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Restorative Justice Practices in Urban High Schools: The Impact on Disciplinary Outcomes for African American and Latino Male Students with Disabilities

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Restorative Justice Practices in Urban High Schools:

The Impact on Disciplinary Outcomes for African American and Latino Male Students with Disabilities

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

by

Jill Kathleen Waggoner

2018

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Restorative Justice Practices in Urban High Schools:

The Impact on Disciplinary Outcomes for African American and Latino Male Students with Disabilities

by

Jill Kathleen Waggoner

University of California, Los Angeles, 2018

Professor Tyrone C. Howard, Co-Chair

Professor Linda P. Rose, Co-Chair

This exploratory sequential mixed methods study examined the use of Restorative Justice practices from a sample of three public urban high school settings in the west coast of the United States to gather data on the impact of such practices on disciplinary outcomes for African American and Latino males with disabilities. The three school sites were identified as high poverty school sites with a majority of students served through Title-I funding. The research design consisted of interviews ($n =16$), survey data analysis ($n = 140$), and a review of public documents which were triangulated to answer three research questions. Participants in the sample included school and district administrators, teachers, counselors, and teachers-on-assignment. The interview design intended to find themes that answered the three research questions related to how the use of Restorative Justice practices impacted disciplinary consequences for African American and Latino males with disabilities. Findings were organized

into several themes which included: resources and expectations, vision and communication, agency and teamwork, and data-driven decisions. Findings indicated that the majority of staff sampled from the three schools believed that using Restorative Justice practices resulted in a decline in the use of zero-tolerance disciplinary responses, such as referrals to suspension, expulsion, or school citation. Findings also supported the conclusion that Restorative Justice practices had contributed to improved staff and student communication and helped strengthen relationships between adults and students on campuses.

The dissertation of Jill Kathleen Waggoner is approved.

Alfreda P. Iglehart

Pedro Antonio Noguera

Tyrone C. Howard, Committee Co-Chair

Linda P. Rose, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2018

DEDICATION

I dedicate this manuscript to my family, which includes every single person who has stood with me through this process.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Problem Background

Urban schools have become intertwined with the penal system over the last thirty years, introducing a "school to prison pipeline" theory within the United States' education dialogue (Gonzalez, 2011; Simmons, 2009). When the United States enacted the Safe and Clean Neighborhoods Act in 1973, a nationwide shift began in the way student discipline was handled in public K-12 school systems. The emphasis on safe neighborhoods eventually led to zero-tolerance policies in schools, which affected the severity of consequences for school-based rules' violations (Noguera, 2003; Giroux, 2010; Simmons, 2009; Oakes, 1985). The term "zero-tolerance" referred to a number of policies that imposed severe consequences for rules violations (Roland et al., 2012). Such punitive disciplinary school policies were also termed "push out policies," and they removed at-risk students from society which resulted in a tripling of the national prison population from 1987 to 2007 (Advancement Project, 2005).

In many urban schools, these zero-tolerance policies typically resulted in suspensions, expulsions, citations, and arrests, all which reduced educational opportunities as out-of-school exclusionary disciplinary consequences minimized school time (Gonzalez, 2011, Borum et al., 2010; Redding & Shalf, 2001). Such exclusionary practices created a push-out practice where youth were forced out of the academic setting and referred to juvenile detention centers. The pipeline from these juvenile detention centers often led students toward the adult correctional systems. This "pipeline" has been referred to as the "school-to-prison pipeline" as many of the students who lacked success in the academic setting found themselves in legal trouble. Skiba and colleagues (2003) noted that there was a strong relationship between state-level rates of school suspensions and state incarceration rates. With each school suspension, students lost time

in the learning environment, decreasing their chances of academic success and resulting in a negative correlation between school suspension and academic achievement (Skiba et al, 2003). As students lost hope for success in education, they were less likely to graduate and more likely to continue on a path toward incarceration, falling victim to the school-to-prison pipeline.

Zero-Tolerance Policies

Low income students of color with identified academic disabilities have suffered the most from the strict interpretations of zero-tolerance policies within school systems. Students with disabilities, specifically those identified with specific learning disabilities or emotional disturbances, have been suspended or expelled twice as often as students without an academic disability (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). The over-reliance on zero-tolerance policies became associated with a system of early criminalization, specifically for urban African American and Latino students nationwide (Giroux, 2010; Simmons, 2009; Borum et al., 2010; Redding & Shalf, 2001; Skiba, 2000a). Data from a 2009-10 study indicated that "nearly one out of every five African American students in California schools (18% of the total African American student enrollment) had been suspended from school in comparison to 7% of Latino students and 6% of white students (Losen, et al., 2012). Additionally, The Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) found that in the 2011-2012 school year African American and Latino students were more likely to be disciplined than their peers within the K-12 system. Arrest rates were also disproportionate for African American and Latino students. Over 50% of all the K-12 students who were referred to law enforcement for arrest or citation were either African American or Latino, according to CRDC data (2013). While African American students made up only 17% of the total K-12 students in the United States, they represented 28% of the arrests and 37% of the population of students in juvenile detention centers (Contemporary Justice

Review, 2013; Noguera, 2013; Giroux, 2010; Smallet et al., 2001). The issue of race cannot be ignored as it is intricately tied to special education identification in United States' K-12 school systems.

Zero-Tolerance Polices for Students with Disabilities

The outlook for students with disabilities (SWD) is similarly bleak when examining discipline data. African American and Latino youths were identified for special education services at higher rates than Whites and Asians (Vincent et al., 2012). Though SWDs accounted for approximately 12 percent of the total student K-12 United States public school population, they accounted for a quarter of all students either arrested at school or referred to law enforcement at school (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). In 2007, these zero-tolerance policies were in place in at least 95% of public K-12 schools in the United States and had led to an emphasis on disciplinary practices that resulted in suspensions, expulsions, and legal citations (Noguera, 2013; Giroux, 2010; Smallet et al., 2001). Students in schools that emphasized zero-tolerance policies were disenfranchised from the classroom community, lost educational opportunities due to exclusionary punishments, and had diminished chances to graduate when referred to the juvenile justice system for school violations (Payne & Welch, 2013; Gonzalez, 2011). Exclusionary disciplinary practices limited the educational opportunities for any students who are subjected to them, but the impact on SWDs was even greater, as shown through the dropout rates of SWDs who failed to return to school after being pushed out to juvenile detention. Of K-12 public school students with learning or emotional disabilities, 60% of all SWDs who were referred to juvenile detention centers as a result of zero-tolerance policies had become high school dropouts (Sametz & Hamparian, 1986).

Students in foster care were often part of this group that were disciplined at higher rates due to their dual identification as both SWDs and foster students. Foster students were recommended for special education services at higher rates than students who were not in foster care and also disciplined at higher rates than students without the same classification. Students in foster care in California were twice as likely to repeat a grade. With nearly 75% of foster students achieving below grade-level standards, they were often identified and recommended for special education services to address the educational gaps created by moving often from placement to placement. Sixty-seven percent of foster children were suspended from school, and 17% were expelled, which is more than three times the general student population (National Working Group on Foster Education, 2008). Zero-tolerance practices, especially when applied more frequently to the most vulnerable populations of students, create a system of exclusion from education for students who are already behind in their educational achievement.

Disproportional Discipline

The U.S. Department of the Office for Civil Rights data from 2014 (OCR) found that of the K-12 students suspended, 13% of the total students suspended had identified disabilities, as compared to only 6% of the students without learning disabilities being subjected to suspension. Students with disabilities accounted for 2.6 million of the K-12 students in the United States, and within that group, there was an over-identification of Latino and African American students determined to have learning disabilities (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). African American and Latino students with learning disabilities also had a disproportionally high number of school disciplinary incidents and dropout rates when compared to non-Latino students or white students (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002; Donovan & Cross, 2002; Losen & Orfield, 2002; Rueda & Windmueller, 2006; Sullivan et al., 2009; U.S. Department of

Education, 2009). Although federal and state legal mandates existed for SWDs, to provide

additional protections during disciplinary proceedings for students with disabilities, SWDs in K-

12 urban schools were still frequently suspended, recommended for expulsion, and issued school

citations for disciplinary infractions. Such practices are commonly referred to as "push out

practices" as they push many of the most vulnerable students out of the educational setting.

<div align="center">**Significance of Problem**</div>

Push Out Practices

Disciplinary practices that forced students with disabilities out of school with consequences

like suspensions, expulsions, and citations, exacerbated the school to prison pipeline for one of

the most vulnerable populations of students (Payne & Welch, 2013; Skiba & Knesting, 2001;

Winters, 1997). Students with disabilities were often already at an academic disadvantage due to

the manifestations of their disabilities. By "pushing them out" of the academic setting with zero-

tolerance disciplinary practices, an already disadvantaged population of K-12 students became

disenfranchised from the academic school setting, leading to increased frequency in behavioral

difficulties (Sharkey & Fenning, 2012). Once students became disenfranchised, they had a

greater tendency to be truant, dropout, and enter the juvenile justice system (Patterson, Reid, &

Dishion, 1992; Winters, 1997). That data contradicts the premise of suspensions. Research

continued to present data indicating that zero-tolerance disciplinary policies were solely punitive

and did not help to reform students' undesired behaviors. Such practices excluded SWDs from

the school environment, creating a larger societal problem as those same students inevitably

ended up in the juvenile justice system and later were led toward incarceration (Sharkey &

Fenning, 2012; Winters, 1997).

Restorative Justice Practices

In an effort to provide a positive alternative to exclusionary discipline practices within the last ten years, educators and public schools across the United States have looked toward Restorative Justice practices (RJ) as an alternative to zero-tolerance practices. Nineteen states had passed legislation regarding a disciplinary system that involves restorative juvenile justice, and 30 other states had included Restorative Justice principles in policy or mission statements (Umbreit & Peterson Armour, 2010). State legislation efforts indicated a shift in policy emphasis for U.S. schools with a greater focus on school discipline that would keep students in the school community rather than exclude them.

Cormier (2002) defined RJ as an approach that focused on repairing the harm caused by offending behavior, while holding the offender accountable for actions that caused harm or broke rules (Roland et al., 2012; Umbreit & Peterson Armour, 2010). Rather than using punitive measures like suspensions, expulsions, and citations as consequences for school rules' infractions, using RJ in schools promoted the use of practices that sought to repair harm caused between individuals. Some of the practices and outcomes identified with Restorative Justice (Kaveney & Drewery, 2011; Varnham, S., 2005) will be discussed in the next chapter.

Problem Statement

There was a need to study schools that were using alternatives to zero-tolerance disciplinary practices to analyze how implementation of such alternatives were impacting the disciplinary outcomes for African American and Latino male SWDs (Vincent et al., 2012). Methods implemented to address school discipline in K-12 settings need to be central to the discussion of disproportionality with regard to SWDs. Since African American and Latino males were disproportionately identified for special education services and also disproportionately

represented in school disciplinary suspensions and expulsions, more research investigating alternative methods of school discipline needed to be studied particularly for SWDs (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Children's Defense Fund, 1975; Eitle & Eitle, 2004; Payne & Welch, 2010; Skiba et al., 2011; Wu et al., 1982). As school districts moved forward with implementation of alternative methods for responding to school discipline issues, the data gathered from schools could inform discussions about how effective new methods are for SWDs and how school and district staff can support alternative responses to discipline.

Given increased federal scrutiny, state local education agencies (LEAs) also started examining local over-identification of African American and Latino students with disabilities in state level suspension and expulsion data. Within the last two years, 2016-18, states also started analyzing foster and homeless disciplinary data to look for disproportionalities. Given that African American students with identified disabilities were measured by the IDEA are 2.8% times more likely to receive exclusionary disciplinary measures than students of other races, schools are now monitored both at the federal and state levels to reduce zero-tolerance practices.

School districts that were implementing alternative responses to school discipline, rather than relying solely on ineffective zero-tolerance policies, attempted to address racially disproportionate exclusionary practices. Several school districts turned to Restorative Justice (RJ) practices as responses to discipline as more inclusionary methods for addressing school discipline (Porter, 2007). With the use of restorative practices, urban school districts could address student discipline with measures that challenged school communities to work collaboratively as they repaired harm done by students' poor choices or rules violations (Porter, 2007). As schools were in various stages of implementation with restorative practices, I chose to study three urban high schools with significant populations of SWDs using varying levels of RJ

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implementation. I examined site and district factors that supported the use of restorative

practices and studied how those restorative practices impacted disciplinary outcomes for African

American and Latino male SWDs. The research focused on the following research questions:

RQ1: What effect, if any, does school staff report RJ practices have on suspension rates,

expulsion rates, and citation rates for African American and Latino male SWDs?

RQ2: How do site and district policies and practices for student discipline, both formal

and informal, influence disciplinary outcomes for African American and Latino

male SWDs according to staff?

RQ3: How do staff perceptions about RJ effectiveness affect the use of RJ practices

when addressing student disciplinary infractions?

Overview of Research Design

Data Collection Methods

This exploratory sequential mixed methods study compared data from three urban

secondary public schools that had been implementing restorative practices for three or more

years (Appendix E). Quantitative data from school sites' suspension and expulsion disciplinary

data were examined first to frame the qualitative data collection process. The qualitative data

portions of the study were collected through a staff survey (Appendix B), staff leaders' interview

responses, and district document analysis.   By using mixed methods, I compared sites'

disciplinary data with staff perceptions about the use of RJ practices for SWDs to determine if

there were connections between how practices were implemented and the rates of exclusionary

disciplinary practices at school sites. Triangulation of data assisted in creating a "convergence

among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories" within my

study (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Site Selection and Participants

Staff members surveyed included teachers, school and district level administrators, and support staff that had direct exposure to either implementing or issuing school disciplinary consequences. Support staff included school counselors, deans, or intervention specialists, depending on the intervention structures within the school sites in the study. Sites had similar student demographics with regard to the percentages of students with disabilities, students identified as Latino and African American and students identified as qualifying for free and reduced lunch due to poverty in the surrounding community. Districts were selected by their decline in overall school suspension rates over the five years prior to the study. By selecting schools with some decline in suspensions who also had reported using RJ practices, the goal was to gain an understanding of how RJ practices had contributed to a decline in zero-tolerance outcomes for African American and Latino male SWDs.

Public Engagement

To address possible staff resistance toward RJ practices, districts could use this study to support the reform of their own disciplinary practices and reference the study findings as a support for sustained district and state funding for the implementation of RJ practices for SWDs. The results will inform my own school district about the sustainability of RJ implementation for SWDs. On a larger scale, this study adds to existing body of research on school discipline and could help influence state legislation that further limits the use of zero-tolerance based disciplinary responses that disproportionately affect African American and Latino male SWDs.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The disproportionate representation of both African American and Latino males in special education who were disciplined through exclusionary methods has continued to fuel the school to prison pipeline in the United States (Hibel et al., 2010; Klingner et al., 2005). Exclusionary practices like suspension, expulsion, and school-based legal citations limit educational equity for the nation's most vulnerable populations. Such zero-tolerance policies have come under significant federal and state level scrutiny within the last ten years (Frey, 2014). African American and Latino males in urban settings, who often are from low socioeconomic backgrounds and had more academic challenges due to identified educational needs, were referred more frequently for suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to law enforcement than peers from other racial groups (Hibel et al., 2010; Klingner et al., 2005). In response to this disproportionate rate of discipline, Restorative Justice practices were implemented throughout many states in the nation. Though Restorative Justice has been around for decades, use of restorative practices in response to school disciplinary infractions was a relatively new arena, and research on the implementation of such practices with SWDs is lacking.

This chapter provides background and research studies on topics pertaining to SWDs: laws, school discipline over time related to SWDs, and alternatives to zero-tolerance discipline practices in schools. First, there will be a brief overview of the purpose of special education placement and special education legal protections. Next, special education disparities in identification related to race will be discussed along with the long-term implications of special education placement. Then, zero-tolerance polices over time and their effects on SWD's will be

described along with an explanation of current California state legislation proposing alternatives to zero-tolerance practices. Critical Race Theory will be introduced in relation to the methods of discipline for SWDs, and lastly, an explanation of Restorative Justice and restorative practices will follow with a discussion of studies that explore the pros and cons for the use of restorative practices as an alternative to zero-tolerance practices.

Overview: Special Education Population, Purpose, and Protections

Special Education Purpose

With nearly 12% of all U.S. students in K-12 public schools receiving special education services in 2011-2012, compared to 8% of students in the early 1970s (U.S. Department of Education, 2009), special education laws and policies affecting SWDs have evolved to meet the growing needs of students. The Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1975 guaranteed that students aged 3 to 21 be afforded a free and appropriate public education (NCES, 2013). Services in special education were intended to provide students with additional educational benefits needed to assist with measurable deficits in cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and/or physical needs (Hibel et al., 2010). The services provided within special education were intended to provide additional resources, academic accommodations and modifications which adapted instruction, and offered specialized services to allow SWDs to access and benefit from the general education curriculum in schools (Bateman & Linden, 2006). Additionally, SWDs received added protections with regard to school discipline due to federal laws enacted in the late 1990s (Harry, 1994). Students qualifying for special education services, were given an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) to address learning and behavioral needs, and they were often placed in classes designed to meet their needs with teachers with designated special education credentials (Watts & Erevelles, 2004). Along with individualized learning

plans, students protected by IDEA were afforded additional legal supports with behavior and disciplinary infractions. Over the years, however, special education has become a sort of "life sentence," and students were not transitioning out of the services over time. Rather, they were staying separated in alternate learning environments, often receiving a sub-standard education in comparison to their peers who are not in special education.

Special Education Law

Federal disability laws, specifically Public Law (P.L.) 105-17 of the IDEA Amendments of 1997 provided the most explicit direction for school disciplinary policies related to suspension and expulsion practices for SWDs. The IDEA amendments were informed by earlier legal cases that applied to students with disabilities. The 1975 case, *Goss v. Lopez*, set parameters for suspension from school and outlined students' rights during the suspension process (Leone, 1985). The ruling outlined the rights for short-term suspensions from school of 10 days or less for students with or without disabilities. All students, regardless of disability or lack thereof, were afforded the right to receive written notice of suspension and given the opportunity to dismiss the charges (Jones Bock et al., 1998). Soon after that case, *Doe v. Kroger* (1979) concluded that the suspension of a student with a disability should result in the evaluation of the student's educational program and the appropriateness of the student's placement (Leone, 1985). Later, the *Honig v. Doe* (1988) case was the first to reach the Supreme Court and further outlined the use of suspension and expulsion. With the ruling in the *Honig v. Doe* case, students received additional protections under the law for knowledge of a disability and had to be afforded appropriate special education services, including a behavioral assessment review by a school psychologist prior to enforcement of an expulsion if behaviors were related to the students' disability or if a disability was suspected to be the cause of a student's misbehavior (Jones Bock

et al., 1998; Katsiyannis & Maag, 1998). While SWDs could still be suspended and referred for expulsion for school rules' violations, they received additional protections under the 1997 amendments to the IDEA. For an extended suspension beyond 10 days, a formal Manifestation Determination hearing must occur for SWDs to determine if the student's misconduct is directly related to the student's disability. If the student's disability was the cause of the misconduct, the school's local educational agency (LEA) must provide additional supports within the school setting to the student rather than proceeding with an expulsion. If an expulsion hearing was going to proceed, parents had the right to have their student "stay put" in their current program, or they could agree to a therapeutic placement during the duration of the expulsion process (Katsiyannis & Maag, 1998). Though safeguards existed for SWDs, rates of disciplinary action, suspension, and expulsion were still disproportionately high for SWDs throughout the nation (Watts & Erevelles, 2004). These higher rates of discipline indicated that there was a true problem with the application of school disciplinary consequences, and schools needed to examine their practices to address these differences.

Race and Identification for Special Education

The connections between racial background and special education identification have been studied since the early 1970s (Dunn, 1968). African American and Latino students have been disproportionately identified for special education services in comparison to non-African-American or non-Latino peers (Gregory et al., 2010; Harry, 1994). Lloyd Dunn's seminal work in 1968 was the first to identify a racial disproportionality in special education identification and placement. Dunn estimated that 60-80% of SWDs were from either low socioeconomic (SES) or ethnic minority households (Hibel et al., 2010). The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights' (1986) data indicated that African American and Latino students were labeled as

emotionally disturbed (ED) at twice the national rate for their racial group population. Similar

rates still exist today for foster youth, who are often labeled as emotionally disturbed due to the

trauma associated with unstable family settings which led to identification for special education.

Foster youth had high rates of special education services (Smithgall, et al., 2004; U.S.

Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families, 2007a).

Approximately 25% to 52% of foster youth received special education services, though SWDs

only represented about 13% of the child population in the U.S. (Zetlin, et al., 2005; National

Center for Education Statistics, 2004). In looking at population shares, Chinn and Hughes

(1987) reported that while African American students represented 20% of the U.S. population,

they represented 45% of those students identified as mentally retarded (MR), a label that has

since been discarded by the special education community and replaced with the term

Intellectually Disabled (ID) (Hibel et al., 2010). Later, Oswald et al. (1999) reported that

African American children were twice as likely to be identified as mentally retarded (MR) and

1.5 times more likely to be identified as emotionally/behaviorally disturbed (ED) than their non-

African American peers. Additionally, Skiba and colleagues (2005) found statistically

significant predictors between race and ethnicity and special education placement. Given the

years of studies pointing to over-identification of African American and Latino male students in

special education, these are the two student sub-groups that were the focus for the purpose of this

study.

Factors Related to Special Education Placement

While many possible reasons have been identified for the disproportional number of

special education referrals for African American and Latino youth, some of the most commonly

cited reasons for elevated referrals are: 1) teacher/examiner assessment biases; 2) over-reliance

on standardized tests with academic norms as determined by the dominant culture; 3) the speech and language differences attributed to students who speak non-standard forms of English or for whom English is a second language; 4) socio-economic factors related to child development for student in low SES regions; and 5) poor school instruction in low SES school environments (Harry & Anderson, 1994; Hibel et al., 2010; Gregory et al., 2010, Watts & Erevelles, 2004). When identifying common factors that led to special education placement for students as early as kindergarten, Hibel et al., (2010) noted two areas that best predicted a student's placement. Students' level of academic achievement and students' frequency of classroom task engagement were the two areas noted as major predictors for special education referral and placement. Boys were also noted to be referred for special education at a statistically higher rate than girls. The study used the nationally representative data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-1999 (ECLS-K) to predict special education placement of over 11,000 students from over 900 schools by Spring 2004, when the students entered fifth grade. This study found that ethnic/racial minority students were underplaced or equally placed into special education, which was contrary to the previous assumptions of Hibel et al. (2010). Limitations in the study, according to the authors, were sample size issues where populations identified with an emotional disturbance were not significant. The researchers hypothesized that had they included more students with emotional disturbance in the sample, a category where there are often noted over-referrals of African American and Latino students, they may have seen data supporting over-identification of students from those sub-groups in special education. Hibel and colleagues (2010) noted that the absence of a large sample of students identified with emotional disturbance in their study, might have led to the differences in placement outcomes.

Students designated for special education face the possibility of both long-term educational and behavioral struggles.

