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Restoring Student Behavior: A Culturally Responsive Evaluation of Restorative Practices on Disproportionate Referral Data

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RESTORING STUDENT BEHAVIOR: A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EVALUATION OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES ON DISPROPORTIONATE REFERRAL DATA

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ABSTRACT

Male students of color often receive harsher disciplinary consequences than their same age White peers. Disproportionate discipline practices have existed within the education system for years, primarily due to a historical systemic issue of implicit bias due to race. One intervention used to quell some of these disparities is Restorative Practices. This program evaluation study used Restorative Practices as an intervention to determine the extent that it could close the discipline gap in one South Carolina high school. Using a concurrent nested mixed method design, I analyzed and synthesized historical agency data to answer the first research question regarding the extent that Restorative Practices decreased a school's suspensions for male students of color; additionally, I collected, analyzed, and synthesized teacher interviews and observations of classrooms to answer the second research question regarding how teachers perceived the implementation of Restorative Practices within their classrooms. Restorative Practices (RPs) served as an intervention during this program evaluation.

Using both quantitative and qualitative data analysis, the study revealed that Restorative Practices as an intervention can assist in closing the discipline gap, while also displaying the need for whole school implementation. This research contributes to the on-going work of equity within the classroom and supports further research within the field.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all the male students of color that I have worked with throughout the years of my career. Each of you has made a lasting impact on my life.

To the students who have been lost to causes greater than any educator, I honor your memory through this dissertation and hope that you are all at peace.

To all of those students who do not feel like they have anyone in their corner: I see you. I hear you. And I stand with you, always.

And to the two young men who serve as my inspiration on a daily basis for this work, thank you for allowing me to be a part of your family. Darius and Izzy, this dissertation is dedicated to you both for always believing in me as a person, teacher, and mentor. Thank you.

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Thank you to Dr. Jacquelynn Malloy, Dr. Noelle Paufler, and Dr. Daniella Sutherland, for your time serving on my committee. Each of you made a lasting impact on me throughout my time in Clemson's graduate program and I will forever be grateful for your expertise, encouragement, and feedback during this process. I appreciate you three!

Thank you to my DiPpy friends, the "Super Group," and the rest of cohort 4 for all of your encouragement, laughs, and support. We will forever be bonded by our doctoral journey, and I am thankful to have had you all in the trenches working with me!

Thank you to my friends and family who have been a constant pillar of support for me throughout this journey and in my life. Between the encouraging texts and hilarious memes, I am forever grateful for all of the support from you all. You are the best "framily" ever!

Finally, I must acknowledge the colleagues who have assisted in my development as a Restorative Practitioner. Dr. Kimberly Hobley, thank you for believing in me as an administrator and teaching me all that you know about RPs. And thank you for coming to train my "admin squad," whom I want to acknowledge as the greatest group of people I have had the privilege to work alongside. Thank you "Boss" and "The Girls" for all of your support.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION OF RESTORING STUDENT BEHAVIOR

School administrators wear many hats during the school day, one of which includes disciplining students for specific actions. Historically, exclusionary discipline, which involves removing a student from the learning environment as a consequence, has been the standard for many administrators. There is a large disparity, though, in the exclusionary discipline practices towards male students of color.

Upon entering the doors of the alternative program as the assistant director, I knew my work was cut out for me. Having always prided myself on being a teacher who built relationships with my students, I figured connections with these new students was eminent. But never did I imagine that relationships were only part of what it meant to be a successful administrator. At any given time, there were approximately 50-80 students in the alternative program where I worked; and at any given time, most students were male racially minoritized students. For the purpose of this dissertation, *racially minoritized students* are defined as any student whose race/ethnicity is not White. As I continued to learn and grow under the direction of a trained Restorative Practitioner, it was then that I realized my own White privilege and I determined a need to not just be an advocate, but an ally for all students to grow to be successful. Many of the students I worked with during my year at the alternative program experienced treatment from adults and assumptions by society that would carry through their entire lives. I continually worked, and still continually work, to ensure that my practices as a school administrator are culturally responsive and consistently fair.

Male students of color have consistently been the target of exclusionary discipline practices in schools. Gregory and Roberts (2017) state "…teachers more vigilantly attune to Black boys'

behavior given possible unconsciously held beliefs that they are more likely to act out" (p. 189). With teachers and staff holding such beliefs, the suspension rates of students of color in several schools in one South Carolina school district do not match the schools' demographic student population. This program evaluation study sought to determine the extent that implementing restorative practices (RPs) in a South Carolina high school decreases the suspensions for male students of color. The evaluation study reviewed implementation of RPs through use of interviews and observations, in addition to review of historical agency data. Additionally, on-going professional development occurred and will continue to occur and may lead to additional revelations.

Restorative Practices (RPs) is defined as "a field within the social sciences that studies how to strengthen relationships between individuals as well as social connections within communities." (International Institute of Restorative Practices, 2022). When looking at disproportionate discipline data and zero tolerance discipline policies, one of the key components that is missing from the data and policies is the significance of relationships. Educators must understand the importance of building rapport with students in order for them to succeed. Milner et al. (2019) state, "students are the teachers of their points of view, and teachers should embrace their voices, ways of knowing, and contributions to the classroom environment" (p. 12). When teachers and school officials view students as individuals who can contribute to building the school community, the lens of removing students from that community as a consequence tends to shift, which can ameliorate disproportionate data and affect change to current policies in place.

As someone who has completed the Restorative Practices (RPs) training, it occurred to me that many educators have not had any kind of training on a restorative approach to classroom management or discipline. Because RPs "aim to provide high support for both students and

teachers" to allow both students and teachers to effectively work together towards a common community goal, I determined the need for this training in my school district (Mansfield et al., 2018, p. 308). In reviewing some of the referrals for the school district during my time at the CSD central office, I found myself wondering, "What if these teachers had used a restorative approach in their classrooms? Would this student still have received exclusionary discipline as a consequence?" When looking at the out of school suspensions for RHS, many of them involve students of color from White teachers, which led to me ask myself, "Does implicit bias from White teachers toward students of color factor in when writing referrals? And if so, how can a restorative mindset address these biases?" These questions led me to determine the need for additional inquiry.

Problem Statement

Exclusionary discipline practices are applied disproportionately to male students of color. The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) data collection for the 2020-2021 school year displays the number of students with one or more out of school suspensions who are African American or another minority subgroup is almost double that of White students in the state of South Carolina (OCR, 2021). Below are figures that show K-12 Student Discipline Data from the OCR data collection. Figure 1.1 shows the percentage of male students by race/ethnicity in South Carolina with one or more out of school suspension (OSS) during to 2020-2021 school year. The percentage of breakdown includes the following: Black or African American 45.8%, White 38.8%, Hispanic/Latino 8.8%, Two or more races 5.7%, American Indian or Alaska Native <1%, Asian <1%, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander <1%. Figure 1.2 shows the percentage of male students in South Carolina with Expulsions. The percentage of breakdown includes the following: Black or African American 45.9%, White 383%, Hispanic/Latino 8.4%, Two or more race 6.1%, Asian 1%, American Indian or Alaska Native <1%, Native Hawaiian or

Other Pacific Islander <1%. I have also included Figure 1.3 which shows the total enrollment of male students in the state of South Carolina during the 2020-2021 school year.

Figure 1.1

Males in SC with more than one OSS

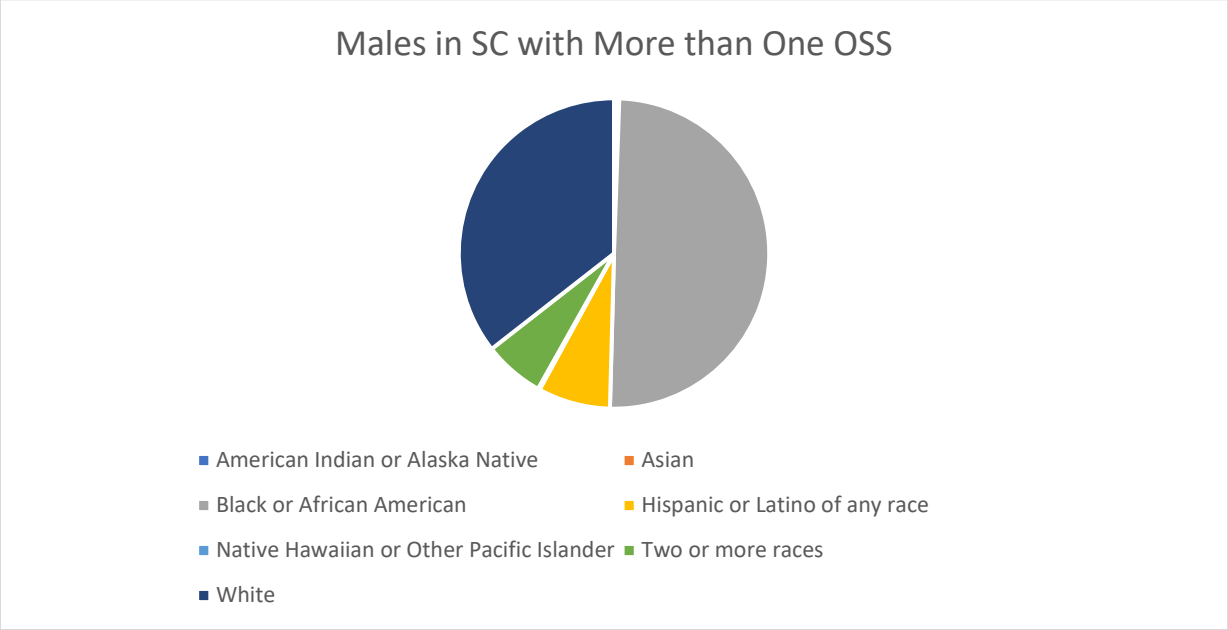


Figure 1.2

Males in SC with Expulsion

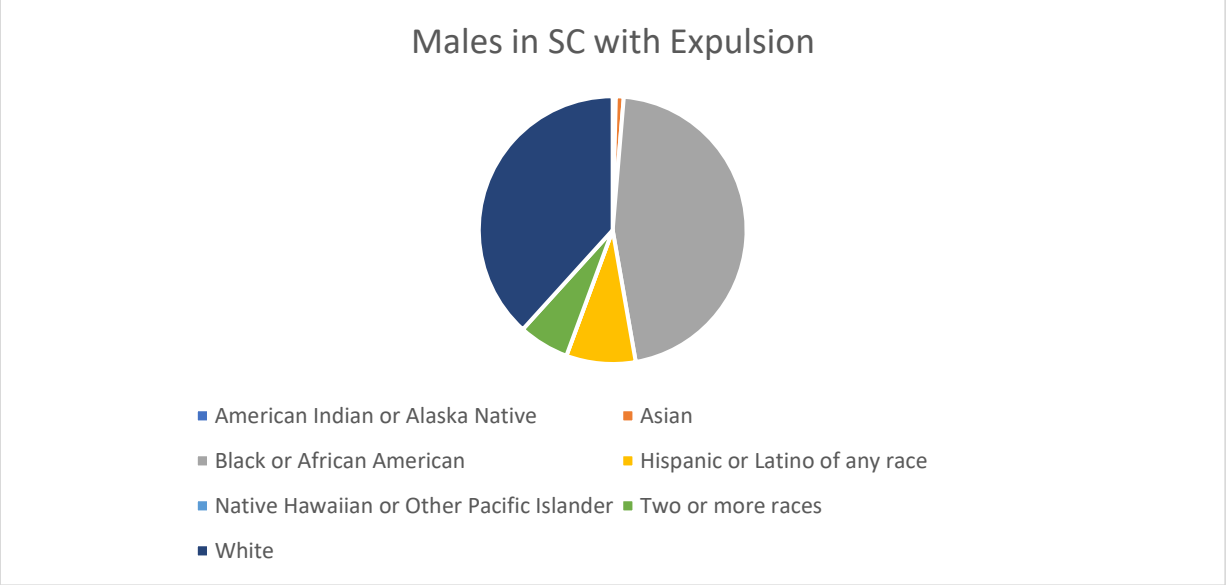
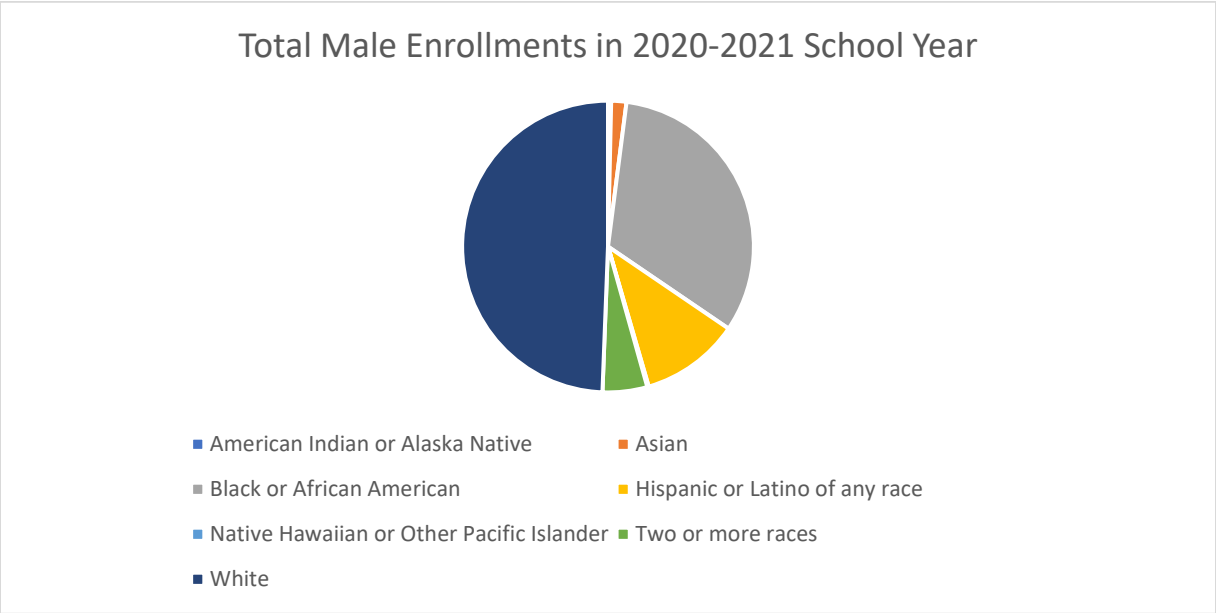


Figure 1.3

Total Male Enrollments in SC for 2020-2021 School Year



When students are removed from the classroom for suspension or expulsion, students are deprived of the opportunity to receive instruction (Hinnant-Crawford et al., 2019). In order to effectively address this issue, RPs training for educators allows a school's administration to reach any implicit biases teachers and staff may have towards students through learning about the importance of reflection and using affective statements.

