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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON THE EFFECT OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE ON SCHOOL SUCCESS AND DISCIPLINARY INCIDENTS

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Alexis Nicole Norris

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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON THE EFFECT OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE ON SCHOOL SUCCESS AND DISCIPLINARY INCIDENTS

By

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ABSTRACT

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON THE EFFECT OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE ON SCHOOL SUCCESS AND DISCIPLINARY INCIDENTS

By

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This study examines whether a restorative justice (RJ) intervention compared to the traditional school discipline process, improves the commitment and attachment to school for middle school students, leading to an increase in academic achievement and a decrease in antisocial behavior. Previous studies on restorative justice programs in schools have found a decrease in suspension, expulsion, and behavioral referral rates for students involved in a RJ intervention and high participant satisfaction rates for both victims and offenders who went through restorative processes. Findings from this study show that RJ had no effect on academic achievement, the change in GPA between the RJ students and non RJ students was not significantly different. However, RJ was found to be successful in reducing or stopping future offending for certain students. The predictive attribute analyses (PAA) show that the best predictor for success in RJ was having minor prior incidents. The PAAs also show that RJ was more effective at stopping future offending for students in poverty with minor prior offenses than the traditional discipline process.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In recent years restorative justice programs have become increasingly popular, especially in the juvenile justice arena (Braithwaite, 1999; Hayes & Daly, 2003; Luke & Lind, 2002; McCold & Wachtel, 1998; Maxwell & Morris, 1994,1996; McGarrell, 2001; McGarrell & Hipple, 2007; Rodriguez, 2005; Sherman et al., 2000; Strang et al., 1999; Umbreit, 1998). More and more, restorative justice practices are also being used in schools as an alternative to the traditional disciplinary process (Ahmed et al., 2001; Calhoun, 2000; Kane et al., 2006; Karp & Breslin, 2001; Minnesota Department of Children, 2002; Morrison, 2002, 2003, 2005; Morrison, Blood, & Thorsborne, 2005; O'Brien, 2005; Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006; Wachtel, 1997; Youth Justice Board, 2005). Preliminary studies of the use of the restorative justice paradigm in schools hold promise, but efforts to date are limited. The impact of the reintegrative shaming or restorative justice processes, in place of traditional school discipline, have the potential not only to improve short-term school performance and commitment, but also to limit the affect of disruptive school behavior and school failure on future delinquency and criminality. Studies have found that disruptive behavior in children can lead to future criminality (Farrington, 1994; Haapasalo & Tremblay, 1994; Nagin & Tremblay, 1999; Stattin & Magnusson, 1989; White et al., 1990). Many of the children with disruptive behavior are also failing in school, and studies have shown that failure in school leads to criminal behavior (Arum & Beattie, 1999; Sherman et al., 1997; Snyder & Sickmund, 2006).

This study explores the impact of the adoption of restorative justice in one local middle school, in a small urban city in the Midwest. More than 60 percent of the students

in this school have been involved in some type of disciplinary incident and more than 26 percent in two or more incidents. These are especially troubling findings when one considers the age group of these middle school students (11 to 16). According to some studies, young offenders are at higher risk of becoming serious and repeat offenders. In one study sixty percent of youth ages 10 to 12 that were referred to court returned and had a high rate of continued offending (Snyder & Sickmund, 1995). In another study, the risk of becoming a more serious offender was two to three times higher for child delinquents ages 7 to 12, than children who started offending at a later age (Lober, Farrington, & Petechuk, 2000). McGarrell (2001) says that "because such young offenders have a high likelihood of reoffending, communities should develop and implement effective early interventions for very young offenders" (p.1).

Restorative justice is one early intervention program that can be implemented in the schools to help reduce the number and severity of student incidents before students escalate to criminal offending. The hope is that this program will help improve the students' attachment and commitment to the school which would be reflected in better academic performance and lower levels of antisocial activity (school incidents). In practice, restorative justice does this by getting all parties involved in the incident, directly involved in the disciplinary process too. The offenders are encouraged to assume responsibility for their actions so they can repair the harm they caused and build or rebuild prosocial relationships. The victim and school or community involvement strengthens the community values and helps to bring the offending students back into the school community (Rodriguez, 2005; Van Ness, 1993).

Integrating concepts from both Reintegrative Shaming Theory (Braithwaite, 1989) and Control Theory (Hirschi, 1969), restorative justice programs should serve to strengthen bonds between the student and the prosocial institution of the school. The process of reintegrative shaming, as opposed to shaming, should – according to Braithwaite – enhance the chances that the student will earn redemption back into the school community if exposed to RJ practices, but will be labeled by and ostracized from the school community if traditional discipline is employed. According to Hirschi (1969), traditional practices, especially suspension and expulsion, limit the physical ability of the student to participate and bond with people and processes in the prosocial institution of the school. Therefore, both theoretical perspectives support the hypothesis framed in this exploratory study, that restorative justice practices should lead to greater school success and lower levels of antisocial behavior.

Chapter 2: Theory and Research

Restorative Justice

In the criminal justice system the question of what is most effective, rehabilitation or punishment, has been discussed and debated by theorists and practitioners for at least half a century (Bazemore, 1998). The punishment, or retributive, model in criminal justice emphasizes offender accountability and, does not emphasize support for the offender (Morrison, 2003); it promotes punishment, denounces crime, demonstrates disapproval of the criminal behavior, and provides consequences for the offender (Bazemore, 1998). In contrast, the treatment or rehabilitative model is less focused on offender accountability, and emphasizes the provision of programs to deal with offenders' deficits that are perceived to be linked to offending (Morrison, 2003). Juvenile justice theorists, such as Gordon Bazemore believe that this model is not as popular with the public because it is difficult to convince them that "it provides anything other than benefits to offenders..." (Bazemore, 1998, p. 769). Since the mid-1970s, when researchers Lipton, Martinson, & Wilks (1974) published a study that pointed to the ineffectiveness of rehabilitation, the "nothing works" study, and through increased crime in the 1980s and the framing of juvenile offenders as "juvenile super-predators," (DiLulio, 1995), the emphasis has been on punishing the offenders instead of rehabilitating them. This has led to an increase in incarceration rates in both adult and juvenile correctional systems (Feld, 1990, 1993). According to proponents of restorative justice, neither of these approaches addresses the needs of the community, the victim, and the offender when responding to crime and deciding on punishment (Bazemore, 1998).

In the retributive and rehabilitative model the community and victim are left out

of the process. Van Ness (1993, 1998) says that nearly every facet of the criminal justice system works to reduce victims, offenders, and communities to passive participants. The victims have no say in what happens to the offender, and they are not addressed when it comes to making amends. The community also has limited involvement; often their contribution is restricted to participation as a witness or on a jury (Van Ness, 1993, 1998). In a different but important way the offender is also left out of the current criminal justice process. Offenders are not given an opportunity to be reintegrated into the community by apologizing, making amends, and repairing the harm they caused. The criminal justice system "excludes from the...process those most affected by the offense – the offenders, victims and their respective communities..." (Wachtel, 1997, p. 124).

Restorative justice (RJ) allows the community, victim, and the offender to be co-participants in an amends making rather than an adjudicatory or disciplinary process. Proponents of restorative justice believe that such processes address the needs of the community and the victims by repairing harm done to them through apology and reparations from the offenders and requires the offenders to take responsibility for their behavior, acknowledge the damages caused by their actions, and work to restore and strengthen informal relationships that may have been damaged; a process that theory proposes leads to the reintegration of offenders into the community (Bazemore, 1996, 1998; Elis, 2005; McGarrell, 2001; Van Ness, 1993; Zehr, 1990).

Zehr (1990) posits three restorative questions: 1) What harm resulted from the crime, 2) What needs to be done to repair the harm, and 3) Who is responsible for the repair? According to Bazemore (1998) the punitive and rehabilitative models fail to adequately address these questions because the community and the victim are left out of

the process. The restorative justice approach sees crime as harming individuals and their communities and the only way to achieve justice is to attempt to "heal the wound" crime causes, not by treating or punishing the offender (Bazemore, 1998; Van Ness et al., 1989; Zehr, 1990). The goals of restorative justice are to sanction crimes, repair harm done to the victim, promote public safety, and reintegrate offenders back into the community. Bazemore (1998) says one way to do this is through earned redemption. This is a "sanctioning approach that allows offenders to make amends to those they have harmed to earn their way back into the trust of the community" (p. 770).

