A Leadership Perspective on Restorative Approaches to Social Justice:
When the Offender is the 'Circle'

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Abstract. Advocates continue to argue the benefits of leadership for a restorative approach to social justice, discipline, and punishment within education settings. In terms of education, this approach is relatively in its infancy with remaining unanswered questions to ensure the ongoing success. In this article, we will raise and engage with one such question, that being, *what happens if the offender in a restorative approach to social justice is the 'circle?'* The notion of the circle is an integral component of restorative justice. In addition, the components of victims and offenders are equally important. Yet, the processes of ascribing meaning to these components can undermine the very ideology and purposes of restorative justice practices. From the lens of leadership for social justice, the authors critically discuss and address the processes of how this may occur and conclude with recommendations for education leaders and practitioners regarding their practices when enacting restorative justice.

Keywords: *Restorative justice, social justice, educational leadership, social power.*

Introduction

Restorative approaches to social justice within education and correctional settings have increased in popularity in recent years (Ryan & Ruddy, 2015; Suzuki & Hayes, 2016). Further, these approaches have been found to be more responsive to the needs of *all* individuals in education communities, reducing some of the negative consequences associated with zero-tolerance policies to discipline and punishment in schools (Lustick,

2017a, 2017b). Examples of negative consequences of zero-tolerance policies have been found to include the educational disengagement of students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds (Lustick, 2017a, 2017b), racial disproportionalities in school discipline and punishment (Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace & Bachman, 2008), and a reifying of the school to prison pipeline (Wilson, 2014). Restorative justice approaches to discipline and punishment in schools have been argued to be highly beneficial to all members within education communities. Such benefits have been found to include: 1. higher levels of stakeholder satisfaction regarding outcomes of wrongdoing (Miller, 2008); 2. increases in inclusive school environments; 3. fostering higher levels of academic success (Wilson, 2014); and, 4. increases in social support and accountability in school environments, which in turn lead to greater emotional wellbeing and educational engagement (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012; Payne & Welch, 2018).

Whilst restorative justice approaches to school discipline and punishment are being championed, we must be wary of singing their praises too early. There is much literature supporting restorative justice, however, many questions remain unanswered (Hopkins, 2015; Lustick, 2017a; Saulnier & Sivasubramaniam, 2015). In moving forward with restorative justice in schools it seems necessary for education researchers, leaders, and practitioners to engage with potentially complex questions. It is our intention in this article to explore the question of *what happens if the offender in a restorative approach to social justice is the 'circle?'* Within this article, the circle represents the notion of community, which is a common conceptualization within restorative justice literature. As such, our intention is to theoretically explore what it means for restorative justice when a community itself has committed a wrongdoing. In exploring this question, key components of restorative justice such as victims, offenders, and community will be critically discussed and deconstructed. Through deconstructing some of the key components of restorative justice practices, we will

identify potential areas of concern and provide educational leaders with practical suggestions for restorative justice implementation and training. We begin with an operational definition of restorative justice followed by a short history of its inception and implementation. A discussion of the 'circle/community' ensues. Next, a discussion on a Foucauldian perspective on discipline and punishment is presented and linked to the key question underpinning this article, followed by two real-world examples of instances when the circle/community is itself the offender of a wrongdoing. Conclusions and recommendations for the future of restorative justice practices and training round out the article.

Operationalizing Restorative Justice

For our purpose, restorative justice will be defined as a method of addressing wrongdoing which explicitly and collectively considers the needs of all involved, particularly, the victim, the offender, and the wider community, with the intention being to enact restoration to social accord which may have been fractured by virtue of the wrongdoing (Miller, 2008; Suzuki & Hayes, 2016; Van Ness & Strong, 2014). The restorative justice model differs from traditional justice approaches, which historically focused almost solely on punishing the offender (Miller, 2008; Suzuki & Hayes, 2016; Van Ness & Strong, 2014).