Oftentimes, teachers lack skills in effectively handling a problem situation due to implicit biases (Cook et al. 2018). Individuals have implicit biases often without realizing them, which can lead to more discipline for students of color. Teachers also tend to expect the use exclusionary discipline to quell disruptive behavior in a classroom setting (Skiba et al., 2002). Typically, teachers want students out of the classroom so they can focus on instruction as opposed to determining, and addressing, the root cause of the behavior. Hinnant-Crawford et al. (2019) surmise that we know students of color are more likely to be reprimanded and punished

for subjective behaviors more than their White peers, which encourages using equity and justice to prevent additional marginalization (p. 227). Skiba et al. (2002) go on to discuss how teacher biases may not be noticed by administrators, but they "reinforce and perpetuate racial and socioeconomic disadvantage" (p. 323). Biases exist in all of us, but in a school setting, it is the responsibility of the administrative team to accurately assign consequences based on situations, not based on race, ethnicity, or bias.

Much of a school's discipline can be reflected in how a principal values not only expectations, but his/her people. For example, as Bolman and Deal (2017) state, "Egalitarianism implies a democratic workplace where employees are an integral part of the decision-making process," (p. 150). When employees are sought after to invest in policies and expectations for which they are responsible for following, a greater return on investment occurs, allowing students to meet the expectations necessary to succeed. As Hinnant-Crawford et al. (2019) state, "yet, in order to challenge and reduce, the inequity and injustice must first be acknowledged as problematic" (p. 216). When a principal recognizes that there is a need to address potential implicit bias, in addition to creating a more restorative culture within his or her school, school culture can flourish.

Cook et al. (2018) discuss how little research has been done in providing solutions to this problem, while many document there is a problem. To address the disconnect, this culturally responsive evaluation study examined the use of restorative practices to minimize the disproportionality in discipline in male students of color due to implicit biases in a high school in one South Carolina school district, while also determined how implementation of RPs was experienced by teachers. In the following section, I first articulated the research questions connected to minimizing the discipline gap. I then reviewed research on exclusionary discipline

practices and the use of restorative practices to try to ameliorate this problem. Following the research rationale, I provided additional information on the selected research site, prior to concluding this chapter with information regarding how minimizing the discipline gap can affect future practice, research, and policy.

Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. To what extent do restorative practices decrease the suspension rate of male students of color at River High School?
2. How do teachers experience the implementation of restorative practices in their classrooms?

A restorative mindset begins with expectations and relationships. “At its core, restorative justice frames the problem as a violation of relationships, rather than a violation of institutional rules of order, as defined in student codes of conduct within education” (Morrison, 2015, p. 446). In using these questions to guide the implementation of restorative practices within RHS, the administrative team wanted to see a decrease in exclusionary discipline. The goal of the evaluation study was to determine the extent that RPs decreased the number of exclusionary suspensions within the school and to understand how teachers perceive the use of restorative practices within their classrooms, in addition to having data that reflects the student population. For example, if the majority of the student population was White, then the majority of suspensions should be assigned to White students.

For this study, *exclusionary discipline* is defined as consequences that remove a student from the learning environment. *Restorative practices* is defined as a mindset that affords students the opportunity to make mistakes and learn from them within the school setting. *Restorative*

practices are used synonymously with *restorative justice*. *Restorative discipline* is defined as "a disposition, a mindset, and an approach to discipline that builds upon the foundational idea that schools are places where students are expected to make errors and learn from them" (Milner et al., 2019, p. 133). *Students of color* are any students that are not classified as White. *Students of color* is used synonymously with *racially minoritized students*, meaning students who are not identified as White.

Research Rationale

The literature surrounding school discipline disparities is vast, to be sure, but while much research has been conducted on discipline disparities, Cook et al. (2018) surmise that little research has been conducted for a solution to these discipline disparities. Most literature is focused more on the disparities themselves and showcasing that such disparities exist. Rocque (2010) states, "the key debate is whether disproportionate minority discipline is a function of differential behavior…or a function of differential treatment…" (p. 558). The literature mostly reflects this sentiment as it discusses the ideas of behavior versus treatment of students, in addition to biases as a factor for the disparities.

As a school leader, it is imperative to understand where the system has been in order to gain a clear picture of a future successful system. South Carolina is a mostly rural state that is made up of many small communities, with some more populated areas that can be considered cities (Jones and Jenkins, 2012). Because the state's predominant industry is tourism, the state historically has struggled to bring in large businesses due to rurality (Jones and Jenkins, 2012). When large businesses do not exist, career opportunities are limited, meaning people do not seek to move to an area where jobs are limited. When business jobs are limited, other individuals who could be teachers may not be around to fill classrooms, especially in rural areas with a

predominantly African American population. Multiple issues, such as racial tension and rurality, have caused schools in the state of South Carolina to consistently be in the bottom rankings of schools nationwide, listed as 43 out of 50 for 2022 (World Population Review). The following sections discuss the literature connected to the problem of practice, with specific synthesis connected to race in schools, the discipline gap for minority students, and a restorative approach to closing the discipline gap.

Race in Schools

There is arguably not a topic more prevalent in discussion than race in education in both South Carolina and the nation. Defining "race" is not as simple as one may think. "Race is a deeply complex sociopolitical system whose boundaries shift and adapt over time." (Sensoy and DiAngelo, 2017, p. 119). "Race" is not just the color of ones' skin or the background of an individual; the term "race" can be viewed through a biological lens or a social lens which has significant impact on everyday life (Sensoy and DiAngelo, 2017, p. 121). By this definition, race plays a huge role in the education system not just in South Carolina, but nationally, in regard to cultural differences of students, teachers, administrators, and all individuals with a role in education.

When looking at how words or actions can lead to stereotypes, Carter et al. (2017) state, "these corrosive stereotypes fueled unequal treatment and continue to do so even today." Stereotypes for male students of color have consistently shown disproportionate discipline gaps in schools (Carter et al., 2017). "For example, a teacher may refer a Black student to the office for being 'loud,' while the same behavior by a White student may elicit a verbal correction," (Milner et al., 2019, p. 43). In the example above, the same behavior prompted different responses from the teacher, which may be due to implicit bias or cultural differences. Because of

historical stereotypes, to include the idea that "any attempt to engage in normal human activity made on a criminal" dating back to slavery (Carter et al., 2017), the idea of implicit bias from White teachers to students of color is not off base. Milner (2010) states, "there is no magic potion to disrupting centuries of oppression, White supremacy, and inequity," (p. 22). Before implicit bias can be adequately addressed, there must be cultural reflection and recognition. Cultural differences can provide much learning opportunity for individuals, but problems can arise, as well. Children who come from different cultural backgrounds may have different assumptions about the world and human relations, while others may lack background knowledge on certain concepts and have differences in teaching and learning styles (Ogbu, 1992, p. 9). These cultural differences can impact student-peer relationships, in addition to student-staff relationships and do so unintentionally due to curriculum decisions. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) discuss the idea of "internalized racial oppression" which, in my opinion, schools have a duty to limit this type of oppression by providing texts and scholars and opportunities for students from all races to connect with others who have similar backgrounds (p. 135). Milner (2010) surmises that when teachers make preconceived beliefs regarding students prior to seeing their ability level, it limits them in seeing potential in those students. This idea of cultural differences directly impacts my problem of practice with relation to exclusionary discipline practices and perceived implicit biases teachers have towards students of different backgrounds.

Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) discussed the idea of "stereotype threat" with regards to academic performance on tests (p. 136). "Their research shows that when Black students are told that their racial group tends to do poorly on a test, they score lower when taking the test" (Sensoy and DiAngelo, 2017, p. 136). This seems, in my opinion, similar to Stockholm syndrome, when victims tend to empathize with captors who have kidnapped them. Within the

system, it is important teachers have positive beliefs that their students can succeed, instead of focusing on negative preconceived notions from previous biases (Gregory and Roberts, 2017). By implementing RPs within their classrooms, teachers can reflect on negative racial beliefs and implicit biases through use of community and relationship building, as opposed to adopting a specific classroom management strategy based on preconceived stereotypes (Milner et al., 2019).

In relation to my problem of practice, implicit bias lay at the foundation of disproportionate exclusionary discipline practices. As Grace and Nelson (2019) state, "the attitudes of teachers toward Black students are a major component of institutionalized racism in school systems" (p. 668). Based on discipline data noted above from OCR, in addition to local data, it is clear that there is a disproportionate amount of out of school suspensions towards students of color, specifically males. Milner et al. (2019) suggest that since many teachers adopt a "color-blind ideology" in their work with students, pretending that they do not 'see' or recognize race, they are missing important features and dimensions of students' identities (p. 21). When teachers fail to identify and address cultural or racial differences amongst their students, they are missing opportunities to engage in meaningful conversations and realize potential connections with their students. Milner et al. (2019) go on to state, "teachers can address implicit bias in their teaching by examining their thoughts and associations about people," which can provide additional opportunity for teachers to not stereotype their students and see them as individuals (p. 105).

Many decisions have been made historically that have left a lasting impact on education, especially in today's world. Allen (2019) discusses the significance of early educational legislation that has not shown much growth in the rural counties of South Carolina, where students still lack access and opportunity (p. 462). As this legislation was from almost 60 years

ago, the relevance of limited access and opportunity is still incredibly disappointing. While steps have been taken forward to be sure, such as addressing more diverse literary selections and encouraging diverse ways of thinking, there is still much work to do in our schools and the education system with specific regards to race, especially in connection to exclusionary discipline for male students of color.

The Discipline Gap for Minority Students

Many researchers have sought to provide intervention to address the discipline gap both in practice and in literature. In their study, Cook et al. (2018) "sought to address this gap in literature by developing and piloting a feasible and potentially effective approach aimed at addressing discipline disparities for Black male students," (p. 136). In developing a "GREET-STOP-PROMPT (GSP)" method, Cook et al. (2018) determined the necessity for a feasible and acceptable approach to addressing these disparities with teachers (p. 147). Research has also suggested that minorities have continuously received unequal treatment within the school setting for many years (Rocque, 2010). With their approach, Cook et al. (2018) strove to not only minimize exclusionary discipline practices, but also to ensure that there was change of behavior and more connectivity to the school, as well (p. 138). The study determined it necessary to determine root causes of problems and not simply address the problems (Cook et al., 2018). When this practice occurs, teachers can spend time on instruction and not attempting to "punish and 'control students." (Milner et al., 2019). Determining the root of the problem, such as implicit biases, can assist in moving forward and closing the discipline gap.

Rocque (2010) conducted a study to determine how race is factored into the discipline equation. "Using a variety of methods, this literature has suggested that there is evidence of bias in America's schools," (Rocque, 2010, p. 573). Rocque (2010) determined that the "driving

forces" behind racial disparities are unclear, though the suggestion that disparities are in part due to bias are present based on his findings (p. 576). When implicit bias affects students and begins to exclude students from the learning environment, it can showcase the discipline disparity. When individuals perceive individuals differently, it can have negative effects. Carter et al. (2017) state, "They underestimated, however, the rigidity of mind-sets and stereotypical beliefs borne from social segregation," (p. 212). Implicit biases in schools can impact social segregation in schools.

Suspension from school can impede academic progress of students, which can be detrimental if students are already behind academically (Gregory and Roberts, 2017). When students are removed from the classroom due to behavior, they are losing instructional time from a certified content-area teacher. When students lose instructional time, they cannot master content in an effective way in order to be successful. In order to effectively attempt to close the opportunity gap, interventions and strategies should be used to assist with quelling discipline disparities. A simple solution to limiting excluding students from instruction can be to create an inclusive classroom environment. When teachers begin the school year by designing classroom norms and setting high expectations, they are able to establish a classroom culture and set the tone for the year (Hinnant-Crawford et al., 2019). Gregory and Roberts (2017) developed a framework, based on research, to address culturally conscious decisions with regards to discipline. The principles developed, which include supportive relationships, respectful environments, and academic rigor to name a few, allow for educators to be aware and reflect on practices while making improvements (Gregory and Roberts, 2017). This framework can be implemented in conjunction to address the problem of discipline disparities.

The literature also discusses the importance of using data to determine appropriate next

steps for this problem. McIntosh et al. (2018) discuss how data use can be an intervention to minimize the disparities in school discipline when specific guidance is used as opposed to making decisions in the moment (p. 147). Data is one of the most effective tools when it comes to reducing discipline disparity. Often, when people see the numbers, they become more aware. Rocque (2010) discusses the idea of using cultural training for teachers to minimize discipline disparities; this training could easily include reviewing data from the previous school year (p. 575). McIntosh et al. (2018) goes on to state, "no single solution has been shown to be completely effective to achieve disciplinary equity for students of color…. but using data…spears to be a promising component of a comprehensive approach" (p. 151). Again, the research details that no solution has been determined, but comprehensive approaches involving data and interventions can assist with this problem.

Additional research suggests using the "Vulnerable Decision Points (VDP) model", which "draws on psychological research to describe the conditions under which racial bias is most likely to influence decisions in the school discipline context…" will showcase the disparities in school discipline (Smolkowski et al., 2016). Using McIntosh et al. (2014) model as a guide, Smolkowski et al. (2016) sought to determine the impacts of implicit biases on adult decisions, and whether that supported or disproved the VDP model (p. 181). The results of their study concluded that overall, African American students were "more likely to receive subjective office discipline referrals than White students" (Smolkowski et al., 2016, p. 189). The findings parallel much of the additional research that supports implicit biases as a contributing factor for disproportionate discipline referrals. RPs has shown to be significant in shrinking the disproportionality across race/ethnicity when implemented with fidelity (Mansfield et al., 2018). While RPs may not succeed in every school setting, there is evidence to suggest that decreased

gaps in disciplinary practices can exist within schools where relationship-building is centered.

