For the purposes of restorative justice, Options 1 and 2 should only be used if a student has refused to use Options 3 or 4 to make peace, or when the state or some outside agency demands a specific course of action due to the nature of the infraction (Claassen & Claassen, 2014).

One common resolution to a conflict between two parties in a school is an agreement by the two parties to commit to a peace or reform approach in future interactions. Letter writing is also a common way to apologize for harm done to another person or sometimes, to a community (Maynard & Weinstein, 2020; Weaver & Swank, 2020). A re-entry conference meeting is also part of the cycle as a plan for the offender(s) to reenter their normal routine and schedule is decided and put into place (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2016).

Healing circles are consistent with several other healing frameworks, including Ginwright's (2015) healing justice framework, feminist pedagogies, and other frameworks that "offer embodied practices for community healing from the trauma of socially toxic and structurally oppressive conditions" (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020, p. 524). All these frameworks hold as truth the belief that healing is "deeply personal and interpersonal work" and for healing to be sustainable, society must change to ensure wellness and wholeness are possible for all peoples (Ginwright, 2015; O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020, p. 524). These frameworks and their shared beliefs once again reiterate that the end goal of restorative justice is a change in society to embrace the tenets at the societal level.

Community Circles

Community circles fall under the heading of a talking circle (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Knight & Wadhwa, 2014). The circles can be formal or informal discussions between members of a given community (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Knight & Wadhwa, 2014). A community can be a classroom, a grade level, or a school community in terms of usage in K-12 schools (Maynard & Weinstein, 2020). Community circles can be used to check-in on members of the community or to build community (Knight & Wadhwa, 2014). Community circles are usually pre-emptive and not a response to conflict, and they are used to "deepen relationships and trust" between faculty, staff, and students (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020, p. 296). For example, a community circle could be used as a group of students approach the end of a class and the timeframe in which standardized tests are given to students. This circle could be used to check-in on the mental health of students and the possible anxiety levels ahead of this testing event to help build community through these shared experiences and emotions. Such a community circle could also have the effect of lessening anxiety levels and attending to the mental health needs of students prior to testing. A community circle could be planned at different intervals throughout the school year to informally gauge the social-emotional wellbeing of students and the greater school community. Feelings and experiences shared through this type of circle could serve as informal data for administrators and teachers to better tend to the needs of their students and school communities.

Democratic Governance Circle

In modern usage, a democratic governance circle can also be called a decision-making circle (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020). This type of circle allows the community to help make a decision (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020). Like all the other groups, a community can be a classroom,

a school, or the school, parents, and members of the larger city or county community (Maynard & Weinstein, 2020). A democratic governance circle, or a decision-making circle, values the input of all community members and listens to the perspective of those community members who want to talk or share their opinions; the goal is to meet the needs of all the members of the community (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020). Student advisory committees, parent/family advisory committees, and teacher advisor committees are an in-practice example of this type of circle, if instituted in such a way that the feedback shared through those committees is then used to make decisions about a school or division. These committees break the whole community into groups, but if executed to elicit feedback from all community members to make a community decision about school policies, it operates as a democratic governance circle. This could be used when making decisions about school calendars, dress code policies, bell schedules, and a variety of other school practices and/ or policies.

Celebration and Grief Circles

Celebration and grief circles are community-building in nature, but they are also a response to some stimuli, depending on the type of circle taking place. A celebration circle can occur to honor or recognize important members or moments in the community, or it can simply celebrate the health and well-being of the community (Oakland Unified School District, n.d.-a). There are also many reasons and events that can lead a community to grieve together and require support together, which would make a grief circle appropriate. School violence and community violence, student suicides, teacher deaths, prominent community members or leader deaths, health issues or dire diagnoses of community member(s), and a housefire or school fire are all examples of events that would warrant a grief circle.

Other Types of Circles

There are many other circles used in restorative justice, many of which are captured in Table 2. The tiers imply how thoroughly restorative justice is instituted as a whole-school approach, and they will be further explored later in this chapter (Oakland Unified School District, n.d.-a; Oakland Unified School District Restorative Justice Team, 2020). Tier 1 circles are a place for schools to begin the process of using restorative justice as an alternative to punitive disciplinary approaches and the change process of reculturing. According to the Oakland City School District Restorative Justice Team (2020), it is best to lay the foundation of restorative justice and to introduce circles before using them to deal with discipline (Tier 2) or for re-entry after returning from a long absence, incarceration, or exclusion (suspension or expulsion). Tier 3 is a destination for schools to head toward, a destination wherein circles are an integral, valued part of the school culture at every level. Table 2 represents an overview of the tiered system of circles and related purposes.

Table 2

Types of Circles by Tier

Tier	Type of Circle	Purpose
1	Community Building Circles	Teach empathy and self-reflection Create a sense of belonging through sharing stories and active listening Equity Build/strengthen relationships, connections.
	Learning/ Curriculum Circles	Use process to share/ teach one another Enhance learning by providing interactive forum for all students to participate in learning process Provide a structure and focus for easily distracted students
	Talking/Issues Circles	Visit a particular topic, reoccurring issues Opportunity to hear different perspectives Not trying to get to agreement, but rather, creating a venue for different voices to be heard
	Celebration Circles	Honor, recognize important moments in the community A form of community building Bring attention to the health of the community
	Healing Circles	Called to support a group (health issues, loss, etc.) Support and share pain
	Decision Making Circles	Group planning—perhaps smaller groups make initial proposals to bring forward to larger group
2	Community Conference/Family Group Conference	Bring all affected parties (parents/guardians/community member) together to discuss serious conflict/harm and provide opportunity for healing
	Harm/Conflict Circles	Bring all affected parties together to discuss conflict/ harm and figure out what needs to happen to move forward in a good way
3	Support Circles	Circles of support and accountability Gather around one person to support long term change
	Healing Circles	Called to support one person (health issues, loss, etc.) Support and share pain
	Re-entry/Welcome Circle	Restorative re-integration from incarceration, expulsion, or suspension to school in a caring way that identifies supports for student so that they can be successful at school and beyond

Note. Adapted with permission from Oakland Unified School District. (n.d.-a). *Types of circles by tier* [PDF file]. Family, Schools, & Community Partnerships Department of Restorative Justice. http://fixschooldiscipline.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/OUSD-Types-of-Circles-by-Tier.2015531.pdf

The use of circles for many different purposes is foundational to restorative justice implementation. These conversations can be courageous and difficult for all involved parties, but they are also necessary to repair and mitigate harm. Circles are necessary to institute restorative justice, and they are perhaps one of the most recognizable components of restorative justice. Circles can be used in isolation in some cases. Teachers can create a restorative environment in their classroom without a whole school model. And while a little restorative justice is certainly better than no restorative justice, the whole-school model has a more positive effect on students, schools and communities (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020). However, a whole-school model must include classroom practices from all teachers for restorative justice to be implemented with fidelity, and inclusion of practices from the classroom to the hallways to the principal's office calls for a change in the culture of a school for restorative justice to permeate the practices of the entire school.

Punitive Discipline Practices

Two main historical events led to punitive discipline practices and exclusionary school practices in public schools: child labor laws and integration of schools (Warnick & Scribner, 2020). Child labor laws moved working-class and impoverished children from factories and workhouses into public schools (Warnick & Scribner, 2020). This led to pushing students into different educational tracts and removing rigor and opportunity in the tracts that working-class and impoverished students were pushed into, focusing on social promotion based on age rather than ability (Warnick & Scribner, 2020). Deficit thinking and theories that blame genetics and/or the environment for perceived deficits in minority cultures supported this practice (Persell,

1981; Warnick & Scribner, 2020). Through these practices, misbehavior was then attributed to social class and family background, rather than focusing on any possible solution.

From here, the constitutional rights of children were stripped away in the 1950s as the juvenile courts worked in tandem with public schools to take care of wayward children by allowing judges to imprison children without a trial, hold them indefinitely without being charging them with a crime, and then forcing children to work with welfare offices and parole officers (Office of the Executive Secretary, Supreme Court of Virginia, 2020; Warnick & Scribner, 2020). Juvenile and domestic relationship courts continue to operate in the United States without a jury; a judge decides the guilt and punishment of children without the constitutional protections offered to adult defendants (Office of the Executive Secretary, Supreme Court of Virginia, 2020). This close relationship between the courts, the police, and public schools led to the rise of stationing police officers in public schools in the form of school resource officers (Warnick & Scribner, 2020). The historical context and continued influence of these relationships in public schools makes the argument that the school-to-prison relationship is a nexus rather than a pipeline much clearer (Meiners & Reyes, 2008; O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020). For example, a school administrator could accuse a student of a crime, have a school resource officer arrest that student, and then the guilt and sentencing of a child is decided by a single judge, rather than by a jury of their peers. In this example, the school supports the prison system in the United States without awarding children the same constitutional rights as adults.

The second major historical event that led directly to exclusionary practices was the racial integration of schools in the 1960s (Warnick & Scribner, 2020). The presence of police officers in schools to deal with working-class and poor White children was exasperated by the integration of schools (Warnick & Scribner, 2020). School resource officers are untrained in

child development and appropriate responses to child misbehavior; thus, physically restraining, handcuffing, and physically harming/ fighting students is commonplace for police officers in dealing with student behavior (Warnick & Scribner, 2020). As Black children integrated predominantly White schools, this physicality was increased as the view of Black children as "uneducable" broke down trust between Black communities, children, and parent and White teachers (Warnick & Scribner, 2020, p. 101). This lack of trust and increased suspicion of teachers and administrators led to mass exclusion of Black children as suspensions and expulsions skyrocketed across the country (Warnick & Scriber, 2020). Little has changed over time as Black children continue to bear the brunt of these harsh policies, being removed from the classroom for transgressions that do not remove White children from the classroom (NCES, 2019; UCLA & ACLU, 2018).

Black male students, as evidence in Figure 5, encounter exclusionary discipline practices more than any other group identified in this figure. As police officer presence in public schools continues to be commonplace, issues that may once have been viewed as youthful disruptions are now being treated as "criminal behavior, warranting arrest and criminal record" (Skiba et al., 2002, p. 337). These inequities in school discipline practices have been exasperated by the implementation of zero tolerance policies implemented in public schools across the United States at the end of twentieth century. O'Brien and Nygreen (2020) noted, "Yet, while the school-prison nexus has exploded in recent years, so too have the voices of critique and growing public outcry over the use of exclusionary discipline and the racial discipline gap" (p. 523). One response to that outcry is instituting restorative justice programs in K-12 schools across the country. Figure 5 shows the percentage of students who were excluded through out-of-school suspensions across the United States in the 2013-2014 school year.

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Figure 5

Exclusion by Race, Ethnicity, and Sex Due to Out-of-School Suspension
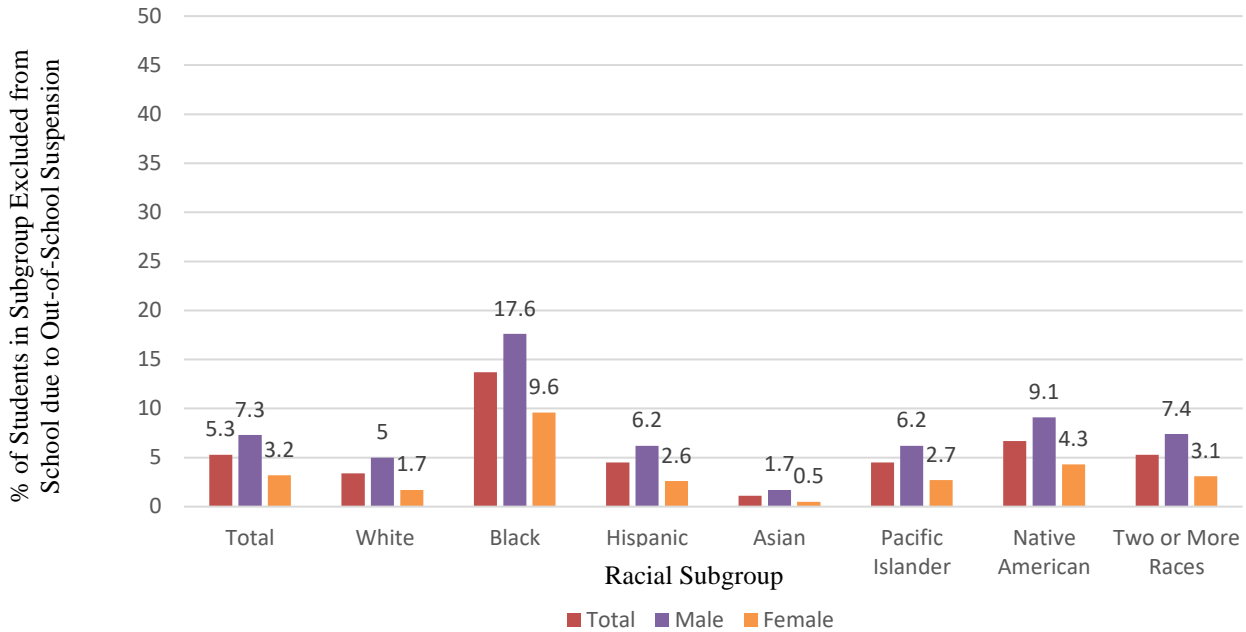
Note. Adapted from National Center for Education Statistics. (2019, February). *Indicator 15: Retention, suspension, and expulsion.* Institute of Educational Sciences. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/raceindicators/indicator_RDA.asp

Zero Tolerance Policies

One of the reasons restorative justice practices have become popular in public education is the growing negative perception of zero tolerance policies, made popular in the 1980s and 1990s (Fronius et al., 2019). Zero tolerance policies were initially put in place to forbid weapons on school grounds, but these policies have since grown to include drugs, violence, and various forms of misbehavior on school campuses across the country (Knight & Wadhwa, 2014). A zero tolerance policy does not allow these items or behaviors deemed as harmful and worthy of this type of policy, regardless of circumstance. A student who brings a small, paring knife to school to cut an apple for lunch is just as guilty as a student who brings an assault rifle to school with

the intent to murder his classmates under these types of policies. In short, transgressions that could be dealt with non-exclusionary practices are instead met with harsh punishments that deprive students of education (Fronius et al., 2019).

This win-lose approach does not incentivize students to change their behavior in the future, rather it encourages them to repeat the same behavior in an effort to hold some power over a system that does not uplift student voice or build community in a school (Bluestein, 2001). All schools are either conflict negative or conflict positive spaces (D. W. Johnson & Johnson, 1995). Either inevitable conflict can be a chance to meet unmet needs and increase teaching and learning or, conflict is viewed as always destructive and without value (D. W. Johnson & Johnson, 1995). Zero tolerance policies position transgressions and conflicts as always negative and without value (D. W. Johnson & Johnson, 1995).

Exclusion

These policies remove children from the classrooms through in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion, which removes children from the learning process and the very business of schools, namely educating young people (Maynard & Weinstein, 2020). Zero tolerance policies are not the only practices that remove students from classrooms, but they are the most culpable in terms of always resorting to exclusion for various transgressions (Bluestein, 2001; D.W. Johnson & Johnson, 1995).

Research shows that suspension alone accounts for 20% of the achievement gap between Black and White students (Darling-Hammond, 2020; Fronius et al., 2019). Students who are suspended even once are twice as likely to drop out (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Fronius et al., 2019); less likely to graduate by 44% (Darling-Hammond at al., 2020); twice as likely to be arrested (Fronius et al., 2019); about half as likely (49%) to attend college or university (Darling-

Hammond et al., 2020); and were significantly more likely to be retained or held back a grade (Fronius et al., 2019) when compared to students who were never suspended. All these impacts have lifelong effects on people. As stated earlier, exclusion by suspension and expulsion, shapes the very lives of young people, and the children most negatively impacted are Black children and children with disabilities (NCES, 2019; O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020; UCLA & ACLU, 2018).

School-Prison Nexus

As previously stated, the school-prison nexus is often used as a more fitting term to describe the relationship between schools and prisons, referred to as the school-to-prison pipeline (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020). Schools and prisons are two parts of a large system and number of institutions that send young Black men to prison are much higher rates than any other sex and race (Meiners & Reyes, 2008). As noted earlier, students who are suspended just once are twice as likely to drop out and not receive a high school diploma (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020), which in turns put them at a higher risk of incarceration (Meiners & Reyes, 2008).

Restorative justice is not a solution in and of itself to the school-prison nexus. The reasons this relationship and nexus point exist extends beyond discipline inequities in K-12 schools (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020). Videos of young Black children being arrested and escorted off school grounds have pulled discipline to the forefront of the school-prison nexus discussion (Zaveri, 2020); however, O'Brien and Nygreen (2020) list many other, equally culpable parts of the school-prison nexus:

> Less visible but equally important arms of the school-prison nexus are curriculum, instruction, assessment practices, school funding, and educational policy, particularly as these have been transformed by two decades of neoliberal reforms. Numerous critical scholars have documented how the imposition of neoliberal reforms has led to a

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narrowing of curriculum, more test-centered pedagogy, more test-centered assessment,

more over-worked and vulnerable educators and diminishing time and space available for

culturally-sustaining, relational, community-building, and enrichment practices. (p. 522)

Neoliberal refers to the reigning social paradigm of the last four to five decades (Lipman, 2011).

Neoliberalism is a strategy to manage capitalism by promoting self-interest, increasing more

revenue streams for people already in power, privatizing public goods and services, and cutting

labor costs and salaries (Lipman, 2011). The argument for these solutions is the age-old belief

that private, competitive markets are more efficient, effective and provide better quality goods

and services than anything public (Lipman, 2011).

The important takeaway here is this: restorative justice is part of the solution to disrupting

the school-prison nexus, a remedy but not a cure. Critical to this work is addressing the discipline

inequities in K-12 schools across the United States in order to disrupt at least part of this nexus,

but it is worth noting that restorative justice is not a cure on its own.

Restorative Justice in Practice

Restorative justice and peaceful conflict resolution sound appealing. Restorative justice

sounds equitable and fairer to students typically harmed the most by punitive school practices.

But is it effective? And how do we measure effectiveness? Many researchers have measured the

effects of restorative justice by looking at impacts on student misbehavior and school discipline,

bullying, racial disparities in discipline, attendance and absenteeism, school climate and safety,

and academic outcomes (Acosta et al., 2019; Anyon et al., 2016; Armour, 2014; Augustine et al.,

2018; Baker, 2009; Davis, 2014; Gonzalez, 2015; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Sumner et al.,

2010). The outcomes were mixed, with an overall positive impact on these areas following some

level of restorative justice implementation.

School Discipline

Empirical studies and data support the findings that restorative justice led to a decrease in exclusionary discipline and in student misbehavior. Both measures are important since many restorative justice programs are "suspension diverse programs" which would naturally lead to less exclusionary discipline as a result of implementation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020, p. 298). In a randomized controlled trial conducted by Augustine et al. (2018), 44 Pittsburgh schools were included in a study that applied a "treatment" of restorative justice training to 22 schools, chosen randomly. The researchers found a 16% reduction in days lost due to exclusionary discipline when restorative justice training was provided to teachers, which was a statistically significant finding ($p < .05$).

Other research studies also show positive outcomes after restorative justice is used in schools. One Texas middle school saw a 65% drop in suspensions for seventh graders after the implementation of restorative justice (Armour, 2014). In Denver, schools that implemented the use of restorative circles showed a 44% drop in out-of-school suspensions in the 3 years following the implementation of restorative justice (Baker, 2009). Gonzalez (2015) noted a decrease in suspensions from 10.6% to 5.6% in Denver Public Schools during restorative justice implementation from the 2006-2007 school year to the 2012-2013 school year. Black students showed the largest decrease from 17.6% to 10.4%, following by Latino/ Hispanic students from 10.2% to 4.7% (Gonzalez, 2015).

Similarly, a middle school in Oakland showed an 87% decrease in suspensions in the 3 years following restorative justice implementation, and the school completely eliminated expulsions (Sumner et al., 2010). Davis (2014) also looked at Oakland schools, noting a 74% decrease in suspensions and a 77% decrease in disciplinary referrals for violence in the 2 years

after the study conducted by Sumner et al. (2010). Lewis (2009) found a 52% decrease in acts of violence and serious incidents in a high school in Philadelphia. The 52% decrease was followed by an additional drop of 40% in the following school year (Lewis, 2009). Riestenburg (2003) reports a decrease of 57% for discipline referrals, a 35% decrease of in-school-suspensions, a 77% decrease in out-of-school suspensions, and only a single expulsion in an elementary school that offered intensive training in restorative justice practices and follow-up for faculty and staff. Another elementary school had a decrease of 55% in office referrals (Goldys, 2016).

Bullying

The effects of restorative justice on bullying were a little less clear as the effect depended on how much restorative justice was being used in the school as a determining factor on success (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Acosta et al. (2019) conducted a randomized controlled trial that provided the treatment of restorative justice training to seven middle schools in Maine and did not provide the treatment/ training to six middle schools in Maine. Acosta et al. (2019) found that there were some issues with the fidelity of restorative justice. Student surveys showed that some schools used restorative justice less and some used restorative justice more (Acosta et al., 2019). Overall, the students in schools receiving restorative justice training did not report a statistically significant drop in bullying (Acosta et al., 2019). Students who reported that their teachers used more restorative justice did experience a statistically significant drop in physical bullying ($p < 0.1$) and cyber bullying ($p < .001$). Based on the results of student surveys, Henson-Nash (2015) reported a drop in bullying after restorative justice was implemented but the drop was not statistically significant. Similarly, Augustine et al. (2018) reported a small drop in bullying across forty-four Pittsburgh K-12 schools ($p > .1$), and Armour (2014) found an increase in bullying after the implementation of restorative justice. Logically, the emphasis on

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relationship-building between students that goes along with restorative justice *should* lead to less bullying (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020), but as noted, the results are unclear empirically.