There are two general principles that work together to allow stakeholders in the restorative justice process to work in collaborative relationships and try to achieve amends for the harm that was caused: restorative decision making or conferencing modeling and restorative sanctions (Bazemore, 1998; Bazemore & Umbreit, 1995; Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006). First, restorative conferencing modeling is "[d]esigned to enable victims, offenders, their supporters, and affected community members to have input into a plan to repair harm" (Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006, p. 132). This can be done through different conferencing models such as: family group conferences, victim-offender mediation, neighborhood accountability boards, and peacemaking circles; which all look to maximize the stakeholders' involvement in the decision making process (Bazemore & Umbreit, 1995; Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006). There many be administrative and procedural differences between the models but they share common features important to the restorative process such as: a focus on community-based sanctioning, non-adversarial and

informal processes, and decision-making consequences (Bazemore & Umbreit, 2001; Bergseth & Bouffard, 2007).

The second principle, restorative sanctions, provides evidence that the offender has earned redemption through efforts to make amends for the harm they caused by performing community and victim services, making apologies and restitution, and through behavioral agreements or any other amends making processes (Bazemore, 1998; Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006).

There are different theories associated with restorative justice. These theoretical perspectives include procedural justice theory (Tyler & Blander, 2000), self categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987), and defiance theory (Sherman, 1993); but this study will focus on Braithwaite's (1989) reintegrative shaming theory and Hirschi's (1969) control theory.

Reintegrative Shaming Theory

According to John Braithwaite, the architect of reintegrative shaming theory, the current criminal justice system handles offenders in a way that makes it difficult for them to shed the offender label. This leads to stigmatizing shame, denouncing the offender not just the criminal act, which makes it hard for the offenders to enter back into society and potentially pushes them further into criminal subcultures. Braithwaite's (1989) reintegrative shaming theory is centered on two principles. First, he says that the method a society uses to handle shame will determine how much violence and crime the society has. If shame is used to humiliate and stigmatize then the person being stigmatized will fail to reintegrate back into society and will seek out criminal subcultures to find positive

self-images. He found that there is a positive relationship between stigmatizing shame and crime, violence, and criminal subcultures in society.

Second, instead of asking the traditional criminal justice question of "Why do criminals do the wrong thing?" he asks, "Why do most people do the right thing most of the time?" (Wachtel, 1997). Braithwaite (1989) found that most people do the right thing because they want to avoid disappointing the people they care about. The opinion of friends and family is a powerful social control, and for most the fear of being shamed by them is a major deterrent to committing crime, more powerful than a criminal justice authority (McGarrell, 2001). Reintegrative shaming involves "encouraging wrongdoers to experience shame for their actions while allowing them to maintain their dignity. This is accomplished by holding wrongdoers accountable for their actions and providing them with an opportunity to make things right" (McCold & Wachtel, 1998, p. 9). It also involves targeting the criminal act not the actor who performs it (Braithwaite, 1989). A combination of accountability by the offender and respect from the victim and community helps to keep the offender in that community (Braithwaite, 1993).

Braithwaite (1989) says that societies that use reintegrative shaming have lower levels of crime and violence. Studies (Leibrich, 1998; Strang et al., 1999) have also found other positive affects of reintegative shaming. Leibrich (1998) found that shame was a significant factor in former offenders remaining crime free. The most common reason mentioned by these re-entering offenders for "going straight" and the most commonly mentioned cost of offending was personal disgrace (behavior exposed in front of people they knew) and private remorse (coming to think their offending was wrong). The Reintegrative Shaming Experiment (RISE) (Strang et al., 1999) which randomly

assigns eligible criminal cases to court or a restorative justice conference, also tested reintegrative shaming theory, and it found positive changes in the attitudes of offenders who went through the restorative justice process. For restorative justice an important step in reintegrating the offender back into the community is a feeling of shame or remorse and an effort to make amends by holding the offender accountable to the victims and the community (Bazemore, 1998; Braithwaite & Mugford, 1994).

Control Theory

Control theory assumes that delinquent acts result when an individual's bond to society is weak or broken. Hirschi (1969) focused on how an individual's bond to society influences their decision to break the law. He found four elements of social bonds to society which restrain a person from engaging in deviant behavior; 1) attachment to others, 2) involvement in conventional activities which restricts opportunities for delinquent behavior, 3) commitment to conventional society and a future career, and 4) belief in the moral validity of the law; to what extent do they feel they should obey the rules of society. Bazemore (1998) summarizes this, saying that social control "emphasizes the importance of the bond individuals have to conventional groups. [These bonds] can in turn be viewed as culturally and structurally fixed in the roles individuals assume in the context of socializing institutions (family, work, school), which there by account for informal constraints on deviant behavior based on affective ties to significant others (teachers, parents) as well as on a more rational stake in conformity that limits individual involvement in crime by the risk criminal behavior poses to future legitimate opportunities" (p. 785). According to Hirschi (1969) control originates with and is

sustained by a person's bond to society and its effect depends on that person's bonds to family and/or conventional institutions like school.

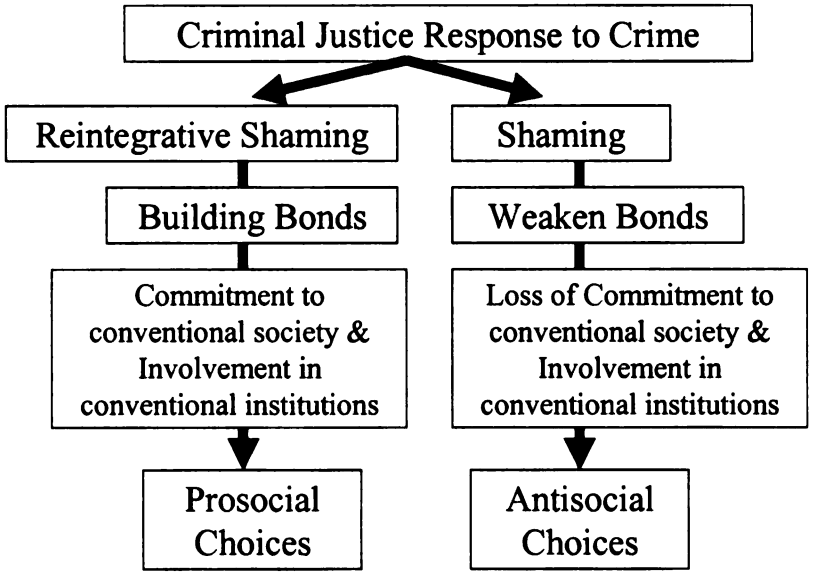
Crime is seen as the breakdown in the bonds that link people and communities together and is also seen as the source for the further weakening of those bonds (Bazemore, 1998; Van Ness et al., 1989). Bazemore et al. (2000) and Elis (2005) see the relationship between criminal behavior and informal social control as reciprocal; "[d]isruption in informal social control produces crime and involvement in crime leads to further disruptions in formal social control..." (Elis, 2005, p. 379). As social bonds are weakened the power of the community to restrain individuals' criminal impulses are reduced. Restorative justice looks to strengthen these weakened bonds and as a result reintegrate offenders into the community by strengthening informal social control and rebuilding social and community relationships which should prevent future criminal behavior (Bazemore, 1998; Bazemore et al., 2000; Elis, 2005; Van Ness, 1989).

In order to repair damaged relationships and build new ones the response to crime has to involve the community and its citizens (Bazemore, 1998; Van Ness at el., 1989). If crime is a result of weakened bonds, then at the individual level the response should focus on changing the offenders' view of the community and on strengthening the offenders' ties or bonds to conventional society. At the community level the focus should be on "increasing the willingness and capacity of community groups to take responsibility for integration and reintegration as well as informal sanctioning and social control..." (Bazemore, 1998, p. 787) of the offender and on changing the citizens' views of the offender (Bazemore, 1998; Braithwaite, 1989; Elis, 2005).

Theory Integration

The proposed theoretical model for this study integrates Braithwaite's (1989) reintegrative shaming theory with Hirschi's (1969) control theory (Figure 1). This model suggests that if the response to a criminal act by the criminal justice system is shaming for the offender, then that individual's bonds to society are weakened, which could lead to a loss of commitment to conventional society and involvement in conventional institutions and activities. If the offender is not committed to society or involved in conventional institutions or activities they may seek out criminal subcultures to gain a positive self-image (Braithwite, 1989), leading to antisocial choices for the offender.