The principle aim of restorative processes in schools is to discuss an incident with the goal of determining appropriate outcomes and subsequently repair the harm that has been caused by an incident through the active involvement of *all* stakeholders (Normore & Jarrett, 2017; Strang & Braithwaite, 2001; Van Ness & Strong, 2014). Within restorative approaches, stakeholders generally include victims, offenders, and where requested, their respective supporters (Normore & Jarrett, 2017; Strang & Braithwaite, 2001; Van Ness & Strong, 2014). Given the range of due process concerns that arise from restorative justice interactions, most restorative practices that are used within school and community settings require the offender to first admit responsibility for the offence and for both the victim and

the offender to consent to their involvement in the process. It is thought that through such a process all participant stakeholders will: have a deeper understanding of the circumstances and consequences of the offence; have agreed and contributed to the drafting of a behavioral or task-oriented contract to which stakeholders will adhere to; and be satisfied that the offence has been dealt with in a fair and equitable manner (Bauman, 2001).

Historical Context

In 1994, Herman Bianchi suggested that education scholars were so connected to the retributive model of criminal justice for school students, they were unable to accept the effectiveness of other models in other times and places (Bianchi, 1994). Five years later, Jon Braithwaite (1999) argued that through the history of the world, restorative justice had been the dominant model of criminal justice, and as such, a move toward a restorative justice model was really a return to our roots, and not the latest attempt to solve ailing justice systems in Western societies (Braithwaite, 1999). Other researchers (Llewellyn & Howse, 1999; Marshall, 1999) argued that restorative justice is not a new idea, but a prominent concept of justice visible throughout most of human history.

The First Nations Peoples of Canada and the United States, as well as the Maori of New Zealand have made very specific and profound contributions to practices in the field of restorative justice (Zehr, 2005). In many ways, restorative justice represents a "validation of values and practices that were characteristic of many Indigenous groups whose traditions were often discounted and repressed by western colonial powers" (Johnstone & Van Ness, 2007, p. 77). By the second half of the 1990s, the term "restorative justice had become popular and attracted many segments of society, including schoolteachers, principals, politicians, juvenile justice agencies, police, judges, victim support groups, aboriginal elders, and parents" (Johnstone & Van Ness, 2007, p. 77). Other researchers assert that restorative justice is "a fast-growing state, national and international social movement that seeks to bring

together people to address the harm caused by crime" (Umbreit & Armour, 2011, p. 2). Although the origins of restorative justice are widely contested (Clamp, 2010, 2014), and varying definitions continue to unfold, many agree that the inherent failings of school discipline and the implementation of zero-tolerance policies (Mackie, 2011) have created an impetus for alternative models to be devised (Schetly, 2009).

Role of Leadership in a Social Justice Context

Beyond the significant shift required of schools and communities to effectively curb violence and achieve justice within a restorative model, is the potential for altering the role of the school leader both within the school and community (Pumariega, 2003). In the best interest of students (Stefkovich & Begley, 2007) restorative justice leaders feel a moral obligation to work with those they serve including, but not limited to, students, teachers, families, partners, and other entities in the communities to first understand the problem and then seek positive solutions (Pires, 2002). Initiatives such as *New DEEL* (*Democratic Ethical Educational Leadership* - Gross & Shapiro, 2013) have shown significant action-oriented partnerships dedicated to inquiry into the nature and practice of democratic, ethical educational leadership through sustained processes of open dialogue, right to voice, community inclusion, and responsible participation toward the common good. These principles seem a good fit with those of restorative justice.

In terms of social justice, Murrell (2006) argues that, "social justice involves a disposition toward recognizing and eradicating all forms of oppression and differential treatment extant in the practices and policies of institutions, as well as a fealty to participatory democracy as a means of this action" (Murrell, 2006, p. 81). Narrowing the definition of social justice from the world stage, to the classroom, does not make the task any easier. How social justice relates to, and influences educational areas such as program development, curricula, practicum opportunities, educational philosophies, social vision, is a

large conversation (Hytten & Bettez, 2011). What can be said is that education plays a key part in promoting justice and the development of democratic citizenship. Michelli and Keiser (2005) see this educational commitment to social justice diminished through our current political climate that tends to stress curriculum tied only to basic literacy and numeracy skills and seemingly little else.