A Restorative Approach

Maynard and Weinstein (2020) explain that emotional regulation is not an instinctive behavior, but a learned behavior (p. 12). The idea of Restorative Practices (RPs) can allow schools to integrate the core idea of building relationships with students into their school culture, which can assist in quelling disproportionate exclusionary discipline. While there is not a specific definition of RPs, for the purposes of this evaluation study, RPs refers to a teaching philosophy that enables teachers to see students as valuable members of the classroom, and the school, community. When someone brings harm to that community, they must understand the harm they have caused before they can successfully reintegrate into the community. RPs also can address problematic behavior without removing students from the learning environment, which can greatly impact academic achievement (Milner et al., 2019). Much of the literature reflects the use of RPs attempt to minimize or close the discipline gap.

Mansfield et al. (2018) share preliminary results of a community engaged research project which shares how one high school implemented RPs and the effects of the implementation when they state, "ultimately, RPs aim to provide high support for both students and teachers in a closely structured setting where people in the school community work together," (Mansfield et al., 2018, p. 308). When teachers and students are able to connect through mutual respect and meaningful relationships, harmonious unity within the classroom can occur. This type of thinking also suggests giving those who have harmed the community an opportunity and voice to make things right again (Milner et al., 2019, p. 136). The study suggested that discipline gaps across race/ethnicity, gender, and special education status shrunk over five years through implementation of RPs with fidelity (Mansfield et al., 2018). It is

important to note that the data of this study was collected via surveys and student focus groups to understand the efficacy of RPs to help members of the school community make informed decisions (Mansfield et al., 2018).

Accountability is an important factor to consider when implementing RPs, which Maynard and Weinstein (2020) state, "Holding students directly and personally responsible for their behavior is what sparks intrinsic change," (p. 20). In a quantitative study conducted by Dhaliwal et al. (2021), educators' beliefs about discipline and their perceptions of restorative practices implementation discussed several research questions that provided additional inquiry on RPs implementation. Many teachers from this study either "do not believe or only believe to a small extent that punitive responses to discipline are necessary tools or key contributors for maintaining school order," (Dhaliwal et al., 2021). Zero tolerance policies can discourage students from wanting to be members of the school community when they exclude students from the classroom (Milner et al., 2019). Instead of punitively punishing students as a consequence, building students up and watching them grow can allow them to believe in the capacity to change and succeed before they will fully invest effort in whatever skill they're trying to master (Maynard and Weinstein, 2020). This confirms the idea, though, that teachers need to be trained by a certified RPs trainer in order to shift their thinking towards a more restorative lens.

It is important to note that schools, and school districts, must understand that RPs are not behavior modification, but a mind shift that will impact and benefit the entire education system (Payne and Welch, 2015). In their study, Payne and Welch (2015) used the "racial threat perspective" to analyze RPs implementation and whether or not "student racial composition of schools contributes to the likelihood of schools using restorative justice responses to student misbehavior" (p. 554). One of the key ideas of the study was that more Black students in a

school would mean the school was less likely to use RPs (Payne and Welch, 2015). This idea suggests that a school's demographic composition will affect the success of RPs implementation. Milner et al. (2019) suggest that the "most effective implementation of a restorative approach to discipline appears to rely on a few key factors: a building level approach as opposed to a classroom-level approach, buy-in from the staff, and a clear implementation plan" (p. 159-60). When there is a whole school approach to implementation, there is a better chance of success; this means that beginning with a school's leadership team can lead to a more effective whole school approach than beginning with classroom teachers.

Much of the literature discusses the significance of RPs implementation connected to race and the discipline gap. Focusing on the idea that schools are a place where students come to learn content and learn how to be contributing members of society, school leaders and teachers must remember that students are children and are apt to make mistakes (Milner et al., 2019). The idea of building relationships and focusing on cultivating meaningful connections will drive the development of the following research questions.

Research Site

Situated in one of the largest growing counties in South Carolina, River High School (RHS) is the largest of six high schools in County School District (CSD) with approximately 1600 students, which is approximately 300 students more than the next largest high school. Additionally, RHS is the newest high school in the district, having opened its' doors in 2016. The school has grown from 900 students to approximately 1600 students in only two years' time, with an estimated approximately 1750 students by the end of the 2023-2024 school year. The demographic shift in the town where RHS is located has changed RHS, once known as the "Country Club School" to a school with a growing multilingual learner (ML) population and a more diverse

demographic. Due to my previous employment in the alternative program and then as the student discipline hearing officer for the school district, I find it important for school's discipline data to reflect their student demographic population. In reviewing historical agency data previously from a district lens, to now reviewing RHS schoolwide data in my role as an assistant principal, there is an overrepresentation of students of color in RHS suspensions, though the majority of the student population is White. Hood et al. (2015) encourages evaluators to know and understand the history of the research site in preparing for the evaluation. Much of the history of RHS is outlined below.

The zoning for RHS was done by a former superintendent of CSD and includes one of the wealthiest communities within the state of South Carolina. RHS, though, still has approximately 35% of students who receive free/reduced lunch. Additionally, the percentage of students who are White has decreased, with the percentage of students from racially minoritized subgroups has increased over the past few years. RHS is the second high school within the town it resides in due to the overwhelming growth the town has experienced.

The school's changing demographic has affected the discipline data, with the total amount of suspensions not reflecting the overall demographic population of the school. While RHS does have the largest student population in CSD, they are not yet able to show equitable distribution of discipline consequences. Table 1 displays specific total numbers of students over the past three school years. The first column displays the school year; the second column displays the total number of students enrolled at RHS. The third and fourth columns display the total number of students who are identified as White (W) and all other subgroups (RM for *racially minoritized*). The fifth column identifies the number of incidents that led to students being assigned out of school suspension (OSS) as a consequence. The last two columns display the total number of incidents that were committed by W students versus RM students.

Table 1

RHS Enrollment and Suspensions

School Year	Total Number of Students	Total Number of W Students	Total Number of RM Students	Total Number of Incidents that Led to Out of School Suspensions	Total Number of Incidents that Led to OSS by W Students	Total Number of Incidents that Led to OSS by RM Students
2020-2021	1508	848	636	45	14	317
2021-2022	1616	890	700	239	69	170
2022-2023	1656	873	783	176	49	127

Table 1 displays a larger total population of White (W) students than racially minoritized (RM) students, to include those who are Black, Hispanic, Asian, Mixed Race, Indian etc. However, upon reviewing the total number of out of school suspensions (OSS), more RM students had incidents that led to OSS than W students. This data is not specific only to RHS. Data from the Office of Civil Rights (OCR), as indicated above, shows that RM students receive more out of school suspensions than W students.

The information gleaned from the table is significant for a few reasons. In looking at the total population of RHS, 43% of students are racially minoritized. However, in looking at the out of school suspensions, RM students account for 65% of the total out of school suspensions from the 2021-2022 school year. While student discipline referrals are based on student behavior, the students are not the ones writing the referrals. The office referrals are written by adults when the students do not meet the expectations that are set forth for them. However, if expectations are unclear to students, how do students know what adults expect from them? This data is significant because it shows there is a disparity toward Not W students, but it also has led to additional questions regarding the adults who write the referrals, which led to the development of the

research questions.

RHS will serve as an ideal site for this study for multiple reasons. First, to effectively implement any type of intervention, administrative buy-in is important. The principal of RHS during the years discussed in this study was a reflective individual who believes that the key to advancing academic progress starts with building relationships, one of the foundational ideas of Restorative Practices. Second, as the largest school in CSD, studying the impact of an intervention can, eventually, allow district stakeholders the opportunity to understand how the same intervention can be implemented within other school buildings. Third, as the ultimate goal is to expand the school pilot to the full school district, RHS has flexibility in that it is the newest school in CSD, allowing it to still form its own identity within the district. In looking at Hood et al. (2015) culturally responsive evaluation framework wheel, preparing for the evaluation and engaging stakeholders have been part of my previous employment duties and responsibilities. In identifying the evaluation's purpose and framing the right questions, I have been able to have conversations with my administrative team and district stakeholders about the importance of the work of this evaluation (Hood et al., 2015). The following section explains my positionality and why I am the right person to do this work.

Positionality

To be successful in the field of education, one must pursue excellence and establish themselves as a lifelong learner. Looking back, I began my path as a lifelong learner prior to ever setting foot in a classroom. Throughout my own schooling experience, I excelled as both an outgoing, communicative person and as a leader. I was part of many school organizations and held multiple leadership positions, but it was my friendly demeanor and compassionate persona that allowed me to stand out amongst others. Looking back at my accomplishments over the

previous years of my education career, I recognize that the first step of selecting where I would spend my undergraduate years was an important one when it came time to think about my career.

I always knew I wanted to work in education, and my undergraduate studies only strengthened that resolve. My student teaching placement in a rural community, which starkly contrasted with my own school community, allowed me to realize how much I wanted to make a difference for students. I grew up in a very affluent area in the suburbs of Atlanta, matriculating from a high school with very little diversity. It was during this time of student teaching that I realized my own White privilege and took it upon myself to be educated not only as a human being, but as someone shaping tomorrow for both me and my students.

During the first few years of my teaching career, I built both knowledge of my content area and developed excellent communication skills, organizational abilities, and the ability to multi-task. As a teacher, it was almost daily that I used innovative problem-solving to assist students with needs and challenges in a day-to-day setting. I believe that my colleagues and students would agree that I am a dependable individual, in that I follow through with things that need to be accomplished and get things done in a timely manner. But what shaped me as both a person and a leader were the relationships I built with my students, my colleagues, and the rural community where I worked.

When first looking to begin my graduate school path, I knew that with my leadership abilities and constant need to help others that Educational Leadership would be a good fit for a program choice. Much of the coursework helped shape my views and opinions of how I wanted to grow as an educational leader. In the beginning of my career, though, there were few opportunities for me to develop a relationship with someone whom I could view as an

educational leader mentor. It was not until I made a change that I gained enough confidence I needed to grow as a professional.

At the conclusion of my seventh year in the classroom, I moved to CSD. During the first few months of teaching in a new building, a spark ignited inside me and gave me the confidence that I needed to pursue additional career opportunities. Working under a female principal who not only supported her teachers but attempted to reach every single student within the community showed me that being a leader did not mean being a "bully." With this newfound outlook and a year of experience in the new district under my belt, I began to seek new opportunities for growth, which led to my being selected for a position in alternative education.

My year of serving as Assistant Director of Alternative Education taught me so much about myself, the education system, and how much work there is to be done for students within the achievement gap. I knew becoming an administrator that one of the biggest challenges I would face was being a disciplinarian, not because I could not be authoritative, but because I wanted students to understand that their actions led to consequences. My director trained the staff at the alternative program on Restorative Practices (RPs) and utilizing zones of regulation and circles to reach students. Through this training and someone whom I consider a permanent mentor, I gained the skills necessary to discipline students in a restorative manner and to provide them with an understanding of their choices. I continually asked myself, "How have I been in education for ten years and not known about this training? Why are more people not trained in Restorative Practices? This is exactly the type of work that I was meant to do."

In addition to gaining confidence in my abilities as an administrator, I learned how much data can tell a story. Ironically, one of my first tasks as an administrator was to analyze the data from the previous school year and the current school year and complete a comparative analysis.

While completing the comparative analysis, it became clear that access and equity were areas with room for growth. I challenged myself to find a way to be a change agent regarding how discipline is handled in the district. I started to have conversations with my director and district personnel about the disproportionality that was uncovered during my data dive. We talked in depth about the data, and I shared my interest in wanting to affect change. My ability to become an advocate for fair and consistent processes came sooner than I imagined when I accepted a new role within CSD. In this new role, I served as the student disciplinary hearing officer, in addition to supporting all schools with behavior interventions for students. This position enabled me to offer consistency across the board with regards to equity and discipline. This position spoke to my passion to reach every student and provide support to the students who need it the most. While I believed I was well suited for this position, I realized ultimately that I missed working with and interacting with students on a daily basis. This need led me to have a serious sit down to collect my thoughts, and I am thankful to have been given the opportunity to now work as a high school assistant principal.

As a scholar-practitioner who has worked in a variety of capacities in CSD over the past six years, I have been prevalent to discipline data for all six high schools. After transitioning out of the classroom, I became the assistant director of the alternative education program. The following year, I served as the school district's student discipline hearing officer, before becoming an assistant principal at RHS. As a straight, White Jewish female, it is important that my positionality as an administrator at RHS provide context to the need for this study. Currently, the school population presents approximately 60% White students, with the remaining 40% being largely Hispanic and African American, with some Asian students and students of mixed ethnicity. While the staff is predominantly made up of White individuals, being able to connect

with and have open dialogue with the teachers who participated in this study shows a larger culturally responsive impact.

Conclusion

Male students of color often have exceptionally different school experiences than other students (Anderson, 2019). Male students of color are the most marginalized when it comes to exclusionary discipline in education (Anderson, 2019). This can be for a multitude of reasons, but particularly when a teacher does not understand the cultural background of students and perceives much of a student's culture in a distorted mindset (Ladson-Billings, 2013). When African American males are not the largest subgroup of students in a schools' demographic breakdown, but they account for most of the out-of-school suspensions in a school building, this only continues to fuel systems such as the "school to prison pipeline" or as Milner et al. (2019) refer to it "cradle-to-prison pipeline (CTPP)" (p. 7).