Outcomes of Restorative Justice on Racial Disparities in Discipline

Gregory et al. (2016) looked at two large, diverse high schools who implemented the SaferSanerSchools program from the International Institute of Restorative Practices. Teachers who used restorative justice frequently issued less referrals overall and frequent use of restorative justice *might* have led to reducing the racial discipline gap (Gregory et al., 2016). The student survey results used for these findings also showed that teachers they reported as highly affective had less of a discipline gap amongst racial lines (Gregory et al., 2016). Gregory et al. (2018) reported the gap between Black and White discipline was cut almost in half, from 9% to 5%, after the district implemented restorative justice throughout the district. Jain et al. (2014) looked at Oakland schools using different levels of restorative justice: control (none), emerging (early phases of implementation), developing (using restorative justice across the school but not in all interactions), and thriving (using restorative justice in every aspect of school). No schools received the thriving designation (Jain et al., 2014). Emerging and control schools saw the discipline gap between Black and White students grow from 2011-2014, while developing schools saw a slight narrowing from 12.6% to 9.2% (Jain et al., 2014). Anyon et al. (2016) reports the implementation of restorative justice saw a drop in discipline overall, but it reveals a persistence of racial discipline groups overall.

Attendance and Absenteeism

Absenteeism can lead to a host of negative impacts on young people: poor academic performance, increased dropout rates, lack of employment after high school, poor health, increased poverty, and increased violent behaviors (Baker et al., 2001; Darling-Hammond et al.,

2020; McCluskey et al., 2004). Like other findings, more restorative justice led to better results. In one study, there was a 50% reduction in absenteeism and a 64% reduction in tardiness for students who had at least three restorative justice interventions in a school year (Baker, 2009). Armour (2014) looked at three grades of students in a middle school (Grades 6-8) in which restorative justice was implemented for Grades 6 and 7, and not implemented for Grade 8. Students in Grades 6 and 7 received fewer tardies than Grade 8, and students who received two years of restorative justice services had less than half as many tardies as the students who did not receive restorative justice services (Armour, 2014). Absenteeism and tardiness have similar academic effects as exclusionary discipline for obvious reasons: students need to be in classrooms in order to learn and achieve academically.

School Climate and Safety

Data also suggests that restorative justice may have a positive effect on school climate and safety. Augustine et al. (2018) found that across the 44 schools who either received or did not receive restorative justice training, there was a statistically significant increase of teachers' perceptions of school climate ($p < .05$). Perceptions of school safety and an understanding of school policies regarding discipline led to this perception (Augustine et al., 2018). Acosta et al. (2019) found that there was a mixed response from their randomized controlled trial. Restorative justice implementation did not increase school climate in statistically significant ways for students; however, students exposed to teachers who used more restorative justice interventions in their classrooms reported more school connectedness, positive peer relationships, and increased peer connectiveness at a statistically significant level ($p < .001$).

Academic Outcomes

Jain et al. (2014) found that schools in Oakland, California implementing restorative justice had an increase of 128% in reading levels across three years, while schools that were not using restorative justice practices saw an increase of only 11%. Graduation rates increased in schools using restorative justice (60% compared to 7% in schools not using restorative justice) and dropout rates decreased in schools using restorative justice (56% compared to 17%) (Jain et al., 2014). Likewise, Armour (2014) reported that students in Grade 6 who were exposed to restorative justice for a school year had an 11% improvement on statewide reading tests and a 13% improvement on statewide math tests. Improvements were significant for Black students (8%), Latino/ Hispanic students (13%), and students in poverty (13%). Students who receive special education services increased the most, with a 42% increase in reading and a 50% increase in math.

Some studies showed no impact on academics following implementation of restorative justice. Norris (2009) found no significant impact on grade point averages for students in schools using restorative justice, compared to schools not using restorative justice. Terrill (2018) and Augustine et al. (2018) reported a drop in academic performance based on grade point averages and state assessment performance, respectively, after implementation of restorative justice practices. Overall, the data were mixed. Terrill (2018) also suggested that in schools without significant academic gains for the whole school, there is still significant improvement in grades and passing rates for students who faced discipline infractions in schools with restorative justice programs, compared to schools without restorative justice. Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) reported that the positive effect of restorative justice may be delayed a year. Thus, it is important

to continue longitudinal data collection after implementing restorative justice to determine if a change in culture occurs and to see if a lag effect occurs for positive outcomes.

New York City, Oakland, and Beyond

New Zealand and Australia have been using restorative justice in their schools and juvenile court system for over 25 years (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Similarly, several states in the U.S. have been using restorative justice for years with success, including (but not limited to) California, Colorado, Illinois, Minnesota, New York, and Pennsylvania (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Of these examples, two large cities stand out among the many other pockets across the nation implementing restorative justice: New York City and Oakland, California. Both cities have involved community and political support for restorative justice and an ongoing commitment to the whole school model, and both cities come up repeatedly in the reviewed literature.

Restorative Justice in the Capital of the World. One of the largest school districts implementing restorative justice at a district-level and city-level is New York City (Office of the Mayor, 2019; Sandwick et al., 2019). Due to the spotlight constantly shone on New York City at the national and international stage, this example has been widely discussed (Sandwick et al., 2019). This initiative does aim to be the immersive restorative justice experience of the whole-school model. Mayor de Blasio supported restorative justice and added eight-five social workers and additional training in social-emotional learning and restorative justice practices for school faculty and staff in 2019 (Office of the Mayor, 2019).

Sandwick et al. (2019) conducted case studies of five diverse New York City schools, conducting interviews and focus groups with educators, students, parents, and school safety staff. Findings from their case studies highlighted five lessons for other districts or cities looking to

implement restorative justice as a whole-school model. Firstly, community building was described as the foundation of restorative justice. This covers relationships between staff and students, staff and leadership, and the school faculty, staff, and the families of students. Secondly, the democratic nature of restorative justice was hugely important. Sandwick et al. (2019) found that schools must address and, in some ways, undo the hierarchies of schools to enhance equity and fully implement restorative justice. Some educators pushed back on the egalitarian nature of conflict resolution when the conflict was between teachers and students. It was difficult for teachers to set aside their beliefs in the power structure traditionally ingrained in punitive discipline models and find fault in their responses to students or interactions with students, but those who did embrace this disruption of the traditional hierarchy, found that student participation and respect was increased under a more egalitarian response to conflict. Similarly, it was important for school administrators to disrupt the hierarchy between teachers and leaders. Teachers must be heard, and their feedback must be acted upon for a shift like restorative justice to be successful. Student leadership is also a pivotal piece of restorative justice; students must be empowered by the process and allowed to be a part of the decision-making teams in schools (Sandwick et al., 2019).

Thirdly, faculty and staff must "move beyond the punishment paradigm" (Sandwick et al., 2019, p. 19). Many educators felt that restorative justice did not hold students accountable or that the process was too slow in dealing with major offenses like a student physically harming a teacher. Some teachers shared fears of coddling or being too soft with students. To combat the stronghold of the punishment paradigm, it is important to use circles to deal with adult-to-adult conflict as well as conflicts involving students. This example led some teachers to understand that just as adult conflicts are not typically resolved with a punishment but rather mediation and

compromise, so too must conflicts with or between students be approached. Improving

communication with staff is also important. Exclusion applies to everyone. A student in not in

class or is on the suspension list. Their punishment is clear, but restorative justice might seem

less clear as the results and accountability piece are not shared with faculty and staff. Being

transparent and communicating the process and how students are held accountable is key to

letting teachers know that students are still being held accountable, just in different, healthier

ways (Sandwick et al., 2019).

Fourthly, restorative justice asks a lot of teachers in terms of additional time and

emotional energy; administrators must make room in the weekly schedule for restorative justice,

making it a formal part of the daily obligations for teachers by taking away other duties to make

room for restorative justice in a way that does not overtax teachers (Sandwick et al., 2019).

Changing the culture of the school into a restorative culture is also necessary to ensure it does

not feel like an add-on program or another initiative that will come and go like all the others.

This change in culture is the reculturing examined in the research study conducted for this

dissertation. Without reculturing, the change cannot be whole-school change/ implementation of

restorative justice, and whole-school implementation of restorative justice is the goal for

Ashwood High School. Leaders must holistically integrate restorative justice as a part of the

classroom and school practices for this to occur. Lastly, leaders must confront conflict and

adversity as it arises. Teachers need a place to celebrate victories, big and small, and a place to

vent their frustrations and be heard as a part of the restorative justice implementation process.

Just like students and families must be heard, so must faculty and staff. Educational leaders have

to be supportive and understanding, acknowledging the feelings of their faculty and staff.

Restorative justice requires a paradigm shift, as previously stated; it is a sharp departure from

culturally ingrained responses to conflict and misbehavior. Overcoming that or confronting that while also implementing new practices is difficult. That needs to be acknowledged.

Both New York City and Oakland have community support in the form of non-profits and coalitions that support the wider community aspects of the restorative process (Brooklyn Community Foundation, 2021; Restorative Justice Initiative, n.d.). A classroom is a community but so is a neighborhood and a borough. Healing and teaching peaceful conflict resolution should extend beyond the school walls. The end goal of restorative justice is to change *society,* so the wider community and society need to be involved if this change is to occur (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020).

Implementation Guide: A Whole School Approach. Oakland Unified School District has been using restorative justice for over a decade in Oakland, California (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020). Oakland Unified School District is comprised of 87 schools and serves 36,154 students (U.S. News & World Report, 2019). Of these 36,154 students, 88.3% are non-White (U.S. News & World Report, 2019). As mentioned earlier, research on Oakland schools has shown enormous gains in academic performance as well as other areas attributed to the implementation of restorative justice as a whole school model (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Oakland employs a multi-person restorative justice team and has created an implementation guide among several other free resources for schools to use as they implement a whole school model.

The *Oakland Unified School District Restorative Justice Implementation Guide: A Whole School Approach* outlines how to implement restorative justice from Tier 1 (the beginning) to Tier 3 (a fully implemented whole-school model; Oakland Unified School District Restorative Justice Team, 2020). Figure 6 explains the building blocks of restorative justice implementation

and provides a useful framework for a school in the early stages of implementing restorative justice. As evidenced in Figure 6, the beginning of the work is framing what restorative justice looks like for your school and assembling a team of people to lead the implementation process (Oakland Unified School District Restorative Justice Team, 2020). Discipline and punishment do not show up until the fourth step of the process, after which there is a strong foundation in place to build to that (Oakland Unified School District Restorative Justice Team, 2020).

Figure 6

Stepping Stones to Creating a Restorative School
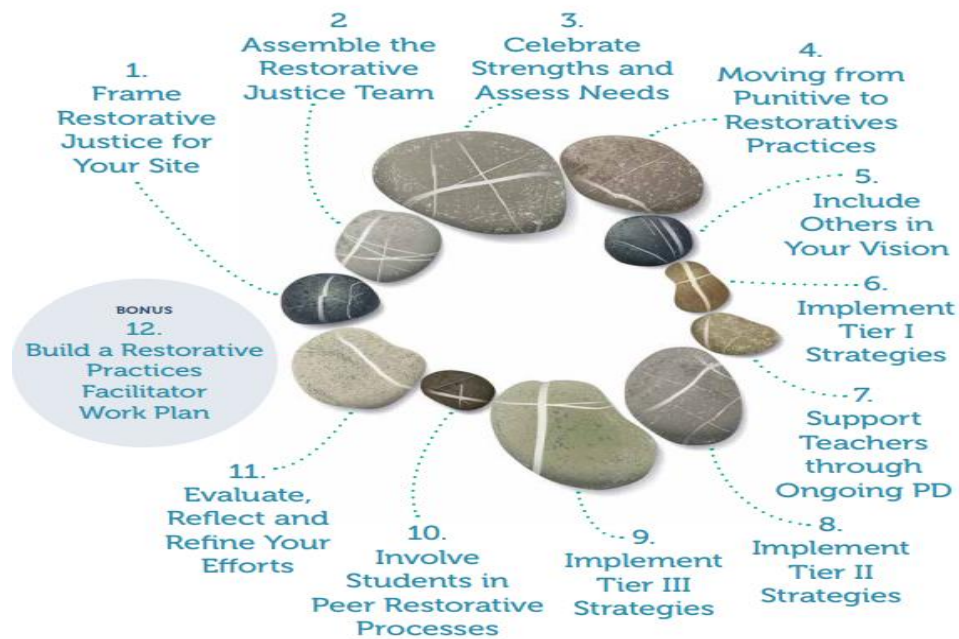
Note. Copied with permission from Oakland Unified School District. (n.d.-b). *Whole School Restorative Justice* [PDF file]. Family, Schools, & Community Partnerships Department of Restorative Justice. http://www.ousd.org/cms/lib/CA01001176/Centricity/Domain/134/Whole%20School%20Restorative%20Justice%20info%20sheet%20Final.pdf

Figure 7 provides a visual to determine where on the continuum that spans zero tolerance policy to restorative justice an individual school or classroom might fall (Oakland Unified School District, n.d.-b). This visual can be an easy assessment schools to use with each conflict with a student or to periodically check the pulse, so to say, with how a specific adult or a community as a whole respond to conflict. Schools that choose yes to all questions in Figure 7 are restorative, schools that answer no to all questions are zero tolerance. The number of *yes* answers versus *no* answers places a school on the continuum in different places. The Oakland Unified School District's guide and free materials are specific to whole-school implementation, so there is also an emphasis on restorative justice within each individual classroom (Oakland Unified School District, n.d.-b).

Figure 7

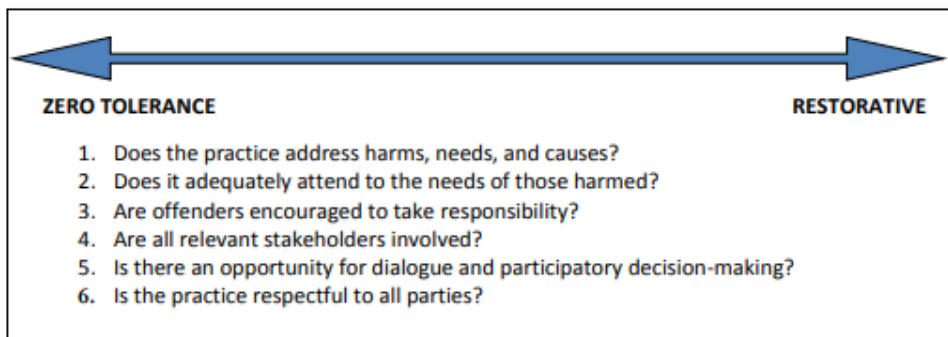*Zero Tolerance to Restorative Justice*

Note. Copied with permission from Oakland Unified School District. (n.d.-b). *Whole School Restorative Justice* [PDF file]. Family, Schools, & Community Partnerships Department of Restorative Justice. http://www.ousd.org/cms/lib/CA01001176/Centricity/Domain/134/Whole%20School%20Restorative%20Justice%20info%20sheet%20Final.pdf

Students spend most of their time in the classroom so it follows that circles and other restorative justice practices need to be implemented in the classroom as well as being implemented as a response administrators or other leaders can take when a conflict arises. One of the main focuses for classroom use is helping students identify what their underlying emotions and needs are that lead them to conflict or anger. Teaching training in the *why* and the *how* of restorative justice implementation in the classroom are necessary for these practices to be in place in all classrooms. In addition to training, careful listening for teacher pushback is necessary to address the needs and coherence of naysayers. Fullan (2001) explained that a culture of change should value pushback because utilizing dissent to make a stronger system of change is a necessary part of the change process. Valuing teacher feedback can also lead to late adopters taking the leap and adopting the change.

Davis (2014) shared a story of an Oakland high school student who verbally attacked his teacher and attempted to punch the school coordinator for restorative justice. After giving the student time to talk and share his story in a safe place, the student shared that his mother was an addict and had recently relapsed, leaving the student in charge of caring for his two younger siblings and basic needs like sleep and food were unmet. A circle was facilitated between the student, the teacher, the principal (who approached the conflict and wanted to suspend the student), the student's mother, and the school coordinator for restorative justice. The student explained what he was going through and offered to make amends by helping his teacher after-school. Davis (2014) shared that the teacher had been physically assaulted earlier in the year and told the student she considered quitting after he verbally assaulted her. The student's mother agreed to rededicate herself to sobriety and the school reached out to community partners to help her seek treatment for her addiction. The student did not initially realize the conflict resulted

from his feelings from home rather than anger or conflict with his teacher. Proper implementation of restorative justice practices allowed for him to realize the root of his issue had nothing to do with the teacher or the school and allowed all involved parties to form bonds, work to prevent further harm, and help the student's needs be met.

Oakland Unified School District has a unique branch of its school system: the Office of the African American Male Achievement (Chatmon & Watson, 2018). One of the driving themes and underlying questions of the African American Male Achievement reframes the image of the canary in a coal mine as a harbinger of danger, and begs the question, "who is the canary in the coal mine—that is who will be affected first and most severely by the toxicities of the system" (Chatmon & Watson, 2018, p. 7). It is well-known that Black male students suffer the most in every aspect of education (Chatmon & Watson, 2018; NCES, 2019; UCLA & ACLU, 2018). The African American Male Achievement works in conjunction with the Oakland Unified School District Restorative Justice Team to limit that harm and remake an educational system that does not require the sacrifice or harm of the canary to save the other people involved (Chatmon & Watson, 2018).

Central to the restorative justice implementation design shared by the Oakland Unified School District is the three-tiered system of implementation (Oakland Unified School District Restorative Justice Team, 2020). At the base of the tiers is tier one or community building (Oakland Unified School District, n.d.-b). Community building (Tier 1) encompasses tiers two and three, which is to say that it continues as a school implements the next two tiers. Success whole school restorative justice has all three tiers working as an on-going, never-ending process; much like the change process, the school never arrives at its destination. This tiered system is shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8
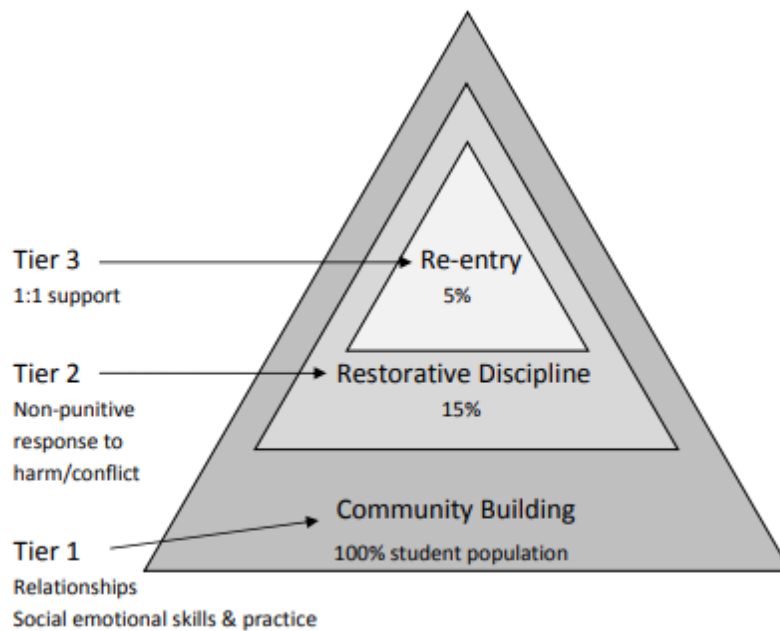
Three Tiers of School Based Restorative Justice

One of the most important parts of the three-tiered approach to restorative justice is the continued emphasis on building a strong foundation before launching into discipline reform and re-entry support (Oakland Unified School District, n.d.-b; Oakland Unified School District Restorative Justice Team, 2020). A school in the early stages of restorative justice implementation should be building relationships, capacity, and community rather than referring a few select students to the restorative justice room instead of in-school suspension or out-of-school suspension (which is still exclusionary in practice). The lessons and resources Oakland

Unified School District readily shares and makes available to other schools trying to implement restorative justice as a whole-school approach are useful for practitioners and provide a framework other schools can easily emulate and adjust for their specific site.

Fullan and Restorative Justice

O'Brien and Nygreen (2020) call the switch from punitive discipline practices to restorative justice practices "a paradigm shift" (p. 525). The path to changing a school's paradigm is work not done simply by knowing how restorative justice works, the effect it can have on student outcomes, or what it looks like in practice. A paradigm shift in many ways is the same shift necessary for a culture of change to emerge through the process of reculturing; both shifts require a fundamental change in one's approach and for followers to question their underlying assumptions and biases. According to Fullan (2016), school culture is the guiding beliefs and values that are clear in how a school operates, which can include the attitudes, behaviors, and values of people involved in the business of the school (the administrators, teachers, paraeducators, counselors, and all adults working in the school building). For restorative justice, those attitudes, behaviors, and values would be, in short, to reduce harm and help students heal and the school community heal.

Changing a culture requires the process of *reculturing*, a term used by Fullan (2001) to describe the process of transforming the culture of a school. There are three main cogs on this wheel of cultural change:

1. Doing the hard work of instilling and cultivating moral purpose of faculty and community, building strong

2. Positive relationships with faculty as the cornerstone of the change process

3. Coherence-making

The conceptual model for this study shows these relationships as a part of the reculturing process. The coherence-making section is greatly expanded upon in Fullan and Quinn's (2016) coherence model. As arguably the most integral part of the process and an area in which scholars have expressed lacking when it comes to restorative justice implementation in K-12 schools, this conceptual model melds the extended information found in the coherence model with the culture of change model (see Figure 2 in Chapter 1), which will be referred to as reculturing throughout this study (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

As noted in the conceptual model, moral purpose is the why or the "North Star" of a cultural change. What mobilizes teachers and counselors to follow this "North Star?" It is not enough to share a moral purpose, it must be cultivated and activated by leaders (Fullan, 2001). Beyond getting teachers on board with the *why*, change leaders must also show teachers *how* (Fullan, 2001). It is about the end goal, but it is also about the path to reach that end goal.