Figure 1: Theoretical Model



Alternatively, if the criminal justice system's response to a criminal act uses reintegrative processes it should help build the offenders' bonds to society, reintegrating

them back into the community and linking them up with prosocial others, leading to prosocial choices.

Restorative Justice in the Juvenile Justice System

As stated above, the goals of restorative justice are to sanction crimes, repair harm to the victim, promote public safety, and reintegrate offenders into the community, while involving the victim, offender, and community in the process. Restorative justice also allows citizens to represent their neighborhood values and norms while being involved in this decision-making process (Rodriguez, 2005), and provides offenders with the opportunity to develop social skills and the chance to learn skills that can help them avoid future criminal involvement (Bazemore, 1998; Braithwaite, 1989; Elis, 2005; Van Ness, 1993). Studies done on restorative justice programs in the juvenile justice system have found higher offender and victim satisfaction rates compared to other interventions (McCold & Wachtel, 1998; McGarrell, 2001; Minnesota Department of Corrections, 2006; Strang et al., 1999) and mixed results on the reduction in offender recidivism (Bergseth & Bouffard, 2007; Braithwaite, 1999; Hayes & Daly, 2003; Luke & Lind, 2002; McCold & Wachtel, 1998; Maxwell & Morris, 1994,1996; McGarrell, 2001; McGarrell & Hipple, 2007; Rodriguez, 2005; Roy, 1993; Sherman et al., 2000; Strang et al., 1999; Umbreit, 1998).

In McCold and Wachtel's (1998) study on restorative policing, violent offenders who participated in the program had lower re-arrest rates than those who did not participate, they were 20 percent less likely to recidivate than those who were not in the program; however there was no difference in the re-arrest rates for property offenders.

The study also reported that participant satisfaction and sense of fairness exceeded 96 percent for those in the program. The Reintagrative Shaming Experiment (RISE) (Strang et al., 1999) which randomly assigned eligible criminal cases to court or a restorative justice conference also found high levels of offender satisfaction and positive changes in the attitudes of offenders who went through the restorative justice process.

In a study done by Bergseth and Bouffard (2007) they found that juveniles referred to a restorative justice process were less likely to experience later police contact, and more likely to have fewer later contacts, less serious later behavior, and a longer time to first re-offense than juveniles referred to the traditional court process. Luke and Lind (2002) found that restorative justice conferences resulted in a 15 to 20 percent reduction in re-offending and Rodriguez (2005) found that juveniles who completed the restorative justice program were less likely to recidivate than those in a comparison group. Meanwhile, Maxwell and Morris (1994, 1996) found that 48 percent of offenders who went through a conference re-offended after six months and after four years 65 percent were reconvicted.

McGarrell's (2001) study of the Indianapolis restorative justice experiment found high levels of satisfaction among participants in the restorative justice conference and the court ordered diversion program (control group), however victims participating in the conference were more satisfied with how their cases were handled and were more likely to report that they were involved in the process and that they were able to express their views. The study also found that during the six months after their initial incident the youth who attended the conferences were significantly less likely than those who attended other diversion programs to be rearrested. Consistent with the initial study,

McGarrell and Hipple's (2007) follow-up study of the Indianapolis restorative justice experiment found that participants in RJ conferences had lower rates of offending particularly in the initial six months after the original offenses. Survival analysis indicated that the decline in offending persisted over a two-year period.

Restorative Justice in Schools

Studies have found that childhood disruptive or troublesome behavior is one of the best predictors of adolescent and adult criminality (Farrington, 1994; Haapasalo & Tremblay, 1994; Nagin & Tremblay, 1999; Stattin & Magnusson, 1989; White et al., 1990), so it follows that students who become involved in incidents in school are more likely to be involved in criminal behavior. In a traditional school discipline process when students are involved in disciplinary incidents the punishment may be detention, suspension, or expulsion depending on the seriousness of the offense. According to Wachtel (1997) one result of detentions, suspensions, and expulsions is that those students that receive them see themselves as an outcast or "bad." Like the criminal justice system, school disciplinary procedures "provide the students little or no opportunity for reintegration – for making amends, apologizing, repairing the harm or shedding the offender label...[He says] the primary difference between schools and courts is that schools start alienating offenders at an earlier age" (p.123-124).

Schools foster the highest levels of violence such as bullying, aggression, intimidation, and exclusion which feeds a wider circle of violence and alienation (Morrison, 2003). According to Hirschi (1969) young people lack a sense of belonging and connectedness and those who cannot clearly see the future which success in school

may provide have little to lose by behaving in a delinquent or deviant manner. This highlights the importance of schools as a social institution. Morrison (2002) says that schools have both the potential to nurture and integrate individuals into society and the potential to stigmatize and exclude them. She also says that "schools may be the most appropriate institutions to focus on reducing antisocial and criminal behavior patterns in children, while promoting... resilience, and social responsibility" (p.1).

By just suspending or expelling the student for their behavior schools may be solving the immediate problem, but fail to see the potential long term consequences. In their study Castenbader and Markson (1998) listed some side effects of in-school and out of school suspension on the students and the community; an increase in maladaptive behaviors not addressed by the suspension, withdrawal from or avoidance of school staff, negative impact on self-respect, stigma among peers, driving a school problem into the streets and community, and disruption of the student's education. They also found that suspension has been correlated with drug use, poor academic achievement, and long term disaffection and alienation; and that "students who had been suspended were more likely to be involved with the legal system" (p. 59).

Traditional school disciplinary procedures like suspension and expulsion take the students out of the school learning environment where there are prosocial, positive influences without giving them a chance to be involved in the process. The student's attachment and commitment to the conventional institution (school), involvement in school activities, and potentially the belief in the legitimacy of school rules may be weakened by this process. By punishing them and not allowing them to make amends, it

makes it harder for the students to be reintegrated back into the school community, which could lead to disillusionment with school and failing grades.

Disillusionment with school and failing grades could lead to larger problems. Some studies have shown that negative attitudes toward and failure in school leads to criminal behavior (Anderson et al., 1999; Arum & Beattie, 1999; Rankin, 1980; Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). Rankin (1980) found that negative attitudes toward school and poor school performance are related to increased delinquency among males and females. Similarly, Anderson et al. (1999) found that a strong attachment to school protects girls from delinquent involvement, however school attachment was unrelated to delinquent behavior among boys. The U.S. Department of Education (1996) says that research shows a link between suspension/expulsion and dropping out of school, which later results in personal and social costs. Students who are failing in school, dropout, and are unable to obtain good jobs or stay unemployed have an increased chance of getting involved with criminal activity (Sherman et al., 1997; Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). In a study on the effects of high school educational experience on the risk of incarceration, Arum and Beattie (1999) found that being enrolled in high school reduced the risk of future incarceration for men ages 19 to 36. If students are chronically involved in school incidents and the traditional discipline process is not working, schools should consider new approaches to handling incidents in school before they lead to larger societal problems.

Restorative justice provides everyone involved in the school incident the opportunity to participate in the disciplinary process and allows differences to be worked through in a constructive manner. It also gives the students an opportunity to learn

conflict resolution skills, a way to solve conflicts without resorting to violence, so they can avoid future incidents (Morrison, 2002). If students are not given a chance to work out their problems or given an opportunity to learn to modify their behavior they "generally return to school no better disciplined and no better able to manage their anger or peaceably resolve disputes" (U.S. Department of Education, 1996, p. 65). Wachtel (1997) says that if children's inappropriate behavior were systematically challenged with a restorative or reintegrative response early on in school, they could avoid the stigmatization and alienation that weakens their bonds to the school community and the larger society.

In primary and secondary schools restorative justice has been used as an alternative to the traditional disciplinary processes in response to disciplinary violations, bullying, and crime (Ahmed et al., 2001, Braithwaite, 2002). There have been several studies done on restorative justice processes which show promise for its effective use in dealing with school disciplinary issues (Calhoun, 2000; Karp & Breslin, 2001; Kane et al., 2006; Minnesota Department of Children, 2002; Morrison, 2001; Morrison, 2005; O'Brien, 2005; Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006; Youth Justice Board, 2005). However, not all studies have shown success. There have been difficulties in implementing the programs in schools (Cameron & Thornsborne, 2000; Karp & Breslin, 2001; Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006) and Morrison, Blood, and Thorsborne (2005) say that restorative justice is not showing the positive change in school behavior management and policy that was originally expected.