Implications of Special Education Placement

There was agreement amongst several researchers that placement in special education and classes that are separate from the general education population created a greater likelihood of long-term negative outcomes for students (Hibel et al., 2010; Watts & Erevelles, 2004; Leone et al., 2003). Special education placement was related to lowered academic expectations, less academic achievement, more frequency in disciplinary referrals, increased suspensions and referrals for expulsion, lower graduation rates, and reduced chances at success after high school (Gillung & Rucker, 1997; Jones, 1992; Donovan & Cross, 2002; Leone et al., 2003; Harry & Klinger, 2006; Hibel et al., 2010). Students identified with learning disabilities had a national dropout rate of over 30%. Additionally, 40% of African American SWD students were arrested in the future, and over half of SWDs were reported as unemployed two years after leaving high school (Oswald et al., 2002). Those SWDs who did find work after leaving school often were offered entry-level jobs with low earnings and little chance at advancement (Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997). Students in special education failed high school exit exams and graduation tests at disproportionate rates, and those SWDs who received alternative diplomas had even fewer chances at success after high school (Heubert, 2002). While the intent of special education was to provide supports for students in need of additional academic and behavioral support, the literature regarding students' negative experiences did not support the intentions. Adding zero-tolerance disciplinary practices to the equation through the over-reliance on suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to law enforcement only made the eventual options for African American and Latino male SWDs even more limited.

Legislation Related to Disciplinary Practices

Zero-Tolerance

Zero-tolerance policies in schools became widely practiced in the 1980s in the United States as an outgrowth of state and federal drug enforcement policies and the War on Drugs in the United States (Skiba & Peterson, 1999; Leone et al., 2003). The term, "zero-tolerance" referred to a "policy that assigned explicit, predetermined punishments to specific violations of school rules, regardless of situation or context of the behavior. In many cases, within schools, these consequences manifested in the form of suspensions and expulsions" (Boccanfuso & Kufeld, 2011). The term originated in the military when the Navy reassigned 40 submarine crew members for suspected drug abuse, and then quickly spread to government agencies and schools as a term representing an unwavering response to rules' violations (Skiba & Peterson, 1999).

School boards across many United States' school districts began adopting "zero-tolerance" policies by 1994 when the United States government determined the need to get tough on crime (Leone et al., 2003), and resulting policies outlined specific consequences for school rules' violations relating to drugs, violence, weapons, and tobacco-related offenses, school disruption and defiance and school dress code violations (Skiba & Peterson, 1999; Leone et al., 2003). Suspensions and expulsions rose dramatically, nearly doubling nationally as a result from the 1980s through the early 2000s as a response to these school board policies and to society's fear that teens had become dangerous and needed to be controlled and punished for their misbehaviors (Wald & Losen, 2003; Skiba & Peterson, 1999; Noguera, 1995). School shootings, such as the Columbine shooting within a suburban Caucasian school community led to further reactionary legislation for school discipline (Boccanfuso & Kufeld, 2011). Even though research

had shown that the majority of school shooters, committing violent crimes on campus, were typically Caucasian adolescent boys, typically from middle class families (Newman, 2004), reactionary zero-tolerance policies became widespread in low-income, low-resourced urban settings as media portrayed African American and Latino male youths as dangerous. Students that were seen as being different from the accepted norm within society were viewed as needing to be controlled through such policies. The need to control these erroneously labeled "dangerous" teens led to increased controls through school policies.

In the late 1990s, publicity about school violence due to weapons on campus, and students' defiant and disruptive behaviors that were labeled as antisocial, led to increases in out-of-school suspensions, expulsion referrals, and police involvement on school campuses for what were once considered to only be school rules' infractions (Morrison et al., 1997). Specifically, in California, the California Department of Education, 1996 Education Code Section 48900 outlined specific offenses for which school administrators must practice zero-tolerance as a result of the national zero-tolerance movement (California Education Code, 2014). School rules' offenses that recommended or mandated a recommendation for expulsion in the California Educational Code included: bringing a weapon to campus, brandishing a knife at another person, or unlawfully selling a controlled substance. For such offenses, students with and without disabilities had to be recommended for an expulsion (Morrison et al., 1997). Such zero-tolerance policies also presented a new way for schools to justify suspension, exclusion from classes, labeling of students, and referrals to expulsions with the addition of these polices. These policies also led to a new way of criminalizing students for school-based offenses (Leone et al., 2003; Gregory et al., 2010). A need for greater school safety due to the fear perpetuated through the

media became the theme used by school districts to warrant the need for these zero-tolerance practices.

However, data on school violence and students' acts of violence from the NCES survey data contradicted societal fears and the push for zero-tolerance disciplinary policies (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). Additionally, Irwin Hyman, a noted violence researcher tracked school violence indicators over a 20 year period and concluded that public perceptions did not match the data being reported by school districts. There had not been a dramatic increase in school violence or use of weapons by students over Hyman's 20 year studies (Skiba & Peterson, 1999), in spite of policies created to address such infractions. However, such policies did radically change the way educators dealt with discipline, allowing for immediate disciplinary consequences, even on first offenses.

Legal Protections for SWDs

The United States Department of Education (USDOE, 2010) and Office of Civil Rights (OCR) define SWDs as students who are eligible to receive an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) services under the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA) in one of the following 13 federally identified categories of special education: 1) intellectual disability (ID); 2) speech or language impairment (SLI); 3) emotional disturbance (ED); 4) orthopedic impairment (OI); 5) autism; 6) traumatic brain injury; 7) developmental delay; 8) health impairment; 9) specific learning disability (SLD); 10) hearing impaired; 11) blindness; 12) multiple disabilities; and 13) vision impairment. Students qualifying for services with one of these 13 categories of disabilities are a sub-group within the U.S. K-12 school system, and this group accounted for a large number of the students who were disproportionately disciplined with zero-tolerance consequences (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). In recent years, the

OCR has intervened in efforts to analyze school data, monitor areas of disproportionality with disciplinary practices, and regulate practices of school districts with the most egregious exclusionary discipline practices.

For SWDs, there were legal support systems incorporated under IDEA that must be used when SWDs were being suspended or considered for an expulsion. Students must have an updated Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) in their Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) to address the behaviors that led to school rules' infractions. This plan had to be updated annually for students who had patterns of misbehavior in school. Additionally, a Manifest Determination meeting had to be held prior to the tenth day of suspension or prior to an expulsion consideration for SWDs to discuss their behaviors and to revise behavior goals (Clarke Jr., 2015). As an IEP team, specific changes were supposed to occur for a student through that Manifestation meeting and additional IEP behavioral supports were to be implemented. In spite of these added legal protections, African American SWDs in public schools, were still subjected to a rate almost double their total population of suspensions (Wald & Losen, 2003).

School to Prison Pipeline for SWDs

With the emphasis on zero-tolerance practices, came the placement of campus safety officers, and even law enforcement officers on many school campuses across the United States. As a reaction to the fear that was perpetuated through the media after suburban mass shootings, urban schools saw an increase in police presence on school campuses. These officers, sometimes referred to as school resource officers (SROs), had the full force of the law behind them when dealing with students' rules violations, regardless of a students' disability status. Such a presence leads to the early criminalization of African American and Latino males with learning disabilities when school rules violations are quickly escalated to legal violations that result in

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students receiving citations for misdemeanors, and even felonies on school campuses (Wald & Losen, 2003). Students were arrested at higher rates due to the presence of officers on school campuses, and the actions of police officers were not regulated by the public school system. Since 1992, 45 states had passed laws making it easier to try juveniles as adults for a variety of legal offenses (Wald & Losen, 2003). Bernstein (2014), noted that "police arrested nearly 2 million juveniles a year, and nearly one in every three American school children would be arrested by the age of 23." Arrests were not occurring for the violent crimes being portrayed as major safety concerns in the media, but most youth were arrested for non-violent offenses. Though schools emphasized a need for more safety controls against violent crime in schools, there was actually a "decrease in juvenile violent crime over the last 15 years, during which time most kids were being locked up for minor offenses and receiving longer sentences harsh tactics of the criminal justice system" (Bernstein, 2014). Additionally, police officers on school campuses did not have to provide additional protections for SWDs when citing them for violations. Regardless of whether a student had an identified learning or intellectual disability, police officers enforced the same punishments for students when laws were broken on school grounds without necessary consideration of a student's IEP. Data showed that being either African American or Latino and having an educational disability increased the likelihood that students eventually would be referred to either the juvenile justice system or an adult prison (Leone et al., 2003). Given the severity of such possibilities, the federal government began to take measures to improve monitoring of SWDs and how students were being treated within schools.

Federal Monitoring

Increased federal attention was given to the "racial discrimination and civil rights within special education beginning in the late 1990s" (Patton, 1998, p. 25). Several studies were conducted on the federal level that led to conclusions about testing biases in special education placement and recommendations for alternative methods of testing (Patton, 1998). In 2004, amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) added federal areas of monitoring for racial and ethnic disproportionality within special education. Areas of monitoring included overrepresentation of ethnic groups with special education categories of emotional disturbance (ED), intellectual disabilities (ID), and specific learning disability (SLD) (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Parrish, 2002). With increased federal scrutiny, state local education agencies (LEAs) also started examining local over-identification of African American and Latino students with disabilities in state level suspension and expulsion data. As African American students with identified disabilities as measured by the IDEA were 2.8% times more likely to receive exclusionary disciplinary measures than students of other races, schools came under increased scrutiny both at the federal and state levels to find alternative methods for discipline that differ from the traditional zero-tolerance practices. Given federal and state governments' recent acknowledgment and support for alternatives to zero-tolerance practices, school districts began pursuing new systems for addressing discipline that would provide supports to all students.

Educational and legal advocates have exposed the inequities in disciplinary practices and have fought for students' rights to have equal access to a fair education limiting exclusionary disciplinary practices that remove SWDs' educational opportunities (Morrison et al., 1997). Also, the former U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan and the former Attorney General Eric Holder responded to civil rights groups' findings and launched the Supportive School

Discipline Initiative on the federal level to offer additional monitoring supports (Sharkey & Fenning, 2012). State law also helped improve monitoring of programs and outcomes for SWDs.

California Legislation

Given that suspensions did not work for rehabilitating students' behaviors (Leone et al., 2003), the California Department of Education (CDE) recently passed legislation that limited the types of offenses that were subject to suspensions (Losen et al., 2014). Public school districts in California were under strict state and federal scrutiny to reduce suspension rates, especially for African American and Latino youth. As a result of the enhanced scrutiny on suspension and expulsion practices, the rates of out-of-school suspensions in California public schools had declined from 2011 to 2013 (Losen et al., 2014). Data from the CDE's 2012-13 report on California's public schools shows that the number of out-of-school suspensions has decreased since 2011-2012 for every racial/ethnic group (Losen et al., 2014). Even with the decreases, though, African American students, who accounted for only 6.2% of California's students accounted for 16.2% of total suspensions, and Latino students accounted for 52.7% of the total students but received 54.6% of the total number of suspensions in California. As a reaction to the high racial disparities, students could no longer be suspended for "defiance only" with the passage of Assembly Bill 420 (ACLU, 2014). Since willful defiance suspensions were accounting for nearly 43% of all suspensions in California, Governor Brown was hopeful that AB 420 would create a decline in the rates of suspension. Additionally, the bill required the training of school teachers and administrators in alternatives to school discipline and best practices in classroom management as part of their credential requirements (ACLU, 2014).

Given the new restrictions, school districts had to find alternative methods to respond to students' defiant behaviors.

California has taken the lead through state level legislation to eliminate the overuse of suspension and expulsion in schools. In fact, California was the first state in the nation to outline suspension limitations, signing AB 420 which made it illegal for educators to suspend students solely for minor rules' infractions of willful defiance (ACLU, 2014). By making it illegal to suspend solely for defiance, educators who previously had excluded students from school when they behaved contrary to the dominant culture's expectations, had to look to new interventions for working with students' behaviors. School districts in California received financial support for creating new responses to discipline when Assembly Bill (AB) 104 of July, 2015 guaranteed an additional ten million dollars to support the implementation of behavior support systems for public schools in California. AB 104 also allocated funding to increase counseling resources on campuses with the intention of reducing the numbers of suspensions, expulsions and exclusionary disciplinary practices while providing social emotional supports for students (AB 104, 2015).

While no California state law has emerged yet to limit the scope of police citations on all school campuses, individual school districts, such as Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), created board policy to limit the scope of police citations on school grounds (Frey, 2014). Police working for LAUSD, "have to refer students to school administrators or an off-campus city resource center if they are involved in crimes, such as theft, damaging school property, fighting, or possession of tobacco, alcohol or marijuana, rather than moving forward with a citation" (Frey, 2014, p. 1). This board policy was a breakthrough that limited police power on school grounds for one of the largest urban school districts in the nation. This board

policy was passed in response to staggering citation numbers in LAUSD. "In 2013 L.A. school police made nearly 1,100 arrests, with 94.5% of those arrested being African-American or Latino students" (Frey, 2014, p.1). Such citations fueled the school to prison pipeline for African American students who accounted for less than 10% of the LAUSD student population, but were on the receiving end of 31% of all arrests (Frey, 2014). As new behavioral systems gain both statewide support through legislation and funding, schools in California have looked toward various systems of behavioral support, including the use of Restorative Justice practices to minimize students' exposure to exclusionary discipline.

LCFF and LCAP

Since California public schools began receiving state funding through the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), each school district became tasked with creating a Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) which specifically include areas that addressed the needs of students in special education and, significant sub-groups of students who are underachieving. Most recently, during 2016-18, foster and homeless youth have also been added to the sub-groups for state monitoring. For many school districts, this meant that district goals needed to be focused on how to help African American, Latino students, and SWDs be more successful academically while also monitoring the disciplinary practices that may exclude those sub-groups from school instruction at higher rates than other sub-groups. Districts were also forced to look at discrepancies in achievement and disciplinary data between genders as part of their analysis of need for improvement (ACLU, 2014). Once goals were created, each school district was expected to meet improvement benchmarks for the sub-groups noted, or funding to the district would be reduced. Though California districts were just beginning the work of monitoring their goals in California, this added layer of state monitoring has already affected the disciplinary

practices used with African American and Latino SWDs. An additional layer of monitoring has been added for foster and homeless youth, a sub-group of students that tends to also have a high rate of special education identification.

Theory Underlying Special Education Placement and Disciplinary Referrals

This study was founded in the premise that school-based zero-tolerance disciplinary practices were unfair given their differential application to males of color with identified learning disabilities. Beginning with that assumption, I determined that studying an alternative to such zero-tolerance practices, the use Restorative Justice (RJ) practices, could highlight practices that may reduce the number of African American and Latino SWDs who were subjected to disproportionate disciplinary consequences. To help frame my thinking throughout this empirically based project, I called on conceptual ideas and arguments from Critical Race Theory.

Critical Race Theory and Discipline

Critical Race Theory (CRT) emerged in the 1980s. Core tenets within this broad school of thought are that race and racism are always present in constructs related to social identity, that racism exists, and race creates and re-creates power structures of inequity within society (Delgado, 2001). Through studying the oppressed in society, we can come to conclusions about how to improve racial inequities (Crenshaw, 1995). CRT has become an important lens to help construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct meaning with regard to race and how race determines societal responses to students of color in school (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Within CRT, race was viewed as something that had been used as a coercive and ideological tool perpetuating White privilege and placing people of color in subordinate positions in society (Simpson, 2014). Zero-tolerance school disciplinary practices and juvenile justice referrals had proven to be racially unequal for years in American public schools, leading to disproportionate numbers of African

American and Latino youth being subject to zero-tolerance school disciplinary policies (Alexander, 2012; Skiba et al., 2003). With disproportionate numbers of African American and Latino males receiving out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, and school citations, and nearly twice as many students with learning disabilities being referred to such disciplinary measures as compared with their White and Asian counterparts without disabilities, there is an undeniable racial discrepancy in who is punished most with zero-tolerance practices.

Within the existing zero-tolerance disciplinary framework, race was connected to academic learning disability identification. SWDs were subjected to "oppressive social conditions" created in schools using zero-tolerance and prison-like responses and became more disenfranchised from the school environment (Watts & Erevelles, 2004). SWDs misbehavior resulted in higher rates of referrals to zero-tolerance forms of punitive discipline than those consequences issued to peers with the same misbehaviors (Simson, 2014). Disciplinary racial discrepancies were evident amongst students, and there were biased school policies that were used to strictly control African American and Latino male students under the guise of a need for increased school safety.

When restorative practices were used, however, the consequences issued to students of color with disabilities were reparative in nature, and they focused on restoring and mending the harmed relationships affected by students' misbehavior, regardless of race or disability designation (Klingner et al., 2005). Consequences to rules' infractions could be addressed in a case by case manner, with each student's rules' violation met with interventions that introduced the student back into the school rather than excluding them from the school environment. By focusing on each student individually, students saw that educators cared about them as students and were fostering a bond to help keep them in the school setting rather than exclude them.

Being a caring educator was one of the critical elements in creating a culturally relevant education experience for students (Howard, 2001). When using RJ practices, students were asked to name their infractions, take ownership of their own reality of events that led to the rule infraction, and share their perspectives with the victims or those who were affected by the rule infraction. Such practices aligned with CRT, as described by Simson (2014) who asserted that in, "naming one's own reality" individuals can exchange stories that allow them to overcome their own ethnocentrism and the tendency to view the world in one way. Within CRT, the concept of giving groups of oppressed people a voice, allowed for a sharing of various beliefs and understandings (Delpit, 1988). Similarly, RJ practices relied on forms of behavioral interventions that listened to students' perspectives about why they broke rules. RJ practices sought students' input about how they would repair the harm done within the school community. Students' voices were naturally included and respected in the use of RJ practices for discipline in schools. Through the use of RJ practices (e.g. peer mediation, victim/offender conferencing, referrals to counseling, and restorative circles), stories were shared, and multiple perspectives on disciplinary events were viewed from various perspectives. A community response was initiated to address student issues, another aspect of culturally relevant educational environments that makes students, especially African American and Latino students, feel valued (Howard, 2001).

RJ Practices and Alternative to Zero-Tolerance Studies

Restorative practices are responses to discipline that are based on a school-wide commitment to the range of practices within RJ. Schools implementing RJ practices as school-wide alternatives to exclusionary forms of discipline focus on targeted teacher training throughout implementation to build capacity within staff (Kaveney & Drewery, 2011). These practices have their roots in Restorative Justice, a set of practices used within the criminal justice

arena dating back to the 1970s which were intended to address harms done between people through crime (Zehr, 1990). RJ practices evolved over time to become communities of practice that included victims' families and communities that were harmed by a criminal wrongdoing. After the 1970's, the use of RJ practices moved from the criminal justice system, to the social welfare realm, to public schools where they were used with school communities as a form of response to school rule violations and harm caused between individuals. As time progressed, the RJ practices evolved further to also include proactive community-building strategies to help individuals understand each other better in an effort to avoid situations where harm occurred (McCold, 1999). An Australian educator was the first cited to use the RJ practice of restorative conferencing within a public school setting (O'Connell, 1998). Since the 1990s, more school districts have brought in RJ practices to reform disciplinary practices and also as a means for community building. To date, there has not been substantive data collection on the impact of the use of such practices with SWDs or with sub-groups of students by ethnicity or gender within the public school setting.

A study conducted about the use of RJ practices within Denver Public Schools found that staffing and financial support for staff working with RJ practices was critical to the program's success. By assigning a district coordinator to oversee and guide the work of RJ practice implementation within school sites Denver schools found greater commitment to RJ practices amongst stakeholders at the school sites (Cavanagh, 2009; Fenning & Sharkey, 2012). The Denver School District encountered opposition from parents and community members when implementing RJ practices, as many felt that RJ practices were not "strict enough" (Fenning & Sharkey, 2012). Denver's study recommended that a key component to the implementation of RJ practices was regular review of disciplinary data amongst staff with particular focus on race,

as they believed such reflection helped support the premise for using RJ practices (Fenning &

Sharkey, 2012). Though the Denver study did not focus on SWDs, their recommendation for

data review during program implementation could be expanded to include SWDs so that districts

address disproportionality in discipline for African American and Latino males within their

schools. Additionally, school districts that incorporated guidelines for discipline that mandated

the use of RJ practices within their school policies, discipline matrices, and board policies found

decreased resistance from site staff toward RJ practices (Morrison et al, 2005). District

guidelines and site-level support with implementation sets expectations for staff members about

how to use RJ practices, which then helps students. When staff members know that there are

mandated expectations for how discipline is handled, and they are expected to employ a variety

of responses to discipline using RJ practices in place of issuing a suspension or expulsion, there

is increased accountability (Kaveney & Drewery, 2011; Fenning & Sharkey, 2012).

 Another state, Pennsylvania, used qualitative case methodology to study the

implementation of Restorative Justice practices to change school culture in several middle and

high schools after adopting a pilot program through SaferSanerSchools (Mirsky, 2007).

Teachers in the schools that adopted the use of restorative practices reported feeling that the

practices helped them work to create a more collaborative culture amongst staff (p. 6). The

middle school staff in the research reported that the practices were so effective for their toughest

students that they expanded the use of these practices to other schools in their district, including

two high schools. By the year 2000, there were two high schools and one middle school

participating in RJ implementation. The administrators at the high school level admitted that the

change in culture was significant and challenging at first, as students saw the new practices as a

lease to roam the campus and have rude and defiant behavior without consequences (p. 6). The

administrators began to see success with implementation once the staff modeled the same

behaviors that they wanted students to practice. Once teachers were able to respect each other

and speak honestly with each other in spite of differences to resolve conflicts, the staff members

found much greater success implementing the same strategies with their students. Additionally,

the administrators in the study found that once teachers were adequately trained and could

comfortably use the RJ practices like "circles, interventions, one-on-ones, and group meetings"

(p. 7), teachers expressed much more satisfaction with the RJ practices and greater overall buy-in

(Mirsky, 2007).

The Pennsylvania study monitored progress over a three-year period. During year-two,

those staff members who were still unconvinced of the advantages of RJ practices were re-

trained with the help of those staff members who had been early adopters and believers in the

program during the first year of implementation. During year three, new teachers were trained in

the practices as they were hired to extend the use of the practices throughout the campuses. By

the end of year three all staff members had been trained in the practices, including teachers,

classroom aides, and administrators. Principals from the study reported that school culture had

improved, and behavioral referrals had declined. They also reported that their staff, as a whole,

felt much more comfortable engaging in conflict resolution with students, rather than resorting to

removing students from the school setting, as they had in the past. While this study did not focus

on the impact of RJ practices on specific groups of students, these educators saw overall

improvements in reduction of zero-tolerance suspensions and expulsions over the three-year

period (Mirsky, 2007).