In addition to a modern emphasis on academic success in the face of globalization, countries throughout the world continue to adopt the social justice principle of universal education for all children. This increasing inclusiveness has led to challenges of diversity, individuality, and discipline. Schools should consider the needs of the many with the needs of the few. An individual student's right to an education, must be weighed against the majority of students' right to a safe and affirming educational environment (Wearmouth, McKinney & Glynn, 2007a). To combat these challenges, schools in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and North America are implementing restorative practices in the form of victim-offender conferences as a process for conflict resolution and student discipline (Wearmouth, McKinney & Glynn, 2007a). Teachers and staff are trained as mediators, and lead restorative circles to bring together the victim, offender, and community members in an effort to turn injury into personal healing and community development (Sullivan & Tiffit, 2001; Wearmouth, McKinney & Glynn, 2007b).

Restorative Justice and Education

Research (Advancement Project, 2014; Normore & Jarrett, 2017; Normore & Jarrett, 2017; Wachtel, 2013) has identified several restorative processes that are typically viewed as most helpful in implementing restorative practices in educational settings. In order to set restorative practices in an educational context we introduce some of the components of the restorative processes in the subsequent section.

Restorative Conference. A restorative conference is a structured meeting "between offenders, victims and both parties' family and friends, in which they deal with the consequences of the crime or wrongdoing and decide how best to repair the harm" (Wachtel, 2013, p. 6). Neither a counseling nor a mediation process, conferencing is a victim-sensitive, straightforward problem-solving method that demonstrates how citizens can resolve their own problems when provided with a constructive forum to do so. Conferences hold offenders accountable while providing them with an opportunity to discard the 'offender' label and be reintegrated into their community, school or workplace. Conferencing can be employed by schools in response to truancy, disciplinary incidents, or as a prevention strategy in the form of role-plays of conferences with primary and secondary school students.

Circles. A circle is a versatile restorative practice that can be used proactively, "to develop relationships and build community or reactively, to respond to wrongdoing, conflicts and problems. Circles give people an opportunity to speak and listen to one another in an atmosphere of safety, decorum and equality" (Wachtel, 2013, p. 7). The circle process allows people to tell their stories and offer their own perspectives without judgment in order for safe space to be created. Wachtel (2013) further posits that the circle has a wide variety of purposes: "conflict resolution, healing, support, decision making, information exchange, and relationship development" (p. 8). Circles may use a sequential format whereby "one person speaks at a time, and the opportunity to speak moves in one direction around the circle" and "each person must wait to speak until his or her turn, and no one may interrupt" (Wachtel, 2013, p. 8). Optionally, a talking piece - a small object that is easily held and passed from person to person - may be used to facilitate this process. Only the person who is holding the talking piece has the right to speak.

The restorative paradigm is manifested in many informal ways beyond the formal processes. Informal restorative practices include affective statements, which communicate

people's feelings, as well as affective questions, which cause people to reflect on how their behavior has affected others. A teacher in a classroom might employ an affective statement when a student has misbehaved, letting the student know how he or she has been affected by the student's behavior: 'When you disrupt the class, I feel sad or disrespected or disappointed'. Hearing this, the student learns how his or her behavior is affecting others. Alternatively, that teacher may ask an affective question, perhaps adapting one of the restorative questions used in the conference script. Whom do you think has been affected by what you just did? Then follow-up with How do you think they have been affected? In answering such questions, instead of simply being punished, the student has a chance to think about his or her behavior, make amends and change the behavior in the future.

Systematic use of informal restorative practices has a cumulative impact and creates what might be described as a restorative milieu - a learning environment where school leaders consistently foster awareness, empathy and responsibility in a way that is likely to prove far more effective in achieving social discipline than our current reliance on punishment and sanctions (Wachtel, 2013).