Building and maintaining relationships as a part of the cultural change process requires an emotionally intelligent leadership team steering the ship (Fullan, 2001). Like much of the reculturing process, it is a process that never ends. Leaders, school administrators, must continually engage with faculty and staff as a part of the change process (Fullan, 2001). Part of that engagement includes navigating opposition and using opposition as a chance to reexamine the process and learn together with followers who oppose changes (Fullan, 2001). As previously noted, moving to the unknown from the known is an anxiety-riddled process that asks a lot of followers. Leaders must be aware of that as they work to change the culture and the school so that they can then help followers overcome these hesitancies and take the leap (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

There are three main parts of the coherence-making process that are distinct and elaborated upon with the coherence model: focused direction, collaborative culture, and clarity (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Focused direction is certainly similar sounding to moral purpose, but it is more about making the central purpose or goal clear than instilling it (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). It develops a clear pathway to achieve the *why* with an emphasis on that pathway (Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

A collaborative culture is a part of the overall culture of change, and it is a key part of the coherence process. Leaders must model learning and a growth mindset (Dweck, 2015), using their example and the process of growth to ensure followers adapt the growth mindset as a part of the change process and the learning process (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Another component is integrated collaborative work. If collaboration is important, it must be a part of the overall work of the school and it must be integrated into daily operations (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Collaboration should not simply be a hope or a goal; collaboration needs to be the expectation. Lastly, clarity is the final part of the coherence model that is unique to the coherence process. According to Fullan and Quinn (2016), clarity is subjective and is often referred to as sensemaking in education. It does not mean the same thing to different people so it can be hard to gauge. Leaders need to ensure clarify by leveraging their relationships to see what people think and what their actions reflect (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Followers must also know more than what the goal is or what the pathway to that goal is. Followers need to know what the goal and the pathway mean *in practice*. Educational leaders must build capacity within the school, and

they must show faculty and staff what that change looks like in practice and teach them how to do it.

For the cultural shift to restorative justice to occur, the school and its inhabitants must change and the process of that change culture is the reculturing process presented in Fullan's (2001) culture of change model and Fullan and Quinn's (2016) coherence model. Moral purpose for restorative justice implementation can be any combination of the following: equitable discipline practices, cultivating peaceful conflict resolution, engaging in community healing, and/or preventing future harm.

Relationships are key to the reculturing process as well as to restorative justice. Both processes necessitate strong relationships between leaders and teachers (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Maynard & Weinstein, 2020). Similarly, this extends to include other relationships: teachers and students, students and students, teachers and families, administrators and students, administrators and students, administrators and students, and a strong relationship with the community beyond the school. Restorative justice can be politically charged or tied to or in opposition to the individual belief system of faculty and staff (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020). School administrators must approach this opposition with the knowledge that they have strong relationships with faculty members. Emotionally intelligent leaders must use those relationships to find common ground and listen to the opposition that is expressed. Administrators can also use that opposition to strengthen the core of the work (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). It is the job of the administrator to help move teachers along and away from the punitive punishment paradigm (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Sandwick et al., 2019).

Administrators must also lead the coherence-making process by being lead learners, modeling a growth mindset (Dweck, 2015), and being in the thick of the work with faculty and

staff (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). School administrators lead this process by providing focused direction, creating and maintaining a collaborative culture, and ensuring clarity (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Administrators provided focused direction by building capacity of restorative justice practices in teachers and other faculty and staff members. Providing an understanding of the how to build community and strong relationships with students, families, and each other, providing support, understanding, and practice for the implementation of restorative circles, cultivating the process of healing and preventing harm in the classroom, and making space in the work day for restorative justice practices are all the purview and responsibility of administrators (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Maynard & Weinstein, 2020; Sandwick et al., 2019 Oakland Unified School District Restorative Justice Team, 2020).

The understanding of these processes also overlaps with collaborative culture, another part of the coherence process, in that this work and cycle of learning needs to involve collaborative work and collaborative learning as an essential part of both the coherence process and the implementation of restorative justice. Collaboration must be cultural, engrained, an expectation by leadership and an example that leadership sets. Collaboration is necessary for any change to take place and is central to changing the culture (Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

Lastly, school administrators and other leaders involved in the implementation of restorative justice must ensure clarity and sensemaking. Faculty and staff need to engage in purposeful, continued interaction with restorative justice practices. Leaders need to ensure this continuance of learning and practices leads to clarity that can be evidenced through how teachers talk about and practice restorative justice. What restorative justice is and how it works must be clear to teachers, counselors, paraeducators, and in many ways, the extended community as a school implements restorative justice.

A school of the early phases of restorative justice should have evidence of these

processes. Administrators should be instilling moral purpose, building strong relationships,

building capacity, cultivating a collaborative culture, and ensuring clarity (Fullan & Quinn,

2016). This study examined that early phase of restorative justice implementation through a

qualitative case study of a small, urban high school in the American South.

Chapter Summary

The literature supports several of the claims made in Chapter 1 about the role of

restorative justice in practice. Zero tolerance policies and punitive discipline practices affect all

children. In particular, these policies and practices affect Black students and students with

disabilities disproportionately compared to other groups of children (Fronius et al., 2019; NCES,

2019; UCLA & ACLU, 2018). Restorative justice, at its heart, is about repairing harm and

preventing future harm. Some schools have chosen to be a part of the healing process, rather than

continue being a reliable part of the school-prison nexus, sending Black young men to prison at

disproportionate rates, which fuels the for-profit prison industrial complex in the United States

(O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020; Rosenbaum, 2018). Using the lessons and structures practiced for

thousands of years by indigenous peoples across the world (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020;

O'Brien & Nygreen et al., 2020; Sandwick et al., 2019) and now modernized for K-12 schools

by school divisions like New York City (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Office of the Mayor,

2019; Sandwick et al., 2019) and Oakland (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Oakland Unified

School District, n.d.-b), K-12 schools have a roadmap to move from exclusionary practices to

restorative practices. The beginning of that implementation practice is a change in culture and

the willingness of school leaders to engage with conflict and disagreement as a part of the change

process to increase student outcomes in practically all areas of noteworthy measure by

implementing the restorative justice whole school approach (Acosta et al., 2019; Anyon et al.,

2016; Armour, 2014; Augustine et al., 2018; Baker, 2009; Davis, 2014; Gonzalez, 2015;

Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Sumner et al., 2010). This study fills in gaps in research in how a

culture of change and the reculturing process and the implementation of restorative justice word

in conjunction to move a school along the continuum from zero tolerance policy/ traditional,

punitive punishment to a restorative justice model.

CHAPTER 3
METHODS

This study was an exploratory case study that explored the culture of change and cultural

shift to restorative justice practices at Ashwood High School (AHS; pseudonym for a high school

serving Grades 9-12 in the American South). An exploratory case study design was fitting for

this study due to the stage in which Ashwood administrators were in the changemaking process

(the beginning) and due to the potential for further research in this setting at the conclusion of

this study (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Yin, 2018). This study had a practice-oriented purpose.

According to Haverkamp and Young (2007), a practice-oriented purpose includes a qualitative

investigation with a goal of gaining understanding "to illuminate specific problems or improve

specific practice" (p. 274). This understanding and plan for possible improvement for the

implementation of restorative justice practices was shared with the administrators of Ashwood

High School as actionable steps for further implementation after this study's conclusion. This

feedback was elicited and desired by the administrators at Ashwood due to their communicated

commitment to continue implementation of restorative justice.

A case study is an appropriate design when closely studying the *how* and the *why* of a

contemporary event (Yin, 2018). Case study design allows a researcher to take a close look at the

people involved through interview, surveys, or observation (Yin, 2018). In this case, a case study

allowed a close look at a particular high school under a particular leadership team installing a

specific discipline approach and cultural shift (restorative justice); this case study provided an in-

depth look into the elements of culture of change and coherence that influence culture at

Ashwood High School while allowing space for multiple insights and meanings to come forth from the data (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). Qualitative data allows a researcher to seek out answers when there is easy access to the people involved in whatever process or area the researcher is studying (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). The open structure of a qualitative case study allowed for multiple research questions and inquiries to work in tandem to reveal the *why* and the *how* of the cultural shift necessitated by moving to a whole school restorative justice model (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Yin, 2018).

Three major data sources were triangulated once data was collected from administrator interviews, the teacher survey, and the content analysis of the student handbook. Triangulation of data allows for multiple sources of data to yield more fruitful results than proficiency in a single source of data (R. Johnson & Gray, 2010). Triangulation of multiple data sources builds trust in the research design and offers greater confidence in the findings of the study (Greene & Hall, 2010). Triangulation of data sources is particularly fitting for an exploratory design, such as an exploratory case study, since this type of design is often comprised of multiple data sources to best yield results (Nastasi et al., 2010).

Ashwood High School

As previously stated, AHS faculty and staff are in the early stages of restorative justice implementation at the whole-school level. This implementation began in the 2019-2020 school year, but the subsequent school closures at the end of that school year and most of the 2020-2021 school year put that implementation on pause. Students returned to the building for the 2021-2022 school year and part of that return involved a renewed commitment to implementing whole-school restorative justice practices. This study examined the first step of the change process: the necessary culture shift needed for any sustainable change, and specifically, for

70

implementation of restorative justice practices. Fullan's culture of change model and coherence model (as a continuation of the culture of change model) will be applied to examine the culture of Ashwood High School when it comes to restorative justice (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Refer to Figure 2 in Chapter 1 for the conceptual model that combines both Fullan models.

AHS is the only public high school in Ashwood, a city in the American South. The City of Ashwood has a population of 23,033 people, and 1,190 students attend AHS. AHS serves students Grades 9-12 and has a 93% graduation rate; 2.85% of students take advanced placement courses and tests, 7.92% take dual-enrollment courses, and 2.02% attend a governor's school. There is a small religious private school in the City of Ashwood that serves 130 students from kindergarten to high school graduation, and it also serves students from nearby cities and counties. Most school-age children in the city attend Ashwood Public Schools. The following demographic data describe the student body of AHS:

- 60.9% Black

- 25.9% White

- 11.2% Hispanic/ Latino

- 0.7% Multiple Races

- 1.4% Asian

- 0.6% Native American

- 0% Native Hawaiian

The City of Ashwood is less diverse than the student body. Much like cities and counties in surrounding counties and across the United States, more children are born to minority groups than to those in the majority culture (Diarassouba & Johnson, 2014). The demographics of the

city are changing and with that change, discipline inequities may come front and center for school administrators. City of Ashwood demographics are:

- 43.5% Black

- 47.1% White

- 3.7% Hispanic/ Latino

- 3.0% Multiple Races

- 0.8% Asian

- 0.4% Native American

- 0.1% Native Hawaiian

Figure 9 displays the notable differences between demographics in the three largest demographic categories in Ashwood: Black, White, and Hispanic/ Latino. It is evident that Black and Hispanic populations are rising in Ashwood at a much higher rate than the White population.

Figure 9

Demographic Differences

School vs. City Racial Demographics
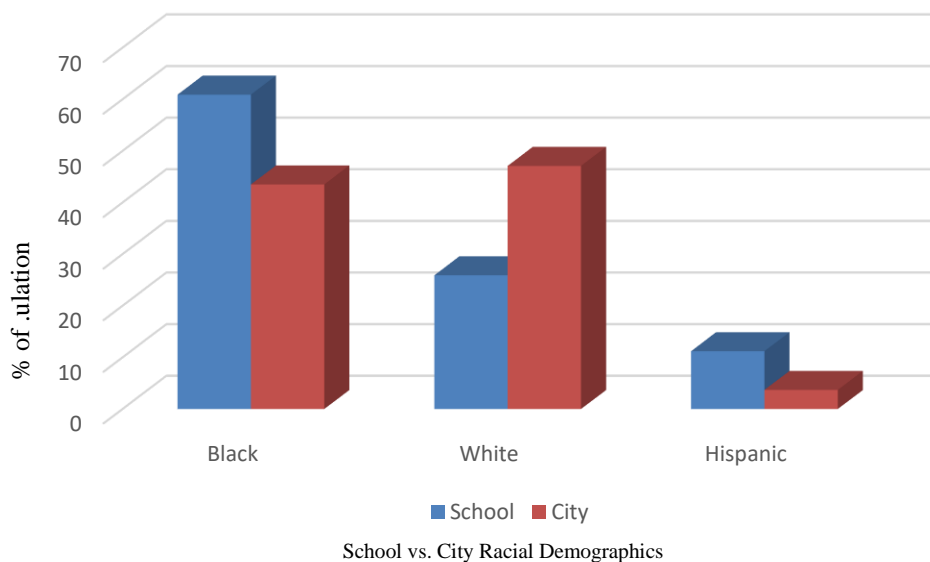
As reviewed in Chapter 2, school culture emerges based on the guiding beliefs and values that are clear in how a school operates, which can include the attitudes, behaviors, and values of faculty and staff within a school (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Culture as a construct in the change process was examined through two interviews with administrators (one principal and three assistant principals), a faculty and staff survey, and content analysis of the AHS Student Handbook. The change process and the implementation of restorative justice is a passion project of the principal. Passion is important for change leaders, as is continued appropriate follow-through. This study investigated the extent to which AHS reflects a culture of change, as is necessary when it comes to the "paradigm shift" required for whole-school implementation of restorative justice (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020, p. 525).

Publicly shared information on discipline data is available from AHS. Information for the 2018-2019 school year is useful in determining the starting point for possible discipline inequities that may have led administrators to implement restorative justice. Black students comprised 60.9% of the AHS population during the 2018-2019 school year; yet 82.1% of the short-term suspensions were Black students. Black students were 3.4 times more likely to receive short-term suspensions than White students, based on this information. AHS had no long-term suspensions for the 2018-2019 school year. The principal during this study was a self-reportedly equity-minded and passionate about restorative justice was also the principal during the 2018-2019 school year, so it is possible she had this positive influence on long-term suspensions, but this is speculation. The students themselves were not participants in this survey, but the demographics of AHS and the City of Ashwood may paint a picture of AHS that enriches the

themes that may arise throughout the study. Figure 10 shows the short-term suspensions from the 2018-2019 school year at AHS.

Figure 10

Population Percentage Compared to Short-Term Suspension Percentage, 2018-2019
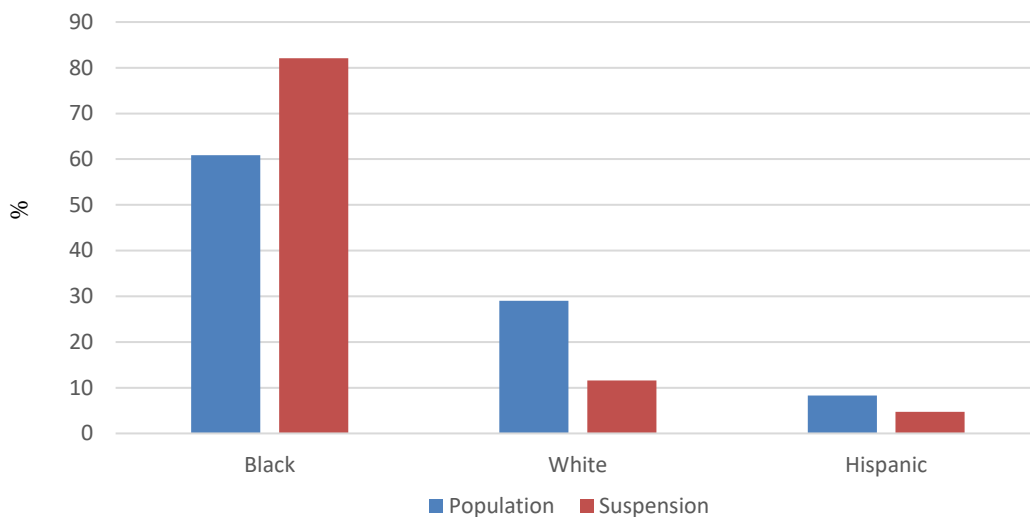
% of School Population vs. Population of Overall Suspensions by Race

Participants

Four administrators were interviewed for this study. Three of these administrators served as assistant principals and one served as the principal of AHS during the data collection timeframe (Spring 2021). During the spring semester of 2021, the administrative team was comprised of a White woman principal, a Black man assistant principal, a Black woman assistant principal, and a White woman assistant principal. Of the districts' 344 teachers, 0.1% are Native American, 0.1% are Asian, 31.7% are Black, 1.5% are Latino/ Hispanic, 65.4% are White, 0% are Hawaiian, and 0.3% are two or more races. AHS's teachers are 56.5% women and 43.5%

men. The teacher population looks significantly different than the population of students, as evidenced in Figure 11. This again focused on three significant demographic groups, leaving out the smaller demographic groups.

Figure 11

Student Population Compared to Teacher Population, 2021
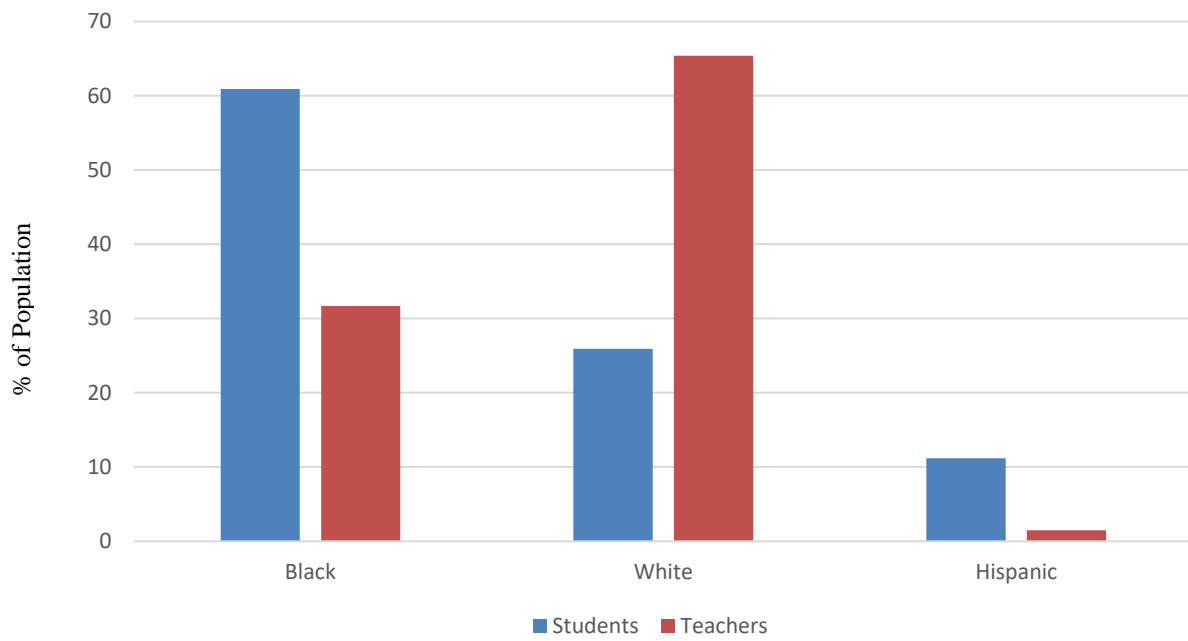
Student Population vs. Teacher Population

Data Sources

Ashwood administrators participated in two interviews each. These interviews were conducted one-on-one via Zoom due to district COVID-19 protocols. A survey of open-ended questions was sent over the AHS email listserv to all teachers ($N = 60$); this survey was completed on a voluntary basis. The data from the survey, interviews, and the content analysis were triangulated as explained below.

Administrator Interviews

Three assistant principals and one principal participated in two interviews. The questions for these interviews underwent an expert panel review prior to use. Each interview was between thirty minutes to one hour long. Interviews were recorded, but only the audio was transcribed and utilized in data analysis. All recordings were kept on a password protected Zoom account through my William & Mary Zoom account login. Recordings were not shared beyond transcription and were deleted at the conclusion of the study. All interview participants were given a pseudonym that is not similar to their real name or any known alias by which they go (such as a nickname or former name) to be used during the data analysis phase for coding. I took minimal notes during the interview to ensure my attention was with the participant as they spoke to maintain "the openness and immediacy necessary" in qualitative research (Vagle, 2018, p. 88).

Interviews were semi-structured and focused on how moral purpose was being cultivated, how relationships were being built and strengthened, how coherence was being made amongst the faculty and staff, and how AHS was a culture of change. Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to provide rich detail and to leave a space for follow-up questions as they arose (Yin, 2018). Consent forms were provided to participants before each interview was conducted (Appendix A). Participants received an email summary after each interview with follow-up questions necessary to ensure clarity and understanding of the interview responses; all participants were welcome to dispute or restate anything shared in the summary. No participants disputed or restated the shared summary. These emails were used for the process of member checking, to ensure the accuracy of responses since the verbatim transcripts might not have accurately encompassed inflections or other nuances (Shenton, 2004). While the practice of member checking does not guarantee honesty in participant responses, it ensured the accuracy of

the transcripts and ensured that unintentional biases or simple misunderstandings did not influence the data analysis (Birt et al., 2016). Participants signed and agreed to the consent form before each interview and before completing the teacher survey. Participants were able to revoke consent at any time during the research process without repercussion, though no participants did.

The focus of the first interview centered on establishing how long participants have been at AHS and the nature of their position, their base definition and understanding of restorative justice, why restorative justice was implemented at AHS, and touched on relationships and collaboration across the school (see Appendix B for the interview protocol). Appendix C represents a crosswalk showing how each question in the first interview aligns with the three research questions for this study and the literature related to the conceptual framework. Appendix D represents a crosswalk of research questions and the elements of coherence model that include the three areas of focus: focused direction, collaboration, and clarity. To some degree, all research questions were addressed in this first interview.

