AN EXPLORATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN AN ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL[*]

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This qualitative case study explores the implementation of restorative justice within one Ontario Public School. Restorative justice is a philosophy and a process for dealing with harmful behaviour, viewing such behaviour as a violation of relationships, not rules. My research seeks to present how restorative justice has been implemented in one school, reaching beyond an examination of the effectiveness of restorative justice to an exploration of how teachers and administrators think and feel about, and actually employ, restorative justice practices. My findings suggest that while there is a personal commitment to the practice of restorative justice on the part of both teachers and administrators, if necessary structures and cultural systems are not in place, then it is difficult to sustain the restorative justice program. This study identifies factors needed to sustain a transformative reform such as restorative justice.

In 2000, the Ontario Ministry of Education introduced the Safe Schools Act (Bill 81),

designed to "increase respect and responsibility" and to "set standards for safe learning and safe

teaching in schools" (p.1). Educators and administrators responded to this legislation in a variety

of ways. Some schools emphasized mandatory consequences for student actions as outlined in

the Act; others focused on progressive discipline; and still others introduced preventative

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measures such as anti-bullying, conflict resolution and community-building programs (Safe Schools Action Team, 2006).

Notably, a few Ontario school boards chose to implement restorative justice programs. At its core, restorative justice views harm as a violation of people and relationships, rather than of rules or laws. Community Justice Initiatives, a Canadian non-profit organization – recognized as having started the first modern restorative justice program – defines restorative justice as "a way of addressing conflict and crime that engages the person who caused the harm, people who were affected by the harm, and the community" (Community Justice Initiatives Website, About Us section, ¶ 2).

With this study, I entered into an exploration of one school board that chose to introduce a restorative justice approach into its schools as part of its Safe Schools initiative. The purpose of this case study was to discover and analyze how restorative justice was being experienced and implemented by teachers and administrators in a specific Ontario Public School Board during the 2008/2009 school year.

Defining the Research Questions

Prior research in both the justice and education systems, conducted in Canada, the United States and Australia, has indicated that restorative justice effectively reduces recidivism rates and promotes positive relationships (Arnott, 2007; Morrison & Martinez, 2001; Porter, 2007; Riestenberg, 2003a; White, 1998). While there is a growing body of research on the effectiveness of restorative justice in schools and its impact on the lives of students, there has been little written about the teachers and administrators who implement restorative approaches. Even less has emerged from a Canadian context.

In the past ten years, however, a number of Canadian school boards have decided to introduce restorative justice practices to the teachers and administrators employed in their region. This research used questionnaires, document analysis and interviews in an exploration of teachers and administrators employed by an Ontario School Board that implemented a board-wide restorative justice approach. While many teachers and administrators of this School Board were trained in the same restorative justice approach, the manner in which individuals understood, experienced and implemented restorative justice varied widely. To examine these differences of understanding, experiencing and practice this research asked the following three related questions: 1. How do teachers and administrators perceive restorative justice and its implementation in their school? 2. How do teachers and administrators perceive their own roles in enacting restorative justice practices? 3. How do the teachers' and administrators' perspectives fit with the School Board's understanding of restorative justice?

Teachers and administrators do not operate in a vacuum, but within a culture and context that affect their actions and beliefs. Educators, in an effort to create safe and effective learning environments, often find themselves bombarded by new ideas, philosophies and trends. Depending on a large number of contributing factors, some of these new ideas take root and others disappear quite rapidly. While the quality of the new idea is obviously part of the dynamic, quality is not the sole determinant of which programs become successfully institutionalized (Feldman, 2000; Fullan, 1995).

By speaking with those people who are entrusted to bring life to the practice of restorative justice, while also being cognizant of the context within which they are working, we are given a window into the factors that help restorative justice to flourish in schools as well as those that damage its chances of survival. Through an exploration of how educators in one

School Board experienced and implemented a restorative justice approach, I hope to contribute to the understanding of successful implementation of restorative justice in Canadian schools.

Definition of Terms

Defining Restorative Justice

Restorative justice is a diverse, multi-layered concept. To suggest that there exists one universal definition of restorative justice is, as Johnstone and Van Ness (2007) purported, to present restorative justice as a "more limited and more impoverished movement than it truly is" (p. 9). There are both tensions and connections among the various definitions, allowing for agreement as well as continued reflection on the nature of restorative justice.

While the idea of restorative justice has been articulated in Western societies only since the early 1970s, the concept draws from a rich source of related knowledge found in such areas as community justice, peacemaking circles of various First Nations' groups, biblical interpretations of justice, mediation, Maori meetings, African village moots, and re-integrative shaming theory, among many others (Schweigert, 1999). The emergence of restorative justice as a field is often accredited to a 1974 criminal case involving two young men who committed vandalism in Elmira, Ontario, Canada and subsequently met with all available victims, negotiated restitution and repaid the victims completely within months. This case gave birth to the victim-offender reconciliation movement–one example of restorative justice–across Canada and, a few years later, in the United States (Sawin & Zehr, 2007; Zehr, 1990; see also Peachey, 1989).

The "Elmira Case" emerged from discontent with the perceived inflexibility and impersonal nature of the retributive model of state justice. American Howard Zehr (1990)

depicted the modern retributive justice system as one that viewed the state as the real victim and denied any participatory role to actual victims. He wrote, "Justice consists of establishing blame and administering pain in a battle grounded by rules. The process is assumed to be the responsibility—indeed, a monopoly—of the state" (p. 82). Current Ottawa Police Chief, Vernon White, concurred with Zehr in his 1998 Master's thesis on restorative justice, characterizing justice in Canada as a "system that is increasingly institutionalized, bureaucratized and less personal than it was previously. This has resulted in the words victim and community being dropped from mainstream justice and replaced with the word 'the state'" (p. 4).

Restorative justice proponents seek to re-personalize the justice system, bestowing priority on the actual victim, offender and community and thus transforming the way societies respond to crime and other inappropriate behaviour. Zehr (2002) summarized this approach by stating that violence is not simply a violation of a law or rule, but a violation of people and of interpersonal relationships; violations create obligations; and the central obligation is to right the wrongs.

In its attention to relationships, it is clear that restorative justice is not only a process, but also a set of values and principles. While the articulation and naming of these shared values differs slightly, Pranis (2007) listed some of the values underpinning restorative justice as interconnectedness, respect, inclusion, responsibility, humility, honesty, mutual care and non-domination. These values are, as Sawatsky (2001) pointed out, "strikingly different" from the modern Western justice system but coherent with many traditions and cultures. By attending to these restorative values, restorative justice practitioners and proponents, regardless of differences in definition, attempt to develop processes that make things as right as possible for all affected by harm.