Influences of Policy on Disciplinary Consequences

The language used within school policy influenced disciplinary procedures and how they are implemented by schools districts. Skiba, Eaton, and Soto (2004) hypothesized that differences in state statutes and states' broader interpretations of definitions of infractions subject to expulsion" (p.1) could impact the nature and frequencies of consequences issued within a school district. For their study, Skiba and colleagues examined language in state education codes for 50 states relating to out-of-school suspension and expulsion. They found five basic categories within the state language that influenced state policy: "definition/length, types of infractions, alternatives to suspension or expulsion, due process, and corporal punishment" (p. 1). Of the 50 states in the study, 9 mandated alternative measures to suspension prior to suspension and only 13 mandated alternative forms of discipline prior to an expulsion (p. 3). Additionally, 27 states allowed (but did not mandate) schools to implement alternatives to expulsion and 17 states allowed (but did not mandate) alternatives to out-of-school suspension (Skiba et al., 2004). Additional findings in the study showed widespread discrepancies between the states in the length of time students were suspended and expelled. The researchers attributed this finding to a lack of specific policy language regarding length of punishment in state education codes. Thirty states in the study did not define a length for expulsions. Additionally, there was a wide variation and a lack of coherence among the states in what infractions were subject to suspension or expulsion. For example, 12 states defined alcohol-related school violations as expellable offenses, while 12 defined those violations as suspendable. While this study did not specifically focus on how RJ practices could be used as alternatives to zero-tolerance practices, it does emphasize the power of policy language in defining practices related to discipline. State Educational Codes and state policies can either outline the use of alternative

forms of discipline, or they can leave those avenues undefined for states; this leaves room for unequal application of disciplinary practices for the most vulnerable populations.

A much smaller study conducted by Gregory and Weinstein (2008) focused on the discipline gap for African American students by studying the number of disciplinary referrals issued for defiance at the secondary level in a mid-sized urban school in the United States. Gregory and Weinstein hypothesized that classroom practices and teacher relationships with students greatly influenced the rate of disciplinary incidents for African American students. They conducted a two-part study, with Study 1 examining 442 referrals for discipline within a school year. Part 1 indicated that there was an over-representation of African American students in the referrals for defiance. Study 2 took a subsample of 30 African American students who were referred for defiance to see if there were conclusions that could be drawn from students' perceptions about their teachers in two of their classes (p. 456). Study 1 concluded that while African American students accounted for 30% of the student body, they were issued 58% of all disciplinary referrals for "defiance of authority" (255/596 referrals), with almost 70% of all referrals for African American students studied being referred for reasons of defiance (p. 461). Of the 250 total African American student referrals, 86% were attributed to one to three adults (within a six period school day). Study 2 involved students who had been referred to an on-campus suspension program for defiance-related referrals. Students were asked to participate voluntarily with parent and student permission slips obtained for all students involved. Thirty students and teachers were involved in Study 2, which used survey and interview results from both a teacher with whom the student self-selected and the teacher who last referred the student for discipline (pp. 462-463). Study 2 concluded that students' variability in behaviors that were labeled as "defiant" varied amongst different teachers in the school and seemed related to

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students' perceptions of teacher behavior (p. 469). Teachers who had issued disciplinary referrals to students were characterized as "uncaring and having low academic expectations" by students. Additionally, students described their self-nominated teachers as "caring, holding high expectations, and having authority" (p. 470). While this study was a small, it focused on African American students and disciplinary referral for defiance, the researchers believed it could inform other studies about practices that result in fewer disciplinary referrals, and it continued research on how teacher interactions and expectations with African American students could affect school discipline rates (Gregory & Weinstein, 2008).

School Culture, Climate, and RJ Practices

RJ practices emphasize care for students and culture-building through the use of practices such as community circles, restorative circles, community conferencing, and informal conferencing with students to proactively build relationships. "RJ practices, with their emphasis on building stronger relationships with students, demands that schools attend to all aspects of the school culture and organization and that they develop a range of relational practices that help prevent incidents of inappropriate behavior from arising in the first place. The practices should include the relational building activities that need to precede and complement these practices. This in turn requires a shift away from punitive practice to a relational approach" (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005). Schools that were successful with their use of RJ practices emphasized a need to build relationships between students and staff prior to the use of RJ practices as a response to discipline. Administrators trying to use RJ practices with staff as a means for school culture change in discipline found that many staff members had a traditional background in school discipline, and were accustomed to zero-tolerance approaches to student discipline. Blood and Thorsborne (2005) noted that "taking up restorative practice, then, can

challenge us in ways that may cause professional and personal discomfort, even pain." These

researchers suggested that any administration seeking culture change using RJ practices should

approach the process with the following steps in mind:

Table 1:
Steps for School Culture Change Using RJ

Stage 1: Gaining Commitment- *Capturing hearts and minds*	1. Making a case for change 1.1. Identifying the need (the cost of current practice) 1.2. Identifying learning gaps 1.3. Challenging current practice 1.4. Debunking the myths around behavior management and what makes a difference 1.5. Linking to other priorities 2. Establishing buy-in
Stage 2: Developing a Shared Vision- *Knowing where we are going and why*	1. Inspiring a shared vision 2. Developing preferred outcomes aligned with the vision 3. Building a Framework for Practice 4. Developing a common language
Stage 3: Developing Responsive and Effective Practice- *Changing how we do things around here*	1. Developing a range of responses 2. Training, maintenance and support 3. Monitoring for quality standards
Stage 4: Developing a Whole School Approach *Putting it all together*	1.Realignment of school policy with new practice 2. Managing the Transition 3. Widening the lens
Stage 5: Professional Relationships *Walking the talk with each other*	1.Promoting open, honest, transparent and fair working relationships 2. Using restorative processes for managing staff grievance, performance management and conflict 3.Challenging practice and behavior – building integrity

Data review, both quantitative data related to discipline and school culture, and qualitative data

to explore staff perceptions of the school climate related to student behavior and school

disciplinary practices were necessary to build buy-in and establish a foundation for the use of RJ

practices (Lee, 2004). In re-conceptualizing the model presented by Wachtel (1999), regarding the movement of staff culture while implementing RJ practices, the following framework was presented, an adapted model from Wachtel, to describe the types of structures and boundaries practiced by individuals within the whole school community when approaching culture change with the use of RJ practices (1999):

Table 2:

RJ Quadrants of Support

TO **Punitive** blaming stigmatizing	**WITH** **Restorative**
Neglectful ignoring surviving **NOT**	**Permissive** rescuing excusing reasoning **FOR**

Nurture/Support ⟶

Low   High

Individuals

In studying school sites that were using RJ practices, "relationships, and their repair, lies at the heart of restorative justice. It is about addressing the needs of those most affected: the victims, and their community of care; the offender, and their community of care; as well as the wider community. Restorative justice seeks to repair that harm through re-weaving the relationships, that sustain individual well-being, back into the fabric of their communities." (Morrison, 2003).

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Summary

While there had been studies examining disciplinary methods that were alternatives to zero-tolerance practices, there was a lack of research about how the disciplinary outcomes for African American and Latino male SWDs were affected when alternative methods were used. Pushing out already disenfranchised groups from school through exclusionary disciplinary practices was not the answer, as recent California legislation began to address. California urban high schools that began this important work were leading the way in a reform toward more equitable educational opportunities and less racially biased systems of exclusion for African American and Latino youth. Rather than forcing students with IEPs into the school-to-prison pipeline, schools embracing and implementing RJ practices may further reduce the chances for long-term academic and societal exclusion for students with disabilities. In 1988, the Bureau of Justice statistics showed that only 28% of all incarcerated U.S. citizens had graduated from high school. According to Winters (1997), anywhere from 20% to 43% of all incarcerated juveniles have special education services. Additionally, in adult correctional facilities, from 30% to 50% of all inmates qualified for special education services as youth (Winters, 1997). Juvenile detention centers and prisons house many of the nations' dropouts and students with disabilities. In order to disrupt the cycle of exclusion from society and discourage the likelihood of students being referred to such systems, new responses to school discipline were necessary, and this study lends data to the discussion about how RJ practices could be a better option for African American and Latino male SWDs in California's public high schools.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The goal of this study which investigated urban secondary schools in California that had been implementing Restorative Justice (RJ) practices was to gather data about how those practices were affecting the ways in which staff set expectations for, and issued, disciplinary consequences for African American and Latino males with identified disabilities. This study was founded on the premise that there was disproportionate representation of both African American and Latino males in special education who were disciplined through exclusionary methods nationally, a premise that also acknowledged the racial inequities that continued to fuel the school to prison pipeline in the United States (Klingner et al., 2005). In response to this disproportionate rate of discipline many states in the U.S. began using RJ practices. WestEd recently published a study on RJ practices (Fronius et al., 2016). The authors highlighted the diversity of implementation of RJ practices throughout the U.S. They found that RJ was being implemented in schools and districts across many states, but to different degrees, and sometimes with varying practices. As California was a state noted for actively addressing the need for systematic change in school disciplinary practices, studying schools that were in the midst of implementation of RJ practices adds to the research about the impact of these practices (Fronius et al., 2016). By studying the RJ approach in three urban high schools in California, this study informs educators about how these alternative approaches could affect students' disciplinary outcomes. The study will also examine how school policies and practices and staff perceptions of RJ practices relate to the rates of exclusionary discipline occurring in schools. The research questions that follow were the driving force for the data that was gathered within this mixed methods study:

Research Questions

RQ1: What effect, if any, does school staff report RJ practices have on suspension rates, expulsion rates, and citation rates for African American and Latino male SWDs?

RQ2: How do site and district policies and practices for student discipline, both formal and informal, influence disciplinary outcomes for African American and Latino male SWDs according to staff?

RQ 3: How do staff perceptions about RJ effectiveness affect the use of RJ practices when addressing student disciplinary infractions?

Research Design

I used an exploratory sequential mixed methods study to compare data from two public secondary urban school sites in California that had completed three to five years of RJ practice implementation. Mixed methods were used because state discipline data was first gathered and analyzed to examine if disciplinary outcomes changed over time prior to and during the implementation of RJ practices. Then qualitative and quantitative data from surveys and staff interviews were collected to gather responses about staff knowledge of RJ practices and how staff members felt about the implementation of RJ practices in their schools (Maxwell, 2013). Survey and interview responses were sorted into categories based on themes that emerged from various staff members' perspectives about the use of RJ practices at their school sites and any perceived impact such practices had for disciplinary outcomes (Maxwell, 2013). The data from the survey, the interviews, and the disciplinary data analysis was triangulated to determine whether any connections existed between site practices and perceptions and disciplinary outcomes for African American and Latino male SWDs.

Quantitative portions of the study obtained through administrative disciplinary records of the school sites studied measured the sustainability of RJ practices for students with disabilities over time by examining 1) number and frequency disciplinary suspensions and expulsions disaggregated by gender, race, and disability status; and 2) change in disciplinary data over time prior to implementation of RJ practices and during the use of RJ practices. Survey and interview portions of the study examined responses of 1) staff perceptions of RJ effects on discipline for students with disabilities; 2) staff perceptions of formal and informal site and district policies that influenced RJ practices; and 3) staff perceptions about the effects of RJ practices when used within school sites.

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Strategies of Inquiry

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Criteria for Site and Population Selection

The sites I targeted for this study were urban, secondary school sites in California with between 1300 and 2300 students. Schools of this size were considered large high schools, and they would have staffs of 80-120 teachers, approximately, which I believed would yield a sample size that would have widely varying experiences with the use of RJ practices. Additionally, to study the research questions, sites I selected needed a population of Latino and African American males in special education that were near the state average or above the state average, with at least 10% or more of students qualifying for special education services. The sites needed to have demonstrated a decrease in suspensions and expulsions over the last three years prior to the start of the study. Lastly, the schools selected for the study had to self-report being in the process of implementing RJ practices with their staff. Implementation stages with the use of RJ practices varied depending on how long sites had been using RJ practices. The sites had to report using RJ practices for at least three years so that they had some data to share about the

implementation process when I started data collection. My step-by-step site selection process

follows.

For the site selection process, I began by researching schools in California, which had

been noted in the news as reducing suspensions and expulsions. Then, I looked at district

websites and the Local Control Accountability Plan for school districts to see if districts had

noted support of Restorative Justice practices in their district plan or goals. I then narrowed

those options to sites that were also using RJ practices as alternatives to zero-tolerance

disciplinary responses. After I had a list of school sites, I went to each site's website and

reviewed their School Accountability Report Cards (SARCs) for the last three school years to see

if there had been a decline in suspension rates. The SARC is a report that all schools have to

post on their school websites, allowing their data to be accessible to the public. These data gave

me a snapshot of schools' demographics by ethnicity and special program (special education,

foster, homeless) enrollment, and provided an outline of site goals for reducing suspensions and

expulsions in relation to past data collected. From viewing the SARCs, I made a list of five

possible school districts that met the criteria with my student population and had also been using

RJ practices. I then completed the IRB requirements for each district of interest, and waited for

approval to study a school in those districts. Once I gained approval through the district IRB

process, I was allowed to contact principals, site administrative teams, and even board members

of various districts to see if a principal would allow me to study a school site. Given that each

district had its own way of implementing policies and practices, it was advantageous to hear

several perspectives from different districts about RJ practices and how, if at all, staff believed

that those practices have affected student disciplinary outcomes for my target populations.

Comparing data from sites within a large district to the work done with RJ practices in a smaller

district that had less public scrutiny from the rest of California provided different lenses about the use of RJ practices, implementation strategies for RJ practices, and how such practices affected disciplinary outcomes.

Site Profiles

Three comprehensive public high school sites participated in this study, which were referred to as Ainsworth High (site A) in Alpha District, Burnside (site B) and Chisolm High (site C) in Beta School District. Two schools, Burnside High School and Chisolm High School were from the same school district (Beta District) with a district population of approximately 50,000 total students, with fewer than 10 high schools in the district. Ainsworth High School was from another school district, had fewer than 20,000 students enrolled and had fewer than 10 high schools in the district. Schools in the study were selected for their current district goals to reduce suspensions and expulsions, for their self-reported district use of Restorative Justice practices, and for their student populations. For the purpose of school selection, the Latino and African American student groups had to comprise at least 10% of the total student population so that there could be reported statistical findings related to the two groups of students. Each school had to have a population of students with disabilities that comprised at least 10% of the overall student population. The school sites ranged in student population from 1,300 to 2,000 students in the overall student body, and all schools in the study served students in Grades 9 to 12. The three high schools were public schools with open enrollment processes, meaning any student living within the school boundaries could attend without a fee or an admission selection process. The schools were in varying stages of their implementation of RJ practices, ranging from year three of implementation to year five, as reported by the administrators who were interviewed.

The schools were purposely selected from two different districts to gather data from educators who were using the RJ practices in a variety of ways. Also, by gathering data from high schools in a larger district (Beta School District) and gathering data from a high school in a smaller district (Alpha School District), experiences that were reported were different with regard to implementation and district-level oversight. This was not a comparative study between sites, but rather an exploratory study to gain data about RJ practices in schools with similar populations. The three schools were similar in that each site was given the freedom to implement RJ practices according to their sites' needs at the site leaders' discretion.

Ainsworth had a range of 1,500 to 2,000 students throughout the years that data were reviewed. Burnside had a population that averaged between 1,300 to 1,800 students. Chisolm had a population between 1,600 to 1,900 students. In sum, the three sites were similar in total student population for the years 2012-2017. Each site's staff of teachers and counselors had the option to take part in the survey. All school sites were considered "urban" high schools and were located in larger metropolitan cities within counties that consisted of 2 to 4 million residents. Additionally, all school sites had a majority of their students eligible for the free and reduced lunch program, which indicated that most students were residing in low-income households. Ainsworth provided free lunch to all students, and Burnside and Chisolm fluctuated between 85% to 98% of students who received free and reduced lunch services during the years of data review.

The site's demographic data (Appendix F) is by gender and ethnicity during the years of the data review, and determined how schools were included in the study sample. It should be noted that the state did not require school districts to publicize their percentages of foster youth until 2015, so no schools had public data for the foster youth sub-group from 2012 to 2014.

However, questions about foster youth were asked in the survey protocol and through the interview process, as there was often overlap with foster students who also qualified for special education services, as noted in chapters one and two.

Population

The population consisted of a survey of as many teachers and support staff as possible at each school site. Four site administrators were interviewed from Ainsworth High School, one from Burnside High School, and three from Chisolm High School. Two district administrators/counselors were interviewed from both Ainsworth High School and Burnside High, and one from Chisolm High School. One site teacher-on-assignment was interviewed from Ainsworth and Burnside, and none from Chisolm (see Appendix L). Each site had varying structures for the leaders who took charge of RJ practices, creating the variance in who participated in the interview process.

Table 3
Staff Survey Responses by Site

	Ainsworth	Burnside	Chisolm
Participant Response Rate by Site	72%	61%	48%
Total Responses Submitted	64	37	39
Total Teachers Responding	59	33	36
Total with Other Roles (Counselors, Teachers on Assignment)	5	4	3

Table 4
Interview Participants by Site

Respondents	Ainsworth	Burnside	Chisolm
Site Administrators	4	1	3
District Administrators/Counselors	2	2	1
Site Counselors	0	1	0
Site Teachers on Assignment	1	1	0

Table 5
Survey Participants' Gender by Site

	Ainsworth	Burnside	Chisolm
Male	15	9	8
Female	43	25	29
Decline to State/No Response	6	3	2

Table 6
Survey Participants' Reported Ethnicity by Site Response Percentages

	Ainsworth	Burnside	Chisolm
Hispanic/Latino/a	15%	19%	14%
African American/Black	14%	5%	7%
Caucasian/White	46%	62%	68%
Asian	11%	6%	3%
Mixed Race	8%	2%	1%
Other	3%	0	2%
Decline to State/No Response	6%	6%	5%

Access

      After approval from the district officials and site principals, I accessed the school sites by arranging time with each Principal to schedule interviews and followed the principal's guidance on how the survey would be made available to staff. I then worked with the administrators' schedules to conduct the interview based on their needs. Some interviews were conducted in person, while others occurred on the phone. My role as both a researcher and a current school administrator was presented to site administrators in my initial conversations with them while I sought access to study their schools.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection occurred through the analysis of site disciplinary data, review of survey data, and coding of interview responses. Document review added to an understanding of the vision and fiscal resources allocated to interventions and RJ practices.

Document Review

Each district had their LCAP displayed on-line for review of fiscal allocations toward district goals and programs. SARC information was reviewed to view site demographics. As available, district referral documents were reviewed. Additionally, the method in which the state collected and reported suspension data changed in the 2011-2012 reporting year. Prior to 2011-2012 school year, schools reported their total numbers of suspensions for the year, which could have included duplicate counts of students who were suspended multiple times throughout the school year. Hence, Chisolm High state data reported more suspensions in 2009-2010 than their total number of enrolled students that year, an impossible statistic, meaning that they were reporting multiple offenses for the same students in their total number of suspensions. Beginning in the 2011-2012 school year, the state changed reporting requirements and mandated that schools report suspensions by "unduplicated counts" for various types of federal offenses and suspensions, which included a reporting category for the number of suspensions for "willful defiance." These mandated reporting requirement changes accompanied the legislative bill that limited the types of offenses for which students could be suspended and also added a level of accountability to schools that had not existed prior to the 2011-2012 school year (see Appendix B for suspension and expulsion data 2009-2017).

Document review specifically informed the second research question about site and district policies. Reviewing board policies, LCAP goals, proposed district expenditures, district policies related to discipline and RJ practices, site policies related to discipline, site documents

used for disciplinary referrals, and site data from WASC reports before RJ implementation and

after RJ implementation also helped inform how practices had, or had not, connected to reduced

zero-tolerance practices at the school sites. Also, document review assisted in my understanding

of the alignment between district and site policies and the use of RJ practices as responses to

discipline.

Disciplinary data about schools in the study was collected by examining the California

Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) data that reported suspension,

expulsion. These same data are also reported by student race, gender, and special populations

(special education, foster, homeless), so they provided background data about the sites' rates of

disciplinary responses prior to the qualitative portions of my data collection.   These disciplinary

data helped describe the schools within the study and were used to determine whether

connections existed between staff perceptions and practices with RJ and student disciplinary

outcomes.

Survey

An introductory consent statement was included in the electronic survey to school staff

informing them of the purpose for the survey. Sites were also given the opportunity of providing

a hard-copy version or to do the survey on-line. All three sites preferred to use the electronic

format for survey responses. At both Ainsworth and Chisolm, the principal forwarded the survey

link to the staff with an introductory message I drafted for them. At Burnside, one of the

Assistant Principals sent the same link and introductory message to staff via e-mail. The survey

addressed all three research questions with Likert scale ratings and open-ended response

questions to gather data about the use of various RJ practices and staff member's opinions about

effectiveness and impact of various practices (See Appendix B). No incentives were offered to

staff for their participation. If response rates were lower than hoped for, I asked the site

administrators if they could remind their staff of their opportunity to respond. The Ainsworth

principal reminded the staff once to respond. I did receive confirmation that the other two

administrators reminded their staff to respond to the survey.

With Ainsworth High School, at least two reminders were sent in different weeks by the

principal via e-mail to remind the staff that they could participate (voluntarily) in the study. For

Burnside High School, the assistant principal sent the link to staff with a brief introduction of my

study, and for Chisolm High School, the principal sent the link to staff with an explanation

similar to that sent by the Burnside administrator. Ainsworth staff had access to respond for a

month and a half, while Burnside and Chisolm staff each had two weeks to respond. The

variance in time allowed occurred because of time restrictions created by statewide testing

deadlines within Beta School District. One interview protocol was used. It had questions that

applied to both site and district level administrators.

All teachers who responded to the survey could potentially have SWDs in their classes,

so it was important to hear perspectives from a sampling of all teachers to understand the impact

of RJ practices at the school sites across a variety of class settings. Support staff were eligible to

participate in the survey, also, as they may also have used RJ practices in working with students

through their roles. Support staff could have included paraprofessionals who worked directly

with SWDs, safety officers who responded to disciplinary incidents, and even school police

officers, as available.

Interviews

Interviews were used to understand the "perspectives and goals" of interviewees

(Maxwell, 2013, p. 102) as they related to the use of RJ practices for SWDs (Appendix A).

Interviews for each district with at least one district-level leader who worked to oversee disciplinary policies, either specifically with SWDs or for all students in the district, gave insight as to how district leaders were guiding RJ practices and their implementation at the school sites. In speaking with district administrators, the goal was to understand how policies, training, and district support had impacted the use of RJ practices for each site of study. Each district had one or two positions that oversaw student interventions and discipline, so I sought input from district leaders who were such a role. All three school sites had administrative designees who were allowed to directly implement disciplinary consequences. Titles varied by site, but these support personnel were called "Deans, Teachers on Assignment, and Intervention Specialists," depending on the district.

A similar interview protocol was used for district and site personnel, but questions selected from the protocol were tailored to staff members' role and the scope of their involvement with discipline outcomes. Questions selected from the protocol for district administrators focused on policies and trainings outlined for the school sites, including board policies and information communicated through meetings with site-level administrators and site staff members about discipline policies. Questions appropriate for each group were noted with either "S" for site or "D" for district. Questions that were appropriate for both types of leaders had both letters "S" and "D" noted beside the question (See Appendix A). Site level staff member interviews focused on types of practices used, opinions about effectiveness of practices, perceptions about staff use of practices, and opinions about how practices have impacted the sites' discipline outcomes.