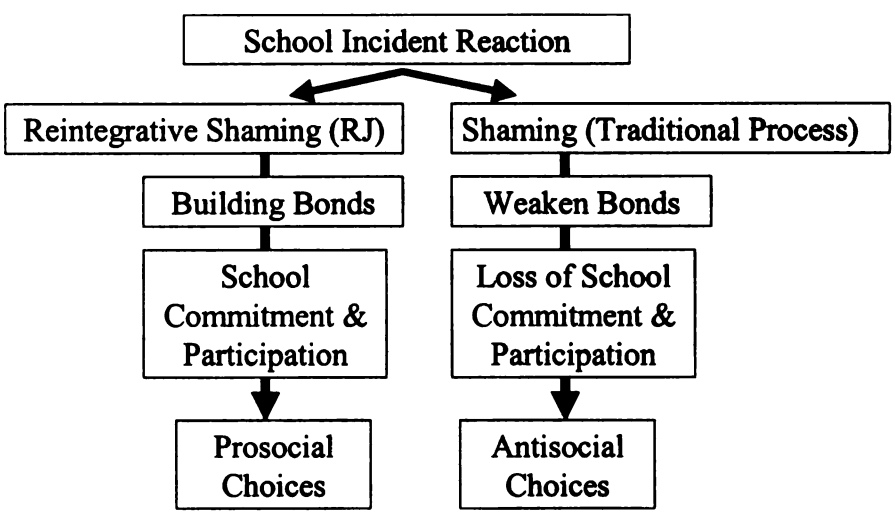
Even though some of the studies on restorative justice in schools show positive results most of the findings deal with participant satisfaction (Kane et al., 2006;Youth

Justice Board, 2005), or the change in the number of suspension/expulsions from year to year (Kane et al., 2006; Karp & Breslin, 2001; Minnesota Department of Children, 2002; Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006; Youth Justice Board, 2005), or the studies describe how the restorative process works and is implemented in different schools (Kane et al., 2006; Karp & Breslin, 2001; Youth Justice Board, 2005). The Youth Justice Boards (2006) evaluation of the Restorative Justice is Schools Programme in London found that 89 percent of students surveyed were satisfied with the outcome of their conferences and that 98 percent thought the process was fair. They also found statistically significant results from teacher surveys with teachers reporting that they saw a significant improvement in student behavior in schools with a RJ program compared to before the program was implemented (18 to 24 month period). Kane et al. (2006) found reductions in exclusions in all but one of the schools in their evaluation of a restorative practices pilot program in Scotland. In their qualitative analysis they found that school staff, students, and parents had positive views of the restorative practices that have been implemented in the schools. Finally, in their review of Minnesota's school-based behavioral intervention pilot program which implemented restorative practices in some elementary, middle, and high schools in Minnesota, Stinchcomb, Bazemore, and Riestenberg (2006) found that suspension, expulsion, and behavioral referral rates went down in most of the schools.

Chapter 3: Theory Based Model and Hypotheses

The theoretical model used for this study applies the school disciplinary process to the model in Figure 1. According to this theoretical model (Figure 2), when students are involved in misconduct in school, it weakens their bonds to school and prosocial others. If they receive the traditional discipline of suspension or expulsions, which withdraws support from the school, their social bonds (attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief) are further weakened or broken. It is hypothesized that this non reintegrative shaming process inhibits reintegration into the school community, and separates them from prosocial others (teachers, peers), potentially leading to antisocial choices and school failure.

Figure 2: Theoretical Model Applied to Schools



The restorative justice intervention is designed to repair the harm done to the social bonds during the initial incident by holding the student accountable, allowing them to understand the harm that they have done and giving them a chance to make amends. The school community attempts to provide an atmosphere that shows respect and support for the student, while showing disapproval for the student's behavior. This process will hopefully help to strengthen or build social bonds and reintegrate the student back into the school community linking them back up with prosocial controllers.

In the research setting for this study, a middle school in a small urban city in the Midwest, school researchers for the restorative justice pilot program found participation satisfaction ratings and results for suspensions and expulsions similar to those found in the Scottish (Kane et al., 2006), Minnesota (Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006), and London (Youth Justice Board, 2005) school studies mentioned above. Across all schools that implemented a RJ program in this school district, from the 2004 to 2005 to the 2006 to 2007 school years, the school researchers found restorative justice programs provided alternatives that prevented more than 1,800 suspension days and 15 expulsions over the three-year study period. Through post-conference surveys they also found that 95 percent of the offenders, 100 percent of the victims, and 88 percent of the students who were co-disputants in an incident were satisfied with the restorative justice intervention process (Lansing School District, 2007).

The findings of the school researchers suggest promise for the theoretical model in Figure 2. Averted suspension days and expulsions kept the students in the school community and linked to prosocial others and the conventional institution (school). Participant satisfaction ratings with the RJ process hint at possible strengthening of the

bonds between the students and the school by building a sense of belief in the legitimacy of the school disciplinary process, in turn building belief in school rules.

Research Question and Hypotheses

This exploratory study attempts to address the following research question:

Does a restorative justice intervention, compared to the traditional school discipline process, improve the commitment and attachment to school of middle school students, leading to school success?

To begin to answer this research question, three hypotheses are provided:

Hypothesis 1) Students who participate in the restorative justice intervention compared to those who go through the traditional school discipline process will have fewer future incidents.

Hypothesis 2) Students who participate in the restorative justice intervention compared to those who go through the traditional school discipline process will have less severe future incidents.

Hypothesis 3) Students who participate in the restorative justice intervention are more likely than those who go through the traditional school discipline process to have an increase in their GPA.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

Research Setting

The setting for this study is a middle school in a small urban area in the American Midwest. The school district chose this school to implement a pilot program for a restorative justice-based process to be used as an alternative to traditional discipline. One of the missions of the program was to utilize restorative justice processes to settle disputes and hold students accountable without divorcing the offending student from school through expulsion or suspension. The program also sought to teach students alternatives to violence and to help students modify negative behaviors. School researchers for the restorative justice program report that restorative justice alternatives for all schools in the school district were used in lieu of an estimated 1,838 suspension days and averted 15 expulsions and semester ending suspensions from the 2004 to 2005 to the 2006 to 2007 school years (Lansing School District, 2007).

The restorative justice program in this school is staffed by trained facilitators. When a dispute arises and the student offender, victim or co-disputants, and a facilitator are available or an RJ intervention can be scheduled, the students participate in one of two types of interventions. Both involve a structured, facilitated "circle" or discussion. The simpler form - a peace circle - involves a discussion between the offender and victim or co-disputants. The more inclusive circles – transformative conferences - also involve structured facilitation among these core participants, in addition they include parents and supporters of the core participants and representatives from the school. These expanded circles were generally used for the more serious offenses, those that might otherwise result in suspension, expulsion, or criminal charges.

In these restorative circles each participant is given an opportunity to talk about how the incident affected them. Once everyone has had a chance to speak the participants decide what the offending student must do to make reparations and repair the harm done by his or her acts. When an agreement is made, the participants sign an outcome plan agreement. The offending student is given a certain amount of time (determined by participants in the circle) to complete the terms in the agreement. If the student fails to do this, they will go through the traditional school disciplinary process. Not all circles end in an agreement. If the participants cannot come to a resolution, the facilitator can recommend another circle at a later date or the offending students go through the traditional school disciplinary process. However, for the cases used in this study period, no circle or transformative process failed to reach an agreement.

Sample and Study Period

The sample used in this exploratory study is a full coverage sample from the student records of all students with disciplinary infractions through the study period. The study period begins with the 2004 to 2005 school year, the first year in which the RJ intervention was phased in as an alternative to traditional disciplinary procedures, and ends with the 2006 to 2007 school year, the last year of the pilot program. Information available for this study covers three school years, 2004 to 2005, 2005 to 2006, and 2006 to 2007.

Limitations

The data for this study only comes from one school and there are very few cases of RJ in the first year. Since this is a three-year study and the analysis of the intervention will begin in the second year, it leaves a limited amount of time for follow up analysis. One limitation of this study is that no random or systematic selection process was used to determine whether students would be assigned to a restorative justice intervention or to the traditional school disciplinary process. Assignment to one group or the other is best described as a convenience sample (Maxfield & Babbie, 2001). Limited availability of facilitators was largely the determining factor in whether a restorative justice alternative was offered.