Defining Restorative Justice in Schools

The application of restorative justice in schools, at least in North America, emerged from dissatisfaction among some educators with aspects of the school system, particularly punitive forms of discipline and "zero tolerance" policies. Zero tolerance policies name certain behaviours as unacceptable and mandate predetermined consequences for students who participate in such behaviour. Though the phrase zero tolerance was never specifically used in Ontario's Safe Schools Act (2000), the Act was seen as much more prescriptive than previous legislation. Martinez (2009) emphasized that there has been little research to prove the effectiveness of zero tolerance policies on creating safer schools.

In contrast to zero discipline policies, restorative justice views inappropriate behaviour as a violation of relationships, not rules. Built upon the same principles and practices as utilized in responding to the criminal justice system, restorative justice in the school setting diverges from traditional discipline in which punishment is meted out by an authority above and instead focuses on empowering the school community to collectively create safe and just schools.

In the school setting, restorative justice draws upon the strength of a number of similar movements such as conflict resolution education, character education, moral education and emotional literacy (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005; Morrison, 2007; Schweigert, 1999). Conflict resolution education (CRE) teaches skills that "help people actively and nonviolently solve problems" (Association for Conflict Resolution, What is Conflict Resolution Education Section, ¶ 2). The three distinct areas of character education, moral education and emotional literacy focus on building social and emotional intelligence, and encouraging positive values and behaviours (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005; Morrison, 2007). Restorative justice marries the skills of CRE with the relational focus of the other movements. Amstutz and Mullet (2005) have

illustrated this marriage by comparing the key question of CRE ("How can you solve the problem?") with that of restorative justice ("How can you put it right?"). They wrote, "The first focuses on finding a solution that is fair and acceptable to all parties; restorative discipline adds the additional layer of working on the relationship that was harmed or deterred" (p. 20).

Although many educators and educational leaders have inherently practiced being restorative, the field of restorative justice provides a framework within which to encourage restorative values and build restorative processes. Restorative values play out in a continuum of practices in the school context, ranging from classroom circles to peer mediation to multi-party restorative conferences. Although circles and conferences vary in structure and purpose, they are generally facilitated discussions involving victims, offenders, and, often, other affected individuals such as family members, friends, school personnel and community members. According to Amstutz and Mullet (2005) circles are often used as preventative: for class meetings, community problem-solving and re-integrating suspended students into the classroom. Conferences, on the other hand, are often used as responses when serious harms have been committed: for exploring what happened, what needs to be done to make things as right as possible, and how the situation will be prevented in the future. Regardless of which practices are employed, all must be grounded in restorative values and, taken together, contribute to the creation of a restorative climate in the school (Smith, 2006).

Methodology

Zehr and Toews (2004) wrote that the field of restorative justice was enriched by a diversity of definitions and understandings of the concept; presumably, teachers and administrators are no different from other people, ascribing multiple, varied meanings to the

phenomenon of restorative justice. It is through making sense of those meanings and determining the essence of the meanings–while keeping them in context–that we are able to understand how to more effectively implement restorative justice practices.

Participants and Procedure

In September 2008, during a conversation with the School Board Administrator responsible for restorative justice, I was made aware that the training of teachers and administrators in restorative justice practices had been somewhat sporadic across the School Board: some schools had almost every teacher trained, others had none. Within this conversation, the Board Administrator offered to look for a school with a sufficient number of staff trained in restorative justice from which to draw for my study.

The Board Administrator continued to be a source of valuable information for me throughout my research. I conducted one 90-minute semi-structured interview with her at the beginning of my data collection period in March 2009. At this time, the Board Administrator presented me with 15 documents: Board-produced material, articles written about the restorative justice program at the Board, materials used during training sessions and documents related to the restorative justice program's philosophy and/or process. She also, as promised, connected me to a school where multiple teachers had received restorative justice training. The Board Administrator sometimes referred to this school as the Board's "model school" of restorative justice.

I chose to focus on educators working in the same school so as to better understand the context in which they were all experiencing restorative justice. I sent a questionnaire to all teachers and administrators at the School to obtain an overview of their use of restorative justice

practices, and their knowledge and beliefs regarding restorative justice. Out of 36 questionnaires sent, 14 were returned--a 39 percent response rate. Of these, seven respondents indicated a willingness to be contacted for interviews. Two of the respondents were administrators and both involved in restorative justice in their school. Of these two, I selected the administrator who the Board Administrator had identified as a strong advocate for restorative justice. Since this school was deemed to be a model one, I preferred to interview the administrator most responsible for the successful implementation of restorative justice so as to learn the factors that may have contributed to the success. This female administrator had many years of teaching and administrative experience and has been administrator at her current school since its opening.

Of the five remaining teachers willing to be interviewed, I contacted the four respondents who returned their questionnaires first. I had intended to select two teachers who indicated on the questionnaire that they were strong proponents of restorative justice and two who indicated negative opinions. Due to the low number of respondents willing to be interviewed, however, I was not able to exercise much control over whom I chose to interview. Yet, even without the control, the participants naturally expressed a diversity of views on restorative justice, understood through the lenses of their various life paths, personalities and teaching experiences. Two of the teachers interviewed were male and two were female. All four were Caucasian. Three were classroom teachers and one was a support teacher. Their teaching experience ranged from 6 to 15 years. Three had received restorative justice training in the last two years while at their current School and one had received training over two years ago while teaching at a different school. For all the teachers, restorative justice training occurred in the form of two- or three-day workshops offered through the School Board. All had utilized restorative justice, some on the

playground and others in their classrooms. None had facilitated a formal restorative justice conference with participants other than their immediate students.

Semi-structured interviews with the teachers and School Administrator took place at the School in either the participant's office or classroom. The interviews were recorded and once transcribed, I provided a copy of the transcription to each participant with an invitation to respond with comments and clarifications. The only response I received was one spelling correction.

Data Collection

As it is nearly impossible to fully separate data collection from data analysis (Creswell, 2007), both my data collection and analysis were conducted through a phenomenological lens, attempting to locate in the data the essence of teachers' and administrators' experience of restorative justice in their School. By examining and analyzing the School Board Website and other documents such as the School Board's training material and public communications on restorative justice, and conducting a semi-structured interview with the Board Administrator, I gained important background and programmatic information. The documents, as selected by the Board Administrator, were significant not only in their content, but also in their inclusion in the package given me, revealing how the School Board wished its restorative justice program to be seen.