Interviews were scheduled with the leaders, based on their availability. Ainsworth High all met with me in person, with the exception of one site leader who preferred to be interviewed

by phone. Ainsworth interviews occurred over a school break in the offices for all staff members, with the exception of two interviews where the leader asked me to complete the interview in a school office during school hours and another, which occurred by phone. All of the interviewees from the Beta District preferred to conduct interviews by phone. In all cases, interviews lasted 30 minutes, and responses were audio-recorded. Most of the participants scheduled time to complete the interview within the school day from their own office at work. They told me they closed their door and scheduled time to be free from distractions.

Data Analysis Methods

Research Question 1 was addressed through triangulation of staff survey data themes, staff interviews, and site disciplinary data review. Research Question 2, was addressed in triangulating data from document review, staff surveys, and staff interviews. By triangulating data gathered for research questions, I could check by data using multiple methods to form conclusions and strengthen the trustworthiness of my findings (Maxwell, 2013). The third research question was answered through staff survey responses and staff interview responses (Appendix K). Once collected, I coded responses based on the research questions that corresponded to each survey item to determine themes in staff responses. Coding is a "typical categorizing strategy in qualitative research…that focuses on relationships of similarity" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 106). Staff interviews were coded by corresponding questions to determine themes that related to the three research questions.

Ethical Considerations

Reliability

I intended to strengthen the reliability of this study by gathering data from two separate school districts in different regions of California with similar demographics in order to widen the

sample size and compare data collected from similar sites. Three schools ultimately agreed to participate in the study and met my original criteria for selection. Internal validity was checked by encouraging input from site and district officials in a confidential setting that they selected. In assuring that survey data would stay confidential through a secure on-line response portal, I aimed to make survey respondents feel comfortable about giving honest responses to questions to add to reliability. The same survey was given to all respondents, and the same interview protocol was used for all interviewees for consistency. This also meant conducting interviews outside of school time for Alpha School District, in an environment that allowed site and district respondents to be as candid as possible. For Beta District, interviewees could give reliable response often over the phone where the interviewee could choose to be in a setting of their choosing that was isolated and away from external distractions.

In addition to these efforts I emphasized that this study was not evaluative in nature, but only sought to gather data from sites that had decreased their suspensions/expulsions over time to see how RJ practices were contributing to their work with school discipline, if at all. Site names, district names, and school personnel names were confidential, to allow for reporting findings without districts feeling as though they were put at the forefront of the discussion about RJ practice implementation in the state chosen.

Credibility

As a current district administrator and a former site administrator, I understood the concerns that other administrators had in participating in a study about a topic like school discipline. Additionally, it was a sensitive topic for school sites to release data about students in traditionally marginalized sub-groups due to racial background and disability status.

Student data was not collected in a way that posed a threat to student privacy per FERPA rights. Any reported data on suspensions or expulsions was obtained through public site and district reporting information system portals where students' demographics were reported without students' names or student identification numbers. Yearly, public schools reported these data to the state, so each district and site had these data readily available for review. Staff names remained confidential within the survey responses and the interviews; only staff positions and years of service were noted, if relevant, for the purpose of coding responses. If reporting the staff positions posed a threat to confidentiality, then findings were reported in generic terms. Data was kept in a personal, password-protected computer away from my work site so that only I had access to data. Surveys, recordings of interviews, transcripts of interviews, and personal notes were shredded upon conclusion of the study or in accordance with IRB procedures so as not to risk violating any privacy agreements. It was critical to have principal and staff member voluntary participation and support. Confidentiality was maintained by allowing the on-line survey responses to be anonymous through a portal where I could not access personal information of respondents. Interview participants all were given my IRB approval, also.

Through the district approval processes for conducting research, the goal to access data for marginalized groups of students was disclosed and reviewed prior to the start of the study. Districts or principals that were not comfortable with disclosing findings about such groups chose not to participate in the study. Since each district had its own version of an approval process to conduct research, I submitted my proposal to conduct research and had approval through the appropriate IRB or district process at each district in advance, had the UCLA IRB process completed and shared with the school districts, and I established a Memorandum of Understanding with each school district, if requested, prior to starting research. Pseudonyms

were used to describe the districts and the school sites, and gender of respondents along with personal demographics about interview respondents was not reported in findings to protect the confidentiality of interview participants. All interview participants signed a consent to conduct research acknowledgment prior to participation, and the on-line survey began with a consent statement that was a requirement for respondents if they were to proceed with completion of the survey.

Biases

I am an educator who believes that zero-tolerance disciplinary practices for students of color in special education results in a disproportionately higher number of exclusions from educational opportunities than for students in other groups. I also believe that alternatives to zero-tolerance policies should be explored in educational settings in order to reduce exclusionary practices in schools. Schools using only zero-tolerance practices for responses to discipline are perpetuating the cycle of school exclusion for students in special populations and minority groups. In studying sites that were already using RJ practices, I worked with schools that had begun the work of exploring alternative options for disciplinary responses, though every site's staff members may have had varying opinions about these practices. Knowing that African American and Latino males were often placed in special education and disciplined at higher rates than students in other racial groups, I had to ensure that my survey and my own interview protocols did not bias my data collection practices.

Piloting my survey and interview protocols with educators helped me revise my questions and check for my own biases within protocols. Various school district leaders, whose districts did not participate in the study assisted in providing feedback on my protocols. Additionally, I reduced the length of my protocols, due to feedback I received in piloting my protocols regarding

possible testing fatigue, making the survey less than ten minutes long to complete. Throughout interviews, I was aware of my body language, how I posed questions, and any information I shared, so as not to bias the participants' responses. I knew that if interview participants believed that I felt that RJ practices were a positive alternative to zero-tolerance practices, they may temper their responses to questions. Also, if my positionality as a school administrator influenced other administrators to answer questions in a way that they considered to be "politically correct," I may not have received a true gauge of their feelings about RJ practices. These were all areas I accounted for as possible limitations in my findings and the data I gathered.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

This sequential exploratory mixed methods study collected data from one comprehensive public high school in one school district, Alpha District and two comprehensive public high school in a second district, Beta District. Both districts were urban and were located in a Western state in the United States. The goal of the research was to gain an understanding of ways in which the use of Restorative Justice practices influenced disciplinary consequences for African American and Latino male students with disabilities (SWDs). Three research questions were addressed through a staff survey, document review, including the review of public disciplinary school site data, and through interviews with staff that worked directly on RJ practices at the school sites or at the district office/central office level. For the research, I first gained background data about each of three high school sites by examining disciplinary data, and then I used the survey response data and interview protocol data responses to triangulate themes that answered the following research questions:

RQ1: What effect, if any, does school staff report RJ practices have on suspension rates, expulsion rates, and citation rates for African American and Latino male SWDs?

RQ2: How do site and district policies and practices for student discipline, both formal and informal, influence disciplinary outcomes for African American and Latino male SWDs according to staff?

RQ3: How do staff perceptions about RJ effectiveness affect the use of RJ practices when addressing student disciplinary infractions?

This chapter begins with a description of the participants, follows with each district's and school's processes for implementation of RJ practices for SWDS, and then presents findings for

the three research questions for each site.   Final comparisons and differences in data among the

three schools will be reported.

<p style="text-align:center;">**Overview of the District and Site Processes for Implementation**</p>

Each of the two districts had its own process and timeline for introducing RJ practices to

its high schools. In Alpha District, the site administrative team reported an emphasis on

reducing the number of African American males and SWDs who were suspended from class in

their intervention efforts. In Beta District, reduction of suspensions for African American

students SWDs was a primary focus of the district's intervention efforts, due to state findings of

disproportionality. Each school was given site-level administrative control over how RJ

practices were implemented, how training was offered to staff members, which staff members

were mandated to attend training, and how often training occurred. Site leaders changed

throughout the years of data presented for review (2009-2016), resulting in changes in the

methods used for RJ implementation, specifically in Beta District. Alpha District had a

consistent administrative team over the course of their use of RJ practices.

The participant counts for both the survey and the interview process follow in Table 3

and Table 4 below.

Table 3
Staff Survey Responses by Site

	Ainsworth	Burnside	Chisolm
Participant Response Rate by Site	72%	61%	48%
Total Responses Submitted	64	37	39
Total Teachers Responding	59	33	36
Total with Other Roles (Counselors, Teachers on Assignment)	5	4	3

All Ainsworth administrators interviewed worked directly with overseeing discipline and

RJ practices or were charged by the district to provide RJ interventions and training for staff and

students. Ainsworth had seven participants in the interview process. For Burnside, participants

ranged from site administrators to certificated staff members and to district office leaders who

worked in various roles directly related to student discipline, student interventions, or in staff

training for RJ practices at the school site or district level. Chisolm had four interview

participants, who were all site or district administrators. One of the respondents overlapped

between Burnside and Chisolm due to the role of that person at the district level and the

involvement with work at both high school sites. The following table outlines the interview

participants by site:

Table 4
Interview Participants by Site

Respondents	Ainsworth	Burnside	Chisolm
Site Administrators	4	1	3
District Administrators/Counselors	2	2	1
Site Counselors	0	1	0
Site Teachers on Assignment	1	1	0

Overall rates of suspensions and expulsions over the last six years leading up to this 2017

study can be viewed in Appendix G, as reported through the Department of Education and from

the school district's School Accountability Report Cards (SARCs), which were state reporting

systems for public schools. While the sites did not consistently lower their suspension *and*

expulsion percentages each consecutive year, all three sites did show declines in suspensions

from the years *prior* to their implementation of RJ practices. It is important to note that there

was no formal system for documenting site-based student citations at any of the three sites. All

site administrators and staff who participated in the interview process stated that RJ practices had

contributed to positive changes in disciplinary data, but nobody could say that RJ practices had

impacted the decline in formal disciplinary data in isolation from other site efforts. As one

administrator stated, "Our use of RJ practices in conjunction with focused staff training efforts, better communication of expectations with staff, and the use of Positive Behavior Incentive Supports (PBIS) have all impacted the reduction in our site suspensions over time." Next, each school site's implementation process is described.

Alpha District, Ainsworth High School

Alpha District and Ainsworth High first introduced RJ practices using an agency outside of the district to provide behavioral interventions with students, and that agency trained administrative staff in the use of RJ practices during the 2011-2012 school year. Such interventions included the use of formal mediations with students, formal counseling and questioning techniques used for disciplinary conferences, the use of tiered interventions for students, and the use of community-building activities with staff and students in classrooms. There was a leadership change at the district level, and a principal transitioned into a district-level/central-office position. That administrator then ensured that RJ practices were implemented at all high schools in the district. The practices were used as a form of intervention prior to a suspension from class or school and were also used to restore relationships after a school suspension. Training was not mandatory until the 2013-2014 school year when the district trained their own staff members and expanded that training to include all site administrators, counselors, teachers on assignment working with interventions, and some of the classified staff members, such as safety officers. Training, however, was not mandatory during the 2013-2014 school year for all Ainsworth staff members. Staff could choose to sign up for RJ training that year for a half-day, whole day, or multiple-day trainings. Trainings were incentivized by pay during meetings, or a substitute was allocated for a teacher's class for a longer training. Those staff members who did not choose to sign up were exposed to RJ practices only through

mandatory one-hour staff meetings that occurred monthly, which included focused discussions on reducing incidents of exclusion from class and school for African American and Latino males and students with disabilities.

From 2014 to 2017, training options expanded and became more frequent but were still voluntary for many staff members. Site administrators targeted specific department members for mandatory intensive trainings of four or more hours of training each year. Targeted staff included teachers, counselors, and administrative staff members. Classified staff members, such as safety officers, cafeteria workers, maintenance staff, and office staff were not included in the mandated group trainings at the time of this study. Training was not widespread or mandated for any single group of classified members at Ainsworth throughout the years of intervention discussed in this study. Amongst certificated staff members (teachers, counselors, and administrators), the principal said that at least 70% of teachers/counselors were using RJ practices regularly by the time of our interview, and all administrators were using RJ practices "fluidly." Two teachers-on-assignment were the site specialists for interventions, and any student referred out of class for disciplinary reasons saw one of these specialists first. The specialist would then use the RJ question protocol and explore the disciplinary concerns through the following reflective questioning which focused on exploring behavioral concerns in a restorative manner rather than invoking blaming (www.iirp.org, 2017)

Table 7

Ainsworth Adversarial Versus Restorative Reflective Questioning Protocol

Adversarial	Restorative
What happened?	What happened?
Who is to blame?	What harm resulted?
What punishment is needed?	What needs to be done to make things right/repair the harm?

Targeted RJ practices were used for SWDs, and protocols matched those expected for students in general education, but the student's case manager and a school psychologist were also expected to be included in the RJ intervention efforts. According to one specialist,

The majority of issues can be resolved without any further suspension or harsher consequence. Often there has just been a misunderstanding between the teacher and the student, or between a couple students, and the goal is to restore the relationship rather than keep the student or students out of class.

The specialist would often refer an SWD directly forward to a site associate principal so that the administrator could also review the student's behavior intervention plan, Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and make informed decisions about consequences to issue the student. Three of the four administrators stated that they would review these data prior to issuing a disciplinary consequence to a student, although one administrator added, "What do you mean? I would treat all students the same with consequences, regardless of whether a student was in special education or not."

Beta District, Burnside High School and Chisolm High School

  The Burnside principal chose not to participate in the interview process but allowed the team working with interventions to be my primary contacts for interviews. The principal stated that other leaders were tasked with RJ implementation efforts and would have a greater depth of knowledge to share. Both high schools in the Beta District had a principal turnover in the last several years, which a district-level interviewee believed had slowed the momentum in implementation and use of RJ practices.   Chisolm High and Burnside High leaders each created a team of on-campus staff to support students. The team members attended trainings on RJ practices, PBIS practices, and other social-emotional trainings. That team was then expected to share the information from their trainings with staff groups on their campus. There was a teacher-on-assignment who had gone through formal RJ practice trainings and was the designated contact person for all students who were suspended from class. One administrator noted that their site suspension rates had not declined "drastically" over the last several years, but the administrator believed they were seeing "small declines in class suspensions with the additional staff supports they had allocated." At the time of interviews, statewide suspension data for the 2016-2017 school year was not finalized, but all interviewed site leaders had a belief that they had "reduced suspensions" from the year before. Data later reported by the state for the 2016-2017 year showed suspensions decreased by 0.8% and expulsions decreased by 0.4% (Appendix G) for the two schools.

  Out-of-school trainings were offered for the team members at Burnside. The team was comprised of a teacher-on-assignment, site administrators, and site counselors. One administrator stated that district trainings for how to run restorative circles, how to run

community building circles, and trainings on trauma-informed practices were offered to their team over the last three years.

The site administrators (assistant principals and principal) at Chisolm participated in the interview process. They indicated that their district's large size necessitated beginning RJ practices at the elementary schools approximately 10 years before the practices moved up to middle schools and then to some high schools where implementation and training occurred over the last five years. During 2014-2015, the district implemented a high school task force to collaborate about RJ practices and subsequently created a high school PBIS team. There were mixed responses at Chisolm about the consistency with district-level supports for administrators. One administrator said it had "been a couple years since there was structured training for administrators on RJ practices from the district," while another administrator described the district trainings as "inconsistent," and another administrator noted that just in the last two years had there been mandated meetings for administrators that were facilitated by district leaders. Two of the site assistant principals, who identified themselves as having a background in special education, firmly believed RJ practices should be used before punishment to correct behavior and restore relationships.

Chisolm began its training on RJ practices by selecting a team of teachers who were mostly in the special education department. The principal thought that the special education teachers were "a natural choice to help lead the RJ and PBIS work, as they already had a background in providing interventions, customizing behavioral plans for students, and working with students' individual social emotional needs to address behavior." As a team, that group was sent to formal trainings in RJ practices, and they were tasked with returning to the larger school staff and sharing information with them. Time was allotted during the 2015-16 and 2016-17

school years for the team to discuss RJ practices at the monthly staff meetings. Teachers and counselors were mandated to attend those staff meetings, but similar to the other two sites, classified members were not mandated to attend regularly or participate in trainings with teachers. Two trainings were offered for classified staff during the 2014-2015 school year, but since the administrative team was relatively new, they could not report on the efforts to train classified staff members prior to the last three years. Site administrators reported that district staff was supportive of the site's need to facilitate trainings in response to requests for trainings by site administrators. In contrast, the staff interviewed from Burnside had mixed responses about district support in running site-level trainings. Two interviewees were positive and felt supported, and the remaining interviewees reported that the district-level supports had "been limited."

The Chisolm High counseling staff was sent to district trainings to learn how to work specifically with the needs of high-risk students: foster students, students with disabilities, and African American students. The district had identified these subgroups to focus on their social emotional needs. The site administrative team noted that they were developing a strategic plan to include RJ practices more explicitly for these three groups to reduce their suspensions.

Both Burnside and Chisolm schools expected that students' special education case managers would be notified of disciplinary concerns, but they did not involve those individuals in the initial RJ conversation with the counselor, in contrast to the expectation at Ainsworth High. The Ainsworth teacher-on-assignment attempted to work through the issue with the student first using RJ practices prior to a disciplinary consequence being issued. Students would only bypass the counselor and be sent straight to an Assistant Principal when a rule violation was

considered "more extreme or severe where there had to be a mandated consequence, such as when there was fighting, drugs or a weapon involved in a suspension from class."

Chisolm was part of the same school district as Burnside, but Chisolm staff reported feeling more advanced in their work with RJ practices and more confident in their progress and staff support of practices than Burnside respondents.   That said, 39 out of a possible 81 individuals responded to the survey (48%), so, the responses for Chisolm provided a snapshot of almost half of the staff about RJ practices. Chisolm's principal advised me to interview the administrative leaders for their input, who all preferred to be interviewed by phone, rather than in person. The staff at Chisolm was described by one district administrator, as "predominantly composed of veteran teachers who had been at the site longer than six years, which creates its own challenges for how you approach new ideas and expectations with the staff."
Survey data and then the interview findings for each research question will be explained for each site in the sections that follow.

RQ #1: Findings for the Three Sites

The first research question asked, "What effect, if any, does school staff report RJ practices have on suspension rates, expulsion rates, and citation rates for African American and Latino male SWDs?" For the three sites, data from both interviewees and survey respondents (Ainsworth $n = 58\%$, Burnside $n = 70\%$, Chisolm $n = 64\%$ which represents the total number of participants agreeing from the survey indicated a belief that suspensions and expulsions had decreased for African American and Latino males with disabilities, in spite of statewide reports that showed varying changes and fluctuations over a period of three years prior to the study. What about citation rates?

Alpha District, Ainsworth High School Findings

In spite of the lack of statistical data to support the assertion that suspensions and expulsions had declined consistently over the last three years, the survey data from the staff responses suggested that respondents believed that RJ practices contributed to the reduction of site suspensions and expulsions. See Appendix D for the survey questions that addressed the first research question. Staff (teachers and counselors) perceptions were that RJ practices had influenced a decline in suspensions and expulsions for all students. Eighty-four percent of the respondents agreed that there was an expectation that they use intervention procedures that included the use of RJ practices prior to suspending a student from class, and 69% of respondents believed that RJ practices had lowered suspension rates. Another 68% of staff agreed that either most or all of the time, they would use RJ practices for students with disabilities rather than refer them for a suspension, expulsion, or a possible school citation. When asked specifically about Latino males with disabilities and then about African American males with disabilities, 67% of respondents said that they would use RJ practices instead of referring the student for a possible suspension, expulsion, or citation. It should be noted that some respondents did not know the answer to the questions, as 31% responded "I don't know" to the question that asked how RJ practices had influenced suspension rates, and 41% said they didn't know how students viewed RJ practices. Lastly, half of the survey respondents (53%) said that RJ practices had limited rules' infractions in their classrooms. Lower percentages of respondents believed that RJ practices had helped them build a stronger sense of community in their classrooms (41%), but few felt RJ practices had limited their options for responding to infractions with students (3%) or had not influenced their practice at all (13%).

Ainsworth interview data also supported the belief that RJ practices had contributed to a decline in site-level suspensions and expulsions for African American and Latino male SWDs.

All seven interviewees at Ainsworth agreed that it would not be possible to attribute a decline in

site suspensions solely to the use of RJ practices, however. They said that the use of these

practices may have *contributed* to their site suspension and expulsion reductions. One

respondent stated:

> I don't know if RJ practices have a direct correlation, but I just sent out the December
>
> suspension list, and only one of the students was in special education. Overall, I would
>
> say our suspension rates for students with disabilities have decreased significantly.

Another administrator had these thoughts about RJ practices and how they impacted class

suspension rates when teachers' vision of students' behaviors changed:

> I think that the RJ trainings have gotten teachers to at least catch themselves and start to
>
> consider the person, not just what happened. They start to see the student as a person, a
>
> human being, a person with a soul, and someone you should talk to. So with the teachers,
>
> it's changing the conversations they have with the kid, and teaching how to deescalate
>
> situations and how to remember that they are the adult and they don't need to be on the
>
> same level arguing with a student.

All those interviewed at Ainsworth mentioned that the use of Positive Behavior

Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in conjunction with RJ practices could have helped reduce

suspensions and expulsions. Three of the interviewees also commented about a "shift in the way

we do things," as a result of the "changes in the state educational code changes several years ago

for what was a suspendable offense." Three site administrators, one teacher on assignment, and

both district administrators (6 of 7 respondents) noted the need to collect and share more

quantitative data to have a true understanding of how much impact the RJ practices, in isolation

of other programs or initiatives, may have had on suspensions with specific demographic groups of students.

When looking specifically at race and disproportionality with suspensions, a site administrator noted that there was a site discrepancy with more African American males being referred out of class for disciplinary referrals than students of other ethnicities and/or gender. In regard to addressing this with staff, the administrator stated, "This is a very hard topic with a lot of emotion involved, and I have to walk a fine line because of my own ethnicity, because of who I am. We may not be able to talk about things like this yet with our staff too overtly." When considering whether the use of RJ practices lowered site suspension rates for African American and Latino males with disabilities, there was agreement amongst all interviewed at Ainsworth High that suspensions were lower for *all* students, but one administrator then said, "I still see the majority of students referred to the office throughout the day or kicked out of class are Black boys." Another respondent said that the "majority, maybe 90% of the students referred to the office from class for discipline are students with disabilities." However, that same administrator added that once the students were in the office, site administrators worked through the RJ practices with students in an effort to avoid suspensions whenever possible, stating that, "most times a suspension can be avoided." If a student had to be suspended due to a rule violation that mandated a suspension, one administrator explained, "there is a re-entry meeting where a restorative circle or conversation takes place in order to reflect on why the suspension occurred and determine how that student can avoid being in the same situation in the future."

Citations elicited a more traditional response, rather than employing RJ practices. The site administrators noted that they referred students to the on-site police officer when there was a drug offense or a fight. However, there was no formal data collection method for tracking the

number of students who received citations, nor were formal data kept on who was receiving a citation on the Ainsworth campus. One administrator said, "That is just not something we have put in place within the district, and the police kind of do their thing if a situation warrants a citation." Ainsworth had a full-time city Sherriff assigned to the school to respond to incidents.

Beta District, Burnside High School and Chisolm High School Findings

Though Burnside High and Chisolm High School were both in Beta District, there was variance in survey responses and interview findings. (See Appendix I for Survey responses for Ainsworth, Burnside, and Chisolm). The data on the impact of RJ practices on school suspension rates are presented in the following figures.