The structure of the school year, the structure of the discipline system, the discipline data collection system, and the small number of students exposed to RJ interventions in this pilot study population also pose challenges for and create limitations for the exploratory study.

The structure of the school year creates limitations because it is discontinuous. It is difficult to compare the impact of a restorative justice intervention that occurs in January where the student can be tracked for five continuous school months, to a RJ intervention that happens in June and the student's progress is not tracked for nearly three months until the new school year starts.

Another complicating factor is the structure of the discipline system. Students who are initially given a restorative justice intervention and become involved in another incident, might receive a second "dose" of RJ or they might be handled through the

traditional disciplinary process. Students can receive multiple "doses" or both interventions.

The manner in which the information is kept on disciplined students is problematic for the study, although researchers are working with school officials to remedy this problem. The discipline records are held separately from the school records. From a practical standpoint, for the sample of students used in this exploratory study, students with no disciplines in year three (eighth grade) are not included in the database and therefore their grade point averages for that grade are not available. In terms of judging school success, by using change in grade point, this limits the study's ability to test the degree to which RJ influences school success, and the degree to which school success influences prosocial behavior.

Challenges Created by Small Numbers in the Treatment Group

If the number of students' receiving restorative justice dosages were much larger, the issue of doses, cross-overs, and redosing could be handled in a number of ways, including creating variables for the number of doses and for the various combinations of treatment. Examples might be RJ only students, RJ followed by traditional discipline students, traditional discipline followed by RJ, or only traditional discipline. The limited number of disciplines also influences the power of the analysis (Lipsey, 1999). Power, or the "probability that the null hypothesis will be rejected when...the null hypothesis is, in fact, false..." (p.28), depends not only on the effect size but also on the degree to which the numbers of those in the treatment group and the comparison group are of equal size. Based on the small effect size found in the controlled experiments on RJ (McGarrell,

2001), and given the gross differences in group size between treatment and non-treatment groups, statistical power was expected to be very low and, therefore, limited in statistically significant findings

There were also a limited number of victim participants, since most of the disciplinary incidents between students involved co-disputants and traditional interventions do not involve the victim. While the reaction of the victim to the RJ protocol is a worthy area for research, there was insufficient information for analysis.

Study Design

Given the limitations noted above, conducting a meaningful, exploratory analysis presents many challenges. This study will attempt to deal with these limitations by using a variety of statistical methods. The central method used is Predictive Attribute Analysis (PAA). For the practitioners attempting to improve services to students, understanding the ways in which RJ alternatives appear to change the trajectory of students under varying conditions will inform their work. For scholarship, an exploration of how the paths of student success or failure follow RJ or traditional processes will begin to produce patterns of understanding and inform further research questions and methods.

Given this, this study will first provide a description of the students and then will create data "maps" combining predictive attribute analysis and traditional risk probabilistic models. Predictive attribute analysis has been shown to provide results as strong as regression analysis for risk factors (Gottfredson & Synder, 2005). In addition, the mapping function provides a visual display of results that is potentially more

accessible to practitioners eager to put research results into force to improve program delivery.

Variables and Measures

The variables available for this exploratory study were collected by the school system for various purposes and merged with records from the restorative justice interventions.

Demographic Variables

Sex, race, poverty, and age will be included as demographic variables. The poverty measure is eligibility for reduced or free lunches, under the National School Lunch Program[1]. The variable for poverty is a dummy variable with 1 indicating poverty and 0 indicating above the poverty level required for inclusion in federally subsidized lunches. Age is recorded in whole years at the beginning of the semester of record. Race is a categorical variable, with the following categories: white, black, Hispanic, and other. Given the issues of statistical power, race was collapsed for some analyses into categories, white and non white. The sex variable is actually male versus female, with male coded as 1 and female as 0.

Independent Variables

The independent or predictor variable is inclusion in an RJ intervention. For the purpose of this exploratory analysis, victim participants will not be included. Therefore,

[1] In the 2005-2006 school year, the federal poverty guidelines for inclusion in the National School Lunch Program for a family of four was an annual income of $19,350 (Food and Nutrition Services, 2005).

the independent variable will be inclusion in an RJ intervention, coded as 1, compared to inclusion in a traditional discipline process, coded as 0.

Other independent variables include school incidents and severity of incidents. While offenses after the intervention period are used to create outcome (dependent) variables, incidents for the semesters prior to the intervention period are used to construct independent or predictor variables, reflecting prior offense records. For the purpose of this study, these offenses have been categorized as 1) minor incidents or public order incidents and 2) major incidents or serious threats, fighting, and assault. The categorization is documented in Appendix A. Minor incidents are coded as 1 and major incidents are coded as 2. To create a prior offense variable, a weighed, additive scale was created valuing minors as one and major incidents as two. Given the limitations of the data, and the need for discrete categories for PAA, this variable was also collapsed into groups as no offenses, minor, and major offenses. Grade Point Average (GPA) exists as a continuous measure from 0 to a perfect score of 4. These data points were collected by the school for all disciplined students by semester. For use as an independent variable, GPA, for the semesters prior to the intervention period was used as a measure of academic achievement.

Outcome Measures

There are two separate outcome measures that relate to the two main research questions. Academic achievement is used as a surrogate measure of commitment to a prosocial activity and institution. Achievement will be coded as a categorical variable. Student grade points will be reduced to a change score. As few students in the sample

improved from grade six to grade seven, the changes in grade point were divided into three equal groups; decrease in grade point, minor decrease, and stable to improved.

The outcome measure constructed for prosocial behavior is the number and gravity of incidents that occur post intervention which are coded as 0 for no continued incidents, 1 for minor incidents, and 2 for major incidents. In order to help with the "mapping" portion of the analysis outcome quadrants were constructed using minor and major incidents, and suspensions for the 8th grade students in the 2006 to 2007 school year. Quadrant 1 – good outcome – consists of students with no incidents and no suspensions in the 2006 to 2007 school year. Quadrant 2 – minor outcome – consists of students who had minor incidents or minor and major incidents but no suspensions in the 2006 to 2007 school year. In this case only one student had a minor and major incident and no suspensions, because they only had one major incident during that time and it did not rise to the level of a suspension they were put into the minor outcome quadrant. Quadrant 3 – moderate outcome – includes students who had minor incidents and a suspension. Finally, quadrant 4 – major outcome – consists of students who had major incidents and a suspension or minor and major incidents and a suspension. A continuous variable was also constructed using a weighted score, following the process outlined in the description of prior offense.

Two Samples and Two Analyses

Third Semester Sample

Given the limitations of the data, this exploratory study began with an examination using students receiving discipline in semester three, which was their first

semester of seventh grade. This intervention period had the advantage of having information on prior offending and academic achievement, for the prior academic year (6^{th} grade) and outcome measures for academic achievement and offending in the subsequent semester (semester 4, the second semester of 7^{th} grade). The disadvantage of this sample was that very few students (21) received an RJ intervention during this semester.

Fourth Semester Sample

The fourth semester sample had a larger number of students receiving RJ interventions and, therefore, had the potential of greater statistical power. There were, however, two major limitations with this sample. First, there is a gap between the intervention period and the period over which outcome measures were calculated. The study period ended at the end of the semester and the outcome period did not commence until school resumed in the fall. A second, major limitation is that eighth grade, grade point averages (GPA) were available for those youth who offended in 8^{th} grade, but were not recorded for youth with no offense record. This systematic loss of data for youth who succeeded made it impossible to test for the relationship of RJ to school achievement for this sample.

Statistical Methods

Given the limitation of the data, several statistical means were used to explore and analyze the data. First, descriptive measures were calculated to understand the shape of the data, including measures of central tendency and variation. Bivariate analyses were conducted, including means tests, to determine if the RJ intervention had significant

influences on GPA and prosocial behavior (future offending). Regression models were created and run, to inform the Predictive Attributive Analysis (PAA). For although regression is a robust tool, the data used in this study is censored and highly skewed to the right, as is the case with many offense or recidivism studies where the most likely outcome is zero (Allen, 1997).