The focus of the second interview with administrators was the establishing of where AHS administrators perceive they were in the change process in terms of implementing restorative justice, the level at which they believed teachers were knowledgeable about and bought into restorative justice implementation, and how administrators handled opposition and pushback from teachers. Interview 2 also included any follow-up questions based on the results of the first interview (see Appendix E for the second interview protocol).

Appendix F shows a crosswalk of how each question in the second interview aligns with the three research questions for this study. To some degree, all research questions are addressed in the second interview. Appendix G provides a crosswalk for the interview questions that align with the coherence model in the three areas. There is some overlap for questions 7a and 6a

because there is some overlap in the Fullan (2001) model and the Fullan and Quinn (2016) model.

Teacher Survey

A survey of open-ended questions was sent out over the AHS email listserv between the first and second administrator interview. The questions in this survey underwent an expert panel review. All teachers were welcome to complete the survey. The survey was conducted in Qualtrics. All answers were composed without prompting and in private by participants. This survey was anonymous, and a consent form appeared before participants reached the rest of the survey. Anyone who did not give consent was not allowed to proceed with survey completion. Participation was completely voluntary, and participants were made aware they could opt out of completing the survey at any time. Individual answers were shared with administrators. An overview of the findings was shared with administrators after the conclusion of the study as part of the recommendations for further implementation of restorative justice. The Qualtrics survey may be found in Appendix H, including the consent form for survey participants. Appendix I shows how each survey question aligned with the three research questions for this study and the coherence model. Appendix J breaks down the questions that align with coherence-making into the three areas of focus that are a part of the coherence model: focused direction, collaboration, and clarity.

Student Handbook Content Analysis

I conducted a content analysis of the student handbook, comparing it to the components of restorative justice such as use of restorative circles, presence of student empowerment and voice, mentions of healing and/ or community building, emphasis on relationships across the school, and any movement away from zero-tolerance policies, punitive practices, and prescribed

punishment for specific offenses. This investigation had the potential to answer all three research questions, depending on what was found during data analysis.

Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed verbatim for data analysis. The typed responses of the faculty and staff survey were also analyzed. I used the a priori analysis approach to look for themes that were then put into bins aligned with restorative justice practices and/ or the reculturing process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). A priori coding did not give the same flexibility as an approach like thematic analysis, but the coding bins remained flexible as the data emerged (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Nowell et al., 2017). I engaged in the following steps through a priori analysis: generated codes aligned with Fullan's (2001) models and restorative justice practices, familiarized myself with the data, realigned or revised bins as necessitated by the emerging data, searched for themes, reviewed themes, defined themes, and produced the reports (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Nowell et al., 2017).

Triangulation

The process of triangulation was used to compare and analyze all data points for overall findings to "develop a comprehensive understanding" and to test validity by examining data from different sources (Carter et al., 2014). For this study, method triangulation was used as three different types of data were collected: interview data, survey data, and content analysis of the code of conduct to the concept model (Carter et al., 2014). Triangulation was used as a way to look at the multiple data sources in this study during the analysis process in order to illuminate the answers to the research questions from different points of view (Whitenton, 2021). Triangulation was used to test the validity of information based on the agreement and the convergence of the different data sources (Ivankova & Kawamura, 2010). The administrators'

perceptions of teacher buy-in, for example, were compared to the answers on the teacher survey to analyze areas of agreement or convergence on this subject. This process increased validity of the study and confidence of the study findings by accessing these different data sources to better understand the *how* and the *why* asked by this study (Ivankova & Kawamura, 2010; Whitenton, 2021; Yin, 2018).

This study was designed and will be analyzed using the theoretical framework of Fullan's (2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016) culture of change and coherence models. This framework sought to understand the culture of change at AHS by examining reculturing, looking closely at moral purpose, relationships, and coherence (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

Research Questions

Overarching Research Question: In what ways does AHS reflect a culture of change in support of restorative justice?

Data was analyzed looking closely at the process of reculturing present at AHS. Reculturing is the process of transforming the culture of a school by instilling and cultivating moral purpose, building strong, positive relationships with faculty, and coherence making (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). A priori analysis illuminated themes that fell into predetermined bins to elucidate the ways in which AHS was a culture of change, and the ways in which the administrative team members were change leaders. The transcripts of interviews, survey answers, and student handbook content analysis provided insight into this question and provided the answers to this question.

Research Question 1: How has the moral purpose been shared and cultivated in support of restorative justice? The presence and cultivation of moral purpose was investigated through interviews with administrators, the faculty and staff survey, and through content analysis of the

student handbook. Moral purpose was evident in specific questions from the interviews and the faculty and staff survey as the central goal and central pathway to change has been communicated and cultivated (Fullan, 2001).

Research Question 2: In what ways have relationships been cultivated to support restorative justice? Strong relationships between administrators and faculty and amongst faculty members themselves are an integral part of the change process (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). These relationships were clear based upon answers to the survey and the interview questions that focus on relationships.

Research Question 3: In what ways is the process of coherence making evident in practice? The process of coherence making examined ways in which focused direction, collaborative culture, and clarity have and have not taken place at AHS.

Delimitations, Limitations, Assumptions

Delimitations

This study was delimited to one secondary school, Ashford High School. It is possible that conducting this study during a time when a worldwide pandemic affected all aspects of schooling, particularly teaching and learning, is a delimitation. The data collection instruments relied heavily on perception data.

Limitations

The study is limited due to a case study approach which relied on high levels of participation. A major limitation was the high teacher turnover rate that hit many schools across the country during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is possible that the early adopters and eager proponents of restorative justice at Ashwood had left the school or the profession by the time data collection for this study took place. Realistically, many schools in the Ashwood area had

faculty and staff that were new to the school and may not have been as invested in the restorative justice process or the coherence-making process as teachers a year or two ago may have been. Qualitative methods also can be negatively affected by bias of the researcher or the participants of the study (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). A leader implementing a change may be more invested and eager than their followers, and this study emphasized leader perceptions as a key component of the process. Doing a case study of a single, small, urban high school is a delimitation that makes findings not as generalizable as experimental approach (Yin, 2018). However, different kinds of studies are not hierarchical and the vivid description and focused approach to a case study is an approach for many disciplines, including education (Yin, 2018).

Assumptions

I assume that the interview questions, survey questions, and content analysis were valid ways to find answers to the research questions and yielded answers that will inform the study. I also assumed that participants were honest and forthcoming in their responses. It was assumed that there is buy-in for the initiative from faculty and staff at the school and that they were committed to implementing restorative justice practices. It is assumed that this action will improve problems of practice in this context. As mentioned by O'Brien and Nygreen (2020), restorative justice implementation often suffers from issues of fidelity. It was assumed that restorative justice is being implemented with fidelity, but certain questions got to the reality of that assumption during data analysis.

Researcher as Instrument Statement

I researched restorative justice practices in a high school in the American South based on my own belief in the necessity of systematic change to begin to remedy the discipline inequities in K-12 education. I have been teaching high school for nine years. All my teaching experience

has been in urban schools and most of my students have been Black. I have seen firsthand the differences in how the discipline infractions of White students and Black students are handled at all three schools in which I have taught. As such, my belief and interest in restorative justice practices is personal, and it has guided my own practice as a teacher. I believe in the value of restorative justice in education and in its ability to make lasting, positive changes in school culture and student outcomes.

To limit my own personal bias affecting the data analysis and reporting, I engaged in reflexive journaling through the research process, expert peer review of data and findings, and I engaged in member checking throughout the research process in an effort to limit an interpretation of participant answers colored by my own biases.

Ethical Considerations

I received full approval for this study from the public school district and the high school administrative team. This study and all its methodological components were sent to William & Mary's Educational Institutional Review Committee (EDIRC) for approval, and they were all approved. The following steps were taken in effort to protect participants' and the school's privacy and confidentiality:

- The school with which I am working has been given a pseudonym for all research documents, and citations that reveal the identity of the school have been redacted.
- All research is in a password protected computer within password protected files and programs that can only be accessed by the researcher.
- The area in which the school is located is described as "the American South" without identifying a more specific reason or region within a state to attempt anonymity.

- A consent form was provided to all interview and survey participants. The consent form had to be signed for the interview to proceed or for the survey to be available to participants.

- The participation of the school and the district in this study was completely voluntary. If the administrators later decline to participate further, this decision will not endanger their future relationship with William & Mary's School of Education.

- A summary of the results of the study was sent to school administrators electronically once they are complete.

Chapter Summary

This study was a practice-oriented exploratory case study that relied on the following sources of data: interviews with administrators, an at-will survey sent to all teachers, and a content analysis of the student handbook at AHS in the City of Ashwood. The Ashwood Public Schools is a small urban district in the American South. The administration team consisted of one principal and three assistant principals. Each administrator participated in two semi-structured interviews that focused on how moral purpose is being cultivated, how relationships are being built and strengthened, how coherence is being made amongst the faculty and staff, and how AHS is a culture of change.

A panel of experts examined and provided feedback on the questions for each interview prior to their use in this study, as well as the results and analyses of the findings. A survey was sent over the AHS listserv asking for teacher participants/feedback. Participants completed their survey anonymously and of their own free will. All participants gave consent, and it was clear they could withdraw that consent and their participation in this study at any time without consequence. The final data source was a content analysis of the student handbook. Data was

analyzed and compared through the process of method triangulation. Researcher bias was limited in a variety of ways, including reflexive journaling and expert panel review. A summary of results and recommendations were sent to district and school administrators at the conclusion of this study, at their request.

CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

This chapter includes an overview of the findings of this study, which investigated a high school in the American South implementing restorative justice as a whole-school culture shift. The study was informed by interviews with the principal and three assistant principals, a survey sent to all teaching staff at Ashwood High School (AHS), and a content analysis of the student handbook. All administrators participated in two semi-structured interviews and 22% of teachers participated in an at-will survey sent across the AHS listserv. Three research questions were analyzed to answer the overarching question of this exploratory case study in preparation for Chapter 5, which includes implications of these findings to support future practice at AHS as implementation continues and recommendations for further implementation and research.

This section is divided into the following research questions:

- Research Question 1: How has the moral purpose been shared and cultivated in support of restorative justice?

- Research Question 2: In what ways have relationships been cultivated to support restorative justice?

- Research Question 3: In what ways is the process of coherence making evident in practice?

Research Question 1: How has the moral purpose been shared and cultivated in support of restorative justice?

Data from administrator interviews, teacher surveys, and a content analysis of the student handbook were collected and analyzed to answer question one. Four administrators participated in two interviews each and 13 teachers participated in a teacher survey. Interview Questions 3, 3a, 3b, and the follow-up question, "How has the moral purpose been communicated to teachers?" related to administrator participant perceptions of the rationale for implementing RJ and how that rationale/ moral purpose had been communicated to teachers. Administrator interview protocols can be found in Appendices B and E. The questions used to answer this question can be found in the first interview protocol (Appendix B). Thirteen teachers (22% of the teaching faculty) participated in the teacher survey, which can be found in Appendix H. Survey Questions 3, 4, 4a, 4b, and 7 related to teacher participant perceptions of the rationale for implementing restorative justice and how the moral purpose was communicated to them.

For the purposes of this study, moral purpose is both the *how* and the *why* behind implementation of restorative justice (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Whole-school restorative justice implementation can have several *whys* behind implementation, such as:

- Disrupting the school-prison nexus (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020)

- Repairing and preventing harm (Sandwick et al., 2019)

- Focusing on individuals and the community as whole (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020; Sandwick et al., 2019)

- Building strong relationships with students and families (Maynard & Weinstein, 2020)

- Cultivating a culture of mutual respect and democratic leadership (Maynard &
  Weinstein, 2020)

Any combination of these answers can be a common moral purpose the people in a school would

articulate for the *why* behind restorative justice.

Administrator Interviews

Administrator interview protocols can be found in Appendices B and E. The following

questions in the first administrator protocol were asked to answer this research question:

Questions 3, 3a, 3b, and the follow-up question, "How has the moral purpose been

communicated to teachers?" from the first interview protocol (Appendix B) were used to answer

this first research question.

Results. Table 3 shows the different reasons and the number of administrator participants

who listed that reason in interview one, as well as how administrators shared/ cultivated the

moral purpose with teachers. The table shows the common understanding and articulation of the

moral purpose for administrator participants and how that common understanding/ articulation

was communicated to teachers.

Table 3

Moral Purpose from Administrator Interviews

Moral Purpose ("Why")	No. of Administrators	Communication to Teachers ("How")	No. of Administrators
Disrupting of school-to-prison pipeline/ school-prison nexus	3	Professional development	3
Repair/ prevent harm in AHS	4	Training with local restorative justice expert	4
More "humanistic"/ fair/ loving way to approach discipline	4	Faculty meetings	4
Repair/ heal the larger Ashwood community	3	Data on the failures of traditional, punitive discipline model	3
RJ's focus on relationships benefits the school community	4	One-on-one conversations with teachers	4

Note. *n* = 4

Findings. All administrator interview participants listed more than one moral purpose/ *why* behind implementation of restorative justice, just as all administrator interview participants listed more than one way in which they perceived moral purpose had been communicated to teachers. The term "humanistic" to described restorative justice was only used by one participant; however, words synonymous with "humanistic" were communicated by all participants. Two administrator participants called restorative justice the "fair/ fairer" approach to discipline, and one called it the "loving way" to approach discipline. All perceived and explained restorative justice to be a better way to approach discipline, rather than the traditional, exclusionary discipline approach used by most schools. Similarly, three of four participants articulated their hope/belief that restorative justice at AHS could heal or repair the violence and

ills in the larger City of Ashwood community. One explained: "It's an interesting community because the parents are fighters, and so they will take their kids to fight on weekends and the parents will get in involved in the fights." Three administrators hoped restorative justice implementation at AHS would minimize or end the fighting within the city community.

This moral purpose was cultivated in two major ways: in a large/whole-group setting and one-on-one with teachers, using conversation, data, and reminding teachers that "restorative justice isn't going away" as a way to reinforce AHS' commitment to whole-school restorative justice implementation. It was unclear whether the data or reinforced commitment increased teacher buy-in or convinced naysayers to take the leap.

Teacher Survey

Teacher responses to the first research question were articulated through the teacher survey. Teacher Survey Questions 3, 4, 4a, 4b, and 7 were used to show perceptions of the rationale for implementing restorative justice (Appendix H). Thirteen teachers completed the survey sent out over the whole school listserv, inviting teachers to participate voluntarily. There are approximately 60 teachers at Ashwood High School, so the participants represent approximately 22% of the teaching staff. Teacher participants were grouped based on their years of teaching experience through question 1 of the survey, grouping teachers into the following bands: 0-5 years, 5-10 years, 10-15 years, or more than 15 years. Participants selected one of the bands under the question to place themselves into these different groups. This was used to separate teachers in case a distinction emerged between new, mid-career, and experienced teacher responses. Teachers were not asked what departments they belonged to, making it unclear if the results represented a cross-section of teachers or if they were heavily represented in one or two departments.

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Results. As evidenced in Figure 12, *to prevent harm* was listed by teachers a major driver

behind the implementation of restorative justice. 100% of teachers who taught 10-15 years or

more than 15 years listed this as a component of the moral purpose. Preventing harm was the

only moral purpose listed in teachers in the 10-15-year category. Building or cultivating

relationships was the second-most frequently listed moral purpose for implementation, though it

lagged preventing harm by a significant amount. Overall, 33% of teachers listed the need to build

strong relationships with students (in some capacity) as the moral purpose. Disrupting the

school-to-prison pipeline was listed by only 8% of teachers, all of whom fell into the 5-10 years

of teaching experience range. As depicted, preventing harm was listed by 83% of teaching staff,

putting it as the primary moral purpose cultivated amongst teachers. Figure 12 shows the

teachers' explanation of the moral purpose at the center of the implementation of restorative

justice at AHS.

Figure 12

The Moral Purpose of Restorative Justice Implementation

Description of Moral Purpose by Respondents
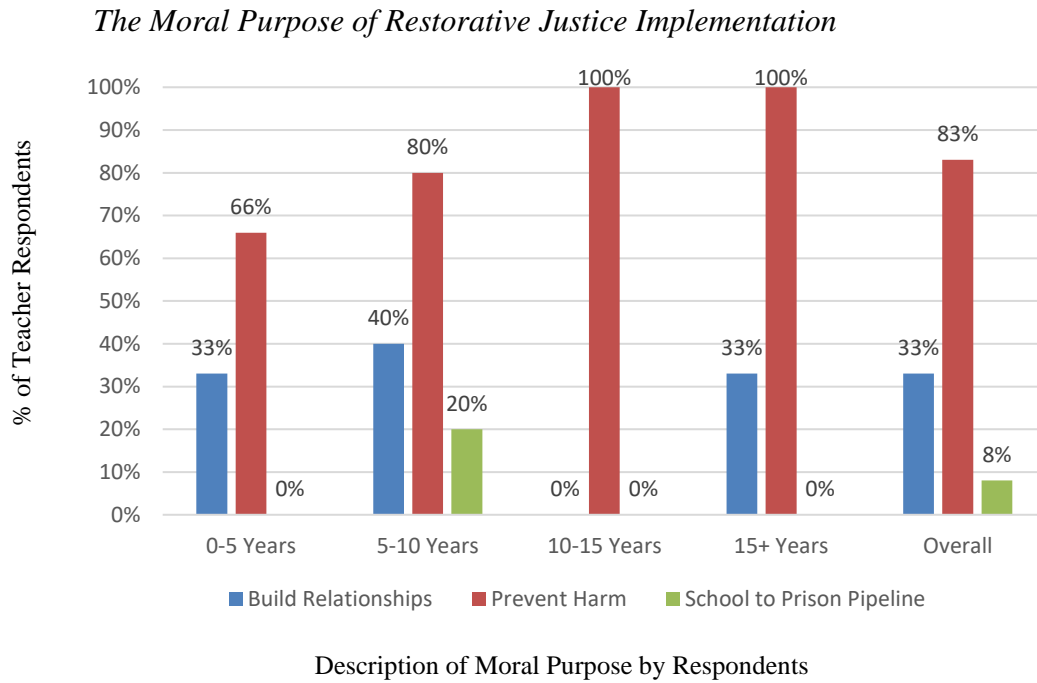
Table 4 shows how teachers explained shared that the moral purpose behind restorative justice was shared with them. This answer came from Question 7 of the teacher survey (Appendix H). This question also gets to coherence, as will be expanded in Research Question 3. Table 4 outlines *how* teachers shared and how many teacher participants shared the same responses.

Table 4

How Moral Purpose has Been Shared or Cultivated

	Participant Responses	
Teacher Response	**No.**	**%***
Professional development	6	46%
Training with local restorative justice expert	7	54%
Trauma-informed trainings	4	31%
Faculty meetings	5	38%
Data on the failures of traditional, punitive discipline model	3	23%
One-on-one conversations with administrators	4	31%
Behavior contracts with students	2	15%
Conference attendance	2	15%

Note. n = 13
*Rounded to whole number

Findings. Of the 13 teachers who completed the survey, nine teachers described the

moral purpose very similarly to how they defined restorative justice, making the two nearly

interchangeable. For example, one teacher described restorative justice thus: "It deals with

rehabilitation and empowering students to resolve conflicts on their own in small groups." This

same participant, listed this as part of the "why" behind restorative justice implementation: "to

establish a peaceful resolution to conflict." Resolving conflicts overlaps in their description of

restorative justice and in the *why* behind restorative justice implementation (which, as noted, was

asked to get to the moral purpose behind restorative justice implementation).

Of the survey participants, 10 teachers (77%) listed more than one way they have

received information on restorative justice, which is the best question for how the moral purpose

was articulated. A specific question on the *how* of moral purpose articulation might have yielded

a clearer answer to this question. Four of the ways in which moral purpose was communicated

fall in the category of large/ whole-group communicated (such as school-wide trainings and

faculty meetings). Only 31% listed one-on-one conversations with administrators as way in

which the moral purpose was communicated outside of a large/whole-group setting. The 23% who listed data on the failure of traditional, punitive discipline policies did not share if that data was shared in a whole-group setting or through one-on-one conversations with administrators.

Communication of the Moral Purpose in Student Handbook

The moral purpose behind implementation of restorative justice at AHS was not communicated explicitly in the student handbook. According to email communication from the principal, the student handbook was created during the 2019-2020 school year to align with restorative justice practices, and it was updated during the 2020-2021 school year to add in COVID/ virtual practices for students. The following part of the student pledge may align to restorative justice:

- "I wish to be the change I want to see in the world."

The pledge also calls for students to be involved and committed, accept others, oppose bullying and fighting, and it emphasizes the need to respect others and contribute to a great school atmosphere. There were no clear results or findings from the handbook, with the exception of researcher interpretation of the student pledge to align to restorative justice practices. Themes to this end are discussed later in the chapter.

Patterns and Themes

The following themes emerged from the first administrator interview. Pre-determined bins and themes were used for sorting themes that emerged, as a part of the a priori analysis method. However, several unanticipated themes emerged throughout the analysis process that were then sorted appropriately. These themes represent a majority of respondents in each category, or a theme that emerged from respondents to the interview and the surveys alike.

School-to-Prison Pipeline. The school-to-prison pipeline was listed by 75% of administrators as part of the moral purpose behind restorative justice implementation at AHS, emerging as one of themes. One administrator shared that disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline became very important after "George Floyd, police brutality, and racial equity issues in the world put the spotlight on making things fairer for people." Another administrator listed it in conjunction with other parts of the moral purpose, without elaboration, and a third administrator explained that "strong relationships" and "loving kids" can end the school-to-prison pipeline. They go on to describe ending this pipeline as the "moral thing" for schools to do.

Repair/Prevent Harm. As depicted in Table 4, 100% of administrator participants listed *repair and prevent harm* as one of part of the moral purpose, emerging as the second theme. This definition is the cohesive definition of restorative justice found in the literature studied in Chapter 2. Repairing and preventing harm in the greater Ashwood community was shared by 75% of administrator participants.