As mentioned above, I sent a questionnaire to all teachers and administrators at the School. The questionnaire was developed in accordance with the Teacher-Centered Systemic Reform Model of Educational Reform (Woodbury & Gess-Newsome, 2002) which emphasizes the interplay of teachers' practice, knowledge and beliefs. The questions asked in the survey

mirror this emphasis, asking participants to respond to nine statements based on their practice of restorative justice, their knowledge and their beliefs.

The interviews I conducted with the four selected teachers and one School Administrator were semi-structured interviews, similar to the interview with the Board Administrator. Although data gathered through interviews is indirect and filtered by the participants, Creswell (2003) suggested interviews allow for researchers to gather data more directly related to their research questions, permit historical information to be provided by participants, and are useful when direct observation is not possible. I chose to specifically employ semi-structured interviews with the participants in order to both ask direct key questions of all the participants as well as leave the discussion open for insights and perspectives which are difficult to fit into set questions.

Data Analyses

Data were first analyzed by conducting a preliminary review of all the documents provided me by the Board Administrator. My intention in analyzing these documents was twofold: to gain insight into the Board's expressed understanding of restorative justice in order to later compare this understanding with teachers' expressed understandings; and to appreciate better the regional context in which educators are operating. Therefore, during my initial reading, I identified words, phrases and images which related to restorative justice philosophy, restorative justice practice, historical references to the program, references to the effectiveness of the program, program and training details, and how documents connected to the timing of the program's life. After transcribing the text that related to the above topics, I identified common themes and ideas, thus enhancing my understanding of the data in the documents. I wrote a preliminary overview of the regional context, as gathered from my reading of the documents. For

areas in my overview that were not well supported, I returned to the documents to strengthen or revise my initial thoughts. Once I had also transcribed and analyzed the interview data from the Board Administrator, I used that data to add depth and detail to the overview that had emerged from the documents.

The questionnaire, sent to all teachers and administrators at the school, was intended to both provide me with an overview of staff's use, knowledge and beliefs regarding restorative justice, as well as obtain names of potential interviewees. Having provided the latter, the analysis focused on gaining an overall sense of the School environment in terms of restorative justice. To begin, I tallied the responses as a collective, in search of as comprehensive a view of the School as possible given that only 39 percent of teachers and administrators responded to the questionnaire. Then I separated the results into two categories: staff with restorative justice training and those without. I wanted to see if understandings about restorative justice would be affected by the provision of training.

As the interviews contained the largest amount of data, I invested a significant amount of time in their analysis. In order to bridge the gap between raw data and my research concerns, I employed Auerbach and Silverstein's (2003) coding method. Their method contained three separate phases, each dealing with a different level of analysis. They acknowledged, however, that the coding process does not move linearly through these phases, but rather moves back and forth as understanding of the text grows in complexity. The phases as Auerbach and Silverstein presented them were: making the text manageable; hearing what was said; and developing theory. Once my transcriptions were complete, I began by selecting the relevant text in each interview. I then grouped the relevant text into categories called repeating ideas, text that expressed similar thoughts. This was done first for each individual interviewee and next for all

the interviews collectively. My master file of repeating ideas contained 33 distinct ideas. These 33 repeating ideas were then organized into 15 larger groups called themes that I will present in the findings section of this paper. Finally, the themes were organized into four theoretical constructs that I will present in the discussion section of this paper.

The Context

Researchers of case studies move themselves as well as their readers to a deeper understanding of the study by situating the case being studied in context, thoroughly analyzing and describing its setting (Creswell, 2007). In order to more fully understand the case being studied in my research, teachers and administrators in one Ontario School, I have set the context by describing the School Board and the School itself. For more detailed context description, please refer to my thesis dissertation (Reimer, 2009).

Teachers and administrators are affected by the context in which they operate, their decisions and practice influenced by contextual factors of structure and culture (Woodbury & Gess-Newsome, 2002). In order to describe the setting of this specific case, I analyzed the documents given me by the Board Administrator as well as the School Board's Website, and drew from the interview with the Board Administrator and the questionnaires sent to the teaching and administrative staff at the School. I also examined external documents necessary to enhance my understanding of the context, such as provincial education bills and regional Websites. Since this section presents information derived from the data, it could conceivably be offered under the heading of findings. I have chosen to separate the context from the findings, however, as they serve two distinct purposes in this paper. The context section allows for the reader to enter into a richer understanding of the contextual factors of structure and culture in which the six

participants are working. Data were necessarily gathered from far-reaching sources so as to describe the context in as broad terms as possible. In the findings section, the focus narrows to the six participants and their own understandings of their experiences within the context being set in this section. One section influences the other, as context influences personal experience, and the data will merge again in the discussion section.

The School Board

For the years (2004-2007) that outside funding was available for the School Board, restorative justice flourished. In its first year of operation, the program saved ten students from expulsion and 45 from suspension. The public communications during this time had a celebratory tone, announcing the numbers of staff trained, citing improvements in school climates and suspension rates, discussing success stories and reporting on outside acclamations of the program. The popularity of restorative justice seemed to peak during the school year 2006-2007 in the School Board, the last full school year of funding. Five articles appeared in local and provincial media declaring restorative justice a success and calling the School Board a "leader" in the field. Around the same time, both the School Board's restorative justice program and an individual working in the program received public honours for their work. The School Board seemed well positioned to continue moving toward their lofty goal, articulated in the last public communication of the 2006-2007 school year, that every student in Canada have access to restorative justice.

The outside funding, however, came to an end in October 2007 and the whole atmosphere shifted. The public communications dwindled from three issues per year to either one or two; they were also thinner on content and hope. The September 2008 issue kicked off with an article

on impermanence and the realization that "everything is changing–nothing remains the same." Inside the issue there was an admission that no grant money had yet been found, and an assurance that training would continue as soon as funding was secured. There was mention of over 350 people on the waitlist for training. There were no more newspaper articles, no more awards. Interestingly, when I contacted the Board Administrator in September 2008 to discuss my possible research, I noticed that all references to the restorative justice program had been removed from the Website. An administrative error, for sure, soon corrected, yet an error that spoke to the diminishing importance of restorative justice in the eyes of the broader School Board.

The School

The School in which I conducted my research was new within the Region. It served children from junior kindergarten to grade six. In the 2008-2009 school year, there was an enrollment of 640 students, an increase of 100 students from the previous year. The growing community of students was also diverse; according to the school profile found on the School Board's Website, the students spoke 40 different languages.

