The promise of restorative practices to transform teacher-student relationships and reduce racial disparities in exclusionary discipline

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## The spread of Restorative Justice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example International RJ</th>
<th>Examples of Domestic RJ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>California</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>Colorado</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>Connecticut</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
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<td>Scotland</td>
<td>Illinois</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Maine</td>
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<td>Brazil...</td>
<td>Maryland</td>
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<td>Michigan</td>
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<td>Minnesota</td>
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<td>New York</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
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<td>Texas...</td>
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(Schiff, 2013)
Switching terms: RJ to RP

- Restorative justice is a subset of restorative practices. (RJ = intervention after rule infraction).

- Restorative Practices (PR) = informal and formal processes that precede a rule-infraction. Processes aim to proactively build relationships and a sense of community to prevent conflict and wrongdoing (Wachtel, 2013).
Restorative Practices

• Restorative practice expand upon restorative justice in the school setting and emphasize a preventative approach.

• Efforts outside of the US (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005; McCluskey et al., 2008).

• Efforts in the US (Ted Wachtel and colleagues, 2009).

• Restorative Practices (RP) has its roots in the restorative justice movement.
http://www.saferSanerschools.org/

International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP)
My read on the theory of Restorative Practices (RP)

Authoritative School Discipline

RP aims to

a) promote support and connection,
b) uphold structure and accountability,
c) integrate fair process and student voice.
Schiff’s summary of a Restorative Approach

• Focuses on relationships
• Gives voice to the person harmed and the person who caused the harm
• Engages collaborative problem-solving
• Dialogue-based decision-making process
• An agreed upon plan leads to actions aimed at repairing the harm done.

(Schiff, 2013)
# IIRP’s Elements of Restorative Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prevention (building</td>
<td>Affective Statements</td>
<td>Use in response to negative or positive events in the classroom and school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relationships and developing community)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactive Circles</td>
<td>Run on daily or weekly basis (e.g., students sit in a circle and discuss a topic that helps build community).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair Process</td>
<td>Engage students in decisions, explain the rationale.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restorative Staff Community/ Restorative Approach with Families</td>
<td>Model and use restorative practices among school staff and with student families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Elements of restorative practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Restorative Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Responsive Circles</strong></td>
<td>Address negative behaviors using questions (e.g., “Who has been affected by what you have done?” “What do you think you need to do to make it right?”).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Small Impromptu Circles</strong></td>
<td>After a moderately serious incident, students sit in a circle and address who has been harmed and what needs to be done to make things right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Restorative Conference Circles</strong></td>
<td>Address negative behaviors by asking the wrong doer and those harmed to answer restorative questions in front of each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reintegrative Management of Shame</strong></td>
<td>Respond to a serious incident using a scripted approach to facilitate accountability and repair harm.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acknowledge the emotions of the wrongdoers and those impacted by the wrong doing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What the students might experience through the RP Elements

My teacher is respectful when talking about feelings. (Affective Statements)

When someone misbehaves, my teacher responds to negative behaviors by asking students questions about what happened, who has been harmed and how the harm can be repaired. (Restorative Questions)

My teacher uses circles to provide opportunities for students to share feelings, ideas and experiences. (Proactive Circles)
What the students might experience through the RP Elements

My teacher asks students for their thoughts and ideas when decisions need to be made that affect the class (Fair Process)

My teacher uses circles to respond to behavior problems and repair harm caused by misbehavior (Responsive Circles)

My teacher acknowledges the feelings of students when they have misbehaved (Management of Shame)
Equitable access and Equitable treatment

Racial disparities in school discipline gap may relate to:

a) Differential access to supportive, developmentally-appropriate, “problem-solving,” rigorous/high expectation, talent development classrooms/schools

a) Differential sanction and selection of certain groups due to a range of processes potentially including implicit bias, microaggressions, low expectations/negative stereotypes, low cultural competence (teachers not bridging social distance) and lack of cultural responsiveness in how classrooms and schools are run.
Equitable access and Equitable treatment

My current focus:

Increase access to supportive, developmentally-appropriate, “problem-solving,” high expectation, talent development classrooms/schools

- Can stronger relationships interrupt differential sanction/selection and underlying processes (e.g., implicit bias, microaggressions)?
Theorizing about RP and the racial discipline gap

• RP’s focus on developing an authoritative climate in the classroom through a range of practices (e.g., proactive circles, affective statements, restorative questions) may elicit trusting teacher-student interactions in which students feel supported and treated fairly.