It was evident in Figure #1 that individuals perceived that RJ practices had reduced suspension rates overall at all three sites with Ainsworth reporting 69% of individuals perceived a drop in suspension rates, Burnside reporting 68%, and individuals at Chisolm reporting 87%.
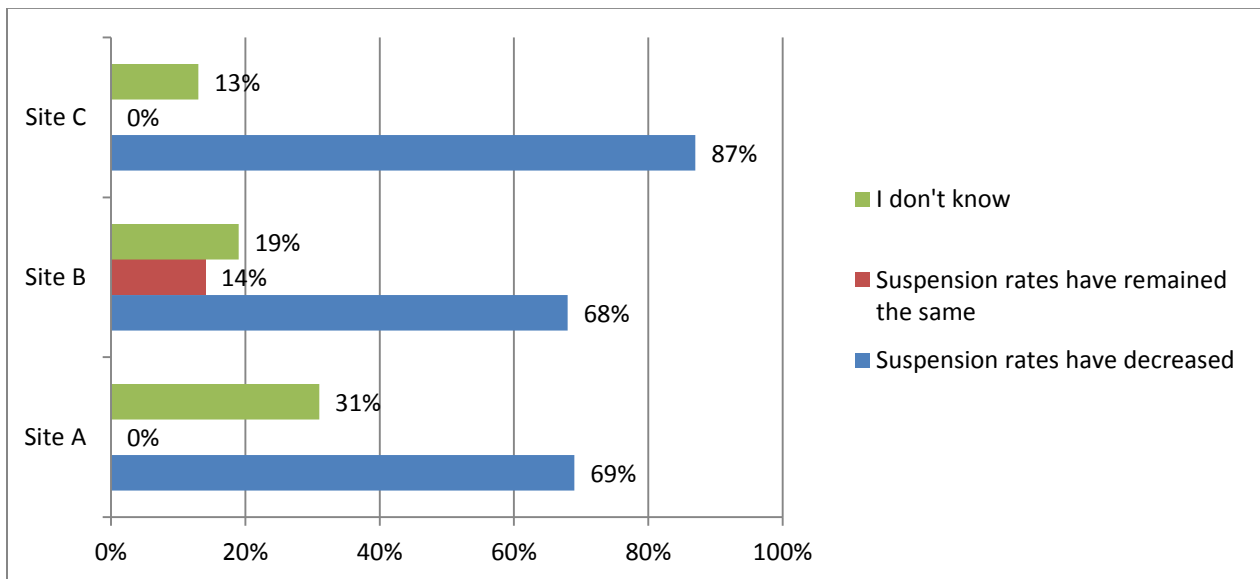
Figure 1. How have Restorative Justice practices affected your school **suspension** rates, if at all? (Survey Q21).

When asked specifically about whether RJ practices were used with special education students at the three sites, the data in Figure #2 indicated that there was a positive skew of

responses. The majority of respondents use RJ most or always at all three sites. Combining the "always or most of the time responses" captures 68% (Ainsworth), 70% (Burnside), and 59% (Chisolm) of the percent of individuals using RJ with students with special needs. Individuals at the three sites also responded similarly to the percentage who reported they do not use RJ practices at all with special education students. Six percent of individuals at Ainsworth reported not using RJ practices in lieu of referrals, and the percentage was 5% at Burnside and 8% at Chisolm.
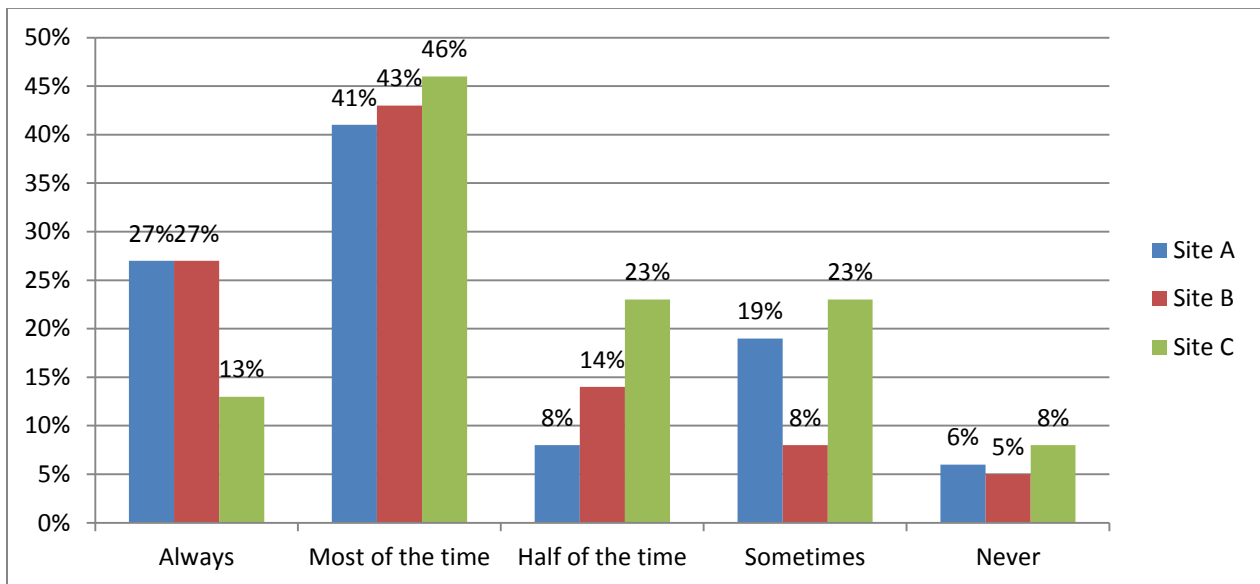
Figure 2. When special education students break rules, I use Restorative Justice practices **instead** of referring the students to suspension/expulsion/citation (Survey Q33).

Figure 3 represents the percentage of respondents who said they would use RJ practices with Latino males with special needs. Over 60% of individuals responded in the affirmative with either always or most of the time at Ainsworth and Burnside, but slightly fewer (59%) said they would do so at Chisolm.
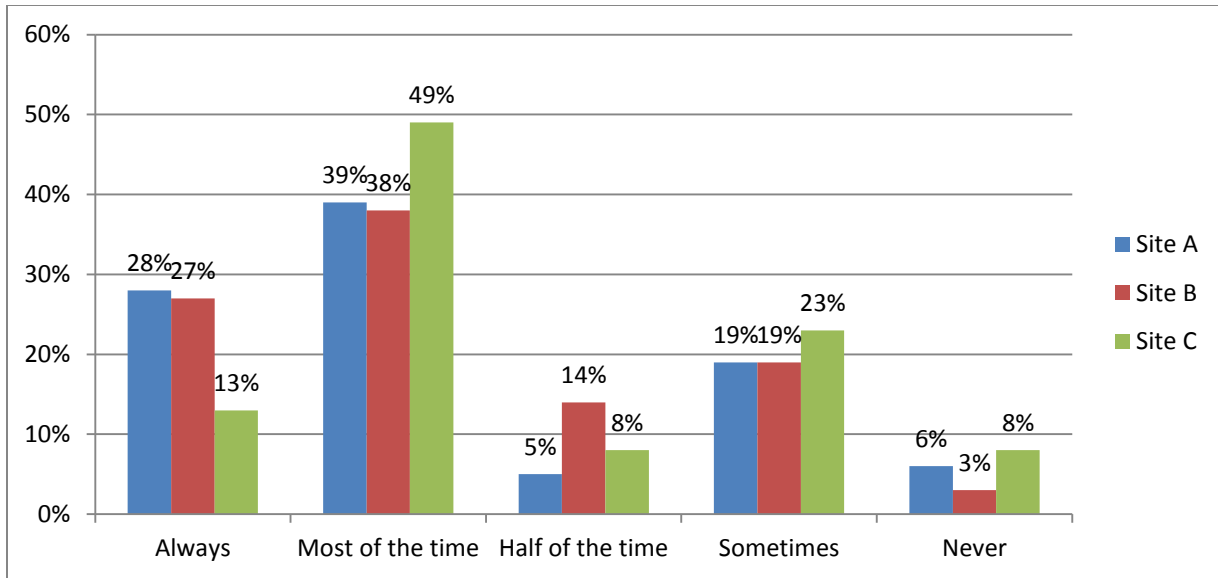
Figure 3. When Latino male students with IEPs break school rules, I use Restorative Justice practices instead of referring the students to suspension/expulsion/citation (Q35).

Figure 4 represents the percentage of those who would use RJ practices with African American special needs males. There was a similar number of individuals who responded "Always" or "Most of the time" from Ainsworth (67%) and Burnside (62%), but Chisolm had 59% of the individuals respond with "Always" or "Most of the time," and there were many fewer individuals who responded with "Always" at Chisolm (13%) than Ainsworth (28%) and Burnside (27%), which was also the case with Latino male SWDs.
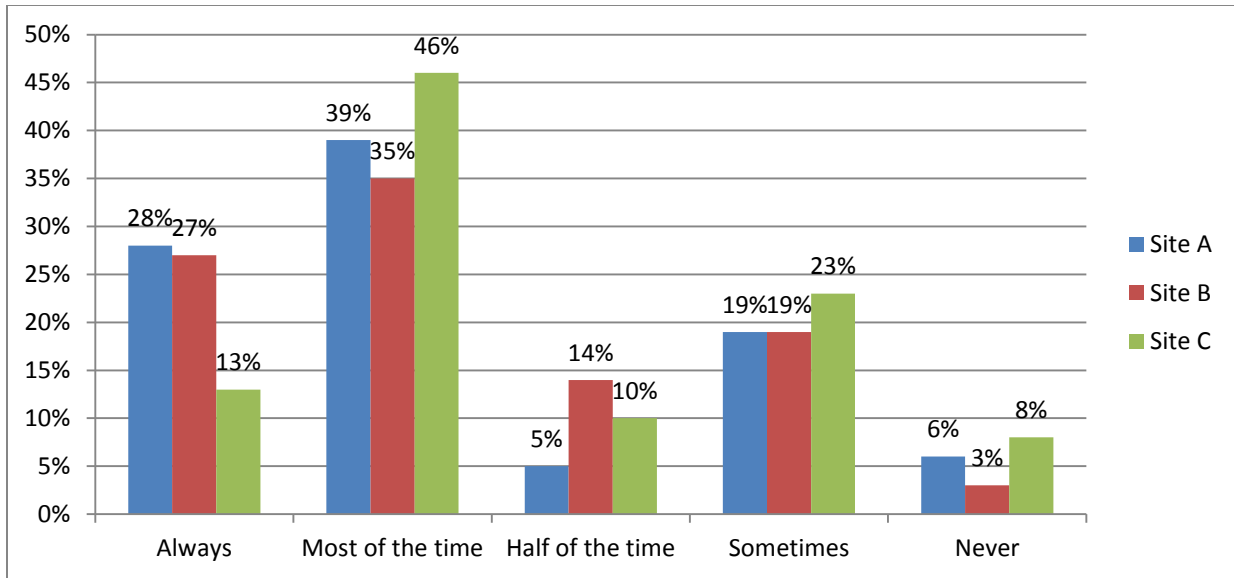
Figure 4. When African American male students with IEPs break school rules, I use Restorative Justice practices instead of referring the students to suspension/expulsion/citation (Q36).

Beta District Findings, Burnside High School. In response to the first research question, the majority of survey respondents at Burnside (78%) knew that RJ practices were being used at their school site and knew that RJ practices were part of the expected intervention protocols, but fewer respondents believed that the use of RJ practices had contributed to a reduction in the number of total school suspensions (68%) or reduced school expulsions (65%). Seventy percent of staff believed that "fewer students were suspended from class" because of RJ practices. More than half of respondents said they would use RJ practices rather than referring a student with a disability (95%) or a foster youth (62%) for suspension. Burnside High had 62% of respondents report that they would use RJ practices "always or most times" prior to recommending a suspension/expulsion/citation for Latino and African American males SWDs. Finally, the majority (70%) of respondents believed that RJ practices had a positive effect in reducing the number of students who were suspended from class. Additionally, the site administration's focus on building community and giving teachers training seemed to have a positive impact, as 76% of respondents reported that the RJ practices had given them additional tools to use with students,

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and another 68% indicated that using the practices had helped them build a stronger sense of community in their classrooms. Lastly, if staff did not follow expected protocols with regard to the use of RJ practices, 68% of staff said that the administrators consulted with the teacher to clarify expectations, but 30% were not sure if administrators took such actions.

All five interviewees at Burnside perceived that the use of RJ practices ultimately had an impact on the reduction of site level suspensions and expulsions. Similar to the respondents at Ainsworth, though, all five mentioned the emphasis on PBIS as a complimentary program used with the Restorative Justice practices. One administrator said, "We have definitely seen a decline in our suspension numbers, but we are just getting started. Things a few years ago were much worse. Teachers were scared of the students. Students were doing whatever they want. We are slowly trying to educate our staff on our students' backgrounds so they can think about discipline differently." The district representative had a broader view of the implementation process and the data that measured the impact of RJ practices and gave examples of several schools in the district that were considered model schools for RJ practices due to drastic turnarounds they had over the last several years in reducing disciplinary infractions and suspension rates. That same representative noted that they would have to "dig deeper" to see if RJ practices alone had resulted in suspension declines. Two of the five interviewees mentioned how recent changes in Burnside's administration had "slowed their work" with RJ implementation and suspension reform; they had some momentum, but they had to "start again" when administration changed.

RJ practices were being used most regularly by counselors, administrators, and a teacher on special assignment at Burnside due to the changes in leadership. An administrator stated, "Right now, I'm still working on solidifying the staff team to focus on community building,

relationship building, and restorative circles, to shift the focus from just moving toward instant

suspensions, which is pretty much what was happening when I first came here." Additionally,

mediations had become a greater focus of the RJ practices for the Burnside administrative team,

as they thought that talking through many issues before and after a suspension had helped them

reduce their overall suspension and expulsion numbers. The district administrator stated that the

cohort teams reviewed data at least quarterly to review suspension and expulsion data by

ethnicity, gender, and special populations. That respondent also said that their regular data

review was due to a previous report that the district had a disproportionality finding that African

American students with disabilities were being suspended more than other groups. The district

meeting data reviews, "looked for disproportionality and trends in the data so that staff could

work together to problem solve with others from various school sites, but teams were still putting

systems in place at some schools and focusing a lot of social-emotional learning and staff

developments." When asked how those data were shared with school site staff members, the

expectation from the district was that each school discussed the data at least yearly and planned

goals for the upcoming year. However, there was no formal monitoring of how or when sites

reviewed these data with staff. Additionally, sites were allowed to create their own goals and

processes for how to address any areas of disproportionality.

Beta District Findings, Chisolm High School. For the same research question, Chisolm High's

survey findings resulted in 62% of staff saying they would use the RJ practices first for Latino

male SWDs and 59% indicating that they would use RJ practices first for African American male

SWDs rather than recommend a suspension/expulsion/citation. The survey data participation

response rate was lowest at Chisolm (48% of total possible staff participating). I was warned

that this could be the case due to the time of year and on one administrator's perception that,

"It's a struggle to get our teachers to read their e-mail regularly." Based on answers to the survey question, which asked whether there were expectations that staff try other interventions prior to referring a student for suspension, the majority (87%) of the responding staff were clear about site expectations and knew that administrators expected them to use RJ practices for interventions prior to referring a student for suspension from class. With regard to working with special populations, 72% of respondents believed they would use RJ practices for students with disabilities and students in foster care rather than referring the student for a suspension, expulsion, or citation. Additionally, 62% of those responding said they were more likely to use RJ practices for Latino males with disabilities all or most of the time, but 59% of staff said they would use RJ practices for African American males with disabilities all or most of the time prior to referring the student for a suspension/expulsion/citation

All four of Chisolm's administrators believed that the use of RJ practices had resulted in a decline in overall suspensions and expulsions, a reduction in the number of students suspended from class, or fewer harsher consequences, such as citations. In reflecting on the site administrators' implementation of RJ practices to reduce suspensions, one administrator said, "We're still a newer administration, so we are working on the basics like building community and some of the community circles and restorative circles in responses to discipline as our first steps to reduce suspensions." Another administrator said that a review of their site data showed a decline in the number of suspensions and expulsions and went on to say, "we look at data with the staff during our meetings so that we can draw conclusions about trends in referral and suspension data and set up trainings for staff to support those areas of concern." The administrative team believed that an emphasis on classroom interventions "contributed to a reduction in suspensions, though not a drastic decline." Another administrator who had a

background as a special education teacher said that the goal was "to relate to the students and care for them as individuals, tenets of the community building practices outlined in RJ practices." This point was reinforced by an additional interviewee from Chisolm who said, "We're much more engaged with our students. We're much more involved with our students than has maybe been the case in the past, so that's why we think our suspensions have dropped." Staff responses to the research question when looking specifically at race and ethnicity for SWDs varied about overall suspension rate/expulsion rates and citation rates. When asked if staff would use RJ practices instead of referring to a suspension/expulsion/citation for Latino male SWDs, 67%, 62% and 62% all responded in the affirmative for Ainsworth High, Burnside High and Chisolm High, respectively. When asked the same question about African American male SWDs, the response was 67%, 62% and 52% respectively. These percentages differed only for Chisolm High (87%) for the question asking, "How have RJ practices affected suspension rates, if at all?" The Chisolm group felt that rates of suspension had dropped even though only just over half of their staff respondents agreed they would use RJ practices in lieu of a suspension.

RQ #2: Findings for the Three Sites

The second research question collected data to answer, "How do site and district policies and practices for student discipline, both formal and informal, influence disciplinary outcomes for African American and Latino male SWDs according to staff?" For each site in the study, the district's expectations and policies had less impact on the practices of site staff than the expectations and procedures set forth by the site administrators. For the three sites, more than half of survey respondents at Ainsworth (53%), Burnside (81%) and Chisolm (54%) believed that site practices had either "influenced many changes" in how they responded to discipline or had influenced "some changes." Over half of respondents (61% of Ainsworth respondents and

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62% of Burnside and Chisolm respondents) did not know if school board policies existed to outline the use of RJ practices responding, "I don't know" to the survey question which asked, "Are there school board policies that include the use of Restorative Justice practices for responding to rule infractions for students?" While some site administrators noted that the district helped them review data, each site had the freedom to implement their own interventions at their own pace, so site-level practices were reported as more impactful for survey respondents than district-level policies. Responses from surveys and interviews for Ainsworth High and then Burnside and Chisolm High School follow.

Alpha District, Ainsworth High School Findings

Overall, site expectations had more impact on teachers' actions than those from the district, as 86% of the respondents said that site expectations had affected their actions at least minimally, altered some of their practices or had influenced many changes. Twenty-four percent of respondents stated that the RJ practices had not influenced their responses to disciplinary actions at all, however.

In interview responses, site expectations set forth through the use of a formal disciplinary matrix, an Office Disciplinary Referral procedure, and targeted staff trainings influenced the use of RJ practices. Collaborative talks to norm practices between site administrators were used as informal site practices to ensure that similar interventions were used when a student was sent out of class. Another administrator highlighted the various trainings that had been offered to staff on RJ practices, saying that "70 to 80% of the staff had participated in staff meetings on RJ practices and estimated that at least 60% had participated in a short training of at least an hour where community circles and restorative circles were presented." It should be noted that the percentage given for how many staff members were trained or were using the practices varied

depending on the interview respondent, but the administrators' answers all ranged from 60% to 80% of site staff that they believed had some form of training during the course of the year. The principal thought the percentages were closer to 70% of certificated staff using the practices regularly after training. The trainings could have been as brief as an introduction to RJ practices in a site staff meeting, or trainings could have ranged to a four-day out of classroom training where staff were formally trained on the practices. Most single or multiple day trainings were voluntary, but the staff meetings were mandatory for all to attend.

All seven interviewees felt that the participation in such trainings increased teachers' comfort with using the practices and gave them greater understanding of RJ practices and how they could be used in the classroom. It was noted by one interviewee that expectations for the use of interventions, "needed to be revisited often with staff and that trainings needed to occur at minimum, quarterly, with staff to review expectations." Another respondent said, "I review the expectations over, and over, and over, and over, and *still* it's necessary to then go to the teachers' classrooms and explain the expectations *again* in person, and then *again* in department meetings, and then *again* at the larger staff meetings." Site administrators had also established informal methods of talking with teachers about site expectations for disciplinary consequences, which varied from coaching, modeling, sending a teacher on visits to other classrooms, and individual conferencing with teachers who were struggling to follow site expectations. One administrator stated, "If I notice that a particular teacher is referring Black boys out of the room more often than other groups, I absolutely will sit down with that teacher to let the teacher know that I see what is happening and try to work with the teacher to provide supports with that group." All site administrators also had made efforts to specifically address male disciplinary rates and disproportionality rates with staff through quarterly meetings, which they felt helped teachers be

more aware of disproportionality, when it existed. One administrator said, "I'm not sure we're quite there yet." Another stated, "We all have biases, but if we can sit together in a community circle alongside each other and talk through things, and be *really* honest with the understanding that everything stays in the circle, we *may* begin to learn from others and learn more about ourselves."

All site administrators at Ainsworth stated they had also worked intentionally with both African American and Latino male students and their parents through targeted meetings to address site data. Meetings discussed site data about discipline and graduation rates in an effort to raise awareness with young men and collaborate with parents on ways to help them be more successful. One administrator said that both African American and Latino male students who took part in these meetings often said that they got in trouble because "their teacher didn't like them," or because "they just didn't like that teacher so they tuned out of what the teacher was saying." That administrator attributed those comments to a need for more community building training through the RJ practices so that teachers could make their classrooms more student-centered.

Beta District, Burnside High School and Chisolm High School Findings

Survey responses to the second research question showed a mixed array of perceptions related to the influence that site and district level practices and policies had on site discipline rates within the same school district. It was clear from their answers that site administrators had communicated their expectations to staff about the use of RJ practices as interventions, and the majority of respondents (68%) believed that administrators would clarify expectations with staff if they were not following guidelines. Additionally, many respondents (78%) were aware that staff was expected to use interventions that included RJ practices prior to suspending a student

from their classroom. While the site administrator and counselors were frank in their feelings

that they were starting from the "ground up" with the changes in leadership, over half of the staff

who responded to the survey were aware of expectations for interventions and knew that

administrators would consult with staff about expectations. There was still room for growth,

though, with 19% of respondents reporting that site leadership expectations had not influenced

their practices. For the two sites, 81% of Burnside High School staff and 54% of Chisolm High

School staff believed that site practices had either "influenced many changes" in how they

responded to discipline or had influenced "some changes." Over half of respondents (60%) did

not know if school board policies existed to outline the use of RJ practices responding, "I don't

know" to the survey question which asked, "Are there school board policies that include the use

of Restorative Justice practices for responding to rule infractions for students?" Survey

responses to the questions that collected data on RQ #2 related to the staff views about the

impact of site and district expectations on their practices for all three school sites may be found

in Appendix J.