The School sought to encourage an inclusive and positive school climate, both through its actions and the physical space itself which was spacious and filled with natural light. Many of the classrooms were clustered around a shared workspace where both students and teachers were encouraged to work collaboratively. Two teachers I interviewed mentioned the physical layout as contributing to a sense of community within the school; they felt a shared responsibility for each other's classroom.

All teachers at the School had been trained in the Tribes Learning Communities program. Tribes is a program that began in the 1970s and, according to the Tribes' Website, is a "research-based process that creates a culture that maximizes learning and human development" (home page). It is a step-by-step process that teachers implement in their classrooms to teach students skills to enable them to work collaboratively in long-term groups called Tribes. Every teacher and administrator interviewed mentioned Tribes as a significant feature of the school, and most felt the philosophy of Tribes connected well with the philosophy of restorative justice.

In contrast to the very public affirmation of Tribes, there was little articulated by the School about restorative justice. There was no mention of the practice in the school profile, even within the section on Safe Schools. It was also unclear how many staff were trained in restorative justice at the School. As the School Administrator said:

> Any new staff that I bring on, I send for the training for the Tribes program. If restorative justice training is available–and it's not as available at our Board as it used to be since they don't have the funding anymore–I would encourage people to go to that as well.

While it was encouraged, restorative justice simply was not the priority of the School, nor was it easily accessible. Of the 14 questionnaires returned to me by teachers and administrators, nine had received training in restorative justice and five had not. Since 22 teachers did not respond to the questionnaire, I am not able to say whether the majority of teachers at the School have received training.

Despite the lack of specific reference to restorative justice in its publications, the School I studied was still considered to be a model restorative justice school by the School Board. According to the questionnaires I received, in general, regardless of whether they had obtained training in restorative justice, teachers and administrators at the School used some restorative justice practices and viewed it favourably. While the questionnaire responses could not provide a

comprehensive overview of the School, they did assist in characterizing the context within which the teachers and administrators I interviewed were operating. The questionnaire asked for responses around three themes: actual use of restorative justice, knowledge of how to use restorative justice and/or confidence in own use, and beliefs regarding restorative justice. I will summarize what the questionnaire revealed about the respondents. Full results can be in my thesis dissertation (Reimer, 2009).

Extrapolating from the questionnaire, those teachers and administrators who had been trained in restorative justice were most apt to use restorative justice practices to deal with minor and/or severe incidents of harm, much more than on a regular, daily basis in their classrooms. They had a moderate amount of confidence in their own skills, but were somewhat hesitant to initiate a process themselves. Overwhelmingly, however, they supported the values and philosophy of restorative justice and felt it to be an effective process. Those respondents who had not received restorative justice training were unlikely to use restorative justice practices to deal with incidents of harm, whether minor or severe, but did incorporate some practices into their daily routines. They had very little confidence in their own ability to utilize restorative justice practices, but still supported the general idea of it. The difference between the two groups in terms of use, knowledge and confidence seemed quite logical; having not received any training in how to use restorative justice, teachers would not be expected to do so with ease. Interestingly, while support for restorative justice was highest amongst teachers with training, support still hovered around 80 percent for those who had never received training and possibly never used any of the techniques. It was impossible to cast any generalizations over the School based on questionnaires from less than half of the staff members, but among the respondents, there existed a favourable attitude toward restorative justice.

Findings

Attending to my research concerns and their focus on the experience of individuals, I analyzed my data as described in the methodology section of this paper, utilizing Auerbach and Silverstein's (2003) method of identifying repeating ideas in the text and arranging them into themes, which are in turn organized into theoretical constructs. While the focus was on the interview data, when appropriate, themes were triangulated with data emerging from questionnaires and the documents given me by the Board Administrator. 15 themes emerged from the repeating ideas and are listed in Table 1. The intention of this next section is to reflect the participants' thoughts as unfiltered as possible, yet grouped under coherent themes. My organization of the themes, explained more fully in the discussion section, reflected the theory and literature upon which my study was based, as well as the triangulating data of structure and culture.

The Table illustrates the organization of the text into themes (those phrases with letters) under italicized titles of theoretical constructs. The number of the six participants who referenced each theme in their interviews is listed in the second column. In the explanation of themes that follows, participants' exact words are used, selected to capture the essence of each theme. Explanations of all 15 themes are available in my thesis dissertation. Here, I will highlight two of the most frequently referenced themes under each theoretical construct. The teachers will be identified with numbers so as to ensure anonymity.

Table
Theoretical Constructs, Themes and Repeating Ideas

Theoretical Constructs and Themes	Number of Participants (out of six) who Referenced Theme
I. Constructing personal understandings of restorative justice	
A. Definition of restorative justice	6
B. Enactment of restorative justice	6
C. Inappropriate use	2
D. Transmission	5
II. Facilitating adoption of new personal practical theories	
A. Benefits for students	6
B. Benefits for school community	5
C. Positively fits with past theories	5
III. Complicating contextual factors of structure and culture	
A. Obstacles to overcome	5
B. Restorative justice requires strong community	6
C. Working against mainstream culture	4
D. Collegial collaboration	4
E. Community connections	1
IV. Inconsistent support from gatekeepers of change	
A. Top-down support	6
B. Feeling out of the loop	2
C. Lack of sustainability	5

Theme 1: Definition of Restorative Justice

When asked to define restorative justice, two thirds of the interviewees referred to restorative justice as a process or a set of steps followed in reaction to a harmful incident. It happened after an "offence" had occurred or when "things go wrong." Teacher 1 stated that "for me it was never a proactive approach, it was a way of approaching a situation after you had used up all the other set of strategies" and described it as being one more "tool" in the toolbox. Teacher 2 appreciated the way restorative justice was able to simply respond to negative incidents.