Using PAA, a series of nested Chi Square analyses are run (Gottfredson & Synder, 2005). To create the PAA map, the sample is divided into groups using the variable that most influences the outcome, and then by the variable that has the next highest influence, and continues through variable of significance. The description of the analyses of each sample will address this in more detail, but due to limitations in the data, missing data (in the semester 4 sample), and lack of power in the semester 3 sample, only the analysis of further offending could progress to this stage.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Results

Analysis of the Third Semester of the Study Period

Descriptives

The first analysis used students with offenses in semester three (the first semester of 7th grade) as the sample, semester three as the intervention period, and semester four as the outcome period. There were 131 students with incidents in the first semester of 7th grade and 21 of these students were involved in an RJ intervention. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for all the students with incidents and the students in RJ. Table 1 shows that roughly 60 percent of the students in the sample were male, 80 percent in poverty, 66.7 percent non white, and 58.8 percent had no prior incidents. The mean GPA for all students in the sample was 1.86 (Table 2). About 58 percent of students had no prior offenses, about 14% percent had minor priors, and about one quarter had major offenses.

Table 1: Descriptives for Third Semester Students

Sex	All Students	RJ	Non RJ	sig.
Female	40.7%	47.6%	38.5%	
Male	59.3%	52.4%	61.5%	
Poverty				
No	20.0%	28.6%	19.2%	
Yes	80.0%	71.4%	80.8%	
Race				
Non White	66.7%	76.2%	92.3%	
White	33.3%	23.8%	7.7%	
Priors				
None	58.8%	55.0%	65.4%	
Minor	13.7%	20.0%	15.4%	
Major	27.5%	25.0%	19.2%	
Incident				
Minor	84.1%	57.1%	88.5%	0.05
Major	15.9%	42.9%	11.5%	
N	131	21	110	

To compare youth who were exposed to RJ interventions to youth exposed only to traditional interventions, a Chi Square analysis of categorical variables was preformed. It indicated that the two groups did not differ significantly on sex, poverty, race, or prior offending. However, the analysis did indicate that RJ youth were more likely to have a major, rather than minor, offense triggering the use of the intervention ($p<.05$) (Table 1).

Table 2: Measures of Central Tendency and Dispersion

GPA	N	Mean	Min	Max	SD	sig.
All	131	1.86	0	4	0.97	
RJ	21	2.04	1	3.5	0.82	
Non RJ	110	1.84	0	4	0.99	

To compare GPA, a Student t test was conducted and, although the mean GPA for RJ students was higher than the GPA for non RJ students, (2.04 for RJ students compared to 1.84 for non RJ students) this difference did not rise to significance.

Bivariate Analysis: GPA

To begin to test the hypothesis that RJ would enhance school participation and achievement and would, through such commitment to prosocial institutions, increase prosocial activity, the relationship between change in GPA and offending was tested. Bivariate correlations (Table 3) indicated no significant relationship between these two variables at the standard level of significance ($p<.05$). However, these variables were related if the standard were relaxed to $p<.10$, providing some support for that portion of the model.

Table 3: Bivariate Analysis of Change in GPA and Incidents

	Incidents
Change in GPA	
Pearson Correlation	-0.127
Sig.	0.089
N	181

Next, tests were conducted to determine if students experiencing an RJ intervention had more positive results related to changes in grade point. In this case, no significant results were found. The non RJ students had a mean change is grade point of -.20, compared to the RJ grade point of -.14, this difference did not rise to significance (Table 4). A Chi Square analysis comparing GPA collapsed into three categories (decline, small decline, and stable to increase) with RJ intervention participation also did not rise to the level of significance (Table 5).

Table 4: T Test Comparing RJ Groups with Change in GPA

	Change in GPA			
	N	Mean	SD	sig.
RJ				
No	110	-.20	.35	
Yes	21	-.14	.41	

There were limitations to the analysis of the academic outcome measure. First, the small number of cases in the RJ group makes it difficult to see significant changes in academic achievement for theses students. Second, one semester is not enough time to see a meaningful change in GPA, the post intervention period needs to be at least one full school year long. Even though GPA was not significant, these findings show promise for

RJ practices being effective in improving academic achievement; even with the small number of cases and the short post intervention period the independent variables are moving in the right direction. Because of this lack of connection between RJ and academic success Hypothesis 3 is not supported. Ways to enhance further studies to explore the relationship proposed in the model will be discussed in the final chapter of this study.

Table 5: Bivariate Analysis of RJ and Change in GPA

	RJ
GPA (continuous)	
Pearson Correlation	.054
Sig. (2-tailed)	.541
N	131
GPA (categorical)	
Pearson Correlation	.097
Sig. (2-tailed)	.269
N	131

**p< .01
*p< .05

Bivariate Analysis: Offending

To explore the relationship between RJ exposure and future offending, a bivarate analysis was conducted (Table 6). A Student t test was conducted comparing the offending level of non RJ and RJ students. A weighted offense scale was used.[2] RJ and non RJ students varied significantly on their level of offending during the post

[2] As noted previously, minor offenses were given a weight of one and major offenses were given a weight of two.

intervention period ($p<.05$). The mean offending score for RJ youth was 6, compared to 10 for non RJ youth. This result, combined with the failure to find significant differences for GPA outcomes, focused the remaining analyses on investigating the relationship of RJ to offending.

Table 6: Bivariate Analysis of Future Offending

Outcomes	All Students	Non RJ	RJ
Mean	9	10	6*
Minimum	0	0	0
Maximum	34	34	27
SD	9	9	7

* $p<.05$

Regression Analysis

The results of an OLS regression analysis are displayed in Table 7. Race, poverty, academic achievement, and prior offense level were all found to be statistically significant and explained about one fourth ($R^2=.26$) of the variation in the outcome. According to the regression, students who are non white, in poverty, with low academic achievement, and a high prior offense level are more likely to continue offending; with academic achievement being the best predictor of continued offending. RJ was not a significant factor in stopping students from offending however the regression model shows that RJ is moving in the right direction; as students participate in RJ the incidents go down. Sex and the offense leading to discipline were not statistically significant.

Problems with Using Regression

Although running an OLS regression was useful for exploring the data and looking at the direction of the variables, as outlined in the previous section on limitations, there were too many issues with the data set to meaningfully use the results. There were unequal groups (21 students in the RJ group and 110 in the non RJ group) and there were not enough students in the RJ group to get sufficient power for the model. One way to explore risk factors in groups with a small number of cases is to use a predictive attribute analysis (PAA).

Table 7: OLS Regression for Continued Offense

	Std. Error	Beta	Sig.	
Sex	1.49	0.04	0.64	
Race (White)	1.52	-0.16	0.05	*
Poverty	1.77	0.19	0.02	**
Academic Achievement	0.89	-0.34	0.00	**
Prior Offense Level	0.78	0.19	0.02	*
Offense leading to discipline	2.08	-0.11	0.24	
RJ	2.35	-0.02	0.80	