Humanistic Approach. Despite using different verbiage, 100% of administrator participants described restorative justice as the fairer, more humanistic approach to handling school discipline. One used the phrase "more humanistic approach." Another said it was the "fair" way to handle discipline. A third said it was the "loving" way to approach school discipline, and the fourth explained that "being a good administrator" naturally encompassed restorative justice as the "best" way to deal with discipline in a school.

Relationships. Strong, positive relationships were also a theme shared by 100% of administrator participants. The kinds of relationships varied, but across all participants the following relationships were discussed: administrator-student, administrator-teacher, teacher-student, student-student, and school-community. All administrators saw strong, positive

relationships as a crucial component of the moral purpose behind restorative justice implementation.

Whole-Group Cultivation. 100% of administrator participants listed various types of whole-group activities (such as professional developments, faculty meetings, and restorative justice training) as one of the main ways in which the moral purpose was cultivated with faculty. It was unclear how the whole-group cultivation took place compared to simply restarting or articulating the moral purpose to faculty in this whole-group setting.

One-on-One Cultivation. 100% of administrator participants listed one-on-one conversations and discussions as one of the ways in which they cultivate moral purpose. This was discussed as happening through email, face-to-face conversations, and always being accessible to teachers if they needed clarity.

The teacher survey responses revealed the following common themes.

Repair/Prevent Harm. Most teacher survey participants (83%) listed "to repair and prevent harm" as part of the moral purpose behind restorative justice implementation at AHS. This reason was the most prevalent in teachers who had taught 10-15 years and 15+ years, with 100% of those participants listing "to repair or prevent harm" as part of the moral purpose and/ or a reason for implementation.

Relationships. One third (33%) of teacher survey participants listed "relationships," in some capacity, as a part of the moral purpose. This was highest in the 5–10-year band, with 40% of teachers in that group listing relationships as part of the moral purpose/ a driver for restorative justice implementation.

Whole-Group Cultivation. Teacher participants listed the following ways in which moral purpose and understanding of restorative justice was communicated to them: professional

development, trainings with local restorative justice expert, trauma-informed trainings, and faculty meetings. All of these modes of communication fall into the theme of whole-group (or large group) cultivation.

The interpretation of the student handbook was less straightforward than that of administrator interview transcripts and teacher survey responses. In addition, the following themes emerged from the student handbook content analysis.

Student Responsibility. The student handbook emphasized student responsibility in the high school pledge, stating: "I pledge to take charge of my life," "I pledge to strive to be my best and never settle for less," and "I pledge to be my own person and refuse to follow the crowd." While not explicitly related to restorative justice, it could be interpreted to support the pillar of preventing harm by taking control of your own actions towards others.

Relationships. The student pledge seemed to include a commitment to relationships with others, stating: "I pledge to always lend a hand to someone in need" and "I pledge to be the greatest influence that I can be." Similarly, the student creed (shared just below AHS Pledge) includes the following statements supporting positive relationships: "To support inclusivity by accepting others," "To treat others as I want to be treated," and "To show respect by allowing staff to do their jobs."

Community Commitment. The importance of community in restorative justice is discussed at length in Chapter 2. Similarly, the student pledge seemed to include the importance of community as well, listing "I pledge to be the change I wish to see in the world" and "I pledge to contribute to making our school atmosphere greater as a whole" in the pledge.

Commitment to Change. The student pledge contained the lines: "I pledge to be the change I wish to see in the world" and "I pledge to promote peace by opposing bullying and/or

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fighting in school." Peace studies as going hand-in-hand with restorative justice practices was discussed by Claassen and Claassen (2008); it could be interpreted that including a commitment to peace aligns with restorative justice.

Research Question 2: In what ways have relationships been cultivated to support restorative justice?

To be a change leader and institute change in an organization or school, relationships are paramount. Fullan (2001) explains, "If moral purpose is job one, relationships are job two, as you can't get anywhere without them" (p. 51). Typically, when we think of the relationships change leaders need to cultivate, we consider their followers; for the school building, that could be teachers, counselors, and other staff. However, students, families, and the community in which the school is situated are also key relationships when it comes to instituting change in a school.

Data from administrator interviews, teacher surveys, and a content analysis of the student handbook were collected and analyzed to answer Question 2. Four administrators participated in two interviews each and 13 teachers participated in a teacher survey. Question 7 from the first administrator interview protocol (Appendix B) and Questions 7, 7a, and 7b from the second administrator interview protocol (Appendix E) related to the ways in which relationships were cultivated in support of restorative justice at AHS, according to administrator participants. Teacher survey Questions 6 and 6a (Appendix H) related to the ways in which relationships were cultivated in support of restorative justice, according to teacher participants.

Administrator Interviews

From the first administrator interview, Question 7 (Appendix B) related to how administrators built and maintained positive relationships with teachers. From the second

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administrator interview, Questions 7, 7a, and 7b explored how those relationships were

cultivated to support restorative justice when faced with resistance and opposition from teachers.

All four administrators answered all four of these questions with rich detail.

Results. Table 5 lists the ways in which administrators shared relationships had been cultivated

in support of restorative justice. These responses came from answers from across both

interviews. The only action listed by all participants falls under leadership traits/ habits rather

than actions taken to build or maintain relationships with teachers. These traits/ habits included

being extroverted, reliable, trustworthy, transparent, and honest/ genuine.

Table 5

Actions to Build/ Maintain Relationships with Teachers

Administrator Responses	No.
Maintaining open communication	1
Getting to know staff	3
Keeping an open-door policy	2
Participating in meetings with teachers	1
Participating in trainings with teachers	1
Giving teachers the gift of time	2
Being present in hallways and classrooms	3
Recognizing teacher successes with cards, conversations, emails	2
Traits of leader	4

Note. n = 4

Findings. Navigating opposition is a crucial part of the change process and the process of

coherence (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Similarly, many educators resist restorative

justice implementation due to their belief that restorative justice does not hold students

accountable or that the process is too slow in dealing with major offenses such as a student

physically hurting a teacher (Sandwick et al., 2019). To "move beyond the punishment

paradigm" (Sandwick et al., 2019, p. 19) and change the culture of a schools, administrators should view opposition as an impetus to improve the process and examine weaknesses in implementation (Fullan, 2001).

One administrator shared they navigated opposition by sharing stories of students who changed their behavior for the better, due to restorative justice. This administrator shared a story in the second interview about a student who was constantly in trouble and had a lot of energy in the classroom. They shared that they told this student they had to try out for the cheerleading team as a consequence for their classroom behaviors; the student tried out, made the squad, and changed her behavior for the better in order to be allowed to stay on the cheerleading squad. Another administrator claimed they navigated opposition by examining incidents from the teacher's perspective and by reminding teachers "restorative justice wasn't going away." A third administrator explained they shared data with teachers to manage opposition, and the last administrator explained she built strong relationships with teachers to navigate opposition.

Teacher Survey

Questions 6 and 6a on the teacher survey related to how administrators cultivated and maintained relationships with teachers in support of restorative justice implementation at AHS. All 13 participants (100%) answered both questions, though the level of detail varied across teacher survey participants.

Results. Table 6 shows the different responses teachers gave for *how* administrators cultivated and maintained relationships with them. Of the 13 participants, 15% were unsure how administrators cultivated and maintained relationships with them. Table 6 shows all the reasons shared, due to a lack of strong frontrunners/ common answers across participants.

Table 6

How Administrators Cultivate Relationships

Teacher Responses	No. of Teachers Listing This *how*	%*
One-on-one conversations	9	69%
Through committees and focus groups	2	25%
Being personable/ approachable	2	25%
Meetings	1	8%
Positively	2	25%
Negatively	3	23
Unsure	2	15%
Building trust	1	8%
Consistency	2	15%
Recognition of hard work/ incentives	5	38%

Note. n = 13
*Rounded to whole number

Overlap exists because 87% of teachers listed more than one way in which administrators cultivated relationships. The *positively* and *negatively* are not researcher interpretation of the data; they are counted here when the participant used the words *positive*, *positively*, *negative*, or *negatively* in their responses to one of the questions in the survey about administrator-teacher relationships.

Findings. As depicted in Table 6, most teachers listed positive ways in which administrators cultivated and maintained relationships with them. One shared: "by demonstrating care and appreciation through monthly incentives." One teacher who used the word "positive" answered: "I am impressed with the support that the admin, teachers, and staff have shown me. This is a very positive and supportive working environment." Another teacher shared administrators were "approachable" and "respectful" when it came to cultivating relationships. Most participants listed one-on-one conversations as a way in which administrators cultivate relationships with them, echoing administrator answers in the last section.

Student Handbook Relationship Cultivation

As noted in the previous section, the Ashwood High School Pledge notes the necessity of and a commitment to relationships with peers and the community in several instances. The AHS Creed, created by student, teacher, and administrator collaboration in the 2019-2020 school year, also reiterates a commitment of relationships. It reads:

As much as I attempt to calm the chaos around me called life, I can't, I can only control myself.

By controlling myself, I vow:

To go to class on time and POP

To support inclusivity by accepting others

To treat others as I want to be treated

To show respect by allowing the staff to do their jobs

To promote good behavior and show our [mascot] Pride

I pledge to be my authentic self at all times and be unapologetically bold.

By following this, I will be the best representation of Ashwood High School I can be.

Findings and results for research question two for the student handbook content analysis, again, was left to researcher interpretation, with no clear answer to *how* those relationships are cultivated and maintained (either student to student or student to teacher/administrator).

Patterns and Themes

Patterns and themes in this section emerged from a majority of participants either across groups or within groups, to include the content analysis of the student handbook. Several common themes emerged from the administrator interviews when it came to relationship building.

Whole-Group Relationship Building. The theme of cultivation by way of whole-group or large group settings was echoed when it came to relationships (as it was with moral purpose). According to administrators, relationships with cultivated and maintained in part during training, professional development, and meetings that teachers and administrators participated in together.

One-on-One Relationship Building. Administrators shared one-on-one conversations (made easier by being accessible and present) with teachers as a way in which they cultivated and maintained relationships. Some administrators also shared that they recognized individual teachers for their successes both at work and in their personal lives as a way in which relationships were strengthened.

Positive Relationships. All administrators shared, in some capacity across the questions used to answer this research question, their belief or view of relationships with teachers and students being a positive area/ an area of strength for administrators. No administrators shared any fears that relationships were tenuous or weak with either group (students or teachers).

Present and Accessible. Three of four participants (75%) listed their being present and accessible in hallways, classrooms, and their open-door office policies as ways in which they cultivated and maintained relationships with teachers.

Leadership Traits. The following leadership traits were shared by administrator participants as a way in which they cultivate and maintain relationships with teachers: being approachable, building trust, being respectful, and being consistent. Whether administrators believed their traits were personality traits or specific traits they purposefully cultivated was not shared.

Several themes emerged from the teacher survey participants answers.

Small-Group Relationship Building. For this theme, 2 of the 13 participants listed committees and focus groups as ways in which administrators build and maintain relationships. This differs from whole-group or large group cultivation, due to the typically much smaller number of people who make up a committee or focus group.

Recognition/Incentives. Five of 13 teachers (38%) listed recognition of hard work or incentives as ways in which administrators cultivated and maintained relationships with them. Depending on the how behind this, it could also fall into one-on-one, small-group, or whole-group. However, how this recognition was communicated and received and how and what incentives were provided were not clear based on teacher survey participant answers.

One-on-One Relationship Building. Nine of 13 (69%) of teachers listed one-on-one conversations as a way in which administrators cultivated and maintained relationships with them. Being personable and approachable are also traits that can fall under one-on-one relationship building traits/ actions by administrators.

Leadership Traits. The following leadership traits were listed by teachers as traits administrators possessed: being approachable, consistent, and personable. Building trust was a leadership action shared by a teacher participant. No teacher participants differentiated positive traits as belonging to one or more administrators, but rather, they grouped all administrators as a whole or a team.

Positive Relationships. Although only 2 of 13 participants used the word "positive" to describe relationships with administrators, several different answers given by teachers fall into a positive way in which leaders can cultivate and maintain relationships, For example, having one-on-one conversations with teachers, being approachable, consistent, personable, and trustworthy are all positive traits for leaders. Similarly, recognizing followers for their successes and offering

incentives can be seen as positive ways in which to cultivate and maintain relationships with followers. Some themes emerged from the student handbook in support of relationships.

Personal Accountability. Personal accountability was shared in the student creed through the following lines: "As much as I attempt to calm the chaos around me called life, I can't, I can only control myself," "To treat others as I want to be treated," and "To show respect by allowing the staff to do their jobs" This theme was determined based on researcher interpretation.

Positive Relationships. As noted in research question one, the student pledge supported positive relationships as a student responsibility. Similarly, the student creed emphasized treating others who the student wants to be treated and showing respect to staff. These fall under both themes for this research question.

Research Question 3: In what ways is the process of coherence making evident in practice?

A key step in reculturing/ the change process is the process of coherence making. Fullan and Quinn (2016) describe coherence as "the shared depth of understanding about the purpose and nature of the work" (p. 1). They go on to explain that coherence is "what is happening in the minds and actions of people individually and especially collectively" (p. 2). Coherence can often be gauged through shared understanding; for example, if administrators and teachers explain the "strategies in action, progress, results, next steps, and so on" consistently when asked separately (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 2). There are three main pillars to coherence: focused direction, collaborative culture, and clarity (Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

Data from administrator interviews, teacher survey, and a content analysis of the student handbook were collected and analyzed to answer research question three. Four administrators participated in two interviews each and 13 teachers participated in a teacher survey. The process

of coherence was investigated through three categories: focused direction, collaborative culture, and clarity related to research question three.

Administrator Interview Questions 2, 3c, and 4 from the first interview protocol (Appendix B) and Questions 1, 1a, 2, 2a, 3, and 3a from the second interview protocol (Appendix H) were used to investigate focused direction. Administrator Interview Questions 5 and 6 from the second interview protocol (Appendix H) were used to investigate the presence of a collaborative culture at AHS. Administrator Interview Questions 2, 2a, 3, 3a, 4, 4a, and 4b were used to investigate administrator and teacher clarity from the administrators' perspectives. Teacher Survey Questions 2, 7, 9, 10, and 11 (Appendix H) were used to investigate focused direction. Teacher Survey Question 5 (Appendix H) was used to investigate the presence of a collaborative culture at AHS. Teacher Survey Questions 8 and 9 were used to investigate teacher clarity from the teachers' perspectives. The student handbook lacked focused direction and collaborative culture. However, it contained some proof of clarity through use and explanation of **P**resent, **O**n-Task, **P**rogressing (POP) behavioral contracts in the handbook. As such, the student handbook will only be discussed in the clarity section of the coherence framework.

Focused Direction

Focused direction includes a focused moral purpose, which was covered in research question one. It also includes fostering understanding to make the *unknown* of the change process familiar and less daunting. As stated in earlier chapters, one of the hinderances to instituting restorative justice is a lack of clear definition of what restorative justice is (Hurley et al., 2015).

Administrator Interviews. Focused direction to foster clarity was analyzed through Questions 2, 3c, and 4 from the first interview protocol (Appendix B) and Questions 1, 1a, 2, 2a,

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3, and 3a from the second interview protocol (Appendix H). There is overlap between research

questions and the data used to investigate the answers to those questions due to the inherent

overlap of the conceptual model for this study, which depicted all the tenets of change and

coherence as concentric circles.

Results. There was an overlap between definitions and moral purpose across the

administrator interview participants. Table 7 shows different components of the definitions that

administrators shared to define restorative justice.

Table 7

Components of Administrator Definitions of Restorative Justice

Administrator Definitions	No. of Administrators Listing
Actions have consequences	3
Repair harm	4
Repair/ build relationships with/ or between students	4
Understand *the why* behind conflicts	3
Resolve conflict	3
Teach students lifelong skills	3

Note. n = 4

Based on the data, the 100% cohesive definition of restorative justice is "a process to repair harm

and repair and build relationships with students and between students." All other components

were common across 75% of administrators (though, not the same 75% of participants for each

component). This definition is an amalgamation of definitions shared by all four administrators.

Findings. One administrator defined restorative justice as:

A process that teaches kids that their actions have, that something happens due to their

actions, and that can be good or bad. If I'm working really hard, then I'm making good

grades: so that's a good consequence. But if I make a mistake, then I've got to fix that

mistake. You know, they're kids so they can make bad choices sometimes. I always say

their brains aren't fully formed. So, we just punish, but [for] most kids, that doesn't really

do any good.

This definition encompasses several of the pieces of restorative justice depicted in Table 6. The

cohesive definition of restorative justice shared above aligns with the definitions and meanings

explored through the literature in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

Teacher Survey. The focused directions of teachers were investigated through Questions

2, 7, 9, 10, and 11 of the teacher survey. Of the 13 participants, 100% answered all the questions,

providing a variety of answers and rich detail.

Results. For this area of study, only nine participant answers will be analyzed due to a

misunderstanding by four participants. Table 8 shows the different responses from those nine

teachers and the corresponding percentage of those nine (making these percentages differ from

previous tables). As shown in Table 8, professional development and trainings were the most

frequently listed way in which teacher participants learned about restorative justice at AHS.

Table 8

Source of Restorative Justice Learning for Teachers

Teacher Responses	No. of Teachers Listing This *how*	%
Professional Development	7	78%
Trainings	5	56%
Literature/ data	3	33%
From principal/ administrators	2	22%

Note. n = 9
*Rounded to whole number

Table 9 shows the manner of training and instruction teachers shared they have received on restorative justice. This is like the answer above, but it aligns with a different question, and thus, had different responses.

Table 9

Teacher Training and Instruction for Restorative Justice (RJ)

Teacher Responses	No. of Teachers Listing	%*
Training with local RJ expert	7	54%
Professional development	7	54%
PBIS *(Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports)*	2	15%
Trauma-informed training	2	15%
RJ Conference	1	8%
Prior experience from different school	1	8%

Note. n = 13
*Rounded to whole number

Table 10 shows the different ways teacher survey participants shared they cultivated and maintained positive relationships with students in a variety of ways. Of the 13 respondents, 77% listed more than one way in which they cultivate and maintain positive relationships with students. Although no answer had a majority, getting to know students, being kind, loving students, and being attentive to students and students' needs had the highest percentage of overlap among teacher respondents.

Table 10

Ways Teacher Cultivate and Maintain Student Relationships

Teacher Responses	No. of Teachers Listing	%*
Getting to know students	4	31%
Being kind	4	31%
Loving students	3	23%
Respecting students	3	23%
Being attentive to students/ students' needs	3	23%
Building trust	2	15%
Modeling vulnerability	2	15%
Having clear expectations	2	15%
Maintaining eye contact	1	8%

Note. n = 13

*Rounded to whole number

The final question listed above (Question 11) was used for focused direction overlaps in the Coherence Crosswalk (Appendix J) with the final part of coherence: clarity. As such, this question will be discussed in the clarity section of this chapter.

Findings. Question 2 was unclear for some teacher participants. Question 2 reads: "How have you learned about the restorative justice initiative at AHS?" One teacher answered this question: "3 to 4 years," two teachers answered it: "yes," and one teacher defined restorative justice in this question. This misunderstanding is why the data shared above only looks at 9 of the 13 teacher survey participants.

Four different teachers listed PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) and trauma-informed trainings as part of the restorative justice instruction and trainings they received there was no overlap between those who listed PBIS and trauma-informed trainings. The Center on PBIS (2022) describes PBIS as "an evidence-based three-tiered framework to improve and integrate all of the data, systems, and practices affecting student outcomes every day" (p. 1).

Hampson (2019) explains the relationship between PBIS and restorative justice practices as systems that "cannot be separated" (p. 1). Pathways to Restorative Communities' Beth Hampson (2019) explains: "As schools look to new initiatives to address these fundamental aspects of teaching and learning the overlap of Restorative Practices, PBIS, Trauma Informed Teaching and Social and Emotional Learning all work together to build safer more effective schools" (Hampson, 2019).

Patterns and Themes. The following themes were revealed through the two administrator interviews in which all four administrators at AHS participated.

Definition as Focused Direction. The cohesive definition that included components all four administrators listed is: "a process to repair harm and repair and build relationships with students and between students." This concise, clear, focused definition can fall under a clear focused direction for administrators.

Moral Purpose as Focused Direction. Most administrators described the definition of restorative justice in the same way they described the moral purpose of focused direction. This overlap could indicate the presence of focused direction or confusion, depending on the analysis.

Lifelong Skills. Three of four administrators listed the desire to teach students lifelong skills as an important part of restorative justice. This overlap across 75% of administrator interview participants could indicate focused direction for most of the administrative team.

Understanding Conflict. Three of four administrators listed understanding the *why* behind conflicts or getting to the root cause of conflict as an important part of restorative justice. This overlap across 75% of administrator interview participants could indicate focused direction for most of the administrative team.

Two themes were revealed through the teacher survey responses, as investigated through teacher survey responses.

Getting to Know Students. Nearly a third of teachers explained that getting to know students and building strong relationships with them was part of the focused direction of restorative justice, as revealed through the questions that investigated this part of coherence.

Treatment of Students. Many more teachers listed things that fell under the theme of treatment of students. For example, being kind, loving and understanding was listed by different teacher participants, as was modeling vulnerability, having clear expectations, and building trust. All of these can be seen as treating students well as part of the restorative justice implementation process at AHS.

Collaborative Culture

Fullan and Quinn (2016) explain that "leaders need to engage and motivate others to collaborate on new solutions" (p. 47). Further, leaders need to "create a culture of growth" and "know how to engage the hearts and mind of everyone" so that leaders and followers can "focus their collective intelligence, talent, and commitment to shaping a new path" (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 47).

Administrator Interviews. Administrator Interview Questions 5 and 6 from the second interview protocol (Appendix H) were used to investigate the presence of a collaborative culture at AHS.