Half of the participants defined restorative justice as a philosophy. Teacher 3, who initially classified restorative justice as a process, also weaved the idea of the philosophy into his definition, seeing strength in both components. Two other individuals, Teacher 4 and the Board Administrator, who did not define restorative justice as a process were quite adamant that restorative justice was first and foremost a philosophy. The actual word philosophy was repeatedly used by all three, as well as phrases such as "a way of thinking" and "it's really just about how you are with people." References were made to the impact that restorative justice has on those involved. In contrast to the focus by the previous group on using restorative justice to respond to a harmful incident, the Board Administrator, while describing a training session, stated,

> We talk about how to bring it into your classroom so it's not something that you do when something big happens; you're using the questions and giving kids an opportunity to use their voice

Theme 2: Enactment of Restorative Justice

The use of restorative justice differed greatly depending on what role the speaker filled: teacher, School Administrator, or Board Administrator. The severity of the offence, the time spent on the process and the formality of the process increased with each role. For teachers, their use of restorative justice mostly centred on dealing with minor incidents of harm or issues that seemed to be disrupting their classroom. Teacher 2 reported that when such issues occurred she would call a classroom meeting to deal with the incident. Teacher 4 used restorative justice mostly on the playground, spontaneously responding to conflicts and fights. She said she utilized a "mini restorative philosophy" in the way she dealt with playground issues. None of the teachers had ever convened a restorative justice circle or conference involving participants other than students. If there was a more serious incident in which a larger group of people needed to be involved, the teachers felt the administrator should take over. As Teacher 1 put it: "I've certainly never encountered a situation that had the severity involved, because obviously I would've passed that off to a principal and gone back to my room to teach math or something."

The administrators both used restorative justice for cases involving more serious incidents of harm. The School Administrator, while reporting that she also used the "basis of restorative justice" for minor incidents between children, acknowledged that administrators are mostly called upon to deal with major disciplinary issues. The Board Administrator was requested to facilitate most serious incidents. She characterized her usual request, most commonly from principals or vice-principals, as occurring when:

> There's been a lot of fur flying and a lot of uproar in the community, when parent council is breathing on the principal about why is that kid only suspended, he should've been expelled, that type of thing. Those are the ones I, because I'm neutral, I don't have any affiliation with the school, I don't work out of their school. I just kind of come in, do it and go, and they see that as fair.

Theme 5: Benefits for Students

All six participants believed that restorative justice provided benefits for students. The benefits were grouped into three loose themes: providing character education for the students; valuing the students' voices; and assisting in healing. Five out of the six interviewees appreciated that restorative justice had something positive to teach students, most often referring to the learning of empathy and recognition of the need to make better choices. Teacher 3 felt that the approach was an effective way to "put yourself in other people's shoes" and to understand that "your decisions are affecting a whole lot of other people that maybe you don't realize." Teacher 2 expressed surprise at the effectiveness of restorative justice, relating:

> I think there's been some kids that I really didn't know if it would ever get through to them, the empathy part, and I really did see it make a difference where they had to look the person in the eye and the person was telling them how they felt when they were doing that.

Besides character education, five of the six interviewees also felt that students benefited from having their own perspectives valued. As Teacher 3 voiced it, "Everybody just wants to be heard." Teachers 2 and 3 expressed the sense that students were "buying in" to restorative justice because it valued the students as individuals, listened to their voices and gave them ownership of the issue. Interestingly, some teachers had noticed a proactive shift in student behaviour:

> I certainly think we've given kids enough voice now that they ask us for resolution and if we haven't provided then they keep at it until they get it. I think we've created good little citizens that way (Teacher 1).

Finally, three teachers (2, 3 and 4) mentioned the ability of restorative justice to assist in the healing of relationships and inner wounds. Teacher 2 summed it up by saying:

> There's something magical about it. I mean, it sounds silly, but I've seen kids that have had all these feelings, they've let all the feelings go in the circle and then they touch each other [referring to shaking hands] and they'll often look each other in the eye and smile for the first time.

Theme 6: Benefits for School Community

The benefits of restorative justice, according to five of the six participants, reach beyond those afforded individual students and actually affect the whole school community: teachers, classrooms, and the School as a whole. Teachers 2 and 3 felt that they had personally gained through the use of restorative justice. Teacher 3 spoke about the "mutual respect" that emerged as students learned, through a restorative justice approach, to view him as "another human being, as a person, rather than an authority figure" and to understand how he, too, can be harmed by negative incidents.

There was recognition by all but Teacher 1 that a restorative justice approach positively affects the environment in individual classrooms, as well as in the entire school. The main praise was that restorative justice helps to create a "calm learning environment," one that the teachers acknowledged cannot exist if students are preoccupied with unresolved issues. Teacher 4 advised, "You do yourself a big service to get this groundwork in place in a school so that learning can take place." In terms of the school as a whole, the School Administrator claimed that restorative justice "maintains the positive relationships within the building–be it staff, students, parents" making it "more effective than other approaches."

Theme 8: Obstacles to Overcome

Out of the six participants, five of them acknowledged that there are obstacles to overcome in order to utilize restorative justice effectively. The major issue was summarized by Teacher 1: "You just don't have the time; you can't take the time." Teacher 2 lamented that time spent utilizing a restorative justice approach was time taken away from instruction. Teacher 1 was unequivocal regarding which aspect of his teaching practice needed to take priority:

> It [restorative justice] requires an exceptional amount of time. And in a building where there's no guidance counselor, I have to take the forefront on that. And sitting for an hour and a quarter in a restorative justice circle is not necessarily going to win me any points in terms of, you know, it's not very often that someone's going to come and ask me to be accountable for children's actions but boy, howdy, when their test scores are dropping, somebody's going to be knocking at my door.

Clearly there is pressure felt from several fronts to focus on instruction rather than time-consuming approaches to deal with behaviour issues.

Despite this pressure, two of the teachers were adamant that the benefits of using a restorative justice approach "far outweigh" the negatives, such as consumption of time. Teacher 3 asked himself what was more important, "ending up with the positive, thankful, appreciative citizen or making sure you cover every curriculum expectation? To me, it's not even a consideration."

Theme 9: Restorative Justice Requires Strong Community

All six participants discussed the importance of establishing a sense of community within a school setting. For the teachers and administrators, restorative justice helped to maintain a sense of community and was an important aspect of community, but very few participants felt that restorative justice actually created a sense of community.

The staff of the School all felt that they were working in a very unique setting and identified their school as possessing a strong sense of community, and thus as fertile ground for a restorative justice approach. There were several factors that seemed to contribute to the establishing of this community feeling: the quality of the staff, the physical layout of the school, the leadership within the school, and the implementation of Tribes. Teacher 3 mentioned that this was a "hand-picked staff" referring to the fact that the School was quite new and the principal

was able to choose individuals, interviewing to ensure that teachers were hired who were "into relationships and restoring relationships." The physical layout of the school, too, seemed to play a role in the establishment of community. As mentioned previously, many of the classrooms were clustered around a shared workspace where two or three classrooms of students and teachers were able to work collaboratively. Also identified were other teachers' willingness to supervise each other's classroom when needed. Teacher 1 identified this collaboration as crucial:

> I can assure you if that wasn't the case, it [restorative justice] would hit the backburner really quickly, because legally I'm responsible for 30 lives in a classroom and if something were to go on and I'm sitting out in the hallway trying to sort something out, I mean, it's just not a river we want to go down. So unless your principal or teaching partner or someone understands that you need that dedicated time, it won't happen. It simply will not happen.