Formal structures of support were created and funded through the district for Burnside

and Chisolm due to a federal mandate to allocate 15% of federal funding from an earlier year's

district budget to address the disproportionality findings from previous years. The district

respondent said that the additional mandated funds had created opportunities to focus fiscal

resources on hiring more people to support implementation of RJ practices, and the funds had

also helped fund trainings for RJ practices at various sites in the district. The trainings were paid

and voluntary, and all district trainings were also open to both classified and certificated staff

members.

In Beta District, some schools chose to be part of a group of schools using RJ practices, and others were mandated to be part of a group that was identified as having disproportionate rates of suspension for African American students with disabilities. Burnside High School was not mandated to be part of the group but had chosen to take part in it. Additionally, the district had received a federal grant that lasted for six years to fund intervention efforts, which had allowed the district to supply additional counselors for school sites to provide trainings for staff, interventions for students, and to work directly with students who were considered "tier 3", or the students identified as requiring the most intensive level of intervention. The district respondent said, "I am supposed to be seeing just the tier three students, which are the students identified as needing the highest levels of supports, but since we're still working on structures at the site, I see pretty much any student who is referred to me by other counselors or administration." The grant was in the fifth year of funding at the time of interviews.

Beta District created a formal structure in which district-level counselors worked with sites and conducted staff trainings while also working with the students who were identified by site leaders as needing the greatest support. This was a resource that administrators noted as helpful in moving their staff culture forward in accepting RJ practices. When asked about expectations for staff when handling discipline, one counselor on assignment said:

> My role is to create trainings for school staff and train administrators, counselors and
> teachers while they build interventions from the ground level at their school site. This
> includes many trainings on cultural competencies, trauma-informed practices, and RJ
> practices, as it's necessary for our staff to have a better understanding of who their
> students are so that they can work with their needs.

One staff member reported that RJ practices really gained momentum in 2013, when the district supported a handful of pilot schools that wanted to use RJ practices, and later seven more coaches were hired to give schools individualized support through the cohort model where each school received an on-site coach for RJ practices. Coaches started by working with counseling teams for trainings, where the focus was training in "restorative conversations, restorative circles, and responding to bullying." From there, additional groups were trained through staff trainings and based on site needs.

Informal structures of site support existed through the administration and the counselors who coached teachers who struggled with classroom management. One administrator said, "our teacher on assignment works with our teachers as a coach and helps model strategies for teachers who are referring a lot of students out of class. That teacher also helps mediate conflicts between students that are disrupting the learning environment or helps mediate issues between teachers and students." Though the district had been using RJ practices for many years, all five interview interviewees reported that the work was gaining stronger momentum at Burnside High School after setbacks due to the changes in administrative site-level leadership.

Chisolm High had a variety of formal and informal practices and expectations that supported their work with RJ implementation. One administrator complimented the number of district-run trainings for administrators that had helped train administrators in RJ practices so that they had a clear understanding of the practices and how to implement them with their staff, but noted that "there needed to be more consistent use with RJ practices with all staff throughout the district." There were site protocols explained by two of the four administrators interviewed about the expectations for staff when a student needed to be suspended from class due to a rule violation. Staff was expected to follow intervention protocols with students such as reflecting on

the behavior, mediating the behavior, and conferencing about the behavior *prior* to suspending a

student from class. One site administrator commented that there was still a great deal of building

to do with some of the staff members with these expectations, as many of the "veteran teachers

just like to kick kids out at the first sign of disrespect, and are not accustomed to having to teach

social skills along with their subject."

Document review did show that Beta District's LCAP had allotted specific funds to

support additional counselors and to support targeted groups that specifically worked to support

African American students and Latino students. The LCAP goals also focused on student

achievement and interventions for foster and homeless youth. Goals did not specifically address

SWDs, as the district already was mandated to allocate 15% of the budget toward reducing

suspension disproportionality for SWDs. District structures existed for the sites to use with their

stakeholders. These structures included a parent/guardian guide to discipline that explained

parents' rights and also explained the various levels of intervention and supports available to

students which included RJ practices in the interventions. There was also a district-created

disciplinary referral form that included various interventions including RJ practices that site

teachers should use when considering a suspension from class.

Chisolm administrators had a belief that a culture shift in the way teachers approached

discipline and interventions was much more successful if it was a teacher-led effort. One

respondent said "the more teachers can lead the trainings and be the face of RJ practices, the

more receptive the staff will be to new ideas." With that in mind, Chisolm was very intentional

about creating a leadership team of mostly special education teachers, counselors and other

interested volunteer staff members who would go to district RJ and PBIS trainings. Those

leaders from the team were then responsible for sharing their information through various site meetings within departments and teacher teams on campus.

Additionally, Chisolm created its own internal formal structure of support by having one counselor assigned to work specifically with all of the students with disabilities on campus for that counselor's entire caseload of students. That lead counselor was also selected to attend district trainings about the needs of foster youth and students with disabilities. When asked if this was a site or district decision, the site administrator said:

> Oh, this was just our decision, as we saw a need to focus on supporting that group of students more intentionally, and by having one counselor assigned to work with students in special ed, it allows that counselor to really understand the needs of various students who may be having struggles either academically or with behaviors.

The administrator also elaborated that they had a couple of classes for students identified as emotionally disturbed (ED) in special education, which added an additional layer of challenges with behaviors and led them to have one counselor assigned to work with the students with disabilities.

An informal structure of support within the site was the expectation that students be referred straight to a counselor for any disciplinary suspension from class. One administrator stated:

> The counselors see the students first when they are sent out of class to see what interventions could be used to support the students' issue. Sometimes there is a personality conflict between a student and a teacher, and a schedule change may need to be explored. Other times, there could be larger social emotional issues where the counselor needs to help the student with referrals to agencies for additional supports. We

get the big issues, of course, so anything that could be a mandatory suspension/expulsion may get routed straight to us, or a counselor may come to us and ask that we step in to take over.

Internal practices at Chisolm also included the use of PBIS as a positive culture and climate building program. The site had been using PBIS for several years based on responses from site administrators. Additionally, the site administrators overall had more stability in their roles at the site, which the majority of the site administrators working at the site for two to three years, adding to the informal practices and site expectations. Prior to becoming administrators two of the site leaders had worked for the same school in other roles, either as teachers or counselors, which gave them an additional level of familiarity with their staff.

RQ #3: Findings for the Three Sites

The third research question collected data on, "How do staff perceptions about RJ effectiveness affect the use of RJ practices when addressing student disciplinary infractions?" Staff perceptions about how effective the practices could be for various rules violations varied largely between the three school sites. The following sections review findings from the survey and interview data at Ainsworth High School and then at Burnside High School and Chisolm High School.

Alpha District, Ainsworth High School Findings

Survey responses to the third research question showed staff members' own views about what infractions could or could not be dealt with using RJ practices. As seen in Figures 5 and 6, there was wide variance in the types of infractions that staff believed must be handled with a suspension and those infractions that they believed could be effectively addressed with RJ practices. One infraction that the majority of people (97%) at Ainsworth reported needed an

automatic suspension was possession of a weapon or dangerous object, which is an offense that is recommended for a suspension or expulsion in the current educational code. The second infraction individuals agreed upon the most was physical fighting, an infraction that does not warrant a suspension in the current educational code.   Administrators and districts made their own determinations on a case-by-case basis with students' fights as to whether there should be a suspension or whether an intervention could be used to address the fights. Sixty-one percent of the respondents believed that fighting should automatically result in a suspension, and the same percentage said that RJ practices were *not* a good answer for fights so the administrators' communication with teachers about their responses to fights was important. They believed in differentiating their responses for students and used interventions prior to suspending students from class. Additionally, 84% of respondents agreed that they would use RJ practices rather than suspend students with disabilities or foster youth from class due to their individual needs or backgrounds.

There were varied responses to the question, "How equipped do you feel your staff is in using the RJ practices specifically when responding to African American and Latino males in special education." One administrator said:

I think they are more sensitive to the needs of African American and Latino males, especially those with disabilities because over the last couple years there's been a lot of conversation about diversity and cultural awareness. We had a couple of staff members also facilitate trainings for teachers to help build capacity so that they can be more equipped when handling discipline for these groups of kids.

However, not everyone shared the same optimism about staff capacity for dealing with African American and Latino males in special education. Another administrator said:

Our staff as a whole? Not really equipped. I mean we are starting the conversation, I

think, within the last couple years. We've been focusing on helping our teachers have a

better understanding of where our kids are coming from. And especially when most of

our teachers are not African American or Hispanic, or even if they are, they may be

coming from a totally different home life. We've had some meetings and conferences

just about our African American and Latino males on campus. But I think it goes back to

the relationship piece. I think you just have to care, and the kids see that. You have to be

strict but genuine.

Another administrator looked at the staff needs from a growth perspective when thinking about

coaching needs if it seemed that staff was suspending groups disproportionately:

Oh…first I see whether or not they are tenured (laughing).   And then if they are, the next

steps are to ask the coaches to do some classroom visits, do some meetings with them

about classroom management systems, have them talk with the department to assist them

with classroom management skills. But then, I will most definitely have a one to one,

individual conversation with that teacher if I am seeing a discrepancy, and I will let them

know that I see the pattern, so we could talk about how I could support them with

that group.

Lastly, another administrator recognized the need for better communication with all staff

members to change perceptions, especially with some of the safety officers on campus who were

still reluctant to use RJ practices and who were frustrated with RJ practices. That administrator

stated,

From a safety perspective, they are bringing the kid up to the office, and they are saying,

man, this is like the 25th time I'm bringing this same kid up to the office. But if we are

able to point to data and say, well the kid is only at ten occurrences this year, as opposed

to last year at this time when the kid had way more instances, then we could point to that

as a success within itself.

The security team in this instance consisted of a group of classified school safety officers hired to

patrol the campus and keep students safe. Trainings and more exposure to the practices were

viewed as the answer to helping some groups of staff members shift their thinking about the use

of RJ practices on the campus.

Beta District, Burnside High School and Chisolm High School Findings

The two rules violations that most staff believed RJ practices could not address were

fighting and bringing a weapon or dangerous object to class. For bullying, using threatening

language, harassment/intimidation, and theft, 30% of the respondents said that RJ practices could

not be used to address the infraction. The varied perceptions about RJ practices supported the

statements from interviewees about the culture shift that was still underway at Burnside with the

newer administrative team. Many staff still had beliefs that several of the rules violations (see

figures 5 and 6) were too extreme to be dealt with through RJ practices.

Responses from the survey (Appendix J) show how likely staff members were to use RJ

practices instead of a suspension with students with disabilities, foster students, African

American males and Latino males when dealing with discipline. A majority of staff was shifting

their views on the use of RJ practices for offenses that previously may have resulted in a

suspension. One administrator reflected that suspensions were once the natural first step, but

responses to the survey indicated that the staff mindset was changing to embrace the use of RJ

practices for various acts of defiance and disrespect. Ninety-two percent of respondents thought

that a verbal argument could be addressed through RJ practices, showing that staff believed

students could work through verbal disagreements rather than face a suspension.

However, there was still work to be done with shifting staff beliefs for more people to embrace

the practices for all students. Though 84% of respondents said they would use RJ practices all or

most of the time in lieu of suspension for students in foster care and students in special

education, there was still 16% of the group that was not sure RJ practices would be effective.

For African American males with disabilities and Latino males with disabilities, over 50% of

respondents said that they used RJ practices "always or most times" instead of referring students

for suspension/expulsion/citation.

Some staff members did not report positive views about the use of RJ practices, as 10%

of the respondents felt that RJ practices had limited their options for responding to discipline.

Responses from the survey also show how likely staff members were to use RJ practices instead

of a suspension. These data speak to the staff perceptions about the needs of students with

disabilities, foster students, and the staff's likelihood to use RJ practices with African American

males and Latino males when dealing with discipline. Figures 5 and 6 portray both the

individual response percentages and averages between the three sites for which rule infractions

could or could not be effectively addressed with RJ practices, based on survey responses

showing a variety of opinion from staff about what typical classroom rule violations can or

cannot be worked through with RJ practices. There was almost complete agreement amongst the

three sites (97%) that RJ practices are not effective when students had brought a weapon to

campus.
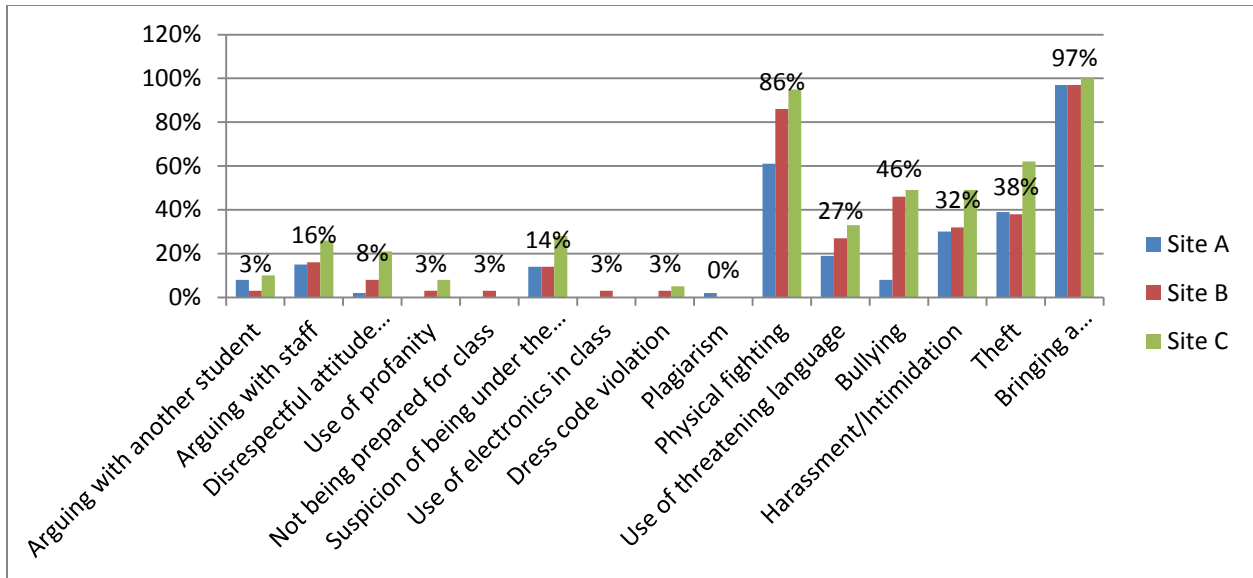
Figure 5. Disciplinary Infractions RJ practices are not effective in addressing, Sites Ainsworth (A), Burnside (B), & Chisolm (C). (RQ3).

While respondents at all three sites reported fairly consistent responses about RJ practices are not effective with physical fighting or weapons, there were numerous disciplinary infractions for which respondents reported RJ is effective in addressing with students, as is reflected in Figure 6 below.
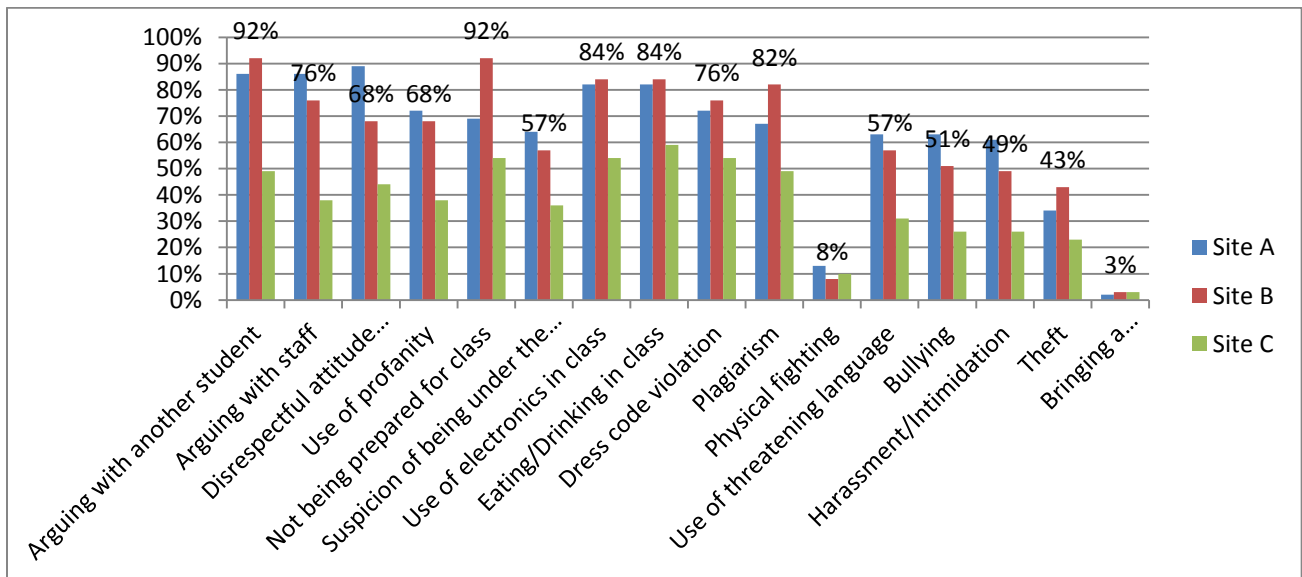
Figure 6. Disciplinary infractions that RJ practices are effective in addressing Sites Ainsworth (A), Burnside (B), & Chisolm (C). (RQ3).

When asking the interview respondents at Burnside High School about how staff perceptions influenced the use of RJ practices, four out of five respondents mentioned the need to build a strong foundation of understanding with staff first about their students' backgrounds and the types of trauma they may have experienced prior to moving staff toward school-wide use of RJ practices. One counselor reflected,

> Only once the staff has a true vision of the various struggles our students have lived
> through and even are still experiencing on a daily basis, can they start to build a stronger
> sense of community with students in the classroom with RJ practices. Then, a teacher
> has a stronger likelihood of taking the extra time to listen to a student and work with the
> student through an issue rather than just suspending the student from class.

At Chisolm High School one administrator was frank in stating, "We have to do a lot of work still with our infrastructure." Another indicated that a number of trainings had occurred with staff to work on their perceptions of discipline and to focus on the social emotional supports needed by their students, which supported the concepts of RJ practices. If teachers were struggling with their implementation, counselors intervened to support the teachers to meet students' needs. Another administrator noted that the goal was really to "empower teachers more to be the first and most crucial person in interventions for students by building trust and building relationships to enhance emotional safety." Some of the more "veteran" teachers were mentioned by the site administrators in interviews as a group who needed more coaching and support with the culture shift in disciplinary expectations stating:

> With a high percentage of tenured teachers, administrators have to be visible in the
> classrooms, be more visible and transparent with our own perceptions of discipline and
> how we should be responding to students' issues, and then we reinforce those

expectations through having an open-door policy with any of our teachers who need more

support. We are still working to gain trust and prove to some of our more veteran

teachers that we are there to support them with student issues.

Conclusion

This chapter described three schools from two school districts, the processes for

implementing RJ practices from site and district-levels, and any effects RJ practices may have

had on the use of zero-tolerance disciplinary options for SWDs. The chapter that follows will

present several key conclusions which emerged from the research findings, then discuss

implications for educational practice, will follow with limitations to the study, and will conclude

with recommendations for continuing study and practice related student discipline.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter first reviews the key findings in relation to the literature and to Critical Race Theory. Next, I present my conclusions based on the study's key findings on discipline and responses to discipline for African American and Latino males SWDs in high schools. This is followed by limitations of this study and recommendations for educational leaders and policy-makers related to the findings. Suggestions for future research are also made. The chapter ends with a reflection on the journey.

Summary of Key Findings

Critical Race Theory

In contextualizing the findings through a CRT framework, RJ practices can be viewed as an intervention tool for schools to help disrupt racial inequalities that traditional exclusionary forms of discipline have historically created for African American and Latino males with disabilities. I chose to use the Critical Race Theory framework to inform this study, as both school districts had identified a need to focus more on how they responded to discipline for African American male SWDs. Knowing that both African American and Latino males accounted for a large portion of the SWD population at both districts in the study, CRT is related to the districts' efforts to change their racial disparities and begin to address exclusionary practices through the use of RJ responses. These disparities were affirmed by interviewees from Beta District who explained how they were given directives from their state education department to address racial disparities in their school discipline rates. Administrators in the Alpha District reported that they felt African American male SWDs were referred to the office for discipline at higher rates than other students.

As noted by researchers, African American and Latino students with learning disabilities have a disproportionally high number of school disciplinary incidents and dropout rates when compared to non-Latino students or white students (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002; Donovan & Cross, 2002; Losen & Orfield, 2002; Rueda & Windmueller, 2006; Sullivan et al., 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2009). My study looked at two school districts in the process of addressing this disproportionality. The data from the study indicated that 84% percent of the Ainsworth respondents, and 78% of the Burnside High and Chisolm High respondents knew that they were "expected to use RJ practices for SWD's prior to recommending a suspension from class." Besides reducing suspensions that excluded students from school, the use of RJ practices gave students a way to share their perspectives about their actions and to change their own behavior. All interview participants agreed that RJ practices "gave students a chance to explain their side" and noted that most suspensions could then be avoided through dialogue. Interviewees from all three schools agreed that their African American and Latino male SWDs were often the student groups who were referred to the office for disciplinary reasons most, and they needed the extra protections of RJ practices to disrupt the cycle of suspension and school exclusion. By focusing on the needs of a group of students who were already identified as being more marginalized and excluded from class than other sub-groups of students, the educators using RJ practices were unknowingly supporting CRT principles by recognizing disproportional rates of exclusion and adding more protections for African American and Latino male SWDs to the school disciplinary process.

<center>Conclusions</center>

My conclusions from the study follow, and each is based on the data that was reported in Chapter Four.

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Conclusion 1: Staff reported that suspensions/expulsions/citations had decreased for Latino and African American male SWDs, but this was not consistent with statewide data reported throughout the reported use of RJ practices.

Similar to findings from the Pennsylvania school study (Mirsky, 2007) described in Chapter Two, where teachers reported feeling that behavioral suspensions had declined after three years of their use of RJ practices, the majority of staff at the three high schools in this study also believed that disciplinary infractions had declined. All interviewees believed that the use of RJ practices was a positive alternate to zero-tolerance forms of school discipline, believed RJ practices helped contribute to the reduction of instances of zero-tolerance consequences and also helped increase communication opportunities between staff and students. The increased communication noted by staff, supported CRT notions that knowing students and their circumstances helped staff to personalize decisions and consciously try to disrupt the cycle of exclusion through improved communication with marginalized populations of students (Dixon & Rousseau, 2006). Survey data indicated that over half of survey respondents believed that the use of RJ practices had reduced the number of students suspended from class (Ainsworth $n = 58\%$, Burnside $n = 70\%$, Chisolm $n = 64\%$), meaning that students were being given more opportunities for non-exclusionary forms of intervention with RJ practices prior to a suspension. Additionally, 84% of Ainsworth respondents, 95% of Burnside respondents and 72% of Chisolm respondents indicated that they were more likely to use RJ practices for SWDs rather than recommend a suspension/expulsion/citation. A community response was initiated by school leaders to address student issues, another aspect of culturally relevant educational environments that made students, especially African American and Latino students, feel heard and included, in the opinion of all of the interviewees across the sites (Howard, 2001).