Restorative justice models are increasingly advocated by educators who regularly work with student suspensions and expulsions and are considered as the prefered alternative to retributive justice (Johnstone & Van Ness, 2007; Normore & Issa Lahera, 2017). It is a process in which participants directly involved in, or stakeholders affected by, a wrongdoing work collectively to find a mutual resolution. A wider more comprehensive defintion is provided by Gilbert and Settles (2007) who state crime is viewed "as a harm to individuals, their neighborhoods, the surrounding community, and even the offender. Crimes produce injuries that must be repaired by those who caused the injury" and that "crimes are more than violations of law, and justice is more than punishment of the guilty" (p. 7). Further, they posit that restorative justice "strives to promote healing through structured communication

processes among victims, offenders, community representatives and government officals. . .
to accomplish these goals in a manner that promotes peace and order for the community,
vindication for the victim, and recompense for the offender" (Gilbert & Settles, 2007, p. 7).

Operationalizing the 'Circle/Community'

The notion of community is conceptualized as being the 'circle'. Our rationale for this
conceptualization is that circling is a popular approach to enacting restorative justice
practices in education settings (Anyon et al., 2016; Payne & Welch, 2018). The circling
approach uses the performance and symbolism of gathering in a circle, whereby all
stakeholders (including the wider community) are invited to participate in the process of
social accord restoration through dialoguing (Suzuki & Hayes, 2016; Van Ness & Strong,
2014). Due to the embedded symbolism within this approach, the conceptualization of
community as the circle aligns itself well with our definition of restorative justice and some
of the key purposes and tenets of restorative approaches to social justice.

As highlighted by Suzuki and Hayes (2016) and influenced by Indigenous practices,
circling as a formalized approach to enacting restorative justice emerged in Canada in 1992
during a criminal trial. In this trial, Judge Barry Stuart was concerned that traditional methods
of sentencing were no longer appropriate for the offender, whose ongoing history of alcohol
abuse and criminal activity seemed to be non-responsive to previous sentencing conditions
(Van Ness & Strong, 2014). As such, in consultation with the Chief and elders from the
offender's community, it was deemed appropriate that any sentencing measures moving
forward should consider the needs and perspectives of all those affected by the offender's
activities. It was decided that the best way to achieve this would be to allow members of the
community to participate in the sentencing of the offender through the process of all
interested stakeholders (including the offender himself) gathering in a circle and both
formally and informally dialoguing to have their needs and perspectives considered in the

sentencing. The importance of being gathered in a circle is that this is a neutral and non-threatening space as there are no hierarchies in a circle. Further, by inviting and considering the wider community to be a key stakeholder relative to a wrongdoing, the circle itself begins to symbolize and represent that community and the very notion of community. Therefore, all subsequent references to community in this article may use both terms community and the circle interchangeably.

Restoring Social Accord to the 'Circle'

When enacting a circling approach to restorative justice it must be noted that the intention of this approach is not to punish an offender for a wrongdoing but rather to enact restoration to social accord within the circle, thereby achieving social justice relative to the wrongdoing (Johnstone, 2008; Lustick, 2017a). The processes and intentions underpinning how this occurs are presented in Figure 1 below. Image A represents community with all in the center being those who make up the community. Within this image, the future offender of a wrongdoing is a member of that community. However, in the very act of committing a wrongdoing and disrupting social accord within the circle the offender has forfeited his/her right of being a member of the community. As such, on a symbolic level the offender has, as a result of his/her action, removed him/herself from the circle, as depicted in image B. It is important to note that it is at this point where the distinction between traditional approaches to discipline and punishment and a restorative approach become apparent. In traditional approaches, when the offender is outside the circle, s/he is punished accordingly (Kafka, 2011; Payne & Welch, 2015). Education-related examples may include: being removed from a classroom, receiving a detention, a student being suspended from attending school for a period, or in more serious cases, being expelled from the school altogether and as such never returning to the circle (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2001; Payne & Welch, 2015; Welch & Payne, 2012).