Administrative leadership was recognized as highly important to creating a supportive community, both in the quotation above and in other comments by participants. Part of leadership involved institutionalizing practices that encouraged community. In this matter, Teachers 2 and 3 praised the practice at their School of beginning each staff meeting with a community-building activity, suggesting that at the point of the interview the sense of community had become "pretty self-sustaining."

Tied in with other roots of community creation was the program, Tribes. As Teacher 4 stated, Tribes "really does build in the philosophy of community into a school." Since all the teachers in the school had received training in Tribes, this seemed to facilitate a strong connection among teachers. There was recognition from participants that restorative justice and Tribes "jive very nicely" but that Tribes was the definite precursor to bringing in a restorative justice approach. Teacher 1 summarized the relationship between Tribes and restorative justice as follows:

> I would say that restorative justice does not create community, it's as a result of community. You need to start with that ideology. We're lucky here, we kind of tapped into Tribes. Whatever ideology you want to tap into. If you can build community through that, restorative justice is a natural extension of a belief of community, of a belief that everyone has a place here, of a belief of mutual respect and actually teaching what those things look like. Because it's when you go outside that circle of community that you require restorative justice and you require someone to be pulled back into community. You can't step outside of community unless there is one.

It seemed that at this model restorative justice school, community had been created through a number of initiatives–hiring of quality staff, intentional physical layout and Tribes–but restorative justice was seen mostly as a product of community, not as one of the key contributors.

Theme 13: Top-Down Support

All six participants spoke of the significance of support—whether perceived or real—from those in authority. This support was discussed in terms of three groups: school administration, the school board as a system, and those in top positions in the school board, such as the director of education and the board of trustees.

All of the teachers who were interviewed felt as though they were categorically encouraged by their school administration to utilize a restorative justice approach. Teacher 1 declared, "Our principal is a believer in restorative justice and uses that philosophy on a regular basis." The teachers felt that this was significant for their continued use of restorative justice since, as Teacher 4 expressed it, "your administrator drives your school and if your administrator values something else, then that's where the emphasis will be." School administrators were seen as being very influential on the actions of teachers and therefore the life of restorative justice. Yet, even with that interest and influence, the School Administrator was unable to train as many staff as she had wished due to the lack of training available from the School Board.

Although individuals at the School Board were praised for their work, the School Board as a system was seen to have failed somewhat in its handling of the restorative justice program. The School Administrator gratefully acknowledged the support she had personally received from the Board Administrator, yet felt that some systemic policies discouraged support of the restorative justice program. For instance, one of the factors used when determining which schools receive vice-principals was the number of suspensions that school records. The School Administrator felt that by withholding a vice-principal from schools that used restorative justice in lieu of suspensions, this policy effectively penalized her, stating "there's a misfit here and if you want us to do restorative justice, you have to recognize that I need more help, not less." Teacher 2 indicated frustration at not seeing action on the part of the School Board.

Moving to the next level of power, the Board Administrator expressed frustration with the lack of support she felt from those in authority in the School Board, stating, "I think one of the disappointing pieces of this project has been that there hasn't been a consistent promotion of it at the top." While support was initially present, it eroded as individuals in the roles of trustees were replaced by "ones coming from other places who don't really know much about restorative justice." The Board Administrator thought that "it would be really helpful to have the top–the director, superintendents, trustees, and the chair–have all of them on board with it. Make it a top-down initiative." While she experienced the support of some individuals, it was consistency that was lacking.

Theme 15: Lack of Sustainability

Sustainability of the restorative justice program was identified as an issue by five out of the six participants. Some of the teachers viewed the program as one that was once vibrant, but

was now fading away. Teacher 1 called restorative justice a "fad" and described its fate quite

vividly:

> I think, unfortunately, like many things in education, fads come and fads go and
> without the funding to continue the training, then you will see restorative justice
> slowly die out, even here … where it was really brought in in a big way. Once the
> funding dried up, teachers stopped getting trained. We're very busy people, we're
> always being inundated with the latest fad, and it could very quickly pass into
> something that we used to do: 'I've heard about and I think someone here on staff
> has some training on it.' But if we don't continually renew a new generation of
> teachers and integrate them into that belief it will slowly… It will always be part
> of what we do, but RJ as a terminology may slip into the way of the dodo.

Teacher 2 remembered the interest there was in restorative justice when the program was first

implemented and compared that to the lack of interest she felt currently existed:

> I heard a lot more about it in general: teachers talking about it, and postings on
> [the internal conference file], there were newspaper articles about it at that time,
> things like that as well. The media really seemed to pick up on it, but I really have
> seen that dwindle. And there's always a new issue, right? And they picked up on
> the new issue and left that behind. Which is too bad. It changed a lot of people.
> It's not like it's totally gone, but it's certainly not as strong a push as it was.

The Board Administrator also acknowledged a shift in momentum. When our interview took

place, there were about 360 people on the waiting list for training and no new funding in sight.

There was a possibility that next year the program would be included in the School Board's

budget, contrary to the situation this year, but the Board Administrator was unclear as to whether

that would be the case.

Discussion

My research began as an exploration of how teachers and administrators within one

school understood and enacted restorative justice. I wanted to gather data on individuals'

experiences, as well as gain an understanding of the influence of the contextual factors of

structure and culture in which these individuals were operating.

Attending to my research questions and building on theory and the collected data, I have developed four theoretical constructs on which I will elaborate in this section: (a) constructing personal understandings of restorative justice; (b) facilitating adoption of new personal practical theories; (c) complicating contextual factors of structure and culture; and (d) inconsistent support from gatekeepers of change. Taken together, the four constructs illustrate the progression of restorative justice in one particular school from introduction to its current limited adoption, highlighting along the way best practices and challenges.

Constructing Personal Understandings of Restorative Justice

As evidenced in my data, the School studied contains individuals who appreciate and value restorative justice. While all participants connect with the underlying philosophy that girds restorative justice, the majority of participants see the value of restorative justice in its ability to respond, after the fact, to harm. Therefore, restorative justice is rarely seen as affecting the day-to-day lives of teachers and their classrooms but emerges as an effective tool—being mostly utilized by administrators—for dealing with harm.