While the statewide data reported for suspensions and expulsions did not consistently improve throughout the use of RJ practices for each site in the study, the administrators *believed* that RJ practices led to a decline in suspensions and expulsions. It's important to note that data cannot be reported on incidents in which RJ practices *prevented* suspensions or expulsions. This is where respondents' perceptions about the use of RJ practices were valuable data.

Conclusion #2: Staff reported that both formal and informal site expectations had more influence on their use of RJ practices than did district expectations.

Interview responses indicated that site trainings and RJ collaborations occurred more often than those led by the district. Formal training opportunities at the site level in the use of RJ practices at all three sites contributed to increased communication about students with disabilities and how to use RJ practices in place of zero-tolerance practices. Ainsworth participants noted monthly trainings for teachers and said data on suspensions was reviewed with staff at least quarterly, though they reported a need for more intentional review of data with staff based on race and gender. All interviewees at the Ainsworth school site believed they were "better equipped" to use RJ practices as a result of the training and were more likely not to suspend a student with disabilities when RJ practices were employed. Klingner et al., 2005 noted that RJ practices helped educators mend relationships regardless of race or disability designation.

Additionally, school districts that incorporated guidelines for discipline and mandated the use of RJ practices within their school policies, discipline matrices, and board policies found decreased resistance from site staff toward RJ practices (Morrison et al, 2005). District guidelines and site-level support with implementation set expectations for staff members about how to use RJ practices, which then helped students have increased opportunities to be heard through the discipline process. When staff members knew that there were mandated

expectations for how discipline was handled, and they were expected to employ a variety of responses to discipline using RJ practices in place of issuing a suspension or expulsion, there was increased accountability (Kaveney & Drewery, 2011; Fenning & Sharkey, 2012).   Site expectations and procedures were widely known by staff at all three school sites, as evidenced in the survey data showing that 78% of Ainsworth staff, 89% of Burnside staff, and 89% of Chisolm staff knew their discipline site policies. But, only one-third of the respondents from all three schools knew if there were district RJ policies.

Conclusion 3: More than half of the survey respondents at each site believed that RJ practices could effectively address non-contact or non-violent school rules' violations. Findings indicated that staff was more likely to use RJ practices instead of referring a student for a suspension/expulsion/citation. Between 52% and 68% of respondents at all three sites said they would use RJ practices always or most times. These percentages remained above 50% for all sub-group categories in the survey: students with disabilities, foster youth, Latino males with disabilities, and African American males with disabilities (See Appendices H, I, J).

The two offenses that more than half of all site respondents agreed could not be addressed effectively with RJ practices were the more violent, or contact-based offenses of bringing a weapon to campus and fighting, though fighting had some variance. Ninety-seven percent or more of the respondents at each site said that RJ practices could not effectively address bringing a weapon to school. Ainsworth staff had just 60% of staff report that RJ practices could not effectively address fighting, while the two sites from the Beta district had over 80% of their staff indicating that RJ practices could not be effective in addressing fighting.

Conclusion 4: Collaboration is needed to get agreement on the consequences for school rules violations. With the variance in responses at Ainsworth, it is evident why there is a goal to

improve communication about RJ practices and results. A shared belief system about the effectiveness of RJ would support how consequences are administered for offenses committed by male African American SWDs, Latino SWDs and other disadvantaged students. Staff asserted that there was a system for alerting them to who their students in foster care were (Ainsworth 93%, Burnside 87%, Chisolm 89%). Also, the majority of staff members at each site reported being "more likely to used RJ practices for students in foster care, rather than recommend a suspension due to their backgrounds (Q41) with 89% of Ainsworth staff, 83% of Burnside staff and 86% of Chisolm staff responding with "yes" to that survey question. Reducing disproportionalities requires a school culture in which there is agreement by staff members about consequences given for the same offense. There were varying percentages of staff member agreement about whether RJ practices could be effective for several non-contact offenses, such as bullying and theft. At the Beta district sites, approximately 40% of staff agreed that RJ practices were not effective in dealing with bullying, and at least 30% of the staff respondents at all three sites thought that instances of theft could not be addressed with RJ practices.

Recommendations for Practice

The findings suggest the following recommendations for schools already engaging in RJ practices or beginning to use RJ practices to address disproportionate school discipline rates for disadvantaged students, including African American and Latino male SWDs, and foster or homeless youth.

Recommendation 1: Site and district leadership need to share a vision about RJ implementation, and new leaders need to be encouraged by the school district leaders to collaborate with the school's staff on RJ practices. Site leaders in this study noted a need for consistency with vision.

When there is a change in leadership, new leaders must be accountable for sharing the district vision for RJ implementation.

Recommendation 2: Trainings in RJ practices at the site level must be frequent, data-driven, and reflective of site practices throughout the implementation of RJ practices. All staff need frequent trainings in both the culture-building aspects of RJ practices along with the restorative practices. Data should be shared regularly with staff to show progress related to student discipline while using the practices.

Recommendation 3: Trainings must begin prior to the use of RJ practices for all teachers and administrators to build a foundation for staff buy-in. Trainings need to stress consistency in messages from administrators and teacher leaders on RJ practices.

Recommendation 4: Explicit communication and reflective conversations about school and state student disciplinary data and clear expectations for data protocols are needed. Benchmarks to measure progress using site data should be set and should be analyzed regularly amongst administrators with the staff. Collaborated on developing protocols for using RJ practices are necessary. The administrators in this study all noted a need to share and monitor benchmarks more frequently with a set protocol for data analysis.

Recommendation 5: RJ practices are most successful when used consistently within the school culture. Schools should consider pairing the RJ practices with a system of positive reinforcements, such as a using a system like PBIS, to build culture amongst staff and students along with the use of RJ practices.

<div align="center">

Limitations of the Study

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This exploratory study looked at perceptions of individuals at three sites by triangulating data from a survey, state data, and interviews, but the total sample size was small. The data was

based on three high schools with two of them from the same school district. While these schools may not represent the work of all schools using RJ practices, the study does provide a snapshot of developing RJ practices at three high schools with large populations of disadvantaged students. Additionally, the administrators at the three sites did not share the same understandings or use of RJ practices in that they did not use a set, standardized RJ response protocol when dealing with discipline that was common to all three schools. As was noted by several of the interviewees at the three schools, the ways that adults responded to each student's behavior incident could vary from incident to incident, and each student could have a different outcome, depending on the circumstances that created the school rules violation. Also, the staff members using the RJ practices could influence the outcome of the rule violation and the people who created them.

One principal chose not to participate in responding to the interview portion of the study, due to being new at the school and feeling that the other administrators and teacher leaders had more immediate expertise in the implementation of RJ practices at the site. The absence of the principal's voice communicating about the use of RJ practices may be a limitation, as staff look to a principal, especially a new principal to set a tone and establish the vision of the school. Another limitation is the reported turnover in site administration in Beta District. The administrators reporting on the progress of RJ practices could only give their perspective from the time they had been at the school site, so they did not consistently have a historical view of the progress or lack of progress seen with the use of RJ practices over a period of years.

Finally, this study did not explore the relationship between RJ practices and the impact of using the practices on school safety or perceptions of school safety. The findings from this study reflected only the perceptions of staff of three high schools that were in the process of using RJ

practices. There was overlap in the sites' efforts to build school culture and a shared vision while using RJ practices, which also raised the question about how much of the reported success of RJ practices was due to the efforts to build school culture and how much was due to the staffs' use of the practices.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study did not explore whether there was a relationship between teachers' years of service in relation to their perceptions toward RJ practices or their willingness to implement RJ practices, but comments were made by interviewees stating that they had more challenges with the more "veteran" staff accepting the use of RJ practices. Future research could investigate these elements and explore ways to train veteran teachers to use RJ practices. Further study could also be longitudinal by monitoring Latino, African American male SWDs and other disadvantaged students individually over the course of four years of high school to gather data from students and staff regarding how the RJ practices impacted their future behaviors on campus and compare that information with students in general education classes. The interviewees from this study said they had yet to monitor the growth of individual students over time when RJ practices were used in place of other disciplinary actions. Future studies could also explore how data collection protocols could be used to monitor and identify trends in student citations on school campuses by gender and student group. Lastly, a longitudinal study of varied processes for implementing RJ at schools could show how various practices impacted site-level responses to rule infractions over the course of years and the impact on school culture and feelings about school safety, over time when RJ practices were used as first responses for rule infractions.

Reflection on the Journey

The focus of this dissertation was driven by my own experiences as a teacher, dean, associate principal, and as a special education coordinator in an urban high school district. In the past eighteen years, I have witnessed and dealt with the disproportionate rates of suspension and expulsion for both Latino and African American males in special education. I was particularly concerned with the impact that such exclusionary practices were having on my students as I saw them pushed out of schools through the use of disciplinary methods when I believed other measures could have been used first as interventions. Critical Race Theory supports the need to identify and name the racial inequities we see in society and then take measures to actively work in a way that disrupts those inequities (Crenshaw, 1995). I have engaged in training with RJ practices in my own quest to be an administrator who was looking for alternative measures to suspensions for students, and I have found that using RJ practices can help with culture-building and with understanding students' thinking in disciplinary conferences within my own work. My personal journey has been one of self-reflection as a school site and now a district-level administrator working with African American and Latino SWDs. By being intentional in identifying and naming racial inequities in discipline, I have been able to both reflect on my own practice and have been able to initiate targeted conversations to influence changes in the practices of my colleagues. For educators working in urban school settings with populations of students who historically have higher exclusionary rates than their better-resourced counterparts, Restorative Justice practices, then, are a promising set of tools and options for responding to students' misbehaviors in schools that I believe could continue to promote less exclusion from the academic setting and promote more inclusion.

Appendix A:
Interview Protocol: Site and District Administrators

Thank you for your willingness to participate in a study that will assist me in completing a portion of data collection for a UCLA doctoral dissertation. I will also be using data gathered from your answers to the questions we talk about today, so this interview may be included in the data collection for that research. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes to one hour, though it could go longer depending upon your willingness and your responses to the questions. You are free to end the interview at any time. Everything you discuss with me during this interview is strictly confidential, so please feel free to speak openly. In order for me to accurately record our conversation, I would like to digitally record the conversation so I can later transcribe the interview verbatim. The recording will not be shared with anyone else and will be kept in a secure environment. If there are points during the interview where you would like the recorder off, please let me know, so that I can stop the recording. Please note, that follow-up questions that are not listed on this protocol may be added depending on answers provided during the interview process.

1. Tell me about your role or the position(s) you hold at this school (S/D)
   a. How long have you worked at this school?

   b. How long have you worked in this school district?

2. How knowledgeable are you about Restorative Justice practices? (S/D; RQ 2, 3)
3. Describe the use of RJ practices at your site. How consistently are they used? (S/D; RQ 1, 2)
4. What kind of guidance do you receive with regard to how to assign consequences for rules' infractions from your site and/or district leaders? (S/D; RQ 2)
   a. How were you trained?
5. What RJ practices have you been trained to use in response to school disciplinary issues for students in special populations? (S/D; RQ 2)
   a. Students with disabilities
   b. Foster youth
   c. Homeless youth
6. What site level polices/practices are you expected to follow with regard to a possible suspension for students with disabilities? (S/D; RQ 1, 2)
7. What site level policies/practices are you expected to follow with regard to a possible recommendation for expulsion for students with disabilities? How do RJ practices factor into these cases? (S/D; RQ 1, 2)
8. Describe the use of RJ practices by your staff. Who uses these practices? Are they school wide? Do some staff use these practices more often than others?(S/D; RQ 3)
9. How equipped do you believe your staff is in using RJ practices in response to disciplinary infractions for African American and Latino male SWDs? (S/D; RQ 3)
10. How often are you employing RJ practices when responding to disciplinary infractions for your SWDs, if at all? (S; RQ 1, 3)
11. How do you feel the use of RJ practices has impacted site level suspension rates/expulsion rates for all students? (S/D; RQ 1)
    a. How about students with disabilities?

    b.   How about your foster youth?

    c.   How about your homeless youth?

12. How often to you review and reflect on site disciplinary data as it relates to African American and Latino males? (S/D; RQ 2)

13. How often do you review and reflect on site disciplinary data as the data relate to your special population groups? (S/D; RQ 1, 2)

    a.   Students with disabilities

    b.   Foster youth

    c.   Homeless youth

14. How does data review influence your practices at the site/district level, if at all? (S/D; RQ 2)

15. Is there anything we have not covered that you want to add?

Teacher and Site Support Staff Questionnaire

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. Prior to beginning this questionnaire, please read the following consent form.

University of California, Los Angeles – CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Restorative Justice Practices in Urban High Schools: The Impact on Disciplinary Outcomes for African American and Latino Male Students with Disabilities

Jill Waggoner, M.Ed., under the faculty sponsorship of Dr. Linda Rose, Ph.D. and Dr. Tyrone Howard Ph.D, from the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) is conducting a research study.

You were asked to be a possible participant in this study because you work directly with high school students and may have to recommend disciplinary consequences for students at one of the high schools selected for the study. Your participation in this research is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?

• With the recent California policy changes influencing districts to use "other means of correction" in place of suspensions and expulsions, many districts are using Restorative Justice practices in lieu of previous practices. I am interested in learning about these early changes and practices and the perspectives of school staff regarding the change in disciplinary responses.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?
• If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to fill out an anonymous questionnaire, which should take no more than 20-30 minutes to complete.

Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?
• You may be asked questions whose truthful answer is contrary to district policies and procedures. However your participation in this study is confidential and pseudonyms for schools will be used. Additionally, you are not required to answer questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

Are there any potential benefits if I participate?
• You may benefit from the study by being provided with an opportunity for you to share your own beliefs and practices related to disciplinary practices.

• The results of the research may help to inform districts in California about their use and implementation of Restorative Justice practices.

Will I be paid for participating?
• No. Your participation is completely voluntary.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?
• Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of providing a pseudonym for your school. All data will be maintained on my personal password-protected laptop and backed up on my password-protected personal hard drive. Any hard copies will be locked up in my fireproof filing cabinet at my home when not in my immediate possession.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?
• You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.

• Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.

• You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about the research, you can talk to the Researcher (Jill Waggoner) or the Faculty Sponsors (Dr. Linda Rose). Please contact:

Jill Waggoner
waggoner.j13@gmail.com
Linda Rose, Ph.D.
rose@gseis.ucla.edu
(310) 206-1673

If you have questions about your rights while taking part in this study, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers about the study, please call the OHRPP at (310) 825-7122 or write to:

UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program
11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 211, Box 951694
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694

      o   I have read the consent form for this study and am in agreement with the terms. I also understand that my participation is completely voluntary and I may withdraw at any time.

      o   I have read the consent form for this study and DO NOT agree with the terms.

1. What school do you work at?

[ ]

2. What is your current position at the school?
   o Classroom Teacher
   o Other (please specify below)

[ ]

3. What subject(s) do you currently teach?
   o English
   o Math
   o Foreign Language
   o Science
   o History/Social Studies
   o Physical Education
   o Arts (Visual, Music, Drama, Dance, etc.)
   o Special Education
   o English Language Development (ELD)
   o Career Tech
   o Other (please specify below)

[ ]

4. How many years have you been teaching or working at this school site?
   Less than one year
   One to three years
   Four to nine years
   10 years and more

[ ]

The next few questions are specifically about the discipline policy and Restorative Justice practices for your school site or school district. Please answer to the best of your knowledge. Please remember that your answers will remain anonymous.

5. Please provide a description of how you believe Restorative Justice practices are used at your school.

[ ]

6. Do you know why your school is using Restorative Justice practices?
- ○ Definitely yes
- ○ Probably yes
- ○ Probably not
- ○ Definitely not

7. From this list of Restorative Justice practices, what practices do you believe occur at your site, if any?

- ❑ Affective statements
- ❑ Affective questions
- ❑ Small impromptu conferencing
- ❑ Community circles/group circles
- ❑ Responsive circles
- ❑ Restorative circles
- ❑ Formal restorative conferencing
- ❑ Peer mediation
- ❑ Peer court
- ❑ Peer disciplinary review board
- ❑ Restorative conversations/dialogues
- ❑ Mandatory community service
- ❑ Other _____

8. How often do you use Restorative Justice practices, on average?

- ○ More than 10 times a week
- ○ 6-10 times a week
- ○ 1-5 times a week
- ○ Once or twice monthly
- ○ A couple times yearly
- ○ I don't use Restorative Justice practices.

9. How did you learn about Restorative Justice practices?

- ❑ Site staff meeting
- ❑ Site professional development/training
- ❑ District staff meeting
- ❑ District professional development/training
- ❑ From my colleagues
- ❑ Site policy/expected practices
- ❑ News/media
- ❑ Personal research
- ❑ Continuing education
- ❑ I don't remember
- ❑ Other (please specify) _____

10. At your site or district, trainings for the use of Restorative Justice practices occur:

- ○ monthly
- ○ quarterly
- ○ yearly
- ○ never

11. Select any of the following Restorative Justice practice trainings you have attended.

- ❑ Training occurring over 2 or more days
- ❑ Single day training
- ❑ Partial day training
- ❑ Training during staff conferencing/collaboration time
- ❑ I have not attended any trainings about Restorative Justice practices.

12. Select all that apply. Restorative Justice practice trainings are:

- ❑ mandatory
- ❑ optional
- ❑ by invitation/administrative selection
- ❑ not available

13. Select any disciplinary infractions that you believe are reasons to suspend a student from class rather than employing Restorative Justice practices.

- ❑ Arguing with another student
- ❑ Arguing with staff
- ❑ Disrespectful attitude toward staff/willful defiance
- ❑ Use of profanity
- ❑ Suspicion of being under the influence of alcohol/drugs
- ❑ Cheating/Plagiarism
- ❑ Not complying with directions/class policies
- ❑ Not being prepared for class
- ❑ Physical fighting
- ❑ Use of electronics in class
- ❑ Eating/Drinking in class
- ❑ Tardiness/Truancy
- ❑ Dress code violation
- ❑ Use of threatening language
- ❑ Bullying
- ❑ Harassment/Intimidation
- ❑ Theft
- ❑ Bringing a weapon/dangerous object to class
- ❑ Other rule violations: please fill in _____

14. Restorative Justice practices are effective options to use for students for which of the following?

❑ Arguing with another student
❑ Arguing with staff
❑ Disrespectful attitude toward staff/willful defiance
❑ Use of profanity
❑ Suspicion of being under the influence of alcohol/drugs
❑ Cheating/Plagiarism
❑ Not complying with directions/class policies
❑ Not being prepared for class
❑ Physical fighting
❑ Use of electronics in class
❑ Eating/Drinking in class
❑ Tardiness/Truancy
❑ Dress code violations
❑ Use of threatening language
❑ Bullying
❑ Harassment/Intimidation
❑ Theft
❑ Bringing a weapon/dangerous object to class
❑ None apply

15. How have site expectations influenced your use of Restorative Justice practices with students?

○ They have influenced many changes in my responses to student disciplinary issues.
○ They have altered some of my responses to student disciplinary issues.
○ They have influenced my practices minimally with student disciplinary issues.
○ They have not influenced my responses to student disciplinary issues.

16. How have district policies influenced your use of Restorative Justice practices with students?

○ They have influenced many changes in my responses to student disciplinary issues.
○ They have altered some of my responses to student disciplinary issues.
○ They have influenced my practices minimally with student disciplinary issues.
○ They have not influenced my responses to student disciplinary issues.

17. Does your site have disciplinary protocols that include the use of Restorative Justice practices for responding to rule infractions with students?

○ Yes
○ I don't know
○ No

18. Are there school board policies that include the use of Restorative Justice practices for responding to rule infractions with students?

○ Yes
○ I don't know
○ No

19. If school site staff members do not follow disciplinary guidelines, administrators consult with them to clarify expectations.

○ Yes
○ I don't know
○ No

20. Staff is expected to use intervention procedures that include the use of Restorative Justice practices prior to suspending a student from class.

○ Yes
○ I don't know
○ No

21. How have Restorative Justice practices affected your school suspension rates, if at all?

○ Suspensions have decreased.
○ Suspensions have remained the same.
○ Suspensions have increased.
○ I don't know.

22. How have Restorative Justice practices affected your school expulsion rates, if at all?

- ◯ Expulsions have decreased.
- ◯ Expulsions have remained the same.
- ◯ Expulsions have increased.
- ◯ I don't know.

23. Select all that apply. I view the use of Restorative Justice practices as:

- ❑ Positive alternatives to address student misbehavior in lieu of suspensions/expulsions/school citations.
- ❑ Less effective alternatives to address student misbehavior than using suspensions/expulsions/school citations.
- ❑ A way to give students voice in the classroom/at school.
- ❑ A collaborative alternative to be used instead of suspension.
- ❑ I have mixed feelings about the practices; sometimes they are effective, and other times I believe a suspension/expulsion/school citation is a more effective response.
- ❑ Community building practices.
- ❑ I am not familiar with Restorative Justice practices.
- ❑ Other: Please add your answer. _____

24. For disciplinary situations, I believe students view Restorative Justice practices are responses that:

- ◯ Are serious consequences
- ◯ Are less serious than other types of consequences
- ◯ Are not serious consequences
- ◯ I don't know if students are familiar with Restorative Justice practices
- ◯ Other: Please add your answer _____

25. As a staff, we review our student suspension rates demographically, by comparing race and gender data:

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ I don't know
- ◯ No

26. As a staff, we review our special education suspension rates:

○ Weekly
○ Monthly
○ Quarterly
○ Every Semester
○ Once a year
○ Never
○ I don't know

27. As a staff, we review our foster youth suspension rates:

○ Weekly
○ Monthly
○ Quarterly
○ Every Semester
○ Once a year
○ Never
○ I don't know

28. As a staff, we review our student expulsion rates:

○ Weekly
○ Monthly
○ Quarterly
○ Every Semester
○ Once a year
○ Never
○ I don't know

29. There is a process at my school for informing staff about which students have Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) for special education.

○ Yes
○ No
○ I don't know.

30. There is a process at my school for informing staff about which students in special education have a Behavior Intervention/Behavior Support Plan (BIP/BSP):

❍ Yes
❍ No
❍ I don't know

31. There is a process at my school for informing staff about which students are in foster care.

❍ Yes
❍ No
❍ I don't know

32. When special education students break rules, I base my disciplinary responses on IEP needs which includes referring to the Behavior Intervention/Support Plan, if a plan exists.

❍ Yes
❍ No

33. When special education students break rules, I use Restorative Justice practices instead of referring the students to suspension/expulsion/citation:

❍ Always
❍ Most of the time
❍ About half the time
❍ Sometimes
❍ Never

34. When foster students break rules, I use Restorative Justice practices instead of referring the students to suspension/expulsion/citation:

❍ Always
❍ Most of the time
❍ About half the time
❍ Sometimes
❍ Never

35. When Latino male students with IEPs break school rules, I use Restorative Justice practices instead of referring the students to suspension/expulsion/citation:

○ Always
○ Most of the time
○ About half of the time
○ Sometimes
○ Never

36. When African American male students with IEPs break school rules, I use Restorative Justice practices instead of referring the students to suspension/expulsion/citation:

○ Always
○ Most of the time
○ About half the time
○ Sometimes
○ Never

37. As a staff we analyze/discuss disciplinary data about African American males in special education to review any possible disproportionality.