One intervention that can work towards minimizing this systemic issue is Restorative Practices (RPs), a set of ideas that allows for school leaders and teachers to view the school as a community. RPs "takes situations that otherwise might result in a student being removed from class, and instead presents ways to teach the student how to repair the harm that was done, and continue forward" (Maynard and Weinstein, 2020). With RPs, the school and each classroom create an individualized community and if someone brings harm to the community, they must reflect and recognize their behavior to restore their place within the community. This evaluation study is significant due to the ramifications of racial equity across a school and, hopefully eventually, a school district. The purpose of this evaluation study is to determine the extent of RPs decreasing the exclusionary discipline of male students on color in one school and how teachers within that school experience the implementation of RPs. The results can allow the

remaining schools within the district to determine their own success should they choose to implement RPs in their buildings. As previously stated, implementation of RPs includes targeted training on RPs and on-going professional development for reflection opportunities.

Practice

This study suggests that school leaders who take a collaborative approach to setting school-wide expectations can use RPs as an intervention to decrease their exclusionary discipline of racially marginalized sub-groups of students. As Smith et al., (2015) deduce that while many educators have "bleeding hearts" and want to see their students succeed, decisions are made based on past-experiences (p. 2). When teachers are able to have a voice in developing school-wide expectations, they feel more connected and more empowered to lead; similarly, when students have a voice in the development of classroom norms and expectations, they are more apt to stay committed to following them. By creating an environment where all stakeholders feel that their voices are heard in setting expectations, those expectations are met, and possibly exceeded, on a regular and consistent basis. One of the activities in the RPs training involves modeling how to use a circle to create norms, which is a skill that teachers can take back and use in their classrooms with students.

Milner et al., (2019) recommend three methods for implementation of RPs. These methods, to include affective language, circle processes, and restorative conferences, are techniques that any teacher can successfully integrate into their daily practice for a more equitable classroom. Affective language can "reinforce positive behavior, redirect unwanted behavior, and lead students to reflect on how their actions have affected others" (Milner et al., 2019, p. 162). Circles can be used for students to have a collaborative voice when addressing an issue, but they can also be used to start off a class period or have a discussion on specific content

(Maynard and Weinstein, 2020). A restorative conference is an opportunity for an individual to reflect on how they brought harm to the community and what needs to happen in order to be successfully re-integrated back into the community (Milner et al., 2019). These simple techniques can create equitable practices in any classroom, in addition to teacher reflection on their current practice. Each of these techniques are taught to participants in RPs training.

Research

Further research is needed to determine the effectiveness of RPs on limiting exclusionary discipline in a post-pandemic world. The COVID-19 pandemic changed education, which caused students to be "stuck" at home and discipline became a virtual entity. When students returned to school from the pandemic, after having little social interaction for an extended period, many students' behaviors regressed, causing escalated issues amongst students. The rate of exclusionary discipline cannot really be examined from the school year where students were stuck at home due to COVID. Further research will allow for more a more detailed look at how behavior changed since the pandemic, but also the success of RPs. By looking at navigating RPs through both a disciplinary and academic lens, researchers can deduce the success rate of weaving RPs into the academic mission of a school (Smith et al., 2015).

This evaluation study provided additional information to already existing research. Payne and Welch (2015) surmise that "no study to date has assessed whether high minority composition is similarly associated with the odds that schools will be less likely to implement specific restorative practices to address student violations." (p. 543). My evaluation study has components that have been previously studied, such as implementing RPs and the need to address disproportionate exclusionary discipline. However, this evaluation study aimed to determine the extent that RPs minimize the discipline gap, which will add to cultivated research

in the field. Additional research is needed in order to gain insight into RPs implementation in various school settings and additional research sites, both across the district and throughout South Carolina.

Policy

It is essential for policymakers to understand the impact exclusionary discipline can have on student achievement. Egregious behaviors, such as bringing a weapon to school, should still face appropriate repercussions; however, RPs should remain an option for conflict resolution. Focusing on building relationships within the school community will be the focus of policy and the driving force for successful implementation of RPs. The policy used inclusive language to reach all groups of individuals it seeks to assist.

This evaluation study can inform the local school board of the importance of funding and training opportunities. Because the principal of RHS has determined a need for RPs, the results from this study can show the local school board the impact RPs has on a school's discipline. This evaluation study can serve as a pilot for the school district, as this study is the first step of a larger research project for the entirety of CSD. Sharing results with the school board, whether positive or negative, can allow for open communication with the school board to explain how to improve the discipline gap.

The implications for this study are significant. Leaders see the significance of implementing RPs to reach every student in their building. Teachers feel empowered to have meaningful, and sometimes tough, conversations with students, who in return feel respected and heard in schools, as opposed to stifled and silenced. By utilizing early warning systems, school staff can intervene early with students who have need additional support (Smith et al., 2015). Further research will be able to determine the need for additional resources for schools seeking

to create a climate shift within their buildings. As Hood et al. (2015) state, “one of the benefits of centering evaluation in culture is that it pushes the profession to examine and reflect on respected standards of inquiry and to see these in a new light” (p. 302). School culture is such a significant factor that can influence student achievement. When school culture focuses on community and working together to achieve a common goal, students can succeed.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH METHODS

The purpose of this dissertation was to determine the extent that Restorative Practices (RPs) decreased a school's exclusionary discipline rate for male students of color, to include African American, Hispanic, Asian, and students of multiple races. With my role as an assistant principal at RHS, implementing RPs into our school's culture has been at the forefront of my plans. According to Creswell et al. (2003), mixed methods research involves collecting and/or analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data while integrating data throughout the research process (p. 212). Through a concurrent nested design, I used historical agency data, interviews, and observations to determine the extent of effectiveness of RPs to decrease a high school's overall rate of exclusionary discipline in addition to how teachers perceived implementation of RPs within their classrooms. I first analyzed historical agency data (quantitative) and then conducted interviews and observations (qualitative) to strengthen the claim that the rate of exclusionary discipline decreases upon implementation of RPs (Creswell et al., 2003, p. 229). The qualitative data was nested within the quantitative data, as the quantitative data answered my first research question and was collected first, with qualitative data answering the second research question. To create a more restorative mindset throughout the entire school district, this program evaluation study seeks to provide baseline data for a larger project utilizing improvement science in order to have CSD become an entirely RPs district.

Improvement Science Approach

Improvement science is a framework rooted in allowing scholars to become practitioners who can "improve" a specific area of their interest. As stated by Perry et al. (2020), "improvement science offers a valuable set of tools with distinct skills, knowledge, and habits

that can support leaders in improving their systems and organizations" (p. 14). This framework employs the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle by putting into action a strategy based on a problem of practice. Improvement science seeks to provide the "why" for "how" improvers solve their problem. This evaluation study used a mixed-methods approach informed by improvement science to determine the extent of effectiveness of RPs implementation to decrease the overall exclusionary discipline rate of male students of color, directly aligning with what Hinnant-Crawford (2020) states is the goal of improvement science: "to identify changes or interventions that increase positive outcomes or decrease negative outcomes" (p. 26). In this evaluation study, the negative outcomes seeking decrease were inequitable distribution of discipline consequences.

Through implementation of Restorative Practices (RPs), high support for both students and teachers are closely structured in a setting where people in the school community work together (Mansfield et al., 2018). RPs utilizes the idea that proactively building a positive campus climate will prevent misbehavior through building strong relationships between and amongst students and educators (Dhaliwal et al., 2021). Historically, zero tolerance policies have existed for students who misbehave; however, RPs prioritize improving the climate to prevent any misbehavior in the first place (Dhaliwal et al., 2021). When RPs is used to create expectations, both in the school building and within the classroom, work to restore and reconnect people within the community when damage or harm occurs is synonymous with everyday occurrences (Mustian et al., 2021). Using continuous improvement and progress monitoring of RPs in classrooms, this evaluation study provided insight into the extent that RPs decrease the rate of exclusionary discipline for students of color at RHS. Creswell and Creswell (2018) state that "[mixed methods] it is a useful strategy to have a more complete understanding of research problems and questions…comparing different perspectives drawn from quantitative and

qualitative data" (p. 216). A concurrent nested design was most appropriate when looking at which mixed-methods approach to use for this study, as there was a predominant data source (quantitative) with a secondary data source (qualitative) used (Creswell et al., 2003). Specific components of the methodology are outlined below. First, participant recruitment is discussed and explained. Next, I discuss and outline the methods of data collection that were used for program evaluation study. Then, the methods of data analysis are explained and outlined; and finally, validity and limitations are discussed and outlined.

Participant Recruitment

The plan stage of a PDSA cycle, according to Hinnant-Crawford (2020), is an opportunity to ensure that everyone is on the same page with the objectives and predictions of the improvement (p. 166). As the school administrator with the most experience with RPs, it was imperative that the rest of my administrative team understand the objective and predictions of the program evaluation to fully grasp their roles in the implementation of RPs (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020). Because RPs focus on building relationships amongst students and faculty to alleviate differences (Gomez et al., 2021), the administrators and teachers at RHS received explicit training aligned with the school's and the principal's vision.

The administrative team and selected teachers from RHS received an intensive two-day training from a certified trainer from the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP). During this training, the participants learned definitions and information on affective statements and circle processes (International Institute for Restorative Practices, 2022). They participated in role play scenarios with one another and had discussions regarding how to implement these techniques within their building and classrooms. Milner (2019) states, "these approaches [affective statements and circles] can help teachers reflect about and develop skills in

communication, relationship building, and understanding of their students as well" (p. 139). After two days of training, participants received a certificate of completion and left equipped with the skills necessary to move forward with implementation.

RHS was purposefully selected as the research site to effectively answer each of the research questions the evaluation seeks to address. The discipline data from previous years for RHS supports this site being selected for this study. The 2021-2022 school year has White students from RHS allowing for 39% of out of school suspensions, which is almost 15% less than the total number of White students within the school's population, meaning that 60% of RHS's out of school suspensions are RM students, not reflecting the demographic breakdown of the student population. This data saw a spike from the 2020-2021 school year, where the data was skewed due to virtual learning still occurring due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As one of the assistant principals at RHS, I have access to the historical agency data and to all persons willing to participate in the study. With the assistance of my principal and administrative team, we reviewed historical agency data collectively and presented the opportunity to participate in the RPs training to randomly selected staff. These teachers were presented with the opportunity and were able to opt in to receive the training and participate in the study. Teachers who participated in the training were not required to participate in the study.

Of the training participants, nine teachers agreed to participate in the study. The teachers who agreed to participate in the study were each given a pseudonym in order to protect their identity. The study participants' information is listed below. I have included the participant's years of teaching experience, gender, race/ethnicity, and language first acquired in the table below.

Table 2.1

Study Participants

Pseudonym	**Years of Teaching Experience**	**Gender**	**Race/Ethnicity**	**Language First Acquired**
Miss Scarlet	3 years	Female	White	English
Mrs. Green	1 year	Female	Hispanic	Spanish
Mrs. Peacock	4 years	Female	White	English
Professor Plum	11 years	Female	Black	English
Mrs. White	1 year	Female	White	English
Col. Mustard	9 years	Male	White	English
Madame Brunette	11 years	Female	Hispanic	Spanish
Miss Peach	2 years	Female	White	English
Dr. Orchid	4 years	Female	Black	English

For reference, RHS has 102 teachers. The study participants represent 8% of RHS staff. Participants are all employees of RHS, due to the research question focusing on the extent of RPs on exclusionary discipline within a specific site. As the main idea of qualitative research is to "purposefully select participants or sites that will best help the research understand the problem and the research question" (Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p. 185), participants to attend the initial training were selected based on administrative recommendation. Those who choose to participate in the study understood the requirement of participating in both interviews and classroom observations and how their participation would help the overall climate of RHS. All participants shared the following inclusion criterion: participants must be teachers at RHS; and participants were willing to be interviewed and observed during the study.

Methods of Data Collection

The "Do" phase of the Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle allows for the researcher to collect multiple forms of data (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020). Data can both inform processes and show a

need for additional data collection (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020). Additionally, this phase is when the change is carried out to measure effectiveness and whether the change implementation was successful (Perry et al., 2020). Below, I outline the three main forms of data collected during this study: historical agency data (quantitative) and interviews and observations (qualitative).

Agency Data

Agency data related to discipline was collected from three school years spanning 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023. The data collected includes the total number of school suspensions broken down by gender and race-ethnicity. Specific data reviewed included the total out of school suspension (OSS) and in school suspension (ISS) for students. These data were collected through the use of PowerSchool, which houses individual student data that the South Carolina Department of Education uses annually for reporting purposes. The data were requested through the school district and provided to the research team by the Director of Data Services for CSD. The data was provided in an Excel spreadsheet.

Interviews

Teachers who participated in the RPs training, and who agreed to participate in the study, were interviewed. Open-ended questions were used to gain the most information from each teacher (Appendix A). Interviews occurred on a weekly basis as teachers implemented RPs within their classrooms; three teachers were interviewed each week over a three-week span. Interviews were conducted in a private space between the researcher and the teacher. The responses from the interviews were transcribed and then coded for emergent themes. All interviews were kept confidential.

Semi-structured interviews were used for all participants, with the same questions serving as the foundation for the interviews with opportunity for additional open-ended questions to be

brought in pending information gleaned from respondents. Questions were developed using RPs as a focus of the scope, in addition to determining educator's perceptions of implementation within their classrooms. Interviews were allotted for 45 minutes at a minimum, as Weiss (1994) informs it is difficult to "develop a coherent account in an interview under half an hour" (p. 56). Follow-up reflection conversations, which were informal and lasting for less than 10 minutes, occurred on a weekly basis over the span of one month after all formal interviews occurred.

Observations

Classroom observations were conducted for all nine of the participants. Each participant was observed one time during a semester. The classroom observations lasted for 30-45 minutes and occurred at varying times throughout the class period (beginning of the block, middle of the block, end of the block). I conducted these observations as a non-participant observer and researcher and not as an assistant principal, meaning that I did not seek to critique the teaching styles, student conduct, instructional framework, etc. of the lessons, but to determine the environment of the teachers' classroom. An observation rubric, modeled after the SCTS 4.0 rubric "Environment" section, was used to conduct the classroom observations (Appendix B). Detailed snippets of the observation tool can be found in the following chapter when discussing the data analysis. Observations indicated how RPs affect the environment of a classroom to determine whether that factors into teachers writing office referrals. I used the indicators from the rubric to score the observations, with notes from the observation. The scores and notes were transferred to a spreadsheet to allow for comparison across data sources.