• With improved relationships, distrust, implicit bias and cultural misunderstanding may be reduced between teachers and students historically over-represented in school discipline (Gregory et al., 2011, Simson, 2012).

• A sensitivity to individual student perspectives and the collective voice of students accompanied by consistent and fair accountability for jointly-developed classroom rules may reduce the likelihood that students in stigmatized groups will be excluded from the classroom for discipline reasons.
Collaborative “Small Grants Program”

• The funded study identified whether higher RP implementation in high school classrooms were associated with positive teacher relationships for students of all racial and ethnic groups as seen through:

   a) student experience of their teachers as respectful

   b) infrequent use of teacher-issued referrals for misconduct/defiance across racial and ethnic groups (a discipline referral category accounting for large racial discipline gaps, Gregory & Weinstein, 2008).
Study sites

• Two high schools in PA
  – 149 Asian students (3%)
  – 2,443 White students (52%)
  – 1,430 Hispanic students (30%)
  – 720 African American students (15%).

• Small sample of teachers
  – $N = 29$
  – 75% women.
  – With the exception of a self-identified Puerto Rican teacher, most teachers identified as White.
  – Random selection of one of their classrooms
Students in the survey sample

- 412 students completed surveys.
- Males (53%) and female students (47%).
- Students self-reported:
  - 44% White,
  - 21% Hispanic,
  - 3% American Indian,
  - 2% Asian,
  - 5% African American,
  - 25% Mixed Race.

Of the 106 mixed race students, 45% reported they were partially of African American descent and 73% reported they were partially of Hispanic descent.
Discipline Referral Data

- The year before the RP program was brought into the schools (2010-2011), referrals related to misconduct/defiance comprised almost 30.3% of all discipline incidents.

- This was the second most common reason students received a discipline referral, following reasons related to missing class time (e.g., truancy, tardiness).

- In the 2010-2011 school year, close to a third of Hispanic and African American students (34%, 38%, respectively) compared to 5% and 11% of Asian and White students (respectively) were issued referrals for misconduct/defiance.
Clustering of groups for analysis

- Hispanic, African American, American Indian, Mixed from these groups
- Asian, White

Percentage in sample:
- 54% for Hispanic, African American, American Indian, Mixed
- 46% for Asian, White
Measuring RP Implementation

• Students answered all items on a five-point scale, rating the degree to which the teacher engaged in the particular RP approach (i.e., not at all, rarely, sometimes, often, and always).

  – The Affective Statements Scale (3 items, alpha = .59) included “My teacher is respectful when talking about feelings.”

  – The Restorative Questions Scale (4 items, alpha = .81) included, “When someone misbehaves, my teacher responds to negative behaviors by asking students questions about what happened, who has been harmed and how the harm can be repaired.”

  – The Proactive Circles Scale (4 items, alpha = .75) included, “My teacher uses circles to provide opportunities for students to share feelings, ideas and experiences.”

  – The Fair Process Scale (4 items, alpha = .73) included, “Asks students for their thoughts and ideas when decisions need to be made that affect the class.”

  – The Responsive Circles Scale (6 items, alpha = .72) included, “My teacher uses circles to respond to behavior problems and repair harm caused by misbehavior.”

  – The Management of Shame Scale (4 items, alpha = .71) included, “My teacher acknowledges the feelings of students when they have misbehaved.”
Teacher ratings

• Teachers RP implementation on parallel scales:
  - Affective Statements Scale, (8 items, alpha = .80),
  - Restorative Questions Scale (7 items, alpha = .90),
  - Proactive Circles Scale (8 items, alpha = .59),
  - Fair Process Scale (6 items, alpha = .93),
  - Responsive Circles Scale (10 items, alpha = .76),
  - Management of Shame Scale (7 items, alpha = .93).
Experience of RP implementation similar across student race and ethnicity

All differences *ns*
Measuring quality of teacher-student relationships

• Teacher Respect scale
  – On the student survey
  – 4-point likert scale, “not at all true” to “very true.”
  – They indicated whether the teacher “liked them,” “interrupted them when they had something to say” (rev. scored), “did not enjoy having them in class” (rev. scored) and “never listened to their side” (rev. scored).