Results. Of the four administrators, 100% listed PLCs (professional learning communities) as the main tenant of teacher collaboration at AHS. 100% of administrators also listed training from a local restorative justice expert, annual conferences, professional

development, and faculty meetings as ways in which teachers collaborate on restorative justice. Administrators also shared barriers to collaboration which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Findings. Administrators (and teachers) referred to training sessions with a local restorative justice expert as part of their change process in different parts of the interviews. The local restorative justice expert listed his services on his website thus:

> [Local Restorative Justice Expert] has provided services and trainings in communication, planning, problem-solving, restorative practices, diversity and cultural competence, and conflict resolution for businesses, government, schools, universities, and other organizations.

Administrators shared that they had attended an annual conference in 2017-2018 on restorative justice practices in education. In 2018-2019, a group of teachers who volunteered to be trained in restorative justice were sent to the conference with administrators. The following two school years, the conference was held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but administrators and select teachers continued to attend the conference together. Teachers volunteered to attend again, based on interest in becoming more adept at instituting restorative justice practices in their classroom.

Teacher Survey. Question 5 of the teacher survey (Appendix H) was used to investigate the presence of a collaborative culture at AHS. The survey did not have a question specific to collaborating around restorative justice, but instead focused on the existence of a collaborative culture (in general) at AHS.

Results. One teacher did not list the ways they collaborate, instead offering: "Communication is key in collaboration, especially when it comes to expectations and mutual

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respect for each other." Due to the lack of *ways* listed in that answer, Table 11 includes the other

twelve teacher survey participant responses.

Table 11

How Teachers Collaborate at Ashwood High School

Teacher Responses	No. of Teachers Listing	%*
Planning/ lessons	5	42%
Co-teaching	4	33%
Informal conversation (text, email, chats)	4	33%
Do not collaborate (due to teacher shortage/ overloads)	3	25%

Note. n = 12
*Rounded to whole number

The reasons 25% of teachers explained they do not collaborate is due to the teacher

shortage. They explained that teachers must teach "overloads" which means they do not have a

planning period, and instead, teach an additional course. This will be expanded upon in Chapter

5.

Findings. Most teachers shared their collaboration in terms of collaborating around

lessons, co-teaching, and informal communication, rather than collaboration around the

restorative justice practices, implementation, or barriers.

Patterns and Themes. The following themes were revealed through administrator

interviews and analysis of interview transcripts.

Whole-Group Trainings/ Professional Development. Collaboration was often limited to

whole-group training and professional development, according to 100% of administrator

responses. It was unclear how a teaching staff of 60 people was able to collaborate in large settings.

PLCs. All administrators also listed PLCs as settings in which teachers collaborated. Two of four (50%) of administrators shared that this collaboration was often limited to instructional planning, rather than including restorative justice.

Two themes were revealed through analysis of teacher survey responses.

Instructional Collaboration. Nine of 12 analyzed responses fell under instructional collaboration. This included lesson planning, curricular planning, and co-teaching collaboration.

Informal Collaboration. Approximately one third of teachers shared they collaborated in informal ways, through face-to-face discussions, text messages, and emails with colleagues. It was unclear whether that collaboration was also instructional or if it fell under restorative justice collaboration.

Clarity

Clarity is a subjective ideal, differing from person to person (Fullan & Quinn, 2016), but it is a crucial part of focusing direction in followers as a change leader. Change leaders must be sure that clarity is evident in "people's minds and actions" (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 24). Administrators must build capacity in their faculty and staff before clarity can be achieved, and clarity must precede coherence (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Developing capacity and building "new skills" thus "increases clarity and, in turn, commitment" of teachers and other followers (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, pp. 24-25).

Administrator Interviews. Questions 2, 2a, 3, 3a, 4, 4a, and 4b from the second administrator protocol (Appendix E) were used to investigate clarity through the administrators' perspectives. A variety of responses from these questions informed the results of this section.

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Results. Table 12 shares a summary of each administrator's short-term goals, evidence for short term goals, long-term goals, and evidence for long-term goals. Administrators are listed in no order or hierarchy. Table 12 shows commonalities between administrators, with most listing discipline data and a reduction in discipline issues as evidence and goals. Culture in the school and the community were also commonalities across administrator participants.

Table 12

Short-Term and Long-Term Administrator Goals and Evidence

	Administrator 1	Administrator 2	Administrator 3	Administrator 4
Short-term goals	• Continue growing restorative justice and getting better at it	• Decrease in suspensions • Increase in use of restorative justice circles • Increase in number of students requesting mediation	• Reduction in referrals • Improvement in student behavior	• Build strong, positive relationships with students • Build trust with students
Evidence of short-term goals	• Suspension data • Expulsion data • Data on number of students going to mediation vs. being excluded • Students coming to adults to avoid conflict	• Suspension data • Expulsion data • Data on number of students requesting mediation	• Referral data • Incident/ behavior data	• These things cannot be measured/ unsure how to measure them.
Long-term goals	• No in-school fighting • Improved graduation rate • Improved school culture • Improvement in City of Ashwood community/ less violence in the city	• Improvement in student communication • Ability for students to handle conflict peacefully • Ability for students to apologize after causing harm	• Culture of support and trust	• Improvement in City of Ashwood community/ less violence in the city • Increase in parent involvement • Increase in student academic success
Evidence of long-term goals	• Suspension data • Expulsion data • Graduation rate data	• Data on improvement of culture	• Student surveys • Faculty surveys • Discipline data • Referral data	• These things cannot be measured/ unsure how to measure them.

Questions 4, 4a, and 4b were asked to gauge administrator perception of school-wide clarity.

Administrators were asked to express this answer in a percentage of teachers for each question

and given bands to choose from. Figure 13 shows the administrator perception of teacher

knowledge of restorative justice. The results are separated by administrator, in no order or

hierarchy, to show their perceived assumption of teachers who know what restorative justice is

compared to teachers using restorative justice in the classroom. As shown, the administrators had a shared perception that far more teachers knew what restorative justice is when compared to teachers using it.

Figure 13

Administrator Perception of Teacher Knowledge of Restorative Justice (RJ)

Knowledge vs. Usage Among Teachers
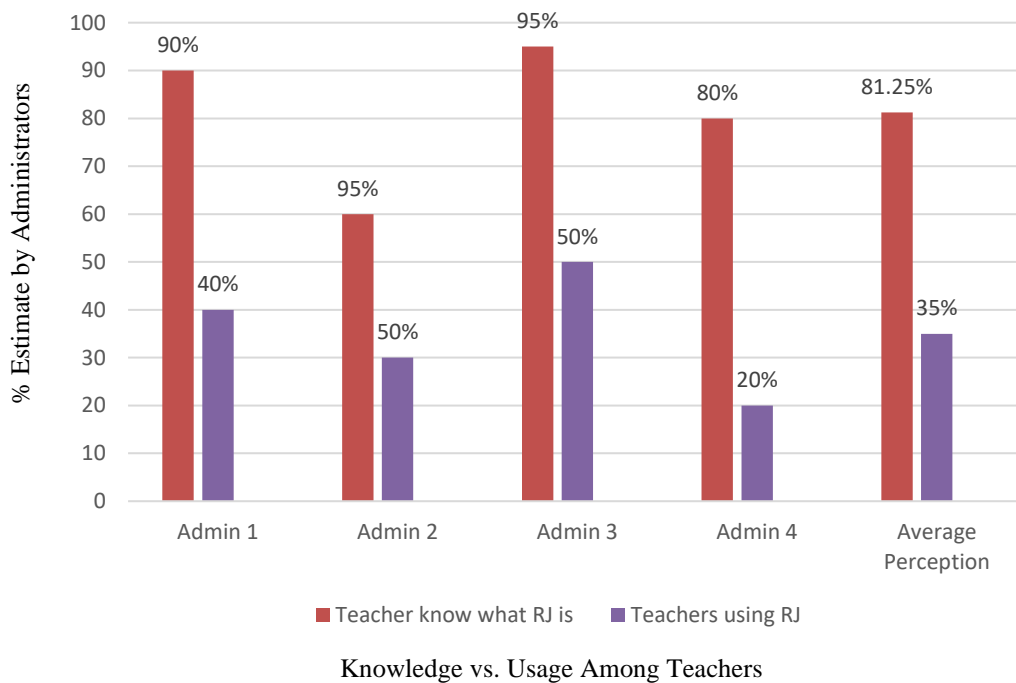
Findings. There was overlap among administrator participants in terms of short-term and long-term plans for restorative justice, and 75% of administrators agreed that survey data, discipline data, and academic data could be used to determine if short-term and long-term plans were successfully met. Reducing discipline issues, exclusions, school culture, and community culture were commonalities among administrator participants for short-term and long-term goals.

Teacher Survey. Questions 8 and 9 of the teacher survey (Appendix H) were analyzed to

investigate teacher clarity around restorative justice implementation.

Results. There were various responses to the question on how teachers implement

restorative justice in their classrooms. Table 13 shows the different ways in which teacher survey

participants shared they implemented restorative justice in their classrooms, as well as the

number of teachers who did not implement restorative justice in their classrooms. Many

participants listed more than one way in which they implement restorative justice in their

classrooms. While only one teacher mentioned P.O.P. contracts by name, two additional teachers

listed "behavioral contracts" as ways in which they implement restorative justice in the

classroom.

Table 13

How Teachers Implement Restorative Justice in the Classroom

Teacher Responses	No. of Teachers Listing	%*
Mediation/ discussions with students	8	62%
Giving second chances	5	38%
Using P.O.P./ behavioral contracts	3	23%
Being patient	3	23%
Giving students a voice/ say	2	15%
Kindness	2	15%
Maintaining firm expectations	2	15%
Avoiding referrals	1	8%
Does not use restorative practices in the classroom	2	15%

Note. n = 13
*Rounded to whole number

Findings. Answers to the first question were the most standardized answers to teacher survey questions. Across teacher participants, 62% of participants shared some variation of "case by case basis" or it depends on the student or situation, and 38% of participants said they were unsure/ did not know. One such participant in the unsure category shared, "Truly, I'm not sure;" another shared, "Frankly, I don't know."

Mediations or discussions with students was listed by 62% of teacher survey participants. While 0% of teachers used the term "circles" or "restorative justice circles," it is possible those mediations and discussions are structured like a circle or use restorative justice circles as a blueprint for how they are run. However, that possibility is speculative.

Student Handbook Clarity. Again, restorative justice is not mentioned explicitly in the student handbook. However, P.O.P. contracts were. As such the findings here are an interpretation based on researcher interpretation and analysis of the student handbook.

Results. Teachers and administrators mentioned P.O.P. contracts in interviews and surveys, with 100% of administrators mentioning P.O.P. contracts somewhere in the interview process. P.O.P. contracts were described by one administrator as a key way in which AHS is implementing restorative justice. According to the student handbook, the acronym P.O.P. stands for Present, On-task, and Progressing. The handbook reads:

As previously stated, AHS Students P.O.P. Students are expected to be **P**resent, **O**n-task, and **P**rogressing.

PRESENT

Being PRESENT at school is important because students are more likely to succeed in academics when they attend school consistently.

ON TASK

Students will ultimately become more productive by staying ON TASK.

PROGRESSING

PROGRESS on goals leads to more positive emotions and more satisfaction with life.

The handbook goes on to include what it looks like to P.O.P. in different settings and times across the school. Each description is given in a chart that describes what being present, on-task, and progressing looks like in each setting. Table 14 shows what it looks like to POP in the classroom. It is important to note that many of the scenarios were updated to include COVID-19 safety protocols during the 2021-2022 school year. Table 14 is a recreation verbatim of how students P.O.P. in the classroom.

Table 14

Present, On-Task, and Progressing in the Classroom

Present	On Task	Progressing
• Be inside the door when the tardy bell rings • Do the right task at the right time • Have a positive attitude toward learning and the ideas presented in class • Sit in your assigned desk to maintain social distancing protocols.	• Follow the directions of the teacher • Bring required materials to class • Put things where they belong (personal items, trash, supplies, etc.) • Stay on track—time on task • Treat yourself and others in the classroom with respect	• Show respect for yourself by setting challenging goals and working toward them • Give your best effort to succeed at the task at hand • Use the supports you have • Ask for and give help • Just do it!

Table 15 has been recreated verbatim from the handbook to show how a student should P.O.P. in the hallway. The 15-minute rule is described as the practice of not giving passes the first and last 15 minutes of classes (to cut down on hallway traffic).

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Table 15

Present, On-Task, and Progressing in the Hallway

Present	On Task	Progressing
• Follow the 15-minute rule	• Follow the dress code	• Take care of any business as quickly as possible so you can minimize missed class time
• Walk right, talk right	• Follow adult directions	
• Take the most direct route to your destination	• Have a pass during class time	
• If we are utilizing one-way hallways for social distancing, follow the directions of the hallway	• Go only to the destination approved by your teacher	• Be in class during class time so you can learn!
	• Stay to the right and maintain a 6-foot distance from others	

Findings. P.O.P. contracts and expectations also fall under the implementation of PBIS. As noted previously, some teachers and administrators explained PBIS as a support and/or a process used in conjunction with restorative justice to implement whole-school restorative justice. P.O.P contracts will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

Patterns and Themes. Questions 2, 2a, 3, 3a, 4, 4a, and 4b from the second administrator protocol (Appendix E) revealed the following themes:

Reduce Exclusion. Reducing student exclusion from the classroom, through a reduction of in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion was a common theme among all administrator participants.

Reduce Violence. All administrators referred to reducing violence throughout their interviews. However, for these particular questions, 75% of administrators listed a reduction of violence in the school and/ or city communities as a short-term or long-term goal of restorative justice implementation.

Community Change. Community change was a theme throughout the interviews, but specifically in terms of clarity, two administrators (50%) listed positive community change

explicitly in their goals and an additional administrator (25%) seemed to imply it as a goal. As noted earlier, community change is often seen as the end-goal of restorative justice implementation in K-12 schools (O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020).

Improved Culture. All administrators (100%) expressed a desire to improve the culture of the school in some capacity as a key part of their goals. Three of the four administrators (75%) understood that culture could be determined through various data.

Questions 8 and 9 of the teacher survey (Appendix H) revealed four common themes.

Circles. As previously noted, this theme falls under researcher interpretation. The word "circles" was not used by any teacher participants. However, the reference to mediation and discussions that understand the root of a problem read as if they fall under the definition of restorative justice circles discussed in Chapter 2. Of the 13 teacher participants, eight (62%) listed mediation and discussions with students as a way in which they implement restorative justice in their classrooms. If these are structured restorative justice circles or modeled after structured circles, they would be a clear example of AHS teachers using restorative justice in their classrooms.

Treatment of Students. Being kind and understanding to students, giving students a voice, and being firm and clear are all ways in which teachers explained their treatment of students is a way in which they implement restorative justice in their classroom. Although not explicitly stated, giving students a voice could be an example of democratic governance described in Chapter 2 as an important part of restorative justice implementation.

The student handbook had no explicit mention of restorative justice. However, it did have a large section devoted to P.O.P. contracts. P.O.P. contracts fall under the umbrella of PBIS, which can be a way in which schools implement restorative justice practices.

Behavioral Expectations. The P.O.P. contracts list clear expectations of student behavior in different parts of the school, leaving little room for interpretation for students. These clear behavior guidelines can make it easier for students to understand the behavioral expectations in the school.

Behavioral Contracts. P.O.P. contracts are an example of behavioral contracts. Sometimes behavioral contracts are tailored for individual students, but these contracts have clear guidelines for all students. Signing the handbook (an expectation of all students) could be seen as acknowledging and agreeing to abide by P.O.P. behavioral contracts. When a student does not POP, that signature could be used to denote a violation of that specific contract.

Triangulation of Data

Triangulation of all three data sources allowed the different sources of data to yield more fruitful results than proficiency in a single source of data (R. Johnson & Gray, 2010). Data from administrator interviews, teacher survey results, and a content analysis of the student handbook revealed some shared themes for the three research questions. There was only one theme that overlapped for all three data sets, but there were more overlapping themes when looking just at the administrator interviews and teacher survey results. The area with the least number of overlapping themes was coherence (focused direction, collaborative culture, and clarity). Coherence is described as essential for a culture of change to be in place (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

Moral Purpose

Moral purpose is responsible for the single common theme between all three data sources: relationships. Analysis of administrator interview transcript, teacher survey results, and a content analysis of the student handbook all revealed the theme of relationships. In the context

of this study and these findings, strong, positive relationships were seen as an essential part of the moral purpose behind restorative justice implementation. Relationships in this section referred to teacher-student relationships, administrator-student relationships, and student-student relationships. Administrator-teacher relationships with not examined through the lens of moral purpose.

Teacher survey responses and administrator interview transcripts also yielded a common theme that articulated the *why* behind restorative justice implementation: to repair and prevent harm. This definition was shared in Chapter 2 as a succinct, cohesive definition of restorative justice. A clear, shared moral purpose is important for a culture of change. However, there were several themes in each group of participants that were not shared across participant groups.

Relationships

There were no shared themes across all three data sets. Administrator interview transcripts and teacher survey results did have three common themes when it came to cultivating and maintaining relationships: one-on-one, group, and leadership traits. Administrators shared in interviews and teachers shared in the survey that relationships between administrators and teachers were cultivated and maintained through one-on-one conversations and communication. This could mean relationships are a strength for administrators, if combined with other factors.

The second shared theme was group cultivation and maintenance of relationships. Administrators explained they cultivated and maintained relationships through whole-group/ large group settings such as PDs, meetings, and trainings; teachers explained administrators cultivated relationships with them through focus groups and committees which are smaller groups (rather than a large/ whole-group setting). While the kind of group described was not the same, the understanding that relationships were cultivated and maintained in groups emerged.

The third shared theme for relationships was leadership traits. Administrators and teachers listed a variety of leadership traits as being part of how relationships were cultivated and maintained at AHS. The specific traits varied across participants, but participants valued being trustworthy and open.

Coherence

Referring back to the conceptual model for this study, relationships are necessary for moral purpose to be cultivated, and both relationships are moral purpose are necessary for the coherence process to be authentic. Similarly, focused direction, collaborative culture, and clarity are three pillars necessary for coherence. Coherence is the stage in which only one theme emerged across the administrator interview transcripts and teacher survey results. There were no themes that emerged across all data points.

The first pillar of coherence, focused direction, saw no overlapping themes across participants groups and data sets. The second pillar, collaborative culture, yielded a single theme between administrator interview transcripts and teacher survey results. This theme was PLCs/instructional collaboration as the major way in which teachers collaborate. Collaboration around restorative justice implementation was not a common theme across data sets. Clarity also yielded no common themes, although P.O.P. contracts were a commonality explored in some capacity, it did not emerge as a theme for this study.

Conclusions from this triangulation of data will be examined in Chapter 5, as will the overarching research question: In what ways does AHS reflect a culture of change in support of restorative justice? Answering that question requires interpretation of the three datasets independently and collectively.

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Summary of Chapter

The major finding from the triangulation of data points supports much of what Michael Fullan says about changing culture and being a leader of change: the change process and the kind of leadership needed for this process are "complex, rife with paradoxes and dilemmas" (Fullan, 2001, p. 2). Change is a process that takes time, often several years, to occur in a system; similarly, cultivating coherence and increasing buy-in are difficult processes (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Creating a whole-school model that is different from the prevailing practices and beliefs about discipline and the responsibilities of schools is difficult work, but the findings support AHS' administration's commitment to change and early indicators of change in the culture of the school, as analyzed through administrator interviews transcripts, teacher survey results, and a content analysis of the student handbook.

In this chapter, I included findings from the research; some findings were found in a majority or nearly a majority of teachers. However, while the number of respondents represented 22% of the teaching staff, there was still a relatively small total number of survey responses. As such, I included several findings that were not a majority to share a rich overview of teacher and administrator responses to interviews and the survey, respectively. When it comes to coherence, there were almost no instances wherein most teachers responded in the same or similar fashion, reverberating Fullan's claims that coherence is a complex, complicated process that can be very easy to get wrong. Changing a system is an arduous task with many moving parts and goals that must work in tandem to result in long-lasting, system-wide change. AHS is a system wherein the leadership team is relatively well-versed in the change they are trying to implement, but the teachers and student handbook do not seem to be working in tandem towards that effort.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was an exploratory case study examining the cultural of change and cultural shift to restorative justice practices at Ashwood High School (AHS). The cultural shift of AHS was examined through the theoretical lens of Michael Fullan's practice of *reculturing*, using a conceptual model that combined Fullan's culture of change and coherence models (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). This conceptual model presents reculturing through the follow concentric circles: coherence, moral purpose, and relationships, with relationships as the inner most circle and the cornerstone of the reculturing process.

The implementation of restorative justice practices in K-12 education is happening across the country and the world; however, the roots of these practices are attributed to various indigenous cultures in the Americas and the South Pacific (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020; Sandwick et al., 2019). This implementation is generally attributed to racial inequities in K-12 discipline practices that support the school to prison nexus (Hurley et al., 2015; O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020).

This study was conducted with participants in a public high school in a small urban school district in the American South. Here, the American South generally applies to the geographical region south of the Mason-Dixon line and east of the westernmost Texas-New Mexico border and notably including all states formerly known as the Confederate States of America (Britannica, 2021). This historical understanding situates the study geopolitically in the diverse political landscape of the United States.

The following data points informed the findings of this study: two semi-structured interviews for each of the four administrators, an open-ended teacher survey completed at-will, and a content analysis of the student handbook. This data was analyzed through the lens of the researcher-created conceptual model which combined the theoretical frameworks in Michael Fullan's *Leading in a Culture of Change* (2001) and *Coherence: The Right Drivers in Action for Schools, Districts, and Systems* (2016). The change process examined was the process of reculturing, or the process of transforming the culture of a school (Fullan, 2001); in this case, the cultural shift was from a traditional punitive discipline culture to a restorative culture.