In an effort to maintain a sense of balance between my role as an assistant principal and the role of a researcher, I used a verbal and written agreement with the teachers that participated and received the RPs training. It was important that during observations and interviews, teachers

felt comfortable and were able to be honest in their responses. To remain unbiased, I had the instructional coach in the building assist in conducting the classroom observations. This was helpful with preserving relationships and remaining unbiased in results, in addition to preserving their identities and confidentiality.

Methods of Data Analysis

In studying the results and the data gleaned from the previous phase, Hinnant-Crawford (2020) encourages practitioners to determine if the research questions posed were answered from the data collected (p. 169). In review of the data, it was important to use what Perry et al. (2020) describe as an "equity lens" in order to ensure equitable practices and systems are being developed (p. 129). Using an "equity lens" allowed me to determine root causes for potential inequities. Data analysis serves as the "Study" phase of the PDSA cycle.

This mixed-methods program evaluation will serve as the foundation of a larger project that will examine the effectiveness of Restorative Practices (RPs) on decreasing the overall rate of exclusionary discipline in a school district. This study focused on qualitative data gathered through interviews and observations, and quantitative data gathered historical agency data in order to answer the two research questions. Data analysis occurred while data were being collected in order for the process to negate any blind spots and to show specific holes in the data for additional collection (Miles et al., 2014). For this program evaluation, I used deductive coding cycles to analyze the data through the lens of the improvement science conceptual framework. The first cycle of coding focused on descriptive codes (Miles et al., 2014), with a second cycle of pattern coding to follow. The multiple cycles of coding allowed for conclusions to be drawn while acknowledging implications from the conceptual framework within the study.

Data collected through the three main sources were organized using codes. Descriptive

codes, which allowed me to assign labels to the data, helped me to organize the data based on specific themes/occurrences (Miles et al., 2014). For example, because it was important to look at historical agency data in order to show the significance of the problem, I have prescribed codes for historical agency data information from the Office of Civil Rights as OCR and information from Educator's Handbook as EH. Based on research, I previously assigned codes for the themes of support and attitude (SUP; ATT; Mansfield et al., 2018). These codes eventually transitioned into one of the main themes that I discuss in the following chapter. Because my research questions seek to determine the extent of RPs implementation on the rate of discipline, it will be important to review data for additional inductive codes (Miles et al., 2014). By using both deductive and inductive coding, I will be able to organize the data into groups to determine the effectiveness of RPs implementation, in addition to teacher perception of RPs implementation within their classrooms.

Upon completion of the first cycle of coding, a second cycle of pattern coding allowed me to organize the data by emergent themes, configurations, and explanations (Miles et al., 2014). For example, after reviewing the data coded SUP for support, there were subgroups based on different types of support that teachers provide for students. These subgroups included encouraging support, emotional support, and advisory support. When looking at pattern codes, it was also important to review specific thematic patterns, but also relationships among people which assisted in answering the second research question regarding expectations (Miles et al., 2014). This allowed for additional analysis to occur once the second cycle of coding is completed. I kept track of information, ensuring that names for the codes, descriptions, and examples are included for the most organization, in addition to ensuring reliability of the coding process (Creswell and Poth, 2018).

Data collection and analysis are concurrent processes, according to Miles et al. (2014). While I anticipated many codes and themes emerging throughout the process, my goal was to condense the data into three to five main categories for deeper analysis. I used categorical aggregation in order to seek specific instances from the data in the hope that specific meanings emerge (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Additionally, in an effort to answer both research questions, naturalistic generalizations were developed from data analysis to determine the effectiveness of RPs implementation in decreasing the exclusionary discipline rate of students of color (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Using the concurrent nested design, I was able to use the quantitative data to assist in understanding the qualitative data.

By analyzing the data in this way, I was able to make connections to the literature, in addition to answering the research questions. My analysis was presented in narrative form through a mixed-methods concurrent nested approach. In order to ensure both research questions are answered and whether or not RPs was an effective measure to decrease the discipline rate of a student subgroup, I reviewed the historical agency data from the previous school year while simultaneously observing and interviewing teachers. Specifically, as the teachers are one unit of the analysis, the data from classroom observations was compared in an effort to determine effectiveness. For example, I was interested in seeing if how a teacher's classroom is setup affects their classroom management.

Validity and Limitations

After reviewing data during the previous phase, it was then time to determine how to move forward, ideally into the next "Plan" phase for the next PDSA cycle (Hinnant-Crawford, 2020). As both a researcher and participant in the study, it was of the utmost importance that I ensured trustworthiness of the analysis in this study. I used triangulation of multiple data sources

in order to ensure reliability (Creswell and Poth, 2018). For example, I reviewed the interviews with teachers, observations of classrooms, and historical data agency reports to validate all findings related to the research questions. Because this research was conducted at my place of employment, I was able to ensure validity of information through member checking and follow-up conversations with the teachers. Upon reviewing the results with my administrative team, a determination was made of next steps in preparation for future plans and equitable practices for all students.

Triangulation of the data sources established validity and assisted in developing consistencies and themes in responses. By engaging in meaningful analysis, I was able to determine any potential personal biases while analyzing data and results (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). One of my strengths as a researcher and a practitioner was my ability to keep detailed notes and documentation during observations and interviews. This allowed me to ensure appropriate reflections occurred within the analysis. Additionally, this was important when interpreting results of the data analysis, both when looking at the quantitative results from the historical agency data and the qualitative results from interviews and observations. Because of my use of concurrent nested design, the quantitative data was nested within the qualitative data (Creswell et al., 2003). While both sets of data have meaning and answer one of my two research questions, Creswell et al. (2003) advise that using this design can result in unequal evidence within a study, which may be a disadvantage upon interpretation (p. 230). I made sure to note this during the final analysis of the results.

CHAPTER THREE

FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings based on the mixed methods program evaluation conducted to determine the extent that RPs decreased a school's exclusionary discipline rate for male students of color and to determine how teachers experience the implementation of RPs. Using a mixed-methods approach, I initiated a teacher professional development session on RPs, conducted teacher observations and interviews, sought reflective feedback from teachers and helped them take steps to implement RPs in their classrooms, while analyzing historical agency data. Utilizing a concurrent nested design, I analyzed historical agency data (quantitative) and interviews and observations (qualitative) concurrently, which allowed me to gain different perspectives from using both methods (Creswell et al., 2003).

Study Design

This mixed-methods program evaluation utilized a concurrent nested design and was informed by improvement science. Creswell and Creswell (2018) surmise that both qualitative and quantitative data provide information that should yield the same results (p. 217). I collected quantitative data at the beginning of the study spanning three school years, beginning in 2020-2021 and ending in 2022-2023. The qualitative data collected throughout the research study included interviews with teachers on the use of RPs in their classroom, followed by observations of the teachers within their classrooms. The qualitative data analysis allowed me to determine how teachers perceive the use of RPs within their classroom.

In this chapter, I report the findings of both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The quantitative data analysis provides the answer to the first research question: "To what extent do RPs decrease the suspension rate of male students of color?" The qualitative data analysis

supports the answer to the second research question: “How do teachers experience the implementation of RPs in their classrooms?” While the individual analysis answered each question separately, the convergence of findings strengthens the claims of the study (Creswell et al., 2003, p. 229). I discuss the quantitative findings first, followed by the qualitative findings and then summarize the results in a comparative analysis.

Quantitative Findings

The quantitative data analysis answers the research question “to what extent do RPs decrease the suspension rate of male students of color?” It is important to note that the data collected from the 2020-2021 school year was not indicative of a full school year of in-person students. During the 2020-2021 school year, CSD remained virtual for the first semester, with only half of the students returning to the building for only two days a week. The data collected in 2021-2022 school year reflects a more typical school year that was not affected by the pandemic.

The initial training for the administrative team and teachers occurred during summer of 2022, meaning the data from the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school year is before RPs implementation (pre-intervention) began at RHS during the 2022-2023 school year. The qualitative data was nested between the pre-intervention data collection and the post-intervention data collection, which occurred at the end of the 2022-2023 school year. The population for analysis is RHS students, with the sample being RHS male students. This analysis aimed to determine the extent that RPs decreased the suspension rate of male students of color. The original data file shared by CSD included the total population suspensions. Both in-school suspension and out of school suspensions were considered, as both forms of punishment remove students from classroom instruction. I removed all female students, as they were not part of the sample. I created a pivot table for each school year with the total duration of days of suspensions

by race/ethnicity. Table 3.1 shows the total number of male students enrolled at RHS for each of the three years of data. Table 3.2 shows the numerical values for total days of suspension broken down by race/ethnicity and Figure 2.1 below shows a summary of the data from Table 3.2. This table has decimal place values to represent not full days of suspension. For example, if a student was put out of school at 10:45 AM, which is two hours after the school day begins, the total time out of that day would be less than 1 full day of suspension. For the purpose of this research, A represents Asian students; B represents Black or African American students; H represents Hispanic/Latino students; I represents American Indian or Alaska Native students; M represents students of two or more races; P represents Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander students; W represents White students.

Table 3.1

Total Male Students Enrolled at RHS

	A	**B**	**H**	**I**	**M**	**P**	**W**	**Total Males**
2020-2021	12	107	178	2	34	1	422	756
2021-2022	10	95	216	3	38	1	434	797
2022-2023	9	84	490	5	36	2	431	822

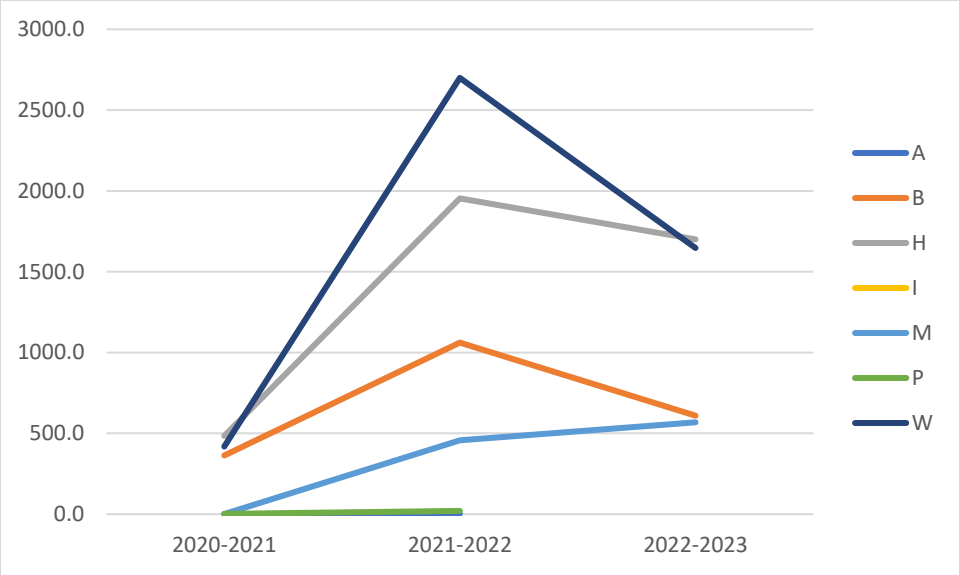
Table 3.2

Total Days of Suspension by Race/Ethnicity

	A	**B**	**H**	**I**	**M**	**P**	**W**	**Grand Total**
2020-2021	0.14	363.14	483.85		0.57	1.71	418.14	1267.57
2021-2022	3	1061.42	1953.8	1.71	456.28	20	2699.71	6196
2022-2023		610	1699.7		568.14		1647.28	4525.14
Grand Total	**3.14**	**2034.57**	**4137.42**	**1.71**	**1025**	**21.71**	**4765.14**	**11988.7**

Figure 2.1

Line Graph of Total Suspensions by Race/Ethnicity



The data in the above figure shows total suspensions for each race/ethnic group, which removed them from instruction. While W students appear to have the most suspensions, if you look at the data as W versus RM students, the RM students account for most of the total suspensions. It is important to note that the total suspensions for all male students decreased during the 2022-2023 school year, after the initial RPs training conducted for administration and selected teachers. These numbers indicate the implementation of the intervention did ultimately decrease the amount of lost instructional time as there were less suspensions during the 2022-2023 school year than the 2021-2022 school year.

To determine the extent that RPs can decrease the rate of suspension, we first must determine if there is an association between race/ethnicity and suspensions. A Chi-Square test of independence was administered to the data to determine if there was an association between race/ethnicity and suspensions. I conducted this test twice between the years 2021-2022 (pre-intervention) and 2022-2023 (post-intervention). The data for students was first separated by race/ethnicity. For the purpose of running the Chi-Square test of independence, the race/ethnicity

categories were “W” for White students and “RM” for all students of a race/ethnicity other than White. Table 4.1 shows the data that was used to run this test for the 2021-2022 school year.

Table 4.1

Chi Square Test of Independence for 2021-2022

	White	**Racially Marginalized**	**Total**
Suspended Males	116	157	273
Not Suspended Males	318	206	524
Total	434	363	797

The relation between these variables was significant, x^2 (1, N = 797) = 23.96, $p < .05$. This tells us that there is an association between race/ethnicity and suspension due to the *p*-value being significantly less than .05.

Because training was conducted during the summer of 2022, I ran another Chi Square test for the data for the 2022-2023 school year. Table 4.2 shows the data that was used to run this test for the 2022-2023 school year.

Table 4.2

Chi Square Test of Independence for 2022-2023

	White	**Racially Marginalized**	**Total**
Suspended Males	92	147	239
Not Suspended Males	339	244	583
Total	431	391	822

The relation between these variables was also significant, x^2 (1, N = 822) = 26.25, $p < .05$. This tells us that there is an association between race/ethnicity and suspensions due to the *p*-value being significantly less than .05. While RPs did decrease the total suspension, based on the numbers in Table 3.2, the statistical significance shows that even with RPs implementation, there is still a relation between race/ethnicity and suspension.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative findings were gleaned utilizing two data collection instruments. I used a semi-structured interview and classroom observations using a rubric (Appendix B) to collect data. I interviewed the nine study participants and observed each of their classrooms. For this study, the observations conducted specifically looked at classroom environment and not instructional methods. I used a coding system to organize the information and from this found emerging themes that included the following: teacher actions, organization of classroom, support for students, teacher attitudes and expectations. The data, described in detail below, suggests that teachers had positive experiences implementing RPs into their classrooms and supports additional training for the remaining staff members of the school. Below, each of the five themes are explored in detail, with specific evidence from the observation and interview protocol listed under each subsection.