When enacting traditional approaches to discipline and punishment, it is important to recognize that the approaches are punitive and usually offender-focused. By attending only to the offender, the needs of other stakeholders (i.e. the victim and the wider community) are often silenced in terms of the outcome of the wrongdoing. Yet, in restorative approaches the needs of the victim, the offender, and the community are at the forefront of how an outcome is achieved (Wachtell, Wachtell & Costello, 2009). It is through this process that restoration to the circle can be achieved. As such, the bracketing of the offender outside the circle is counter to this approach. Rather, the key intention of a restorative justice approach is to bring the offender back into the circle, as depicted in the image C, as it is in this process that restoration to social accord occurs within the circle.
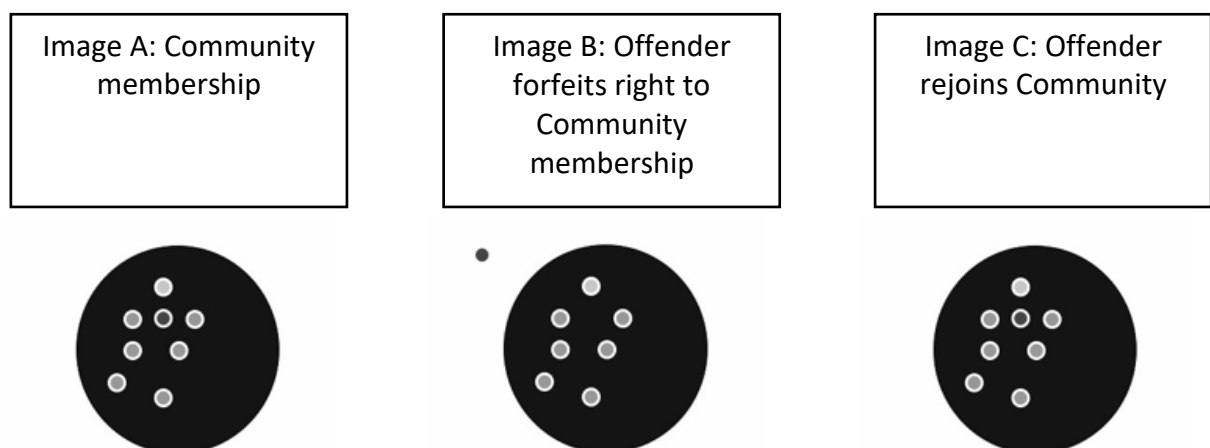
Image A: Community membership	Image B: Offender forfeits right to Community membership	Image C: Offender rejoins Community

Figure 1. The conceptual process of restoring social accord to the 'circle'

Breaking the Mold of Traditional Approaches to Discipline and Punishment

As previously mentioned, there is a growing body of empirical literature championing the benefits of restorative justice models of discipline and punishment in school communities. Additionally, from a Foucauldian perspective, restorative approaches seem to be breaking the mold of the genealogy of discipline and punishment in our societies as proposed by Foucault

(1977). This work of Foucault's was inspired by Nietzsche's (1887, 1998) pioneering text *On the Genealogy of Morals*. In their work, Foucault (1977) and Nietzsche (1887, 1998) use the term genealogy to refer to the heredity and reification of social beliefs through the evolution of practice and norms over time (Nietzsche's focus being morality and Foucault's focus being discipline and punishment).

As highlighted by Foucault (1977) in his seminal text *Discipline and Punish*, the genealogy of discipline and punishment strategies within societal and institutional settings have evolved in increasingly complex ways to enact social control and surveillance tactics within societies. Further, discipline and punishment practices are often underpinned by intricate power structures that, for some, are extremely difficult to navigate due to the assignment of social labels. For example, drawing on traditional approaches to justice, the assignment and expected roles of the labels victims, offenders, and communities operate in a manner which is intended for social control (Foucault, 1977). The operation of these intricate structures is highlighted by Foucault (1977) via his metaphorical use of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, which is an institutional building design that allows for sophisticated surveillance tactics to produce and maintain social agents' positionality and control their behavior by virtue of assigned social labels. However, when we contrast the intentions of Panopticism and Foucault's broader genealogy thesis, with the intentions and purposes of restorative justice practices, it appears that restorative practices do not align with Foucauldian control and surveillance tactics and as such break the mold of the genealogy of discipline and punishment; restorative justice is not intended for social regulation, it is intended to enact restorations to social accord. As such, for education leaders, researchers, and practitioners who are committed to social justice, this 'breaking of the mold' appears to be a step in the right direction, and thereby restorative approaches to discipline and punishment in education settings may be interpreted as being highly beneficial for education communities. However,