• School discipline records:
  – Misconduct/defiance” discipline referrals included disrespect, insubordination, profanity/obscenity, misconduct, and disorderly conduct.
• The relationship between RP implementation and teacher respect would not vary by student race/ethnicity
**HLM Analysis with Student-Reported Teacher Respect as Level-1 Outcome**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Model 1 Estimate (SE)</th>
<th>Model 2 Estimate (SE)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Level 1 Student-level predictors</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race (1: Hispanic/Black; 0: Asian/White) $\beta_{1j}$</td>
<td>-0.02 (.05)</td>
<td>-0.02 (.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Cooperation$<em>{ij}$ $\beta</em>{2j}$</td>
<td>0.20** (.06)</td>
<td>0.19** (.06)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Level 2 Teacher-level predictors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student report_RP_Implement$<em>j$ $\gamma</em>{01}$</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.12** (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher report_RP_Implement$<em>j$ $\gamma</em>{02}$</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.05 (.03)</td>
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Findings

• Students reporting greater implementation of the RP elements tended to perceive those teachers as more respectful.

• A cross-level interaction was ns, which suggested the link between RP implementation and teacher respect was the same for Asian/White versus Hispanic/African- Amer., Amer. Indian groups.
Hypothesis

RP Implementation

→

Low racial discipline gap
## Regression Models for Number of Defiance referrals

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White/Asian Referrals</th>
<th>Afr-American/Hispanic Referrals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>R²</strong></td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.18*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standardized Betas</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Teacher-reported RP Implementation</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Student-reported RP Implementation</td>
<td>-.34+</td>
<td>-.44*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teachers above \((n = 16)\) and below \((n = 13)\) the mean on student-perceived RP implementation and number of misconduct/defiance referrals by race/ethnicity.
Study limitations

• Only first-year of RP implementation in the school

• Shared method variance (student-reported RP implementation and teacher respect)

• By randomly selecting one of the classrooms of our participating teachers, we took a “snap shot” of RP implementation. Yet, we used disc referrals from that teacher from across the school day.
Summary of study

• Teachers who were perceived by their students as frequently implementing many of the RP practices tended to have better relationships with their students, compared to infrequent implementers of RP.

• This was seen in the degree to which students felt respected by their teachers and teachers’ use of disruption/defiance disciplinary referrals.

• RP has promise for narrowing the racial discipline gap.

• Submitted for publication in a special issue of the *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation* (JEPC) on *Restorative Justice and School Consultation: Current Science and Practice*
Next steps:

• Do racial disparities in discipline change after two years of RP implementation in the high schools?

• *RP-Observe* – systematic observation of RP elements in the classroom
Equity-Implicit versus Equity-Explicit Interventions

Equity-Explicit Interventions:

- Does an intervention REQUIRE an explicit equity focus or cultural critique to more equitably distribute social capital or relational resources in schools?

- Do we have evidence that self-reflection on culture, microaggressions, institutionalized racism, or bias helps school staff provide equitable access to positive supportive relationships and leads to equitable treatment across racial groups?

- What are the pros and cons of an Equity-Implicit versus Equity-Explicit Interventions?

- Would potential RP effects be greater or lesser if the program went from being equity-implicit to equity-explicit?
Equity-Implicit versus Equity-Explicit Interventions

For Equity-Implicit Interventions:

- Is it enough that we increase access and lower differential selection/sanction by:
  • building positive teacher and student relationships
  • using nonpunitive, problem-solving approaches to rule infractions?

- Can a relationship-focused intervention bridge “social distance” across the predominantly White teaching force and their students of color?

- Is building trust/sense of community amongst peers and between staff-students enough to more equitably allocate relational resources?
Analyses include classroom, student and teacher controls: the percentage of AA students in the classroom, course subject area, teacher race/gender, years of teaching experience,
Thank you

Thank you to Atlantic Philanthropies for the support of this research.