Teacher Actions

The theme of "Teacher Actions" emerged as things that teachers do within the classroom. Actions can include routines within the classroom, how a teacher interacts with students, how a teacher communicates with students, and/or creating an environment for learning. A former principal once told teachers during a staff meeting that every teacher is either the king or queen of their classroom. History tells us that monarchs have long had either positive or tumultuous paths with their subjects. Similarly, teachers pave the way for how the semester progresses with their students from the first day of class. All nine study participants use the first day of class to get to know their students and set classroom expectations. Miss Scarlet stated, "I spend the majority of the first day of class doing icebreaker activities in order to get to know my students and for my students to get to know me." Getting to know students and showing that a teacher has

interest in their students can help create a classroom community. The study participants each had their own version of getting to know their students on the first day of class in order to begin to build those relationships. Dr. Orchid said, “I allow students to sit wherever they feel comfortable so I can get a layout of what students are friends with each other.” Miss Peach said, “We discuss the ways in which we want the classroom to look, feel, and sound, and we work through adjectives of each of those. The adjectives go on a poster that stays posted throughout the year.” The study participants use their own methods to create meaningful classroom communities and build rapport with their students.

Building a classroom community involves teachers being proactive in engaging students. Seven out of the nine participants stated that having one on one conversations with students, whether to discuss a grade, how to complete an assignment, or do a progress check, allows the teachers to build relationships with their students. During Ms. Green’s classroom observation, she spoke individually to Student A, who seemed to be struggling reading the assignment. She continued speaking to Student A, while walking around the room. She continued to monitor student progress by engaging with other students individually in order to assist them with the assignment. When she came back around to Student A, they continued their conversation, allowing the student to complete the required task and stood up proudly to show the teacher the accomplishment. Similar behavior was observed in all of the classroom observations. When students are engaged in the lesson, behaviors are often limited. Col. Mustard used teenage lingo to confirm student understanding. He stated, “We Gucci?” to check for understanding of a task. The students all responded to his question.

When Col. Mustard spoke to students using informal lingo, as seen during his classroom observation, he did so to build a connection with his students. When teachers meet students

where they are, classroom culture and community can address each student's unique learning needs (Milner et al., 2019, p. 97). During her interview, when asked what "restorative" meant to her, Miss Peach stated, "Something related to respect with students. In this case, it means honor where students are coming from and meeting them where they are." During all nine observations, the teachers engaged the students by continually asking questions to both check for understanding, but also to keep students on their toes. Mrs. Peacock used questioning to review the previous day's lesson, calling on students to remind the class what learning took place the day prior to the observation day. When one student was not quick to answer the question, Mrs. Peacock used prodding questions and allowed for wait time in order to give the student a chance to answer. This allowed the student to still answer the question, but in a respectful manner so as not to embarrass the student. The data gleaned from both the interviews and observations suggest that when teachers can model behavior and lead by example, students are more apt to act appropriately within the classroom.

Teachers' actions towards students usually plays a large role in the effectiveness of managing a classroom. A sense of community within a classroom helps to create an environment of high standards and expectations. When the students and the teacher are able to work together to work through things, a harmonious environment exists for learning. Four of the study participants explicitly stated "working through things together" with students helps build the classroom sense of community and allows students to have the opportunity for success.

Organization of Classroom

I observed all nine participants' classrooms, in addition to asking an interview question about how teachers set up their classrooms. Each classroom looked a little different, but they all shared one noticeable commonality: all classrooms had students seated in proximity to one

another or in groups. Three participants explicitly stated the importance of "student collaboration" during their interviews. Organizing a classroom where students can collaborate and learn from each other strengthens the idea of a classroom community, which is one of the tenets of RPs (Milner et al., 2019). All nine participants had seating charts for where students were to sit within the classroom. Mrs. White stated, "I put students in groups because it actually cuts down on their socialization. I put their supplies at their desk." Teachers who make supplies easily accessible for students tend to have less interruptions during instruction, based upon my observations. All nine classrooms were organized in a manner conducive to allowing both teacher and students to move about freely in order to accomplish necessary tasks. Both Col. Mustard and Miss Peach's classrooms have student desks put together in groups around a larger table in the center of the classroom. When students are seated in groups, they hold each other accountable.

Student accountability drives RPs. When someone does harm to the community, the community holds that person accountable for his/her actions. Similarly, when a teacher creates a classroom community and a student interrupts the teacher or brings harm to the class, both the teacher and the students can hold one another accountable. Madame Brunette stated, "It's all about respect. I explain to them what I'm expecting and then I hear what they are expecting." Communicating expectations is a large piece of accountability. If students do not know what to expect, how are teachers supposed to hold them accountable? Professor Plum created an acronym that explains what she expects of her students. She shared during her interview that she has students say it out loud at the start of every class period in order to hold them accountable. This acronym, which spells out LEARN, is on a poster that is placed at the front of the classroom on the wall above the white board. It states "All students are expected to LEARN: Listen to the

teacher and NOT talk when they are talking; Enter the room ON TIME with correct materials ready to learn; Aim to produce the HIGHEST QUALITY at all times; Respect the rights of others by NOT disrupting their learning; Not call out but RAISE your hand to get the teacher's attention." Mrs. Green asks her students on the first day of class what they expect from her as their teacher, before telling her students what she expects from them as her students. Accountability goes hand in hand with setting expectations and following procedures.

RHS has schoolwide expectations that teachers are expected to follow. In regard to the classroom environment, administration expects all teachers to have learning targets and success criteria posted in student-friendly terminology. This expectation is communicated to teachers at the beginning of the school year. I observed this in all nine classrooms. Of the nine observations conducted, four were at the very start of the class period. All four teachers had a similar organization to beginning their class to include the following: a bell ringer was displayed on the board as students entered the classroom; the teacher took attendance while students worked on the bell ringer; the teacher and class collaboratively reviewed the bell ringer; the teacher reviewed what students learned the previous day; the teacher began the day's lesson. When students have a routine and know what to expect within their classroom, they are able to focus on the learning process. Teachers who establish a systemic routine in their classroom create a foundation for student success (Westberry, 2020). Having an organized classroom with clear expectations helps to set up a supportive environment for students to succeed.

The "Environment" domain on the observation rubric is one of three domains from the SCTS 4.0 Rubric. As classroom environment plays a large role in successful implementation of RPs, observations of the three domains listed on the rubric, to include "Environment", "Respectful Culture", and "Expectations", for classroom environment was important for data

collection. I chose to use this rubric instead of creating my own checklist in order to assess teachers using a tool that is used regularly in teacher evaluations. For the purpose of this study, no participants were evaluated during these observations. I have included a figure of the "Environment" domain below (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1

Environment Domain of Observation Rubric

ENVIRONMENT				
	Exemplary (4)	Proficient (3)	Needs Improvement (2)	Unsatisfactory (1)
Environment[18]	The classroom • welcomes all students and guests and provides a safe space for all students to take risks and interact with peers. • is clearly organized and designed for and with students to promote learning for all. • has supplies, equipment, and resources easily and readily accessible to provide equitable opportunities for all students. • displays current student work that that promotes a positive and inclusive classroom environment. • is consistently arranged to maximize individual and group learning and to reinforce a positive classroom culture.	The classroom • welcomes all students and guests. • is organized to promote learning for all students. • has supplies, equipment, and resources accessible to provide equitable opportunities for students. • displays current student work. • is arranged to promote individual and group learning.	The classroom • welcomes most students and guests. • is somewhat organized to promote learning for all students. • has supplies, equipment, and resources accessible. • displayed student work is not updated regularly. • is sometimes arranged to promote individual and group learning.	The classroom • is somewhat uninviting. • is not organized to promote student learning. • supplies, equipment, and resources are difficult to access. • does not display student work. • is not arranged to promote group learning.

Of the nine participants, five earned a four or "Exemplary" rating while four participants earned a three or "Proficient" rating. The key difference between earning an "Exemplary" rating versus a "Proficient" rating includes being able to interact with peers, taking risks, and having current student work displayed within the classroom. The participants who earned a "Proficient" all had welcoming classrooms to promote student learning but did not have current student work

displayed nor a chance for students to interact with their peers during the observation. This is a potential limitation, as collaboration may have occurred during another time. Below is a table (Table 5.1) with the nine study participants and their scores in the "Environment" section, with evidence to support their score.

Table 5.1

Participants Scores in Environment Domain

Participant	**Score**	**Evidence**
Miss Scarlet	4	The teacher has supplies for students in clearly marked locations (bin of pens has a label with pens on the front, paper has paper on the front, etc.) and they are accessible to provide equitable opportunities for all students.
Mrs. Green	4	The classroom desks are in the shape of a "U" facing the board, which promotes learning for all to allow for collaboration and discussion to promote learning for all.
Mrs. Peacock	3	The classroom displayed current student work (projects that connected to the standards) and promoted learning for all by having visible learning targets posted on the board for students to see.
Professor Plum	3	There is a table at the front of the classroom with supplies and a turn in bin that all students are able to access.
Mrs. White	4	All student desks were in groups and each group had a supply bucket in the middle of the desks. This ensured all students had equitable access to what they needed to be successful in the lesson.
Col. Mustard	4	The classroom was clearly organized to promote learning for all students as they were seated in a fishbowl layout, meaning there was a table in the middle of the classroom with smaller groupings of desks around the larger table.
Madame Brunette	3	The classroom was displayed with student work which promoted learning.
Miss Peach	3	The classroom is organized to allow students to work in groups or pairs. Current student work is hanging on the bulletin board in the classroom.
Dr. Orchid	4	The classroom welcomed all students, even when a student was tardy, there was little to no break in instruction. Teacher has organized the classroom and designed her instruction to promote learning for all by knowing student's names to address them respectfully and in an inclusive manor.

Support for Students

As Madame Brunette indicated above, respect between teachers and students helps to create a classroom community. All nine study participants used the word "respect" throughout their responses during the interviews. I observed mutual respect within the classrooms during my observation. The observation rubric has "Respectful Culture" as one if its three domains. I have included a snippet of this domain below (Figure 2).

Figure 3.2

Respectful Culture Domain of Observation Rubric

Respectful Culture[19]	• Teacher-student and student-student interactions demonstrate caring and respect for one another and celebrate and acknowledge all students' background and culture. • Teacher fosters positive teacher-to-student and student-to-student interactions that demonstrate overall care, kindness, and respect for one another. • Teacher seeks out and is receptive to the interests and opinions of all students. • Positive relationships and interdependence characterize the classroom.	• Teacher-student interactions are generally positive and reflect awareness and consideration of all students' background and culture. • Teacher and students exhibit respect and kindness for the teacher and each other; classroom is free of unhealthy conflict, sarcasm, and put-downs. • Teacher is receptive to the interests and opinions of students.	• Teacher-student interactions are sometimes positive, but may reflect occasional inconsistencies. • Students exhibit respect and kindness for the teacher and each other. • Teacher is sometimes receptive to the interests and opinions of students.	• Teacher does not establish a safe and positive classroom culture for students. • Students do not exhibit respect for the teacher or each other. • Teacher and/or student interaction is characterized by unhealthy conflict, sarcasm, or put-downs. • Teacher is not receptive to interests and opinions of students.

All nine participants scored a three or were "Proficient" in this domain. This scoring was based on observing positive interactions between teacher and students, exhibitions of respect for both people and others' belongings, and conversations that were free of judgement and harshness. In Miss Peach, Col. Mustard, and Mrs. Peacock's classes, the students and teachers' interactions were positive, with the students asking questions freely and the teachers calling on the students by name. Dr. Orchid and Mrs. Green both utilized the rapport they built with the students to use sarcasm as a means of communication. The sarcasm was not said negatively nor was it used as

an insult. Miss Scarlet, Professor Plum, Mrs. White, and Madame Brunette all had classrooms where mutual respect and kindness existed. The final domain of the observation rubric is discussed farther within this chapter.

The biggest difference between earning a three or "Proficient" versus earning a four or "Exemplary" in this domain includes the differences in a few key words. The first indicator states "Adult-student interactions are generally positive and reflect awareness and consideration of all students' background and culture" in the "Proficient" rating. In order to be "Exemplary," the rubric states, "adult-student and student-student interactions demonstrate caring and respect for one another and celebrate and acknowledge all students' background and culture." All nine participants had clearly respectful cultures in their classrooms, but student-student interactions that celebrated and acknowledged student backgrounds was not observed within any of the classrooms. Teachers often focus so much on building a rapport between themselves and the student, that they forget the importance of creating a respectful culture amongst the students. However, if teachers focus on creating a classroom community, where everyone is responsible for holding each other accountable, student-student interactions can be more positive.

The ultimate goal and accomplishment of any high school student is to walk across the stage at graduation. In order to matriculate, students must succeed academically. In order for students to succeed academically, teachers must plan engaging lessons for students that can connect to their own lives. When students are more engaged, behavior tends to be less of an issue (Milner et al., 2019). Six of the nine participants used the word "engaging" when asked how they manage their classroom throughout the school year. Col. Mustard stated, "At the end of the day, just remaining engaged in communication with the students is important to remind them that I'm not their friend, but their teacher who supports them." Miss Scarlet and Mrs. Green both use

student engagement to assist in managing their classrooms by speaking to students who may have interrupted instruction, but also by planning lessons and activities that appeal to student interests. During all nine observations, students were on-task and engaged in the lesson.