as we attempt to demonstrate in the following section, without deconstructing and interrogating crucial components of restorative justice practices, restorative justice practices may just be a sophisticated next step in the genealogy of discipline and punishment, with education leaders and practitioners being the cornerstone of this sophisticated approach to social control.

The Question

In our interrogation, if restorative justice does in fact break the Foucauldian mold of the genealogy of discipline and punishment, and as such strives to be an authentic approach to enact social accord and justice we propose the following question: *What happens if the offender in a restorative approach to social justice is the 'circle?'* The importance of this question lies in our previous discussion on the key components of restorative justice, that being victims, offenders, and circles. In asking this question, we need to acknowledge that there are implicit assumptions and presuppositions lurking in our understanding of key components of restorative justice. These being primarily: Who is a victim? Who is an offender? Who is a member of the community? And, what is a circle, what does it represent, and for whom? The meanings assigned to victims, offenders, and community members denote social positions with expected behaviors. Whilst we may view the meanings assigned to these components as being instinctual, crucial to this view is whose instincts are in fact assigning meanings, relative to what, and for what purposes? Therefore, we cannot ascribe restorative justice components with any ontological certainty. Rather, the meanings given to these components are contingent on epistemic points of reference, which become reified as being meaningful through political and institutional structures and systems which yield social power. Considering this, the applications of these meanings should be done so with extreme caution as the ability to do so is imbalanced within our societies.

In teasing out how key components of restorative justice are assigned meaning, we may wish to consider the relationships between ontology, epistemology, and social power. Whilst these terms are commonly utilized in education research, the relationship between them is rarely addressed. In simple terms, ontology is a branch of metaphysics concerned with the nature of being (i.e. what exists) (Blackburn, 2005). Whereas, epistemology refers to theories of knowledge and how knowledge comes to be generated (Blackburn, 2005). Yet, when we consider the relationship between ontology and epistemology we must acknowledge that it is through the operation of our knowledge that we assign things, stuff, events, and so on, with ontological certainty (even if misguidedly so). For example, if we appeal to historical, sociological, anthropological, and scientific records it seems overwhelmingly apparent that all knowledge is epistemically situated (Boghossian, 2006; Kuhn, 1962). Further, it is argued that the production of objectively validated knowledge in modern society is often embedded with imperialistic tendencies, and thus is intrinsically linked with social power (Smith, 1999). Consequently, when meanings are assigned to victims, offenders, and the circle relative to a wrongdoing it is essential to consider the process by which this is done. Therefore, when enacting restorative justice within socio-institutional settings, practitioners must ask themselves what is being restored and for whom? For example, are the intentions of restoration to enact restoration to social accord to facilitate social justice in the circle, or is the intention of the restoration to maintain a status quo of social control within the circle.

Real-Word Examples

To help with conceptualizing the operation of the restorative processes discussed thus far, we will offer real-world examples. This first example comes from the Australian context. Previous research has highlighted that there are significant issues regarding educational equity and opportunity for Indigenous students in Australia (Lamb, Jackson, Walstab, & Huo, 2015). Additionally, it has been argued that equity and inequality issues can be exacerbated,