As Zehr and Toews (2004) wrote, restorative justice is a concept that inspires a diversity of definitions and understandings. These definitions and understandings, according to Woodbury and Gess-Newsome (2002), are formed by a person's knowledge and beliefs, situated within his or her own personal contextual factors. Accordingly, the participants in this study created their own understandings of restorative justice built on such factors as past experiences, prior knowledge, experience of restorative justice training sessions, actual use of restorative justice and already established beliefs.

Naturally these personal understandings are unique to the individuals who hold them, but there emerge some patterns in this study worth exploring. The majority of staff members at the School who participated in the study, with the exception of one individual, define restorative justice primarily as a response to a committed harm. The Board Administrator, on the other hand, highlights the underlying philosophy of restorative justice and this focus is also seen in the Board-produced public communications and training manual. All participants at some point in their interviews connect restorative justice to a set of underlying values; the difference lies in which aspect of restorative justice—preventative (values and philosophy) or responsive (process)—is given priority. There seems to be discrepancy between the School Board's stance on restorative justice and the understanding that has been constructed by most of the individuals. While the School Board emphasizes preventative measures and values, half of the teachers and the School Administrator stress the applicability of restorative justice after a harmful incident has occurred.

The construction of an understanding of restorative justice as chiefly a process seems to restrict teachers in their use of restorative justice. None of the teachers have actually facilitated a conference, most indicating in the interviews and questionnaires a lack of confidence to do so. The teachers and school administrator's perceptions of their own roles contributes to this phenomenon: restorative processes are viewed as the responsibility of administrators--first School and then Board, as the severity of the incident grows. By being relegated to a formal process, restorative justice loses its applicability for day-to-day use within the classroom. Therefore, since restorative justice is utilized fully only by a few, it is left with a more limited support base.

The next few sections will explore some of the factors contributing to participants' understanding, use and ultimately the state of restorative justice in the School and School Board as a whole.

Facilitating Adoption of New Personal Practical Theories

All of the participants indicate support for restorative justice, albeit to varying degrees and with varying interpretations of the concept. Based on the data from the interviews and questionnaires, the staff at the School, with a few exceptions, believe restorative justice to be effective and in most cases to connect with and formalize previous or current belief systems. In all, participants feel a personal commitment to restorative justice and have incorporated it into their own personal practical theories.

Since restorative justice, as a term if not entirely as an approach, was new at some point for all participants, participants had to decide whether to adopt it as a new personal practical theory or maintain their existing theories. For change within educators to occur, Feldman (2000) argued that teachers and administrators must view the new theory as 1) sensible, 2) as equally beneficial as past theories, and 3) able to enlighten the individual about his or her teaching practice.

The data confirm that there are many facilitating factors aiding the participants in the adoption of new personal practical theories of restorative justice. The teachers all find the restorative justice approach to fit positively with their past theories, formalizing past theories and providing them with more of a substantial framework. All participants praise restorative justice for the varied benefits it bestows upon students, teachers themselves, the school as a whole, and parents. There is indication from all participants that restorative justice is found to meet

Feldman's (2000) three categories: it is deemed to be sensible ("it helps for the classroom to run smoothly"); it is as equally beneficial as past theories ("I think it is more effective than other approaches because it maintains the positive relationships within the building"); and it is able to enlighten the individual about his or her teaching practice ("I've learned patience, learned listening, learned that everybody just wants to be heard"). In all, participants express a personal commitment to restorative justice.

If, as Woodbury and Gess-Newsome (2002) stated "school change is ultimately about teacher change" (p. 774), then the acceptance by these teachers of restorative justice bodes well for its future in their School. And yet, restorative justice in the School is characterized by some as "dying." Although personally committed, contextual factors have a profound effect on a more widespread commitment to restorative justice.

Complicating Contextual Factors of Structure and Culture

As evidenced by all the data, the teachers and administrators in this study are situated within a context that both supports and undermines their use of restorative justice. They operate within a community that understands restorative justice, work in a school which values community and feel strongly supportive of and supported by one another. Yet despite this support, the participants also must adhere to broader institutional policies—situated within a retributive culture—that do not encourage the use of restorative justice. The result is a context full of tensions and complexities.

Karp and Breslin (2001) in their case study of schools implementing restorative justice approaches in the United States highlighted barriers toward implementation including two that I also found: restorative justice practices take a lot of time; and broader institutional policies may

not support spending that time and energy. Not surprisingly, time emerges as a negative factor in all the interviews conducted. Although some teachers may be personally anxious about losing instructional time to restorative justice practice, that anxiety does not occur within a vacuum; there are outside pressures—from parents, administrators, broader policies—making it undesirable to focus time on activities other than instruction. For a few teachers, however, their personal commitment to restorative justice prevails over the time pressure, and they continue to practice restorative justice regardless of the time they need to devote to the approach.

Participants identify their school as possessing an underlying philosophy that encourages a cooperative and collegial climate. Several studies of restorative justice in schools (Karp & Breslin, 2001; Morrison, 2007) identified some of the philosophical tensions that were apparent between existing practices and those of restorative justice. In the School I studied, however, most of the discussion centers on the strong fit between restorative justice and the School's underlying philosophy. Restorative justice is only described as a "tough sell" when the view is broadened to include society in general.

Even though the School may not feel a disconnection between the School's general philosophy and that of restorative justice, the broader entrenched retributive culture still has an effect on them. For example, the School Administrator critiques a policy that rewards schools with high suspension rates by providing them with a vice-principal. The Board Administrator gives several examples of deep-rooted retributive policies prevalent in the school system, one of which is the absence of options for administrators to record the use of restorative justice processes in their mandatory reporting forms. In some key ways, such as the reporting forms, the system does not even acknowledge the existence of restorative justice. For the School, while they may feel insulated, the ingrained retributive nature of the school system affects them. If

restorative justice is not acknowledged as a viable alternative, then widespread support for the approach begins to erode, making training less available within the School Board, for their School or any other.

It truly is confounding, how structure and culture, within which are situated individuals' personal commitments to restorative justice, actually affect the implementation of restorative justice in the School. While time is a common complaint, the School enjoys an underlying philosophy that is conducive to using restorative justice. There is widespread support in the community, tempered somewhat by the overarching culture of retribution found in society at large. Theoretically, this is a School and School Board that should be well poised to sustain a restorative justice approach. The final construct explores the role of gatekeepers of change, those systems of individuals who influence both personal practical theories and structure and culture.