Teacher Attitudes

The theme of "teacher attitudes" emerged throughout both interviews and during my observations. "Teacher attitudes" means a teacher's disposition during their interactions with students, in addition to how the teacher feels. Educators join the field for various reasons. Some may want to relive their glory days; some may want to help the future generations; some may have had a horrible experience and think they can be a better teacher than anyone they ever had as a teacher. Whatever the case, educators have a responsibility to teach their students and meet the state standards for their content area. When teachers present content and communicate positively, students often feel comfortable connecting with their teacher. Milner et al. (2019) discuss positive framing and how much of an impact positivity, optimism, and enthusiasm plays in a student's success. Of the nine participants, five used the word "positive" throughout their interviews. Madame Brunette said, "I keep it positive. I don't yell. If I have to reteach something, I do because that's what my students need." During the observations, positive interactions between teachers and students occurred regularly.

Positive interactions are important, but reality is also important. In a predominantly White school of over 1500 students, the majority of the staff is also White. There are approximately 99 total certified teachers at RHS. 88% of the teachers at RHS are White. The nine study participants' demographic information was shared in Chapter 2, but the participants are 50% White and 50% racially marginalized. One of the interview questions states, "How does your culture impact what you view as appropriate and inappropriate behavior?" Professor Plum,

Madame Brunette, and Dr. Orchid are all natives of countries outside the United States. All three of them shared that in their countries, younger people show more respect to adults than they do here in the U.S. Mrs. White spoke of the importance of fairness in her response. She wants to make sure that all students are treated fairly in her classroom. Mrs. Peacock was the only White participant who shared that she had to learn about her minority students' backgrounds more, as she was brought up as a "Southern White lady." Acknowledging this shows that Mrs. Peacock is a reflective individual who wants to connect with her students in order to see them succeed.

Reflective teachers show their students that they are human and not above making mistakes. Dr. Orchid shared that if there was a behavior issue in her class, she would wait to speak to the student until the following day so that they both had time to reflect on the situation. She takes time to reflect on the action, as opposed to reflecting in action in the moment when the behavior occurs. During the observation of Dr. Orchid's class, no problem behaviors occurred. Teacher reflection assists in eliminating the use of microaggressions. Carter et al. (2017) state, "microaggressions are often enacted automatically and unconsciously – delivered in the form of subtle insults, indifferent looks, gestures, and tones" (p. 52). Those teachers who reflect tend to notice if they have used microaggressions within their classrooms. When Col. Mustard asked his class, "Are we Gucci?" He was using teenage slang in order to connect with his students. The observer paid attention to the minority students' reactions to this; there was zero reaction other than smiling and laughing. This shows that Col. Mustard has rapport with his students who are comfortable with him using slang every now and then.

Expectations

All nine participants stated "expectations" throughout their interviews. As expectations are one of the major tenets of RPs, the participants all understand that setting expectations for

students helps manage their classroom. Of the nine participants, seven included students in creating their classroom expectations. Mrs. Peacock used groups to create her classroom expectations, in addition to posters. Mrs. Green asked students what they expected of her as their teacher before she shared what she expected of them as her students. Mrs. White had her students create their own classroom expectations and they then reviewed them as a whole class; she stated, "That is what we use to hold each other accountable throughout the year." Col. Mustard leads by example, which he uses to help students understand his classroom expectations. Professor Plum has her students repeat her expectations at the start of every class so that they understand what is expected of them. Each participant had his/her own unique way of presenting classroom expectations to students.

The observation rubric has an "Expectations" domain that is included below (Figure 6).

Figure 3.3

Expectations domain of Observation Rubric

ENVIRONMENT				
	Exemplary (4)	Proficient (3)	Needs Improvement (2)	Unsatisfactory (1)
	Consistent Evidence of Student-Centered Learning/Student Ownership of Learning – Teacher and Students Facilitate the Learning	*Some Evidence of Student-Centered Learning/Student Ownership of Learning – Teacher Facilitates the Learning*	*Moving Toward Student-Centered Learning/Student Ownership of Learning Consistent Reliance on Teacher Direction*	*Heavy Emphasis on Teacher Direction – Minimal Evidence of Student Ownership of Learning*
Expectations[16]	• Teacher engages students in learning with clear and rigorous academic expectations for every student and actively uses aligned and differentiated materials and resources to ensure equitable access to learning. • Students regularly learn from their mistakes and can describe their thinking on what they learned. • Teacher creates learning opportunities where all students consistently experience success. • Students lead opportunities that support learning. • Students take initiative to meet or exceed teacher expectations. • Teacher optimizes instructional time to ensure each student meets their learning goals.	• Teacher engages students in learning with clear and rigorous academic expectations for every student with aligned materials and resources for students to access. • Teacher encourages students to learn from mistakes. • Teacher creates learning opportunities where all students can experience success. • Students complete their work according to teacher expectations.	• Teacher engages students in learning with clear and rigorous academic expectations for most students. • Teacher encourages students to learn from mistakes. • Teacher creates learning opportunities where some students can experience success. • Teacher expectations for student work are not clear for all students.	• Teacher expectations are not rigorous for every student. • Teacher creates an environment where mistakes and failure are not viewed as learning experiences. • Teacher does not create learning opportunities where students can experience success. • Student work is rarely completed to meet teacher expectations.

All nine participants scored three or "Proficient" within this domain. The indicator that states, "Students complete work according to teacher expectations," was seen in all nine observations. Miss Peach walked around the room as students were reading aloud to ensure that everyone

stayed on task. She interacted positively with her students and answered questions that were asked of her. Mrs. White's class completed an activity where students moved around the classroom to different stations to complete an assignment. Prior to students leaving their seats, Mrs. White reviewed the instructions, which were posted for students to see, and asked if anyone had any questions. No students had questions, so they proceeded to complete the activity. All nine participants displayed the expectations for their classroom to be visible for students throughout the semester.

The biggest difference between earning a three or "Proficient" versus earning a four or "Exemplary" in the "Expectations" domain includes a key indicator. In the "Exemplary" section, one of the indicators states, "Students regularly learn from their mistakes and can describe their thinking on what they learned." Two other indicators in the "Exemplary" section, but not in the "Proficient" section, state, "Students lead opportunities that support learning," and "Students take initiative to meet or exceed teacher expectations." As stated, all classrooms have some evidence of student-centered learning/student ownership of learning, but there was not enough evidence to support assigning any study participant a score of "4" in this section.

RPs utilizes expectations as a way to not only build a classroom community, but to hold students accountable for their actions. With Professor Plum's LEARN acronym, she sets the expectation that students know and understand what she wants to see in her classroom on a daily basis by having students repeat the acronym to her. Additionally, Col. Mustard used the beginning of his class to review his daily expectations for students while he lectured; he stated, "Remember that you should be filling in the blanks of your notes while I am talking." This indicated that he wanted students to be taking notes while he was speaking.

Summary

This program evaluation informed by improvement science utilized both quantitative and qualitative data analysis to determine the extent that RPs decreased the rate of suspension for male students of color and how teacher's perceived implementation of RPs in their classrooms. The participants were nine teachers with different backgrounds and who teach a variety of subjects, including English, math, history, science, world language, business, and ESOL. The first research question I set out to answer was: "To what extent do RPs decrease the suspension rate of male students of color at RHS?" Based on the quantitative data, the association between race/ethnicity and suspensions is statistically significant, meaning that there is an association between race/ethnicity and suspensions. This association is concerning, as equitable discipline practices should occur in schools. RPs as an intervention, though, has shown to have positive outcome, based on viewing the numbers from Figure 1.1. However, there is not data to suggest that RPs decreases suspensions for racially marginalized students, as there is still an association between race/ethnicity and suspensions post-intervention. The second research question states: "How do teachers perceive the implementation of RPs within their classrooms?" I feel confident in the answer to this question, as the data sources and analysis concluded that teachers perceive RPs positively and will continue to use the intervention within their classrooms. Based on the observations, it is important that teachers are regularly observed and have an opportunity to reflect on the use of RPs within their classrooms. The implementation of RPs at RHS has been positive for the teachers who have been trained on the intervention. In fact, study participants want the rest of the school to be trained in order to create a more positive and collaborative school environment.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This culturally responsive program evaluation was informed by improvement science to determine the extent that RPs decreased a school's exclusionary discipline rate and how teachers experienced the implementation of RPs within their classrooms. I identified the problem of discipline data not reflecting a school's student demographic population, meaning discipline has not been equitably applied to students. I implemented RPs as an intervention to address the problem of practice. The final chapter discusses key findings from the program evaluation and future recommendations for practice, research, and policy.

The quantitative data that I analyzed provided evidence to answer the first research question that stated: "To what extent does RPs decrease the exclusionary discipline rate of male students of color at RHS?" With there being an association between race/ethnicity and suspensions, this suggests that there is not equitable distribution of consequences to students based on their race. In looking at the numbers of total of suspensions between the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year, there was a significant decrease in the total out of school suspensions. As the administrative team received the RPs training during the summer of 2022, they became more aware of how much exclusionary discipline can remove students from the classroom. One key finding gleaned from the quantitative data was that once school administrators implement RPs within the school environment, the total amount of exclusionary discipline decreased. However, another key finding was that even though RPs was utilized as an intervention, it did not change the statistical significance that shows the relationship between race/ethnicity and suspensions. This suggests a more systemic issue connecting race/ethnicity to suspensions.

The qualitative data that was analyzed answered the second research question: "How do teachers experience RPs implementation in their classrooms?" Based on the interview responses and what I observed during the classroom, the perception of implementation was positive, and teachers were successful with implementation. The key finding from the qualitative data was that teachers who spend time getting to know their students and build relationships with their students, while setting high and achievable expectations have success with implementation of RPs and keeping their students in their classrooms. Milner et al. (2019) sum it up perfectly stating, "The more deeply a teacher knows their students, the greater the opportunity to tie that knowledge of students' lives and interests into the lessons. The more the curriculum is tied to student's lives…the more likely they are to engage in deep learning…" (p. 100). Teacher and administrator relationships with students can assist in addressing inequitable discipline practices.

Below, I discuss the key findings from the data collected, which includes the following: explicit training for teachers and administrators, teacher perception, inequitable discipline practices, and, finally, on-going reflection. After I discuss the key findings, I share recommendations and implications on practice, research, and policy.

Discussion of Key Findings

Explicit Training for Teachers and Administrators

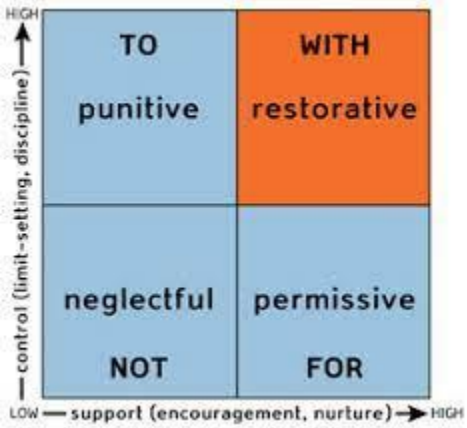
RHS administrators and teachers were trained on RPs during the summer of 2022, prior to the start of the 2022-2023 school year. It was important for the administrative team to be trained alongside the teachers, as often suspensions become a preferred disciplinary action of school administrators (Hinnant-Crawford et al., 2019). The training is discussed in depth in a previous chapter, but it is important to note that administrators and teachers both took away important skills to utilize within their own daily practice.

The quantitative data shows that the total number of days of suspension was less after the administrative team of RHS completed the RPs training and implemented the intervention during the 2022-2023 school year. As school administrators, the principal and assistant principals are responsible for sharing information with staff and can either help or hinder a school culture. When the entire administrative team takes responsibility for implementing RPs, as the team did at RHS, there is a larger sense of buy-in across the school (Shramko et al., 2023). As mentioned previously, only 8% of RHS teachers participated in the study. Only 10% of RHS teachers completed the RPs training with the administrative team, meaning more than 90% of RHS teachers have yet to complete training on RPs. This suggests the importance of continuing the training until all staff are trained in this intervention.

The administrators of RHS completed the training alongside the teachers. Within RPs, there is a social discipline window that suggests the most restorative actions occur when people do things “WITH” each other as opposed “TO” each other. I have included the social discipline window below as a reference in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1

Social Discipline Window



As the administrative team completed this training with teachers, it allowed teachers to understand the importance of the training, but also allowed administrators to build relationships with those teachers. When a staff is as large as RHS with over 100 teachers, plus an additional 40-50 classified employees, it can be hard to build meaningful connections. The social discipline window is helpful for teachers when interacting with students but can also apply to when administrators are interacting with teachers.

Teacher Perception

The qualitative data collected in this study suggests that teachers had a positive experience with implementation of RPs. After the training during summer of 2022, the administrative team made it a point to use circles when meeting with small groups of teachers and staff and to use circles when trying to quell conflict amongst both staff and students. Shramko et al. (2023) refer to this as "prioritizing community building circle practices" (p. 7). By modeling for teachers that the intervention was important to them, the administrative team helped teachers understand the importance of utilizing RPs, which ultimately means creating a classroom environment where students feel that they have a voice. RPs reinforce "interpersonal responsibility and interconnectedness while giving space for individual voice…" (Lustik, 2022). Col. Mustard shared that RPs helped him remember that the students are just kids and part of the learning process is learning how to make mistakes. He also shared that the training helped his parenting skills for his toddler and joked that high school students are very similar to toddlers.

Madame Brunette shared that she felt the RPs initial training was beneficial and that she feels that she learned how to better build relationships with her students so that they feel comfortable in her class and show respect both to her and to one another. While the study participants all shared a similar sentiment to Madame Brunette, it is important to remember that

this was only 8% of RHS total teacher population. In order for RHS to become a school with total implementation of RPs, the entirety of the staff needs to be trained. Dhaliwal et al. (2017) discusses the importance of shifting a mindset while implementing RPs to best affect practice. With such a large staff, shifting all 150 teachers' mindsets could present some challenges. However, as the initial teachers who served as the study participants had positive experiences, the opportunity for growth is present and evident within RHS. These teachers can share their experiences with other staff members and become, as Vincent et al. (2021) call them, "early adopters" who support the implementation of RPs within classrooms.