and even perpetuated, by teacher attitudes and educational expectations of Indigenous students (Riley & Pidgeon, 2018). The example presented here has become known as *bad black kid syndrome* within the Australian education context (*Education and Employment References Committee*, 2016). This example comes from a 2016 Australian Senate inquiry into the levels of educational access and attainment for students with disability in Australia (*Education and Employment References Committee*, 2016). A submission to this Australian Senate inquiry by the *First Peoples Disability Network* argued that Indigenous students with hearing impairments in Australian schools are more readily identified by their teachers and their wider school community as misbehaving due to their educational engagement and outcomes instead of these resulting from their impairment (*Education and Employment References Committee*, 2016). As such, we argue that this misrecognition of labelling these students as offenders of a wrongdoing victimizes them in at least two ways. Firstly, labelling Indigenous students who have hearing impairments as offenders actually victimizes them in that they do not then receive the ongoing support they are entitled to in and on their education journeys (*Education and Employment References Committee*, 2016). Secondly, labelling further victimizes them through the punishments they receive, and the consequences of these punishments, due to this label (Lustick, 2017a, 2017b; Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace & Bachman, 2008; Wilson, 2014). If a restorative approach to these perceived wrongdoings committed by these Indigenous students was to occur, knowing what we know, we must inquire who is/are the victim/s? Who is/are the offender/s? and, what is being restored and for whom? In this example, we would have to view any form of attempted restoration as being a maintenance of the status quo (via social control), whereby Indigenous students could continue to experience systemic disadvantage in Australian schools due to their interactions with educational systems and structures (*Education and Employment References Committee*, 2016; Gonski et al., 2011; Lamb et al., 2015).

Within the United States, a restorative approach to discipline could be perceived as a realistic alternative to zero-tolerance retributive policies, which mandate suspension and expulsion, and disproportionately target minority students (Normore, 2015). Specifically, minority youth are disproportionately represented in the number of school suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to the juvenile justice system. Restorative justice is increasingly being implemented as an alternative to retributive school discipline polices, and a social justice response to the school to prison pipeline (Clemson, 2015). There is minimal research on school-based restorative justice, and even less on its implementation and efficacy in schools serving youth of color. However, one example of how restorative justice policies reduce violence, suspensions, and referrals to the juvenile justice system can be found in the Oakland Unified School District. In a 2007 case study conducted by the Thelton E. Henderson Center for Social Justice at the University of California, Berkeley, Cole Middle School in West Oakland's restorative justice program (created as an alternative to zero-tolerance disciplinary policies) was found to resolve conflict and build school community (Normore, 2015). All teachers and staff at Cole Middle School were trained in the practice of disciplinary circles and community building activities. Because of the training, teachers became better at recognizing when the restorative approach to resolving conflict was most appropriate. Furthermore, the training increased opportunities to effectively build positive relationships within the school community (Normore, 2015; Sumner, Silverman & Framptone, 2010).

Concluding Remarks and Future Recommendations

As the research to date has demonstrated, restorative approaches to discipline and punishment are highly beneficial to community members within education settings. Yet, we must acknowledge that it is still early days regarding the ongoing success and validity of these approaches, with there being more work to be done. As we have attempted to

demonstrate in this article, moving forward, education leaders and practitioners must acknowledge the operation of their social power when enacting restorative approaches to ensure that the intentions of these approaches are congruent with the ideology of restorative justice; particularly, when considering what it is that is being restored, by whom, and for whose benefit. Therefore, we suggest education leaders and practitioners contemplate the following two considerations when enacting restorative justice practices and training. Firstly, *buy-in* must be for social justice. As the restorative justice model considers the needs of all involved, key stakeholders must be engaged in the process of restoration. As such, when requesting individuals to participate in restorative processes we must ask ourselves what are we asking people to buy-in to and why? Secondly, and maybe most importantly, education leaders and practitioners must challenge their epistemic points of reference and the influence of their power. It is these points of reference, which carry the power to assign meaning to concepts such as victims, offenders, and community. In considering the above two suggestions, authentic cultivation of shared values within the circle can be a key goal. In doing so, we propose a re-imagination of the status quo within our education settings, rather than simply attempting to restore it when it is perceived to be broken.

By adopting a restorative approach, researchers and educational leader-practitioners can connect and extend long-established lines of conceptual and empirical inquiry aimed at improving school practices and thereby gain insights that may otherwise be overlooked, or assumed. They offer great promise for generating, refining, and testing theories of restorative practices in educational leadership and will help strengthen already vibrant lines of inquiry on social justice.

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