Overarching themes from this study included: whole-group relationship and moral purpose cultivation, a lack of coherence for teachers, the marriage of PBIS with restorative justice implementation, a lack of collaboration on restorative justice implementation, a limited amount of collaboration across the board, an emphasis on relationships between teachers and students, and a strong relationship between administrators and teachers who supported restorative justice implementation.

Discussion of Major Findings

Michael Fullan discusses the following areas in several of his models: moral purpose, relationships, and coherence making (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Coherence making includes focused direction, collaborative culture, and clarity (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). These tenets are all necessary for a school to reflect a culture of change (Fullan, 2001).

Research Question 1: How has the moral purpose been shared and cultivated in support of restorative justice?

The moral purpose in support of restorative justice was shared through professional developments, trauma-informed trainings, and trainings with a restorative justice specialist in the

general Ashwood area. Of the teacher survey respondents, 11 teachers explained the moral

purpose, how it was shared, and how they have used that moral purpose to drive restorative

practices in their own classrooms in a positive way that supported school-wide implementation

of restorative justice practices. However, the ability to articulate the moral purpose may not

indicate a culture of change on its own. Fullan and Quinn (2016) explain that "alignment on

paper" might not necessarily lead to change or understanding (p. 24). Providing strategies

"conceptually linked" to goals might still not be enough to "give participants the experiences and

capacity to become clear on what it means in practice" (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 24). As noted

throughout this dissertation, moral purpose must go hand-in-hand with strong relationships and

coherence for a culture to become a culture of change (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

A WestEd report explained that lack of "clear definition nor a widely accepted model" of

restorative justice is evident in existing restorative justice research (Hurley et al., 2015, p. 2). The

cohesive definition found in the literature since published since 2015 is: to repair and mitigate

harm. To repair and prevent (a synonym for mitigate) was a theme among teacher survey

participants and administrator interview participants and was the most commonly discussed

definition across all participants. While the student handbook did not contain this explicit

definition, the student pledge included: "I pledge to promote peace by opposing bullying and/or

fighting in school." Promoting peace and opposing harm (in this instance, bullying and/or

fighting are the harms mentioned), mitigating harm could be seen. Sandwick et al. (2019)

describes restorative justice is an approach to conflict that focuses on the mitigation of harm by

finding the cause of the conflict, focuses on relationships between individuals and within a larger

community, and emphasizes accountability for harm to the individual and the community. At

different parts of the interview processes, getting to the *why* behind a conflict (or the root cause),

mitigating harm in the wider community, and a focus on relationships between students and teachers, students and administrators, students and students, and administrators and teachers. Similarly, approximately one third of teacher participants listed *building relationships* as part of the moral purpose and 100% of administrators shared relationships as a part of the moral purpose of restorative justice implementation.

A necessary part of understanding *how* the moral purpose was shared and cultivated is understanding *what* moral purpose(s) was shared and cultivated by administrators at Ashwood High School, in part to examine if the *how* succeeded in supporting a culture of change across the school. Teachers explained a multi-faceted moral purpose behind implementation of restorative practices, including prevention of harm, disruption of the school-to-prison pipeline (nexus), and cultivation of positive relationships with students. Most teachers listed *prevention of harm* as the moral purpose behind implementation of restorative justice practices, as cited in Chapter 4.

This moral purpose aligns with the definition and moral purpose behind implementation of restorative justice practices in K-12 schools across the country. As noted in Chapter 2, commitments to peace, peacemaking, harm reduction, and harm mitigation are crucial to implementing school-wide restorative justice (Claassen & Claassen, 2008; Maynard & Weinstein, 2020). These commitments can be cornerstones of the moral purpose behind such implementation, and most teachers who took part in the survey listed preventing harm (in some capacity) as the moral purpose behind implementation of restorative justice practices at AHS. The ability to share a uniform explanation of the moral purpose is a key indicator that this first prong of reculturing has been achieved in some capacity among the teachers who chose to participate in this survey.

Fullan (2001) explained that moral purpose alone is not enough; a moral purpose must be "cultivated and activated" (p. 27) by effective change leaders. For AHS administrators to have successfully cultivated a purpose driven moral purpose that is sustainable, "it is imperative to include those who disagree, are skeptical or even cynical" (Fullan & Quinn, 2016, p. 6). Some outliers did not see restorative justice as practical or effective, and they did not feel administrators built strong, positive relationships with staff. The relationship between skepticism or cynicism of restorative justice practices and poor relationships with administrators seems to imply that administrators may not be making strong relationships with teachers who disagree with the cultural shift to restorative justice practices. Although one administrator shared how he handled opposition by sharing stories and concrete examples of how restorative justice has positively affected students at AHS, other administrators claimed that restorative justice is not optional, and it is not going away. The latter approach can be seen as a relationship-breaker, treating followers like children who must obey can make teachers feel as if they have no power to push back against changes in the school with which they do not agree (Fullan, 2001). This latter approach may have impacted relationships with naysayers and will be explored in more detail through the next research question.

Sandwick et al. (2019) examined restorative justice implementation in New York City through case studies of five diverse schools in the school district. Through these case studies, researchers found that the democratic nature of restorative justice was hugely important, as was disrupting the hierarchies of school. This included the power structure between teachers and administrators. Teachers needed to feel they had a voice and a vote, as it were, in the process of restorative justice implementation. Without this part of restorative justice, teachers were less likely to buy-in to the shift to restorative justice from traditional, punitive punishment. Handling

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opposition and relationships also overlaps with question two and will be explored in more depth later; however, moral purpose on its own cannot stand without strong relationships and careful navigation of the followers who do not buy into the moral purpose and/ or the change leaders are trying to make (Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Sandwick et al., 2019).

Research Question 2: In what ways have relationships been cultivated to support restorative justice?

Referring to the conceptual model created for this study, it is important to note that the centermost concentric circle, the cornerstone and the bedrock on which change is built by effective change leaders is relationships (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). As noted in Chapter 4, more than half of teachers who completed the survey viewed building and maintaining relationships as a strength for administrators. Sandwick et al. (2019) described building strong relationships and community as an imperative first step to restorative justice implementation in New York City. It follows that this would be a crucial step for Ashwood, as well. The most prevalent teacher explanations as to how relationships with cultivated and maintained at Ashwood High School were positive. Nine of 13 teacher survey participants (69%) shared those relationships were cultivated through one-on-one discussions with administrators. Teachers also noted a number of positive leadership traits the administrative team possessed, including being trustworthy, consistent, personable, and approachable.

The *how* behind how relationships were cultivated and maintained fell into four main categories between administrator and teacher participants: whole-group/large group settings such as faculty meetings and professional development, small group settings such as committees and focus groups, one-on-one conversations, and administrators recognizing and incentivizing teacher hard work. Building relationships in a setting of 60 teachers and four administrators

could be superficial. Yet, small groups and one-on-one could lead to authentic relationships between leaders and followers.

Although most teachers saw relationships as an area of strength for administrators, there was a vocal minority of teacher participants who felt the opposite, viewing relationships as a weakness for administrators. In reaction to the question "Describe how administrators cultivate relationships with teachers," teachers shared that the principal struggled to communicate positively through Zoom and email. These teachers also expressed that the one-on-one time with administrators was limited, explaining that administrators do not make time to come into classrooms. One of these dissenters viewed the incentives for hard work as being superficial and lacking the true support teachers needed from administrators. Similarly, three other teacher participants also shared they were "not sure" or had "never analyzed" how administrators cultivate relationships with teachers. Oakland Unified School District included relationship and community building as part of the stepping stones to creating a restorative schools Oakland Unified School District Restorative Justice Team, 2020). Including teachers in the vision, celebrating the strengths and assessing the needs, and supporting teachers through the implementation process are necessary stones to creating a restorative school (Oakland Unified School District Restorative Justice Team, 2020). AHS administrators could similarly find more authentic ways to include teacher feedback and provide a place for teachers to safely dissent from the culture change as a necessary part of the whole-school restorative justice process.

It is worth noting that the teachers who felt relationships were not a strength for the administrative team also shared some negative feelings about restorative justice implementation at AHS. Fullan (2001) explains "you can't get anywhere without" relationships (p. 51); relationships with "the people" are the cause for success in change systems (p. 51). Fullan (2001)

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goes on to explain that the "culture of change" is "rife with anxiety, stress, and ambiguity" (p. 71). A change leader's response to these emotions is crucial in a culture of change, and Fullan (2001) explains that change leaders welcome resistance from followers, and change leaders must deal with that resistance effectively in order to be a true change leader. Further, Fullan (2001) sees conflict and resistance as necessary. Absence of resistance and conflict can be a "sign of decay" (p. 74). Sandwick et al. (2019) explains that leaders must confront conflict and adversity as it arises, noting that teachers need a safe place to vent their frustrations and to celebrate big and small victories as part of the restorative justice implementation process. Similarly, Oakland Unified School District (n.d.-b) explained the necessity of including teachers in the restorative justice implementation process. While an emphasis on student emotions and getting to the root of student conflict is a necessary part of the restorative justice process, so is understanding and reacting to teacher emotions and understanding the root of their unrest, anxiety, and dissent (Fullan, 2001; Maynard & Weinstein, 2020; Oakland Unified School District, n.d.-b; Sandwick et al., 2019).

The teachers who did not feel administrators positively or effectively cultivated relationships with them were also teachers resistant to restorative justice implementation. They were skeptical of the change the administrative team was trying to implement at AHS, and their responses to the survey seem to imply that their resistance was unwelcome. As previously mentioned, the same teachers who were critical of restorative justice practices also found relationships were not a strength of administrators, echoing the administrator responses that included a firm response that restorative justice implementation was not optional. This top-down response is unlikely to be welcomed by naysayers. Part of being an emotionally intelligent, successful change leader is welcoming the naysayers and using their feedback to improve;

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welcoming conflict and resistance yields to "later, greater implementation" (Fullan, 2001, p. 75).

It seems possible to conclude that the resistance and naysayers may not be as welcome as they

should be at AHS which limits the effectiveness of the change the administration team is trying

to implement and could hinder whole-school implementation of restorative justice. Silencing or

ignoring resistance can weaken a system of change because hiring or seeking out only "like-

minded innovators" prevents leaders from taking the concerns of the naysayers/ resisters

seriously and taking those concerns into consideration and seeing them as having merit

strengthens the overall organization (Fullan, 2001, p. 75).

      There are always different perspectives within a system, including a system in the change

process. While noteworthy, teacher participants with negative views of relationships with

administrators and restorative justice implementation were in the minority. However, it is

possible that relationships with like-minded teachers and/ or early adopters of restorative justice

are positive, but relationships with naysayers and resisters are more tenuous. In Oakland Unified

School District's three tiers of school based restorative justice model, continued emphasis on

strong relationships was a necessary foundation before a school could move into discipline

reform and re-entry support. This includes relationships between teachers and administrators and

emotionally intelligent leaders (Oakland Unified School District, n.d.-b; Oakland Unified School

District Restorative Justice Team, 2020). Similarly, Sandwick et al. (2019), found that leaders

must confront adversity as it arises and provide a way for naysayers to be a valued part of the

restorative justice implementation process. The difficulties of navigating away from an ingrained

punishment paradigm is a difficult process that needs to be acknowledged as followers express

dissent (O'Brien & Nygeen, 2020; Sandwick et al., 2019). Building strong relationships with

those who resist the change a leader is trying to make is crucial to being a culture of change, and

as previously noted, relationships are the bedrock on which change is built. Without a strong foundation, the entire organization risks failure in terms of changing the culture and, in this case, implementing whole-school restorative justice practices.

Research Question 3: In what ways is the process of coherence making evident in practice?

The three main pillars of coherence in the conceptual model for this study are: focused direction, collaborative culture, and clarity (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). All three must be evident in practice for a system to be a culture of change and a culture of coherence (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Without coherence, change cannot go beyond the surface level. Followers must understand the why and the how of the change being implemented, and followers must be invested enough to implement that change with fidelity. Without understanding and collaboration, these *musts* cannot be achieved.

Focused Direction. One of the many obstacles to implementing whole-school restorative justice is a lack of clear definition or model (Hurley et al., 2015). Even the clear definition of repairing and mitigating harm can be nebulous without the focused direction to implement it. All but a single teacher participant gave a similar definition and understanding of restorative justice, and all administrator participants gave a similar definition and understanding. Follow-up questions about the *how* of implementation were also clearly answered by all participants. However, all administrators perceived that many teachers did not implement or understand restorative justice (as noted in Chapter 4), and it is important to note that the survey was an at-will survey. It is possible that the teachers who lacked focused direction and understanding did not choose to complete the survey. One way to gain more data to support this conclusion could be a survey that all teachers completed as part of the research process. Looking at the data I do have, it seems that there is a focused direction to prevent and mitigate harm at the core of

restorative justice implementation by getting to the root of conflicts, giving students second chances, teaching students how to resolve conflict without violence or teacher intervention, and showing students how to repair/ mend damaged relationships.

A focused direction that includes using circles to celebrate, grieve/ mourn, make decisions, and talk as a community could deepen use and understanding of restorative justice as more than a reaction to conflict which would further lead to a culture of change in the direction of restorative justice. Circles can be broadly described as talking or peacemaking circles, wherein participants sit or stand in a circular formation for a variety of reasons (Knight & Wadhwa, 2014; O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020). These circles are modeled after the circles of indigenous people and typically include the use of a talking piece, which can be a stone, shell, or small item that denotes the holder is allowed to talk (Knight & Wadhwa, 2014). New York City and Oakland schools used circles intentionally as a part of their restorative justice implementation (Oakland Unified School District, n.d.-a; Sandwick et al., 2019; Oakland Unified School District Restorative Justice Team, 2020). While sitting down and having courageous conversations is very similar to a restorative justice circle, no teacher participants and only one administrator participant mentioned the use of circles and conversations to repair or prevent harm seemed isolated to use as a response to conflict, which falls under victim-offender mediation circles (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Knight & Wadhwa, 2014; Maynard & Weinstein, 2020; O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020). There was mention of mediation which seemed to imply at least the use of one type of circle among administrator and teacher participants, but a clear, authentic integration of circles could be beneficial. There is a focused direction at AHS, but there is room for improvement and further focused direction.

Results of the content analysis of the student handbook seemed to show that focused

direction for students is an area of growth. There was no explicit mention of restorative justice or

restorative justice practices in the student handbook. Implementing a variety of circles could

improve the understanding and implementation of restorative justice for students. Adding clear

language to the student handbook could empower students, which is a key component of

restorative justice implementation. Disrupting the hierarchy of schools and including students in

the decision-making and governance of school is an important early step of restorative justice

implementation (Sandwick et al., 2019). Unveiling and sharing the power students have at

Ashwood to enact change and be a part of the implementation process in the student handbook

could improve focused direction. It is also worth noting that the student handbook was not as

useful a data source as I had originally hoped. It is possible that a survey sent to students could

yield clearer answers in future research.

Collaborative Culture. According to administrator interview participants, collaboration

around restorative justice includes department meetings, training with a local restorative justice

expert, professional development and trainings, and annual conferences that teachers attend on a

volunteer basis. There is a concerted effort to collaborate and understand restorative justice in

whole-group settings at Ashwood, and this effort has occurred annually since the 2019-2020

school year.

However, administrators and teachers shared that collaboration during the 2021-2022

school year was at an all-time low due to the teacher shortage. This shortage has led teachers to

giving up their planning period to teach an extra course, which eliminates collaborative time. The

teacher shortage is a reality for schools across the country (Garcia et al., 2022). This shortage is

exacerbated in areas like Ashwood that serve many low-income students and students of color

(Garcia et al., 2022). These challenges are real, but to become a culture of change, collaboration around the change (in this case, whole-school implementation of restorative justice) is necessary to become and a remain a culture of change. As noted in Fullan (2001), change is not a destination—a system never *arrives* but rather, is always arriving and moving forward to be a culture of change. Leaders must constantly adapt to overcome challenges and obstacles that threaten to prevent change (Fullan, 2001). In this case, administrators must get creative when it comes to finding time and space for restorative justice collaboration. Teachers, counselors, and administrators need dedicated space and time to collaborate on school discipline, student relationships, and community empowerment to implement whole-school restorative justice.

Clarity. Clarity, while subjective, succeeds capacity building through careful, intentional collaboration (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Lack of collaboration around restorative justice, for whatever reason, thus may hinder clarity for followers. Ashwood administrators have attempted to increase and encourage clarity for teachers using P.O.P. contracts/ behavioral contracts, professional development, and training. The how behind collaboration and clarity was described as taking place in the same settings, which could be an indicator that collaboration and clarity are suffering as a result. All administrators shared that clarity was a goal AHS was far from reaching, which may support the conclusion that the settings in which clarity is made is not the ideal setting for clarity to emerge.

As noted in Chapter 4, administrators estimated that only about 81% of teachers could define restorative justice and that only about 35% of teachers were using restorative justice in their classrooms. Through interviews, administrators shared they determine the use of restorative justice by examining use of P.O.P contracts, use of mediation, and discipline data to determine how many teachers are using restorative justice in their classrooms. Whether the lack of use was

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due to lack of buy-in, collaboration, or coherence was unclear from their responses. As noted in Claassen and Classsen (2008) and Maynard and Weinstein (2020), students spend most of their time in school in the classroom; without restorative justice in the classroom, there cannot be whole-school implementation of restorative justice (Classen & Classen, 2008; Maynard & Weinstein, 2020). Clarity is an area that administrators and teachers would likely agree needs improvement. Recommendations to increase clarity include a division-wide restorative justice policy, dedicated collaboration time and space, and a dedicated place for teachers to share dissent. These recommendations are discussed later in this chapter.

Overarching Research Question: In what ways does AHS reflect a culture of change in support of restorative justice?

At the conclusion of this study, AHS possessed some tenets of a culture of change through the areas of moral purpose, relationships, and coherence; however, there were also indicators in all three areas of study to suggest that AHS is not there *yet*. Most participants shared a clear understanding of the moral purpose behind restorative justice implementation, and administrators cultivated this moral purpose in a variety of ways over several school years. However, cultivating moral purpose in whole-group settings, such as faculty meetings, may not be the most authentic, impactful way to implement moral purpose in support of restorative justice implementation. This may be why community change, social change, democratic methods for change, and egalitarian governance were not a part of the moral purpose, according to teacher survey participants; these parts were listed as necessary for systems to move from punitive to restorative by O'Brien and Nygreen (2020).

Most teacher participants and all administrator participants shared through survey answers and interview question answers (respectively) that relationships were cultivated in

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different ways and viewed as an area of strength for administrators. However, the ways in which relationships were cultivated and maintained include mention of several group settings, rather than through circles or structured restorative justice practices that are viewed as important steps to implementation in the literature (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Fronius et al., 2019; O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020). Further, a change leader and a leader enacting whole-school restorative justice should embrace dissent and use pushback to strengthen the systems they are implanting (Fullan, 2001; Sandwick et al., 2019). Change is not a destination; you do not arrive—it is ongoing but it is clear that administrators have a lot of ground to cover before they are a culture of change (Fullan, 2001). Implementing restorative justice, while seen by supporters as necessary and the obvious moral answer to discipline inequities in public schools, is a huge departure from traditional, punitive discipline practices. For administrators to not acknowledge that and understand the pushback from teachers is to weaken the culture of change and the change initiatives (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

There is evidence to support coherence among the teachers who participated in the survey as well as in policies such as P.O.P contracts and replacement of ISS with a restorative room, as mentioned by administrator interview participants, teacher survey participants, and a content analysis of the student handbook. The study findings support that AHS has made some progress in the direction of becoming a culture of change (clear moral purpose, strong relationships, and the presence of some (though limited) collaboration. However, coherence, listed by Fullan & Quinn (2016) as a necessity for change, is the area in which there was only one common theme across data sets and clear areas of growth across all participant groups. Through their interviews, administrators shared that school closures due to COVID-19 and subsequent teacher turnover set them back in the process, lengthening the early stages to encompass several school years.

Regardless of the reasons provided, change is not a quick process. It takes years to change a school culture and more years to really see the benefits of that changed culture (Fullan, 2001). As the teacher shortage and effects of COVID-19 persist, administrators must find ways to overcome and continue reculturing; reculturing through the lens and best practices of whole-school restorative justice could be an impactful way to continue the change process. For example, including teachers in cultivating the vision, supporting teachers through their fears and anxieties, confronting conflict and adversity as it arises during implementation, destroying the hierarchy within schools, modeling circles by using them with teachers and students (together and separately), and including the community in the implementation process would strengthen the culture of change and improve implementation (Oakland Unified School District, n.d.-a; Oakland Unified School District, n.d.-b; Sandwick et al., 2019; Oakland Unified School District Restorative Justice Team, 2020).

Implementing whole-school restorative justice and being a culture of change have something very important in common: the school/ system never arrives at a destination (Fullan, 2001; Oakland Unified School District, n.d.-b). The process of change and the process of implementing whole-school restorative justice is an ongoing process that must be monitored and adjusted ad infinitum. A school can become a culture of change. A school can successfully implement whole-school restorative justice practices—but a new administration, new policy, or high teacher turnover can easily set a school back or erase all the progress a different administration made. This is particularly relevant at AHS. Data collection took place in Spring 2022. During the interview process, the administrators indicated their commitment to stay in their current positions as Ashwood continues to move along in the direction of whole-school restorative justice implementation. However, the administration team changed over the summer

of 2022, with one administrator leaving and another administrator from another school within the district joining the team. The current AHS administration team and the school itself have communicated a continued commitment to restorative practices through email communication, but the effect of a new administrator on this culture of change is yet unknown.