The study participants understand the value of RPs at both the classroom level and at the school level because they have been through the training. However, other staff members who have not yet been trained in RPs may not understand all decision made with regards to disciplinary practices, something that Short et al. (2018) state is important for all stakeholders to understand the reasoning behind decisions that are made (p. 317). The training participants had a positive experience and have a positive perception, but with only 8% of RHS staff being trained, it is important to move forward to include additional staff in the training process.

Inequitable Discipline Practices

With the quantitative data showing statistical significance, there is an association between race/ethnicity and days of suspension. Disciplinary consequences are assigned based on the action, meaning the only association to days of suspension should be to the offense. However, as the data suggests there is an association between race/ethnicity and days of suspension, an underlying issue of racial bias can be suggested. In order to address such an issue, this problem needs to be acknowledged (Hinnant-Crawford et al., 2019), which is honestly part of the problem. In order for racial disparities to be adequately addressed in education, those who are

educating and leading the schools have to acknowledge that minority students are treated inequitably (Mccray et al., 2015). This “deficit perspective” that teachers have creates harsher consequences for male students of color (Mccray et al., 2015). When consequences are harsher, that typically means the student is losing instructional time due to either in school suspension or out of school suspension. When RPs is used as an intervention, school staff works to ensure that all students feel connected to the school community, not just a specific subgroup.

With a mostly White staff, RHS’ discipline data has not reflected their student demographic population. During the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school year, Not W students accounted for the majority of RHS’ suspensions. While this remained true in the 2022-2023 school year, the numbers shifted closer to the overall student demographic population, in large part due to the administrative team being RPs trained. A discipline model that utilizes RPs as opposed to a punitive discipline model can help with student success, in addition to addressing equity within the education system (Payne and Welch, 2015). This study aimed to determine the extent that RPs decreased the suspensions of male students of color; RPs as an intervention did decrease the suspensions of male students of color, but it also allowed the educators who became RPs trained to acknowledge the differences among themselves and their students.

RPs aims to create a sense of community, within a school or a classroom. Facilitators of RPs encourage the use of affective statements in communication, which helps students build their self-awareness (Gomez et al., 2021). Affective statements, while building self-awareness, can also encourage students to take ownership of their actions, which directly connects to the indicators on the observation rubric under “Expectations” that kept several study participants from earning an “Exemplary” rating of “4” during their observations.

The study participants individually do not have inequitable discipline practices; however, RHS still has room for growth in regard to equitable distribution of consequences in order for the suspension data to accurately reflect their student demographic data. And though school administrators are able to justify using exclusionary discipline practices to maintain order and control (Simmons-Reed and Cartledge, 2014), the loss of instructional time will ultimately impact the school and the student's academic success.

Continuing Reflection

Administrators and teachers from RHS received RPs training during the summer months prior to the 2022-2023 school year. This professional development opportunity allowed these individuals the opportunity to learn the key tenets of RPs, while also using role play scenarios to practice with affective statements, using circles, and processing the restorative questions for conflict. The training is an opportunity for educators to reflect on their own practice and learn the fundamentals of the theory behind RPs (International Institute of Restorative Practices, 2022). While the administrative team continuously reflected on their practice by reviewing discipline data, teachers only had their own office referrals to use to help them reflect on their own practice. Mrs. White shared that she definitely saw a difference in her own practice by looking at the number of office referrals she wrote between the two school years. Other study participants shared similar beliefs. However, allowing teachers time to work together during professional learning communities could allow for more significant growth of implementation.

On-going professional development is critical to the success of implementing RPs. While administrators frequently checked in with teachers, relationship building was acknowledged as one of the most important aspects of RPs (Vincent et al., 2021). There is not currently any type of refresher course from the International Institute of Restorative Practices, however, RHS could

utilize the personnel that has been trained in order to offer annual learning opportunities for the staff. All nine study participants shared the sentiment that meeting with other teachers to discuss what is working within their own classrooms would be beneficial moving forward. In conclusion, this mixed-methods program evaluation found that teachers had positive experiences of implementing RPs within their classrooms, and that the total number of OSS days did decrease after initial implementation. There is always room for growth.

Recommendation for Practice

This program evaluation study showed how there is continued room for growth in the implementation of RPs within RHS. While the teachers who have received the training are implementing it correctly based on observational data, additional fidelity checks could allow the administrative team to be more consistent in determining the effectiveness of RPs within the classrooms. I observed the teachers' classroom only once, and often one observation does not truly show the reality of a classroom. Conducting observations over an entire semester or an entire school year would allow both the administrative team and teachers the opportunity to have reflective growth mindset conversations. As RPs utilizes the idea of a supportive community (Mansfield et al., 2018), when administrators and teachers collaborate in the best interest of students, everyone wins.

In addition to collaboration, utilizing affective statements, circles, and restorative conferences are also three methods to ensure that RPs is being implemented with fidelity (Milner et al., 2019). Affective statements allow for both students and teachers to utilize communication in order to express what they are feeling. This can reinforce positive interaction, redirect inappropriate behavior, and encourage reflection (Milner et al., 2019). Circles enable students and teachers to learn about one another, while giving them a shared sense of authority and

increase accountability (Gregory et al., 2016). Accountability is also incredibly important with regards to implementation of RPs, not just in circles, but also in restorative conferences. Students should have a support person present during the conference (Gregory et al., 2016) so that they feel supported while they take accountability for their actions. As RHS is a predominantly White school, RPs provides the opportunity for support, structure, and student voice which may help interactions between the predominantly White staff and historically stigmatized groups (Gregory et al., 2016). RPs can assist in breaking down the barriers created by implicit bias through the sense of community the intervention builds.

Recommendation for Research

The recommendations for research include improvements upon this study and for any future studies in CSD related to implementation of RPs. This research study focused on implementation of RPs and review of data of one high school. Future studies have the opportunity to focus on multiple schools within CSD, or even a comparative look at multiple schools within CSD. Additionally, it would be interesting to look at a site that has implemented RPs versus a school that has not implemented RPs. Unfortunately, due to the size of RHS and there being no similarly sized high school within CSD, another research site within the state of South Carolina would have to be selected.

Future studies could certainly review how RPs implementation has impacted school discipline since the COVID-19 pandemic. Vincent et al., (2023) state, “the school closures were stark reminders of the realities within which schools operate and provided important insights into how RPs could help to address associated challenges.” The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted many of the inequities within the education system, including discipline. Discipline stems from behavior, which is something that RPs seeks to address. However, when individuals are stressed,

their behavior can shift, which can cause significant difficulties. Vincent et al. (2023) discuss the significance that the pandemic had on individuals, which thus impacted behavior. As students had to reintegrate back into school buildings after the closures, discipline was greatly affected. Additional research could build on this evaluation study's results in order to determine how RPs can be used to shift a school's culture.

Recommendations for Policy

The state of South Carolina currently provides school districts with a minimum disciplinary policy but allows the districts to have autonomy in regards to their individualized policies. CSD operates using a discipline matrix that has three levels of infractions. While certain egregious behaviors, such as weapons, drugs, and assault, should certainly have appropriate consequences, the smaller offenses, which are classified as "Level 1" should have a uniform approach in response. There are multiple programs such as PBIS and MTSS among others that districts can use to assist with these types of behaviors. However, having RPs as the standard of setting classroom expectations for any Level 1 infraction could assist CSD, and other districts, in streamlining school discipline, while minimizing exclusionary practices.

There is no doubt that there is a discipline gap in the state of South Carolina. Students of color receive far more OSS and expulsions than their White peers. In order to try to effectively change this, there would have to be significant mindset shifts at both the state and national levels. Oftentimes, national policy makers create policies in order to ensure there is a marginalized group of people so that a sense of power can be felt. Within education, by keeping the minority subgroups of students out of the classroom due to suspensions and expulsions, policy makers are ensuring that White students are more successful academically than these minority students. For

there to be any type of effective change, policy makers will have to examine their own implicit biases in order to agree that all students should succeed.

Conclusion

Exclusionary discipline disparities have been an on-going issue within education. This program evaluation study was informed by improvement science and utilized Restorative Practices as an intervention in one South Carolina school district. This study sought to determine the extent that RPs decreased one school's exclusionary discipline while understanding how teachers perceived implementing RPs within their classrooms. While this study provides significant information to assist in closing the discipline gap, there is still much work to be done in regard to the continued marginalization of male students of color in predominantly White schools. Using RPs as an intervention can assist school leaders and teachers in creating school and classroom environments built on a foundation of culture and strong relationships. When teachers set clear expectations for their students, the students can understand what they need to do in order to succeed. Additionally, when school leaders set clear expectations for students, the students can understand how their actions are important within the school setting in order to grow both as learners and as people.

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Appendix A

Teacher Interview

Participant Name: Date of Interview:

Time: Facilitator:

Opening remarks from the facilitator: Thank you for agreeing to participate in interview. Please allow me to introduce myself and explain the purpose of this interview. As you know, you (have/have not) received training on Restorative Practices. Today's conversation will consist of a few questions that I will ask about your classroom management. I encourage you to be open and honest throughout our conversation. Please ask me to clarify anything, if needed.

Confidentiality: Your responses will be confidential. As the lead researcher, I will ensure that I will not share any identifiable information with anyone outside of the study or anyone else. Your responses will be recorded for transcription purposes only. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes and you are welcome to leave at any time. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Demographic Information: The following questions will explain who you are as an classroom teacher.

1. How many years have you worked in education as a classroom teacher?
2. What grade levels do you teach?
3. How many average students are in your classroom during a class?
4. If you had to guess how many office referrals you have written over your career as a classroom teacher, what would the number be?

Classroom Management: Great, thanks for answering those questions. The following questions will address your classroom management style.

1. Explain how you physically set up your classroom on the first day of school.
2. How do you establish classroom expectations for your students for the first day of school?
3. How do you maintain order in your classroom throughout the school year?
4. If/When a problem arises in your classroom with student behavior, how do you handle the situation?
5. How do you manage your classroom?

Restorative Practice Questions: The following questions will seek what you know about restorative practices.

1. What does the word "restorative" mean to you?
2. What do you know about restorative practices? (If they do not know anything, I will provide them with a brief overview.)
3. How would your classroom benefit from or change if you implemented restorative practices?

Restorative Mindset Questions: The following questions include scenarios that could occur in your classroom and seek how you will respond.

1. Thank back to a time you heard someone say, "These kids can't _____." Fill in the blank. How did you respond? How do you wish you had responded?
2. How does your culture impact what you view as appropriate or inappropriate behavior?
3. When you redirect a student in class, the student responds by cursing at you and flipping over her chair. How do you respond?

4. For the third time this school year, one of your students has threatened harm towards another student in your classroom. What are your first next steps?
5. You and a student have a confrontational interaction in your classroom and the student walks out. Fifteen minutes later, an administrator brings them back to your classroom and tells you they are ready to reenter. How do you respond?

Conclusion: I want to thank you very much for your time today and for providing me your honest insight. I am going to give you my contact information if you wish to provide any additional information about this topic. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions.

Appendix B

Observation Rubric

	Exemplary (4)	**Proficient (3)**	**Needs Improvement (2)**	**Unsatisfactory (1)**
Expectations	-Students are engaged in learning with clear and rigorous academic expectations for every student and actively uses aligned and differentiated materials and resources to ensure equitable access to learning. -Students regularly learn from their mistakes and can describe their thinking on what they learned. -Adults in the building create learning opportunities where all students consistently experience success. -Students take initiative to meet or	- Students are engaged in learning with clear and rigorous academic expectations for every student and with aligned materials and resources to access. -Adults encourage students to learn from mistakes. -Adults in the building create learning opportunities where all students can experience success. -Students complete work according to teacher expectations.	- Students are engaged in learning with clear and rigorous academic expectations for most students. -Adults encourage students to learn from mistakes. -Adults in the building create learning opportunities where some students can experience success. -Teacher expectations for student work are not clear for all students.	-Expectations are not rigorous for every student. -Adults in the building create an environment where mistakes and failure are not viewed as learning opportunities. -Adults in the building do not create learning opportunities where students can experience success. -Student work is rarely completed to meet teacher expectations.

	exceed teacher expectations.			
Notes:				
	Exemplary (4)	**Proficient (3)**	**Needs Improvement (2)**	**Unsatisfactory (1)**
Environment	The school: -welcomes all students and guests and provides a safe space for all students to take risks and interact with peers. -is clearly organized and designed for and with students to promote learning for all. -has supplies, equipment, and resources easily and readily accessible to	The school: -welcomes all students and guests. -is organized to promote learning for all. -has supplies, equipment, and resources accessible to provide equitable opportunities for students. -displays current student work.	The school: -welcomes most members and guests. -is somewhat organized to promote learning for all students. -has supplies, equipment, and resources available -displayed student work is not updated regularly	The school: -is somewhat uninviting. -is not organized to promote student learning. -supplies, equipment, and resources are difficult to access. -does not display student work.

	provide equitable opportunities for all students. -displays current student work that promotes a positive school environment.			
Notes:				
	Exemplary (4)	**Proficient (3)**	**Needs Improvement (2)**	**Unsatisfactory (1)**
Respectful Culture	-Adult-student and student-student interactions demonstrate caring and respect for one another and celebrate and acknowledge all students' background and culture. -Adults foster positive	-Adult-student interactions are generally positive and reflect awareness and consideration of all students' background and culture. -Adults and students exhibit respect and kindness for the teacher and each other; school is free	-Adult-student interactions are sometimes positive but may reflect occasional inconsistencies. -Students exhibit respect and kindness for adults and each other. -Adults are sometimes receptive to the interests and opinions of students.	-Adults do not establish a safe and positive culture for students. -Students do not exhibit respect for the adults in the building or each other. -Adults and/or student interaction is characterized by unhealthy conflict, sarcasm or put-downs.

	teacher-to-student and student-to-student interactions that demonstrate overall care, kindness, and respect for one another. -Adults seek out and are receptive to the interests and opinions of all students. -Positive relationships and interdependence characterize the classroom.	of unhealthy conflict, sarcasm, and put-downs.		Adults are not receptive to the interests and opinions of students.
Notes:				