$R^2 = .26$

Predictive Attribute Analysis

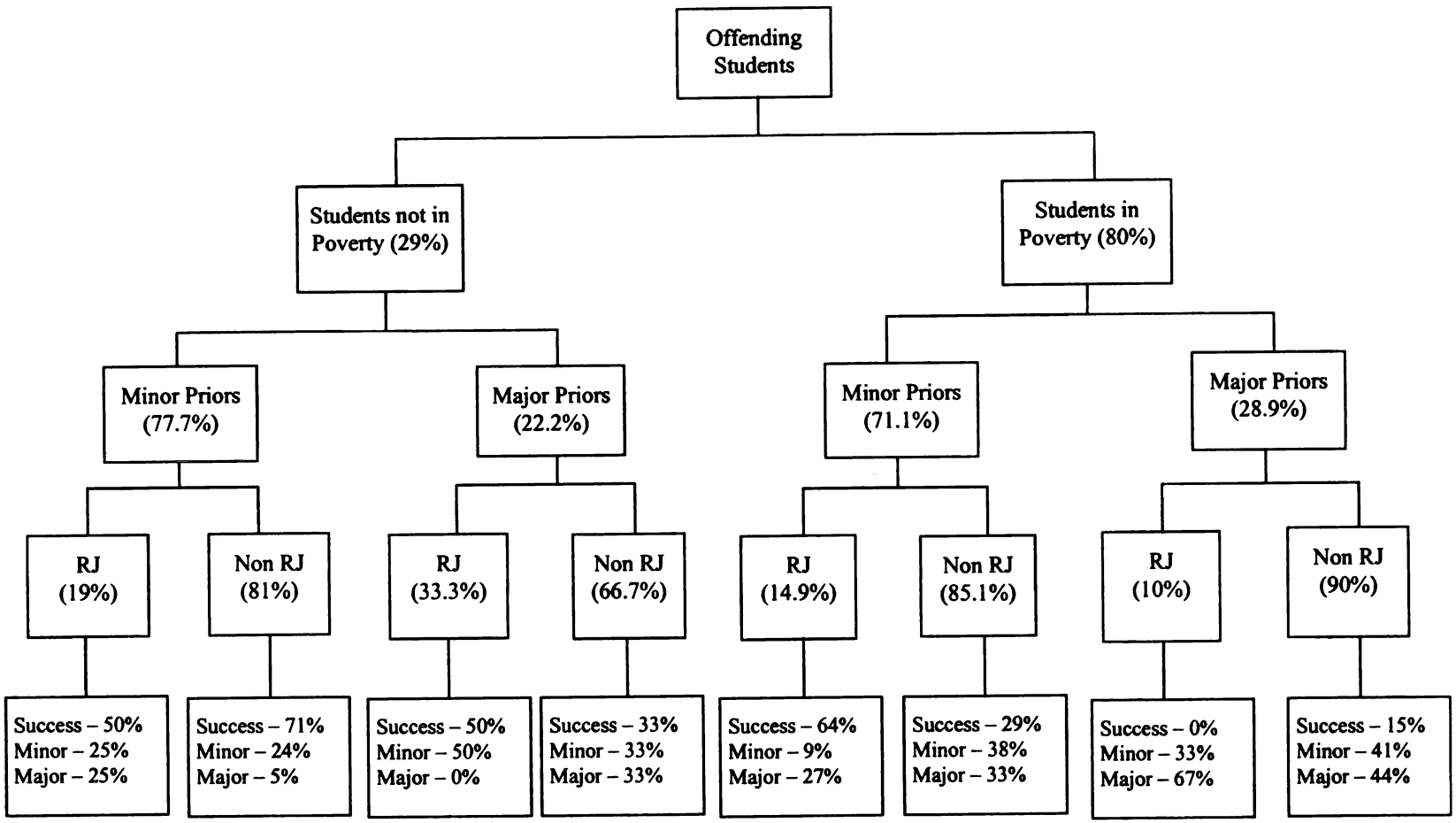
As described in the methods section, to perform a predictive attribute analysis a series of imbedded Chi Square tests are conducted to find the best predictor of the outcome variable. Once the variable is found the sample is divided into subgroups based on that variable. Then the process continues taking the next best predictor within the subgroups and further dividing the sample into additional subgroups. This process is

repeated until dividing the sample no longer yields useful results. One advantage to using PAA is that you may be able to find interactions between variables that might affect the outcome measure that were not readily apparent, given small sample sizes.

Using the regression model to choose the best risk indicators for a successful outcome, a predictive attribute analysis (Figure 3) was preformed to map outcomes for the RJ and non RJ groups[3]. The PAA shows that a majority of the students with incidents were in poverty. From there the next predictive factor was prior offense, with 71 percent of the students in poverty having minor prior offenses. For the students in poverty with minor prior incidents the predictive attribute analysis shows that RJ (64% success rate) was more effective than the traditional discipline (29% success rate) in reducing or stopping further offending. However RJ is not shown to be successful for students in poverty with major prior incidents. Figure 3 also shows that for students not in poverty with minor priors, RJ was not as effective (50% success rate) compared to the traditional discipline (71% success rate), although students with major priors in the RJ group (50%) were slightly more successful than the non RJ group (33%). Findings from the predictive attribute analysis suggests that RJ can be helpful for students in poverty with minor prior offenses, but have a limited impact on those with major prior offenses and those not in poverty.

[3] Academic Achievement was tested, but as indicated by the bivariate analysis, did not show any differences between the intervention and non intervention groups. So the PAA focuses on prior offenses and poverty.

Figure 3: Predictive Attribute Analysis for Third Semester Students



Discussion of Analysis One

Results of the exploratory analysis on students in the third semester of the study period show that 80 percent of the students who committed incidents were in poverty and over 70 percent of the students in the RJ group were in poverty. This finding is consistant with studies that have shown that children in poverty are disciplined and excluded from schools at a higher rate than their counterparts (Bowditch, 1993; Casella, 2003; Fenning & Rose, 2007). According to Casella (2003) this is because school personnel perceive these students as not fitting into the "norm" of the school. Students are often disciplined for nonviolent acts because teachers see them as troublemakers and do not know how to handle them. This may account for the majority of students in poverty committing minor offenses (Figure 3). Fenning and Rose (2007) say that children who are seen as "troublemakers" or "dangerous" are primarily poor ethnic minority students and those with academic problems and "...are primarily removed [from school] for nonviolent infractions found in the school discipline policy" (p. 532).

The results of the means test (Table 6) show a significant difference in the mean number of offenses for RJ students and non RJ students post intervention. Looking at the PAA (Figure 3) this difference may be due to the success of students in poverty with minor prior offenses in the RJ group. The success of students in poverty with minor priors could be attributed to the type of minor offenses the students commit and the teacher's perception of the students who commit these offenses. If, as Fenning and Rose (2007) stated, teachers are marking certain students as dangerous or troublemakers for nonviolent school policy violations like; tardiness, disrupting class, ect.; then RJ may be a better way of addressing these nonviolent issues than detention or suspension. Students

in poverty may have other issues causing them to act out in school in a nonviolent manner (Casella, 2003), and RJ may be helping the student by allowing them to talk through the issues leading to the disruptive behavior or minor incident. According to a study by the Department of Education (1996) if students are not given a chance work out their problems and learn to change their behavior they come back to school with the issues that lead to the incident unresolved.

Another issue that might contribute to the success of RJ for students with minor prior offenses that should be looked at in the future is the type of incidents they are committing. For this study the data on incidents was collected by the school (Appendix A). As shown in Appendix A, offenses like insubordination, disorderly conduct, and persistent misconduct were not explained in any further detail. Actions by students that rise to the level of these classifications may be left up to the discretion of the teacher or school administrator who disciplines them. Future studies should focus on specific richer, descriptions of offenses and circumstances allowing researchers to better understand and classify offending. The findings from this study informed the study done using semester four as the treatment period.

Analysis of the Fourth Semester of the Study Period

Descriptive Statistics

This analysis used the fourth semester of the study period to measure the RJ intervention, and the 2006 to 2007 school year as the outcome measure. There were 227 students with incidents in the second semester of seventh grade and 49 of those students were involved in an RJ intervention. Table 8 and Table 9 shows the descriptive statistics

for all the students with incidents and the students in RJ. The process of describing and exploring the data for this sample mirrors that described in the previous analysis. This sample does not differ significantly from the sample of semester 3 offending students, except in the level of prior offending (Table 8). More than half of the sample of students with offenses in semester three had no prior offenses, as students moved into their fourth semester, the percentage of students with no prior offenses dropped to about one-third.

Table 8: Descriptive Demographic Statistics for Fourth Semester Students

Sex	All Students	RJ	Non RJ	sig.
Female	47.1%	51%	45.5%	
Male	52.9%	49%	54.4%	
Poverty				
No	23.3%	26.5%	23.8%	
Yes	76.7%	73.5%	76.2%	
Race				
NonWhite	64.8%	65.3%	63.9%	
White	35.2%	34.7%	36.1%	
Priors				
None	33.1%	23.3%	35.2%	
Minor	32%	32.6%	33.8%	
Major	34.9%	44.2%	31%	
N	227	49	178	

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics for GPA

GPA		N	Mean	SD
	All	227	2.4	1
	RJ	49	2.3	0.9
	Non RJ	178	2.4	1

Table 10 shows the measures of central tendency for the outcome measure for all students with incidents, RJ students, and non RJ students. The mean score for students in all the groups were the same. This finding differs from the findings from the third semester which found that the RJ group offended at a statistically significantly lower mean rate than the non RJ group.