Inconsistent Support from Gatekeepers of Change

The teachers in this study, as evidenced in interviews and document analysis, enjoy substantial support from the School Administrator and Board Administrator. People in positions of greater authority and policy makers, however, have been inconsistent with their support of restorative justice, leaving the program with no funding, little public encouragement and limited hope for sustainability.

While Berman and McLaughlin (1978) referred to principals as the "gatekeepers of change," I use the term to identify all those who are in positions of upper administration and/or those who influence policy: school administrators, school board administrators, director of education, school board trustees, and those within the Ontario Ministry of Education. Based on my literature review, I focused my study on the role that teachers and administrators play in

implementing school reform, supposing the role of teachers to be especially critical to reform. After conducting my research, however, the evidence suggests that my thinking was misguided: It is the gatekeepers of change who ultimately create and sustain the culture and structure in which teachers operate, and thereby profoundly affect reform initiatives. Although teachers who are personally committed to a restorative justice approach can ultimately decide to bring it into their own classroom, actual educational reform cannot be achieved through a commitment by teachers alone. For second-order or transformative change (Romberg & Price, 1983; Woodbury & Gess-Newsome, 2002) to occur, the gatekeepers of change must be consistently supportive.

In this case study, the School Administrator is viewed as being widely supportive of her staff, particularly in their use of restorative justice. She encourages teachers to be trained in restorative justice when training is available, and models using the approach herself whenever she deems a situation appropriate. She is, in essence, what Copland (2003) described as one of the "catalysts of change" and "protectors of vision" (p. 392), crucial roles for administrators to embody during the implementation of a reform. Once these roles are filled, however, and in the early stages of reform, Copland (2003) insisted that there must be a shift to distributed leadership among all staff. Fullan (1993) described it as the existence of a "two-way relationship of pressure, support and continuous negotiation" (p. 38). In the School, there does not appear to be distributed leadership on restorative justice. The teachers either handle minor incidents within their own classrooms or send serious incidents to the School Administrator who decides whether a restorative justice process is appropriate. Therefore, the teachers do not feel much ownership in restorative justice. While committed to the approach personally and in theory, restorative justice does not impact the day-to-day life of teachers in a significant enough manner so as to warrant wider leadership or advocacy.

Although both the School Administrator and the Board Administrator are praised for their individual work and support of restorative justice, the School Board as a whole and those in positions of power within the Board (board of trustees, director of education, etc.) and the Ministry offer inconsistent support. Messages are mixed, with much public support initially, and then little or no support offered in later years. One of the main issues seems to be that support is offered through individuals at the top level, not systemically. When individuals who are vocal about their support of restorative justice leave their positions, the support follows them.

By far, the largest problem identified by teachers and administrators in terms of the sustainability of restorative justice is the lack of funding. Without money, the training of teachers and others has virtually halted and the presence of restorative justice is waning. Riestenberg (2003b) in her study also documented the negative effects on schools once funding disappears: specialists disappear with the money, leaving schools unprepared to deal with incidents themselves. In this case, the Board Administrator has not disappeared with the funding. Yet, it is a difficult position for the Board Administrator to be in, held hostage by the funding situation, unable to grow the program or actively sustain it. Although the Ministry of Education seems to be supportive of restorative justice through Bill 212 (2007) and the Safe Schools Action Team report (2006), the ultimate indication of support, funding, does not materialize. Similar to teachers and administrators, those in positions of power in the School Board are affected by the priorities put forth by those above them, those within the Ministry of Education.

At the same time, teachers and administrators cannot wait for funding to reappear but must continue in their careers, using what they have learned, but ultimately dismissing restorative justice as another fad no longer supported by policy makers. As Teacher 2 phrased it,

sometimes teachers need to "just do whatever we're told to do" and right now, broadly speaking, very few people are telling teachers to "do" restorative justice.

Conclusion of Discussion

There are multiple ways in which this School and School Board have been positioned for success in terms of implementing restorative justice. The teachers and administrators I interviewed are all personally committed to restorative justice, believing it to be a sensible, effective and enlightening approach. The School has an underlying philosophy that facilitates the adoption of restorative justice and the School Administrator is highly supportive. The School Board as a whole has also offered strong initial support and ensured that the Board Administrator not disappear along with the funding.

Yet, despite these strengths, the challenges are many. The School and School Board operate within a system that is ultimately retributive; for transformative change to be sustainable there must be fundamental shifts in key ways of thinking and acting (Romberg & Price, 1983; Woodbury & Gess-Newsome, 2002). These shifts are facilitated through considerable support from the leadership and this support has not been consistent in this School Board, or in the broader Ontario government, in terms of funding, policy changes, and expressions of support. The gatekeepers of change, those in leadership, have not sustained their initial support of restorative justice, allowing it to be viewed as a fad, a death knell for any potential reform.

Limitations

As a case study based on four teachers and two administrators in one specific School and one specific School Board, it is impossible to generalize my findings. I can also not claim the

teachers to be representative of the entire staff at the School. Due to a necessity to focus the research, voices were left out of this study: parents, students, teachers who had not received any training in restorative justice, superintendents, etc. If those voices had been included, the data would have produced a richer portrait of the school community.

Implications

Restorative justice is still a relatively new concept in Canadian schools. As such, the research conducted on schools implementing it is limited, and although schools and school boards are interested in learning from the experiences of others, there are few resources from which to draw. As a descriptive case study of individuals within a School Board in its fourth year of restorative justice implementation, this study contributes to those limited resources. By examining a School identified as a model school by the Board Administrator within a School Board recognized as a leader in restorative justice and locating the practices that facilitate the adoption and sustaining of restorative justice, it becomes possible to identify some of the larger challenges that other schools, possibly without the benefits of this particular School, might face.

Generally, this study demonstrates the complexity involved in educational reform. The multiple factors interacting with one another create a kaleidoscope of change, with the viewer rarely guessing which factor will emerge dominant. The main lesson derived from this study is that personal commitment on the part of teachers and even administrators is not enough. Without a system that can support the approach—through public encouragement, sustained training, and complimentary structural procedures—restorative justice will remain at an individual level and be phased out as individuals themselves relocate. It is the inconsistent support from the gatekeepers of change within both the region and province that has hindered this School Board in

its implementation of restorative justice. This case study demonstrates the necessity of a long-term plan that opens the door for fundamental changes in school board policies. For transformative reform to be sustained, the reform must become normative within the culture, not an alternative.

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