○ Yes
○ No
○ I don't know

38. As a site we analyze/discuss disciplinary data about Latino males in special education to review any possible disproportionality.

○ Yes
○ No
○ I don't know

39. As a site we analyze/discuss disciplinary data about foster students to review any possible disproportionality.

○ Yes
○ No
○ I don't know

40. I am more likely to use Restorative Justice practices for students in special education, rather than recommend a suspension, due to their special needs.

○ Yes
○ No

41. I am more likely to use Restorative Justice practices for students in foster care, rather than recommend a suspension, due to their backgrounds.

○ Yes
○ No

42. I modify my Restorative Justice practices based on the needs of specific genders of students.

○ Yes
○ No

43. In general, I believe that there are disproportionate rates of school discipline for African American males in the United States, when compared to other students.

○ Yes
○ No
○ I don't know

44. In general, I believe that there are disproportionate rates of school discipline for Latino males in the Unites States, when compared to other students.

○ Yes
○ No
○ I don't know

45. In general, I believe that there are disproportionate rates of school discipline for African American male special education students in the United States, when compared to other students.

○ Yes
○ No
○ I don't know

46. In general, I believe that there are disproportionate rates of school discipline for Latino male special education students in the United States, when compared to other students.

○ Yes
○ No
○ I don't know

47. In general, I believe suspensions are effective consequences for students.

○ Usually
○ Sometimes
○ Seldom

48. In general, I believe expulsions are effective consequences for students.

○ Usually
○ Sometimes
○ Seldom

49. In general, I believe school citations are effective consequences for students.

○ Usually
○ Sometimes
○ Seldom

50. Select all that apply. Restorative Justice practices have:

❑ not affected my disciplinary practices.
❑ resulted in fewer students being suspended from class.
❑ have limited rule infractions with my students.
❑ have increased rule infractions with my students.
❑ given me additional tools to use with students.
❑ built a stronger sense of community with my students.
❑ limited my options for responding to student discipline.
❑ Other: add your response _____

51. From my perspective, Restorative Justice practices should:

○ continue and be expanded with more training and more people using the practices.
○ continue as they are currently used at my school.
○ not be used as options for responses to school rule violations.
○ Other: add your response _____

52. Please add any final comments or thoughts about the use of Restorative Justice practices at your school site and their impact (if any) on disciplinary outcomes for African American and/or Latino male students in special education.

53. If you have a specific example of how Restorative Justice practices have been successful in addressing a rule violation with a student, a time you have used the practices for community building, or a time when Restorative Justice practices have not been successful, please share below (do not personally identify any student/staff member by name).

54. Please share your gender below.

55. Please share your ethnicity below.

Appendix C: Alignment of Protocols and Research Questions

Protocol Question	Aligns with RQ
Interview Question #1	N/A
Interview Question #2	2, 3
Interview Question #3	1, 2
Interview Question #4	2
Interview Question #5	2
Interview Question #6	1, 2
Interview Question #7	1, 2
Interview Question #8	3
Interview Question #9	3
Interview Question #10	1, 3
Interview Question #11	1
Interview Question #12	2
Interview Question #13	1, 2
Interview Question #14	2
Interview Question #15	N/A

Appendix D: Alignment of Survey Questions with Research Questions

Survey Question # and Descriptor	Survey Question # and Coding Descriptor	Survey Question # and Coding Descriptor
Question 1: Demographic	Question 21: RQ1, RQ3	Question 41: RQ1, RQ3
Question 2: Demographic	Question 22: RQ1, RQ3	Question 42: RQ 1, RQ3
Question 3: Demographic	Question 23: RQ3	Question 43: Demographic
Question 4: Demographic	Question 24: RQ3	Question 44: Demographic
Question 5: RQ1, RQ2, Demographic	Question 25: RQ2	Question 45: Demographic
Question 6: RQ1, RQ2, Demographic	Question 26: RQ2	Question 46: Demographic
Question 7: Demographic	Question 27: RQ2	Question 47: RQ1, RQ3
Question 8: Demographic	Question 28: RQ2	Question 48: RQ1, RQ3
Question 9: Demographic	Question 29: RQ2	Question 49: RQ1, RQ3
Question 10: RQ2	Question 30: RQ2	Question 50: RQ1, RQ3
Question 11: RQ2	Question 31: RQ2	Question 51: Demographic
Question 12: RQ2	Question 32: RQ1, RQ3	Question 52: RQ3
Question 13: RQ1, RQ2	Question 33: RQ1, RQ3	Question 53: RQ3
Question 14: RQ1, RQ3	Question 34: RQ1, RQ3	Question 54: Demographic
Question 15: RQ2, RQ3	Question 35: RQ1, RQ3	Question 55: Demographic
Question 16: RQ2, RQ3	Question 36: RQ2	
Question 17: RQ2	Question 37: RQ2	
Question 18: RQ2	Question 38: RQ 2	
Question 19: RQ2	Question 39: RQ2	
Question 20: RQ2	Question 40: RQ1, RQ3	

Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Design
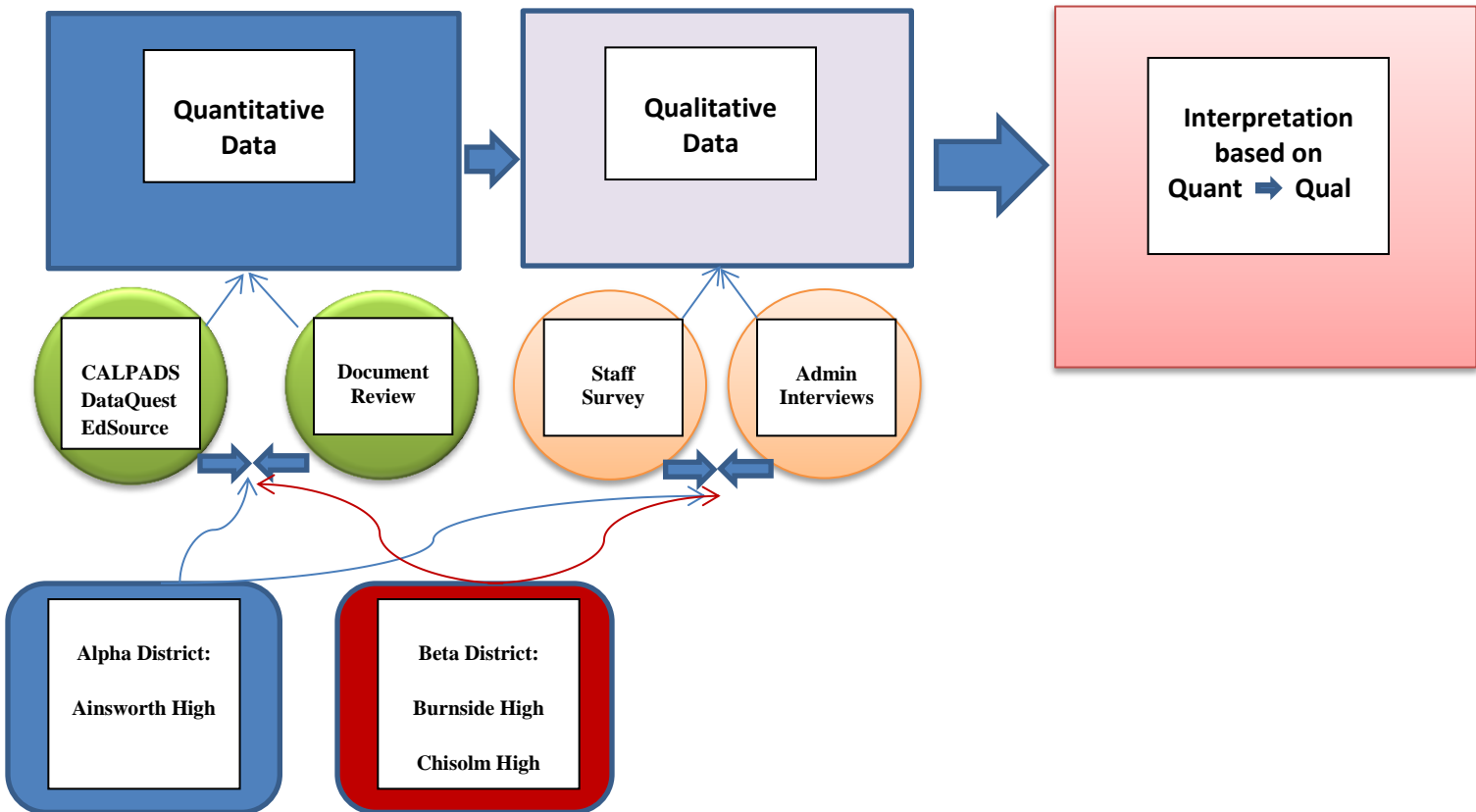
Adapted from: Creswell, J.W. & Clark, V.L.P. (2007), *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research***, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.**

APPENDIX F

Student Populations by Site 2012-17

	Populations	% 2012-13	% 2013-14	% 2014-15	% 2015-16	% 2016-17
Ainsworth	Total Population	1524	1726	1804	1890	1935
	African American	19%	20.2%	19.6%	18%	19%
	Latino	70%	67.8%	66.5%	70%	69%
	Students with Disabilities (SWDs)	N/A	12%	11.7%	10%	11%
	Foster Youth	N/A	N/A	1.9%	3%	1%
	Males	52%	52%	52%	52%	52%
	Females	48%	48%	48%	48%	48%
	Latino Males	36%	34%	43%	37%	36%
	African American Males	10%	10%	10%	9%	10%
	Receiving Free & Reduced Lunch	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Burnside	Total Population	1792	1588	1368	1350	1314
	African American	21%	16%	19%	16%	16%
	Latino	72%	74%	70%	73%	75%
	Students with Disabilities (SWDs)	13%	15%	16%	16%	15%
	Foster Youth	N/A	N/A	1.3%	1.1%	.5%
	Males	49%	49%	49%	49%	52%
	Females	51%	51%	51%	51%	48%
	Latino Males	35%	34%	34%	35%	38%
	African American Males	8%	8%	10%	8%	9%
	Receiving Free & Reduced Lunch	96%	97%	93%	93%	87%
Chisolm	Total Population	1896	1790	1640	1621	1572
	African American	13%	13%	12%	11%	10%
	Latino	79%	80%	81%	81%	81%
	Students with Disabilities	14%	16%	16%	18%	17%
	Foster Youth	*N/A	*N/A	1.5%	1.5%	1%
	Males	51%	50%	50%	51%	46%
	Females	49%	50%	50%	49%	54%
	Latino Males	39%	39%	40%	39%	41%
	African American Males	6%	7%	6%	6%	10%
	Receiving Free & Reduced Lunch	97%	98%	96%	94%	90%

APPENDIX G

Suspension and Expulsion Data 2009-2017 by Percentage of Total Student Enrollment

Ainsworth	2009-2010*	2010-2011*	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Suspensions	16%	17%	9.4%	4.2%	5%	1.2%	1.1%	2.1%
Expulsions	2%	0%	.5%	0%	0%	0%	0.3%	0.1%
Burnside	**2009-2010***	**2010-2011***	**2011-2012**	**2012-2013**	**2013-2014**	**2014-2015**	**2015-2016**	**2016-2017**
Suspensions	77%	58%	13.5%	14.2%	15.8%	9.2%	12.8%	12.0%
Expulsions	0.1%	0.4%	0.1%	0.4%	0.8%	0.3%	0.8%	0.4%
Chisolm	**2009-2010***	**2010-2011***	**2011-2012**	**2012-2013**	**2013-2014**	**2014-2015**	**2015-2016**	**2016-2017**
Suspensions	>100%	88%	16.1%	12.6%	12.2%	12.3%	11.9%	6.5%
Expulsions	0.3%	0.6%	0.1%	0.5%	0.5%	1.2%	0.4%	0.4%

*Rates of suspension reported by the state included duplicated student counts, meaning that each suspension was counted in relation to the total school population. By 2011-2012, the state began reporting unduplicated percentages of suspension, meaning that schools no longer reported multiple suspensions for the same student.

APPENDIX H

Document Review Components by Site

Ainsworth	**LCAP goals/funding** • Goals to reduce suspensions • Funding for staffing to support interventions (including RJ practices) • Funding for on-site Restorative Justice trainings and trainers for staff members • Paid trainings for staff to learn about Restorative Justice practices
Ainsworth	**School site council goals/funding** • PBIS funding for training and schoolwide incentives for students • Funding for intervention staff members • Funding for a data management system to track behaviors and consequences
Ainsworth	**District board policies/practices related to discipline and interventions that must occur prior to suspension** • Outline for mandatory suspensions and offenses that were/were not suspendable offenses • Discipline matrix for teachers to use as a guide for expectations with RJ responses included • Tiered interventions expected for teachers to use with students outlined with RJ responses included
Ainsworth	**Site policies/documents related to discipline and interventions that must occur prior to suspension** • Office referral form with expected interventions from teachers with RJ practices included • Administrative expectation for teachers' use of data management tool for evidence of interventions • Staff reflection tool to use with students in class prior to recommending a class suspension
Burnside & Chisolm	**LCAP goals/funding** • Parent and African American Advisory Committees informed decisions • Additional counselors allocated for sites • African American Task Force to address discipline and school culture concerns • Beginning teacher support including RJ trainings • Response to intervention staffing allotted • Supports for African American, Latino, and foster sub-groups • Restorative Justice district team with district goals • Federal funding of 15% of budget due to significant disproportionality in African American students with disabilities being suspended in previous years • Federal grant for implementation of interventions for six years
Burnside	**School site council goals/funding** • Teacher on assignment for RJ and interventions • Counselor from district doing staff trainings and tier 3 interventions • Funding for use of PBIS and staff trainings (paid and voluntary) • Data management system to track behaviors and consequences
Burnside & Chisolm	**District board policy/practices related to discipline and interventions that must occur prior to suspension** • Outline for mandatory suspensions and offenses not suspendable • Tiered intervention matrix with supports for students • Progressive discipline matrix • Parents' rights posted with questions to ask in the event of referral for suspension • Behavior intervention plans • Office referral form with RJ practices outlined for interventions and progressive discipline • Parents' guide to school interventions • Voluntary participation in cohort for schools using RJ practices
Burnside & Chisolm	**Site policies/documents related to discipline and interventions that must occur prior to suspension** • Office referral form with RJ practices outlined for interventions and progressive discipline

| | | Re-entry plan after suspension using RJ practices Behavior support plans for students with disabilities that could include RJ practices Teacher on assignment or counselor was the first person to intervene with students using RJ practices |

APPENDIX I

RQ #1 Survey Responses for Ainsworth, Burnside, Chisolm

Survey Question	Ainsworth: Answers by Percentage	Burnside: Answers by Percentage	Chisolm: Answers by Percentage
Q34. When foster students break rules, I use Restorative Justice practices *instead* of referring the students to suspension/expulsion/citation:	Always:18/64=28% Most times: 25/64=39% Half of time:5/64=8% Sometimes:12/64=19% Never: 4/64=6%	Always: 10/37=27% Most times: 13/37=35% Half of the time:5/37=14% Sometimes: 7/35= 20% Never= 1/37= 3%	Always: 5/39=13% Most times: 19/39=49% Half of the time: 3/39=8% Sometimes: 9/39= 23% Never: 3/39= 8%
Q40. I am more likely to use Restorative Justice practices for students in special education, rather than recommend a suspension, due to their special needs.	Yes: 54/64=84% No: 10/64: 16%	Yes: 35/37= 95% No: 2/37= 5%	Yes: 28/39= 72% No: 11/39= 28%
Q41. I am more likely to use Restorative Justice practices for students in foster care, rather than recommend a suspension, due to their backgrounds.	Yes: 54/64=84% No: 10/64=16%	Yes: 34/37=92% No: 3/37= 8%	Yes: 28/39= 72% No: 11/39= 28%
Q50. Select all that apply. Restorative Justice practices have:	Fewer students suspended from class:37/64= 58% Given me additional tools to use in my classroom: 34/64=53% Built a stronger sense of community with my students: 26/64=41% Limited rules infractions:18/64=28% Limited my options for responding to student discipline: 2/64=3% Not affected my disciplinary practices:8/64=13%	Fewer students suspended from class: 26/37=70% Given me additional tools to use in my classroom: 28/37=76% Built a stronger sense of community with my students: 25/37=68% Limited rules infractions:15/37=41% Limited my options for responding to student discipline: 1/37= 3%	Fewer students suspended from class: 25/39=64% Given me additional tools to use in my classroom: 21/39=54% Built a stronger sense of community with my students: 20/39=51% Limited rules infractions:9/39=23% Limited my options for responding to student discipline: 4/39= 10% Not affected my disciplinary practices: 3/39= 8%

APPENDIX J
RQ #2 Staff survey responses for sites Ainsworth, Burnside, Chisolm

	Ainsworth	Burnside	Chisolm
Q15: How have site expectations influenced your use of Restorative Justice practices with students?	Influenced many changes: 15/64=23% Altered some practices:19/64=30% Influence practices minimally:21/64=33% No influence: 4/64: 6%	Influenced many changes: 3/37=8% Altered some practices: 27/37=73% Influence practices minimally: 5/37= 14% No influence on practices: 2/37=5%	Influenced many changes: 3/39=8% Altered some practices: 18/39=46% Influence practices minimally: 5/37= 14% No influence on practices: 2/37=5%
Q16: How have district policies influenced your use of Restorative Justice practices with students?	Influenced many changes: 5/64= 8% Altered some practices: 19/64: 30% Influenced practices minimally: 21/64=33% No influence on practices: 19/64: 30%	Influenced many changes: 4/37= 11% Altered some practices: 19/37= 51% Influenced practices minimally: 6/37=16% No influence on practices: 8/37=22%	Influenced many changes: 4/37= 11% Altered some practices: 19/37= 51% Influenced practices minimally: 6/37=16% No influence on practices: 8/37=22%
Q17: Does your site have disciplinary protocols that include the use of Restorative Justice practices for responding to rule infractions for students?	Yes: 50/64: 78% I don't know: 14%	Yes: 33/37=89% No: 1/37=3% I don't know: 3/37= 8%	Yes: 33/37=89% No: 1/37=3% I don't know: 3/37= 8%
Q18: Are there school board policies that include the use of Restorative Justice practices for responding to rule infractions for students?	Yes: 20/64=31% No: 5/64= 8% I don't know: 39/64=61%	Yes: 13/37= 35% No: 1/37= 3% I don't know: 23/37= 62%	Yes: 13/37= 35% No: 1/37= 3% I don't know: 23/37= 62%
Q19: If school site staff members do not follow disciplinary guidelines, administrators consult with them to clarify expectations.	Yes: 42/64=66% No: 3/64=5% I don't know: 19/64= 30%	Yes: 25/37= 68% No: 1/37=3% I don't know: 11/37=30%	Yes: 25/37= 68% No: 1/37=3% I don't know: 11/37=30%
Q20: Staff is expected to use intervention procedures that include the use of Restorative Justice practices *prior* to suspending a student from class.	Yes: 48/64=84%; No: 4/64=6%; I don't know: 12/64: 19%	Yes: 29/37=78% No: 3/37=8% I don't know: 5/37=14%	Yes: 29/37=78% No: 3/37=8% I don't know: 5/37=14%

RQ #3 Survey responses for Sites Ainsworth, Burnside, Chisolm

Survey Question	Ainsworth	Burnside	Chisolm
Q33. When special education students break rules, I use Restorative Justice practices *instead* **of referring the students to suspension/expulsion/citation:**	Always: 17/64=27% Most times: 26/64=41% Half of the time: 5/64=8% Sometimes:12/64=19% Never: 4/64=6%	Always: 9/37=24% Most times: 13/37=35% Half of the time: 5/37=14% Sometimes:7/37=19% Never: 3/37=8%	Always: 5/39=13% Most times: 18/39=46% Half of the time: 9/39=23% Sometimes: 9/39=23% Never: 3/39= 8%
Q34. When foster students break rules, I use Restorative Justice practices *instead* **of referring the students to suspension/expulsion/citation:**	Always:18/64=28% Most times: 25/64=39% Half of time:5/64=8% Sometimes:12/64=19% Never: 4/64=6%	Always:9/37=24% Most times: 13/37=35% Half of time:5/37=14% Sometimes:7/37=19% Never: 3/37=8%	Always: 5/39=13% Most times: 18/39=46% Half of the time: 9/39=23% Sometimes: 9/39=23% Never: 3/39= 8%
Q35. When Latino male students with IEPs break school rules, I use Restorative Justice practices *instead* **of referring the students to suspension/expulsion/citation:**	Always: 18/64=28% Most times: 25/64=39% Half of the time:3/64=5% Sometimes:12/64=19% Never: 4/64=6%	Always: 9/37=24% Most times: 14/37=38% Half of the time:5/37=14% Sometimes:6/37=16% Never: 3/37=5%	Always: 5/39= 13% Most times: 19/39=49% Half of the time:3/39=8% Sometimes:9/39=23% Never: 3/39=8%
Q36. When African American male students with IEPs break school rules, I use Restorative Justice practices *instead* **of referring the students to suspension/expulsion/citation:**	Always: 18/64=28% Most Times:25/64=39% Half of the time:3/64=5% Sometimes:12/64=19% Never: 4/64=6%	Always: 9/37=24% Most Times:14/37=38% Half of the time:5/37=14% Sometimes:6/37=16% Never: 3/37=5%	Always: 5/39=13% Most Times:18/39= 46% Half of the time:4/39=10% Sometimes:9/39=23% Never: 3/39= 8%
Q40. I am more likely to use Restorative Justice practices for students in special education, rather than recommend a suspension, due to their special needs.	Yes: 54/64=84% No: 10/64: 16%	Yes: 35/37= 95% No: 2/37= 5%	Yes: 28/39= 72% No: 11/39= 28%
Q41. I am more likely to use Restorative Justice practices for students in foster care, rather than recommend a suspension, due to their backgrounds.	Yes: 54/64=84% No: 10/64=16%	Yes: 34/37=92% No: 3/37= 8%	Yes: 28/39= 72% No: 11/39= 28%
Q50. Select all that apply. Restorative Justice practices have:	Fewer students suspended from class:37/64= 58% Given me additional tools to use in my classroom: 34/64=53% Built a stronger sense of community with my	Fewer students suspended from class: 26/37=70% Given me additional tools to use in my classroom: 29/37= 78% Built a stronger sense of community with my	Fewer students suspended from class:25/39= 64% Given me additional tools to use in my classroom: 21/39= 54% Built a stronger sense

students: 26/64=41% Limited rules infractions:18/64=28% Limited my options for responding to student discipline: 2/64=3% Not affected my :8/64=13%	students: 25/37=68% Limited rules infractions:12/37=32% Limited my options for responding to student discipline: 1/37=3% Not affected my :5/37=14%	of community with my students: 20/39= 51% Limited rules infractions:9/39= 23% Limited my options for responding to student discipline: 4/39=10% Not affected my :2/39= 5%

APPENDIX L
Interview participants by site

	Ainsworth	Burnside	Chisolm
Site Administrators	4	1	3
District Administrators/Counselors	2	2	1
Site Counselors	0	1	0
Site Teachers on Assignment	1	1	0

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