Implications for Policy, Practice, and Leadership

This study was an exploratory case study of AHS in the early stages of implementation (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017; Yin, 2018). This study had a practice-oriented purpose due to the opportunity for further research, and the administration team's desire to improve practice and illuminate problems with restorative justice implementation at AHS (Haverkamp & Young, 2007). In keeping with the design and the goal of eliciting feedback and improving implementation and progress as a culture of change, recommendations can be found in the table below. Table 16 shows the findings, the area in which the recommendation falls (policy, planning, or leadership), the recommendation itself, and the supporting literature. These recommendations are expanded upon after the table itself.

Table 16

Recommendations for Continued Implementation of Restorative Justice at Ashwood Public Schools

Finding	Related Recommendation	Supporting Literature
The administration team had a clear focused direction and showed evidence of coherence when it came to restorative justice implementation. Teacher participants implemented restorative justice in a variety of ways for a variety of reasons, rather than implementing more unified, cohesive restorative practices.	*Policy:* Ashwood Public Schools should implement a division-wide restorative justice policy that covers all schools and grade levels to ensure alignment across the division. This policy should include explicit use of restorative justice at every level of the organization to increase buy-in, build coherence, and improve practice.	Baker, 2009; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Fullan, 2016; Oakland Unified School District Restorative Justice Team, 2020; Office of the Mayor, 2019; Restorative Justice Initiative, n.d.
Administrator and teacher participants indicated that collaboration is limited due to the teacher shortage, which has led to many teachers giving up a planning period to teach an overload. Due to lack of time, PLCs prioritize their focus on state standards and curriculum implementation.	*Planning:* Administrators should find more creative ways for teachers to collaborate specifically on restorative justice practices.	DuFour, 2014; Fullan, 2001, 2016; Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Hampson, 2019; Oakland Unified School District Restorative Justice Team, 2020 Center on PBIS, 2022; Sandwick et al., 2019
The administration team saw relationships with teachers as a strength of the team. Relationships with teachers who agreed with restorative justice implementation were strong across teacher participants. Relationships were also prioritized in the student handbook.	*Leadership:* Administrators should prioritize building strong, authentic relationships that emphasize mutual trust and provide teachers a safe place to express anxieties and fears around implementation. Administrators should be willing to accept critique and address naysayers as a part of the change process.	Fullan, 2001, 2019; Fullan & Gallagher, 2020; Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Sandwick et al., 2019; Tschannen-Moran, 2014
Several administrator and some teacher participants shared the desire for restorative justice to change the culture of Ashwood High School and then, in time, change the culture of the City of Ashwood itself to create safer environments by preventing harm and violence in the city community. One of the weaknesses found in implementation was a lack of clarity and focused direction for students, as found through content analysis of the student handbook.	*Policy, Planning, and Leadership:* School and division administrators should expand their community feedback to include feedback on restorative justice practices.	Constantino, 2016; Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Gallagher, 2020; Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Ginwright, 2016

Note. PLC = professional learning community (often, this consists of departmental teams or grade-level teams/ content teams within a specific department.

Educational Policy Recommendations

Ashwood Public Schools should implement a division-wide restorative justice policy that covers all schools and grade levels to ensure alignment across the division. This policy will also ensure teachers and administrators promoted from within the district or moved to different schools in the district have a clear understanding of what restorative justice is, why it is implemented, and how it is implemented in Ashwood Public Schools. A coherent policy will ensure that new administrators and teachers are prepared to continue the work in support of a culture of change that supports whole-school implementation of restorative justice. This policy should include restorative justice practices, including the use of circles at every level without the district to increase coherence among all stakeholders.

Furthermore, targeted policies at the elementary-level could lead to trickle-up effect as students ascend to middle and high school with an understanding of how discipline and community are viewed and handled in Ashwood, leading to a more permanent and deep commitment to community change as a result. Embedding restorative justice practices at every level and school across the division is far more likely to yield to long-lasting change across the wider community.

Educational Planning Recommendations

Administrators should find more creative ways for teachers to collaborate specifically on restorative justice practices. This could be accomplished through cross-curricular team-teaching which allows teachers to work together and split overload classes, so each teacher has time to meet with PLCs. This policy should include the use of and language of restorative justice circles as an explicit practice to repair and prevent harm. PLCs specifically targeted to restorative justice could include cross-departmental/ cross-disciplinary groups that meet before or after school

regularly for short amounts of time (e.g., 30 minutes once or twice a week) to avoid using that

time for discussion and planning that focus on standards and/ or curriculum. Similarly, PLCs that

group Ashwood teachers from different schools can discuss restorative justice implementation at

different levels and meet during professional development/ teaching planning days to strengthen

coherence and fidelity of restorative justice implementation across the division.

Administrators should continue targeted learning through professional developments and

workshops that focus on restorative justice implementation in the classroom. Restorative justice

can focus only on students deemed *highflyers* by administrators but that treats restorative justice

implementation as an add-on program/ initiative rather than a whole-school model (which is the

goal for AHS). This continued learning will give teachers more dedicated time to plan in

restorative justice, along with targeted practice-oriented training to ensure coherence and

collaboration are cornerstones, and it will ensure that teacher turnover does not halt any progress

made year to year as learning is ongoing.

Educational Leadership Recommendations

Administrators should continue to prioritize building strong, authentic relationships that

emphasize mutual trust. Part of this relationship focus should be welcoming dissent and using

follower pushback to strengthen the culture of change and the whole-school implementation of

restorative justice. Administrators should examine reasons that teachers push back to ensure

there is not a flaw or area of improvement in their plan and/or implementation of that plan. To

this end, Ashwood should implement a system that elicits anonymous feedback on restorative

justice implementation as well as other areas of change or improvement. This can be

accomplished through anonymous surveys sent quarterly to all staff, or through a link that is

open and available to all school faculty and staff throughout the year. This feedback, coupled

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with the teacher advisory board already in place in Ashwood, would allow administrators to use

dissent to strengthen the school and division in an authentic, meaningful capacity if

administrators analyze this feedback and use it appropriately.

Similarly, Ashwood administrators should be willing to accept critique and address

naysayers as a part of the change process. Willingness to hear flaws in the process or see

pushback as the potential to strengthen implementation of whole-school restorative justice is a

necessary part of the change process. This shift in attitude and practice could yield greater

coherence and implementation with fidelity across the school.

Educational Policy, Planning, and Leadership Recommendations

School and division administrators should expand their community feedback to include

feedback on restorative justice practices. This feedback could be used to implement further

policies and planning by including parents, students, and community partners/ leaders in the

division-wide implementation of restorative justice practices. Ashwood Public Schools is a

division that seemingly includes and values their community feedback, and welcoming that

feedback and planning into this area of change and growth could yield the kind of community

change that AHS participants hope to inspire. This community involvement should also

explicitly include the use of circles throughout the community and at various meetings and

division functions to implement restorative justice authentically throughout the entire division. In

the end, including the community can repair and prevent harm in a much larger way than

isolating restorative justice practices to the people in schools.

Recommendations for Further Research

Change is ongoing, as is the continued commitment to whole-school implementation of

restorative justice. Quarterly surveys overseen by a dedicated restorative justice team or

researcher could be used for action research by eliciting feedback from all stakeholders: students, teachers, teacher assistants, counselors, families, community members, administrators, and everyone involved with the education of young people in the City of Ashwood. Further examination and research on how a new principal at AHS has affected progress and the culture of change could also provide feedback on how to move forward with restorative justice when the leadership changes. Collection of this data could be down qualitatively and quantitatively.

Research on the effect of restorative implementation on grades, graduation rates, discipline trends, college admissions, standardized test scores, school culture, student mental health, and a variety of other factors could be a multi-year project that mirrors what divisions like Denver, New York City, and Oakland have done. This information should be disaggregated by race, gender, and socioeconomic status. In this way, the City of Ashwood could become an example for other divisions around the country as restorative justice expands in K-12 schools with the end goal of disrupting the school to prison nexus and healing communities.

Manuscript Summary

Discipline inequities across racial, gender, and socioeconomic barriers are a constant in the United States, persisting long after the desegregation of schools in the last century. Exclusion from school as a form of discipline disproportionately affects Black students and other students of color, with Black male students being excluded more than any other group in the United States (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; NCES, 2019; O'Brien & Nygreen, 2020; UCLA & ACLU, 2018). School divisions and schools across the United States have implemented restorative justice as an alternative to traditional punitive discipline as a potential remedy for discipline inequities (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Oakland Unified School district, n.d.-b) with some success in the areas of attendance and absenteeism, school climate and safety, and

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academic outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). To institute whole-school restorative justice, a change in school culture, or reculturing, must occur (Fullan, 2001; Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

This study was a practice-oriented exploratory case study that relied on the following sources of data: interviews with administrators, an at-will survey sent to all teachers, and a content analysis of the student handbook at AHS in the City of Ashwood. The content analysis of the student handbook proved less informative than anticipated. A survey sent to students could be a better data source for replicating this study or in further research. However, students and the community were not a big part of the implementation process, which could also be an area of improvement.

Data from all the sources supported the finding that AHS may be in the early stages of becoming a culture of change and of the reculturing process. However, change is a complex, multi-faceted process. It is not a destination at which one arrives; similarly, coherence is complex and hard to get right. Teacher turnover and competing district, state, and federal initiatives and mandates make this already difficult process more difficult. There is room for improvement and progress in all the areas studied, particularly in the area of coherence. Some of this complexity can be self-inflicted. The student handbook does not align with the whole-school change that Ashwood administrators are trying to enact. The term *restorative* does not appear anywhere in the student handbook. Students and families are meant to interact and understand the handbook; though the handbook was reportedly revised to align with the whole-school implementation of restorative justice, the content analysis made clear that it was not aligned to the change Ashwood administrators wish to implement. Revising this handbook is a simple way to improve coherence among stakeholders.

The following recommendations were made to district and school administrators, per their request for recommendations to improve implementation and the change process:

- Ashwood Public Schools should implement a division-wide restorative justice policy that covers all schools and grade levels to ensure alignment across the division.

- Administrators should find more creative ways for teachers to collaborate specifically on restorative justice practices.

- Administrators should prioritize building strong, authentic relationships that emphasize mutual trust and welcome dissent.

- School and division administrators should expand their community feedback to include feedback on restorative justice practices.

There are a variety of opportunities and recommendations for further research in the following areas: stakeholder feedback and student outcomes. This research could include a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods and data to support a mixed methods understanding of the change process and implementation of restorative justice in Ashwood Public Schools. While AHS is at the beginning of the change process in support of whole-school restorative justice implementation, it is my hope that this process continues and cultivates the school, division, and community change administrators and teachers alike hope to inspire.

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WHAT DO I HOPE TO LEARN FROM YOU?

This investigation, entitled "**JUSTICE AND CHANGE: AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY OF THE EARLY IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE WHOLE SCHOOL MODEL IN A HIGH SCHOOL IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH**," is designed to explore the early implementation of restorative justice practices and the culture of change in support of restorative justice.

You were selected due to your position at this school and your part in this change

process. This study will be completed as part of the requirements for my dissertation study in my

doctoral program.

WHY IS YOUR PARTICIPATION IMPORTANT TO ME?

Studying the change process and the early implementation of restorative justice will add to a new, growing body of research into restorative justice implementation in K-12 schools across the country. Your participation and insight will also help your school as it continues this process of implementation and change.

WHAT WILL I REQUEST FROM YOU?

- An initial one-hour semi-structured individual interview in which I will ask you a set of questions and provide topics for you to discuss openly. This interview will be recorded via Zoom, but only the audio transcript will be saved and used for data analysis.
- A final one-hour semi-structured individual interview in which I will ask you a set of questions and provide topics for you to discuss openly. This interview will be recorded via Zoom, but only the audio transcript will be saved and used for data analysis.
- A summary of each interview will be sent to you via email within 48 hours of the interview's conclusion to ensure that the information recorded accurately reflects your perspectives. You will be encouraged to make corrections if my interpretation does not reflect your intended meaning.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Please know that:

- The confidentiality of your personally identifying information will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

- Your name and other identifying information will be known only to the researcher through the information that you provide. Neither your name nor any other personally identifying information will be used in any presentation or published work without prior written consent.
- The audio recordings of the three interviews described above will be kept on a secure password-protected computer and will be removed from the Zoom database and any internet storage at the conclusion of this study.
- You may refuse to answer any questions during the interviews if you so choose. You may also terminate your participation in the study at any time. (To do so, simply inform the interviewer of your intention.) Neither of these actions will incur a penalty of any type.
- Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decline to participate, this decision will not endanger your future relationship with the William & Mary School of Education.
- A summary of the results of the study will be sent to you electronically once they are complete.

HOW CAN YOU CONTACT US?

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact the interviewer, Amber Weyland Rodenbo (agweyland@email.wm.edu) at the William & Mary School of Education, Williamsburg, Virginia (504-301-7426), or her dissertation chair and cooperation professor: Dr. Margaret Constantino (meconstantino@wm.edu). If you have additional questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, Dr. Tom Ward at 757-221-2358 (tjward@wm.edu) or Dr. Jennifer Stevens at 757-221-3862 (jastev@wm.edu), chairs of the two William & Mary committees that supervise the treatment of study participants.

By checking the "I agree to participate" response below, then signing and dating this form, you will indicate your voluntary agreement to participate in this study, and confirm that you are at least 18 years of age.

☐   I agree to participate.

☐   I don't agree to participate.

A copy of this consent form will be given to you to keep.

SIGNATURES:

Participant: _____   Date: _____

Researcher: _____   Date: _____

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCAL FOR FIRST ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW

1. Describe your pathway to your current position.

    a. How many years have you been at AHS?

        i. 0-5 years

        ii. 5-10 years

        iii. 10-20 years

        iv. 20+ years

    b. What is your position at AHS?

    c. How long have you been in this position?

    d. What position did you hold prior?

2. How do you define restorative justice?

3. What do you perceive to be the "why" or "North Star" behind implementing restorative justice at AHS?

    a. What was the impetus for the restorative justice initiative?

    b. Was there a critical incident(s) that prompted the school to initiate restorative justice?

    c. What were the first steps in launching restorative justice practices?

4. How does this initiative align or compete with other school and/or division initiatives?

5. How do teachers collaborate at AHS?

6. How do teachers collaborate on restorative practices?

7. How do you build and maintain positive relationships with teachers?

APPENDIX C

CROSSWALK FOR FIRST ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW

Research Question	Questions that Align
How has the moral purpose been shared and cultivated?	3, 3a, 3b
In what ways have relationships been cultivated?	7
In what ways is the process of coherence-making evident in practice?	2, 3c, 4, 5, 6

APPENDIX D

COHERENCE CROSSWALK FOR FIRST ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW

Coherence-Making Process	Questions that Align
Focused Direction	3c, 4
Collaborative Culture	5, 6
Clarity	2

INTERVIEW PROTOCAL FOR SECOND ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW

1. Describe the stages of implementation of restorative justice?

   a. What stage are you in now?

2. What are the short-term goals for implementing restorative justice?

   a. What evidence is there to suggest these goals have been/ will be met?

3. What are the long-term goals for implementing restorative justice?

   a. What evidence is there to suggest these goals have been/ will be met?

4. What is your perception of school-wide knowledge of restorative justice?

   a. In your opinion, how many faculty members know what restorative justice is?

      i. 0-25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, or 76%-100%

   b. In your opinion, how many faculty members are currently using restorative justice practices?

      i. 0-25%, 26-50%, 51-75%, or 76%-100%

5. What is your perception of the extent to which teachers buy-in to restorative justice practices?

   a. What evidence supports this?

6. How has the use of restorative justice practices impacted discipline at AHS?

7. What are the barriers to implementing school-wide restorative justice?

   a. What forms of resistance have you/do you encounter?

   b. How do you navigate opposition to restorative practices?

APPENDIX F

CROSSWALK FOR SECOND ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW

Research Question	Questions that Align
How has the moral purpose been shared and cultivated?	4, 4a, 4b, 5, 5a, 6
In what ways have relationships been cultivated?	7, 7a, 7b
In what ways is the process of coherence-making evident in practice?	2a, 3a, 6

COHERENCE CROSSWALK FOR SECOND ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW

Coherence-Making Process	Questions that Align
Focused Direction	1, 2, 3
Collaborative Culture	
Clarity	2a, 3a, 6

TEACHER SURVEY QUALTRICS PROTOCOL

Consent Form in Qualtrics:

WHAT DO I HOPE TO LEARN FROM YOU?

This investigation, entitled "**JUSTICE AND CHANGE: AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY OF THE EARLY IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE WHOLE SCHOOL MODEL IN A HIGH SCHOOL IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH**," is designed to explore the early implementation of restorative justice practices and the culture of change in support of restorative justice.

You were selected due to your position as a teacher at this school and your part in the

change process. This study will be completed as part of the requirements for my dissertation

study in my doctoral program.

WHY IS YOUR PARTICIPATION IMPORTANT TO ME?

Studying the change process and the early implementation of restorative justice will add to a new, growing body of research into restorative justice implementation in K-12 schools across the country. Your participation and insight will also help your school as it continues this process of implementation and change.

WHAT WILL I REQUEST FROM YOU?

- Honest, open answers to the provided teacher survey

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Please know that:

- The confidentiality of your personally identifying information will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.
- Your name will not be collected, nor will any personally identifying information (such as your years at the school) be divulged by the researcher to any persons or entities.
- The answers you provide will be kept on a password-protected computer and will not be copied or reproduced into any unsecure device or program.

- You may refuse to answer any of the questions you encounter in this survey, if you so choose. You may also terminate your participation in the study at any time. (To do so, simply do not continue filling out the survey.) This action will incur a penalty of any type.
- Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decline to participate, this decision will not endanger your future relationship with the William & Mary School of Education.

HOW CAN YOU CONTACT US?

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact the interviewer, Amber Weyland Rodenbo (agweyland@email.wm.edu) at the William & Mary School of Education, Williamsburg, Virginia (504-301-7426), or her dissertation chair and cooperation professor: Dr. Margaret Constantino (meconstantino@wm.edu). If you have additional questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, Dr. Tom Ward at 757-221-2358 (tjward@wm.edu) or Dr. Jennifer Stevens at 757-221-3862 (jastev@wm.edu), chairs of the two William & Mary committees that supervise the treatment of study participants.

By checking the "I agree to participate" response below, then signing and dating this form, you will indicate your voluntary agreement to participate in this study, and confirm that you are at least 18 years of age.

☐   I agree to participate.

☐   I don't agree to participate.

A copy of this consent form will be given to you to keep.

SIGNATURES:

Participant: _____   Date: _____

If participants click yes, they can continue to the teacher survey. If they click no, they will not be directed to the teacher survey as they have revoked consent.

1. How long have you been a teacher at AHS?

2. How have you learned about the restorative justice initiative at AHS?

3. How would you describe restorative justice?

4. What is the "why" behind restorative justice implementation?

    a. What was the impetus for the initiative?

b. Was there a critical incident(s) that spurred the initiative?

5. In what ways do you collaborate with other teachers?

6. Describe how administrators cultivated relationships with teachers?

   a. What are some examples of how they have cultivated relationships with you?

7. What training or instruction have you undergone pertaining to restorative justice?

8. Describe how discipline decisions are made for students.

9. How do you cultivate and maintain positive relationships with your students?

10. Do you implement restorative justice practices in your classroom?

11. *(SKIP #11 if answer is no)* How do you implement restorative justice practices in your

    classroom?

12. Is there anything else you would like to add to help me understand how restorative justice

    is happening in practice at AHS?

APPENDIX I

CROSSWALK FOR TEACHER SURVEY

Research Question	Questions that Align
How has the moral purpose been shared and cultivated?	2, 4a, 4b
In what ways have relationships been cultivated?	6, 6a, 9
In what ways is the process of coherence-making evident in practice?	2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11,

APPENDIX J

COHERENCE CROSSWALK FOR TEACHER SURVEY

Coherence-Making Process	Questions that Align
Focused Direction	2, 7, 9, 11
Collaborative Culture	5
Clarity	8, 11

APPENDIX L

AUTHOR'S NOTE

At the beginning of this dissertation, I shared two quotes, one from an article on inequity in school discipline and one from a popular spoken word poem. The first quote reads: "Education has both enslaving and emancipatory possibilities, especially during this period of economic restructuring and rapid change in our social life, and may, in turn, forge new ways of thinking about social life" (Brown, 2003, p. 148). In the age of livestreaming the execution of people of color by police and white vigilantes, education has a unique opportunity to become the change our students need. As discussed throughout this dissertation, communities of color and students in poverty suffer the most at the hands of traditional punitive discipline practices, and if the first business of public schools is to educate all the young people in the United States, all children must be in class to learn. If the COVID-19 pandemic taught educators nothing else, it is my hope that it taught us the importance of having students in a classroom with a qualified teacher to learn and succeed academically. For students who are suspended or expelled, the opportunity and the right to learn in a classroom is stripped away. As noted throughout this study, children under the age of eighteen already lack many of the constitutional rights of adults; education should not further that lack of rights.

The second quote, a few lines from a well-known spoken word poem by Dylan Garity, reads:

> I know I am lucky enough to be one of the winners of this game. I was handed a head start and a rulebook in my own tongue, but the winners of a rigged game should not get to write the rules. (Garity, 2013)

Traditional punitive discipline benefits children with parents at home who are accessible to them and educated on how to successfully maneuver the K-12 school system. It assumes that sending students home will lead to parent understanding and involvement of the punishment to prevent future misbehavior. It does not consider the cyclical harm public schools have done to students and families of color, a harm that leads to disillusionment and distrust and views schools in the same way police and prisons are viewed in communities of color. And while change and coherence are complex, complicated processes, I believe they are possible with the right leadership and plans in place. Restorative justice is an opportunity to change the status quo for students of color. It offers a severing of the school-prison nexus and the possibility of healing communities across a country that has historically and systematically disadvantaged Black Americans from the moment they are born. It is an opportunity to make amends and prevent future harm as a system. Restorative justice, in a word, is hope.

VITA

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School Improvement Specialist
2023 - Present

English Department Chair
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