Table 10: Descriptive of Future Offending (8th Grade)

Outcomes	All	Non RJ	RJ
Mean	5	4	5
Minimum	0	0	0
Maximum	26	26	22
SD	6	6	7

*p<.05

Exploring Factors for PAA

Unlike the analysis of the sample using offending students in their first semester of seventh grade relating to an outcome in the following semester, the analysis of students offending in the second semester of seventh grade relating to an outcome after a summer break, the regression model was not predictive of future offending. In order to examine the relationships among variables to inform the PAA, a correlation matrix was constructed (Table 11). The correlations are consistent with the relationships found in the first analysis in terms of academic achievement (prior GPA), prior offending, and instant offenses. However, contrary to both the relationships seen in analysis one and in general research findings on juvenile offending, neither poverty nor race significantly correlate with offending. This lack of association was so striking that care was taken to go back to

Table 11: Correlation Matrix for PAA

Correlations

		8th Grade Offending	Sex	Race	Poverty	Prior GPA	Prior Incidents	Incident Level	RJ
8th GradeOffending	Pearson Correlation								
	Sig. (2-tailed)								
	N	192							
Sex	Pearson Correlation	0.04							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.56							
	N	192	251						
Race	Pearson Correlation	-0.04	-0.03						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.56	0.59						
	N	192	251	251					
Poverty	Pearson Correlation	0.06	-0.01	-0.18					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.42	0.90	0.00					
	N	192	251	251	251				
Prior GPA	Pearson Correlation	-0.22	-0.26	0.12	-0.29				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00**	0.00	0.06	0.00				
	N	190	249	249	249	249			
Prior Incidents	Pearson Correlation	0.26	0.21	-0.06	0.01	-0.35			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00**	0.00	0.43	0.88	0.00			
	N	163	188	188	188	187	188		
Incident Level	Pearson Correlation	0.42	0.11	-0.18	0.18	-0.48	0.30		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.00**	0.13	0.01	0.02	0.00	0.00		
	N	158	184	184	184	182	154	184	
RJ	Pearson Correlation	0.06	-0.04	-0.01	-0.03	-0.07	0.12	0.22	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.40	0.49	0.85	0.69	0.25	0.11	0.00	
	N	192	251	251	251	249	188	184	251

**p< .01

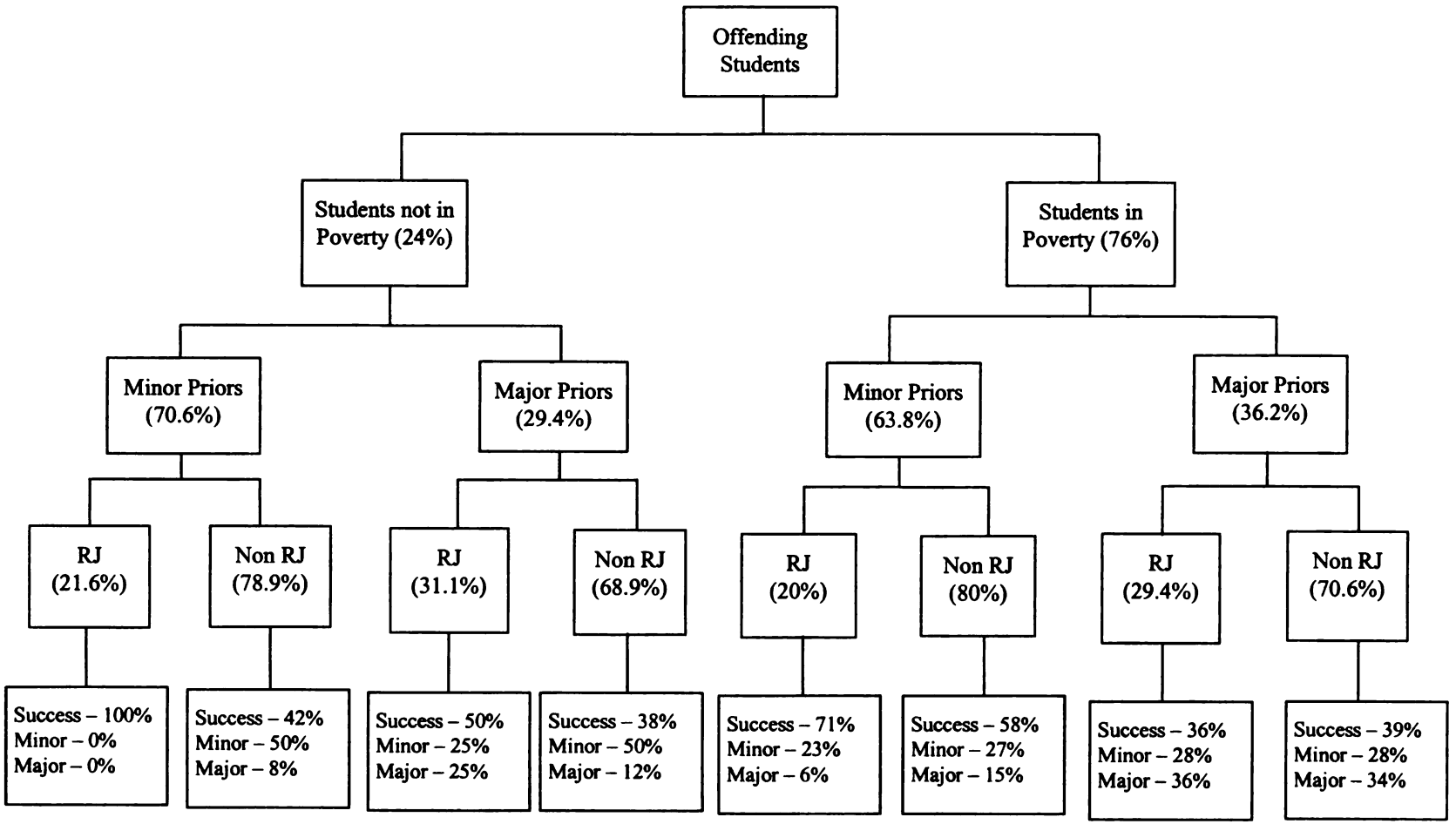
the original files to assure that cases were not miscoded. Checks across the original files assured data integrity, but did not offer any other clues as to explain the anomalous findings. This issue will be discussed further in the closing chapter.

Predictive Attribute Analysis

A predictive attribute analysis was preformed for the students who committed incidents in the forth semester of the study period in order to map the outcomes for RJ and non RJ students. The PAA (Figure 4) shows that most offending students were in poverty (76%) and most of those students had minor prior incidents (63.8%). Similar to semester 3 students (Figure 3), RJ looks to have been more effective for students in poverty with minor priors (71% success rate) than the traditional discipline process (58 %

These findings seem to confirm the results from analysis one. Although most students who committed incidents were in poverty, it was not a predictor of success in RJ for this sample. The best predictor for success in RJ was prior offense level. Students with minor prior incidents who participated in an RJ intervention were more successful than students who went through the traditional discipline process. The distribution of students in the PAA for semester 4 (Figure 4) and the PAA for semester 3 (Figure 3) are about equal. The only difference between the two models is that poverty was not found to have an effect on the success of RJ for students in semester 4. This finding is curious and further testing needs to be done to find out why poverty dropped of the map after one semester.

Figure 4: Predictive Attribute Analysis for Fourth Semester Students



Chapter 6: Integrating Results and Conclusions

In this exploratory study, the two samples had different strengths and limitations for analysis. While there were differences in overall predictors of future offending, results relating RJ to academic success and further offending showed some consistent patterns. In both analyses, Predictive Attribute Analyses showed that RJ was more effective than the traditional discipline process at reducing or stopping offending for students with minor patterns of prior offending. Only the PAA for the third semester (Figure 3) showed poverty to be a predictive factor, with students in poverty with minor prior offenses having the best success in reducing or stopping their offending. Students with major patterns of prior offending involved in RJ did not do worse, they just did not produce statistically significant results.

Linking Back to Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

Students who participate in the restorative justice intervention compared to those who go through the traditional school discipline process will have fewer future incidents.

The results for this hypothesis were mixed. The means tests for the offense outcome measure (Table 6) in the third semester analysis showed a statistically significant difference in the mean weighted incident score for RJ students and non RJ students. RJ students had a lower incident score post intervention than the non RJ students. The fourth semester analysis showed no such difference. The regression analysis preformed in analysis one, showed that RJ was not a significant factor in reducing offending when controlling for other factors (Table 7), though this was not

unexpected given the limitations of the sample. Looking at the predictive attribute analyses, the third semester analysis (Figure 3) showed that students in poverty with minor prior offenses who participated in RJ did have fewer incidents post intervention than those who went through the traditional process. In the fourth semester analysis (Figure 4), both students in poverty and those not in poverty with minor prior offenses who went through a RJ intervention had fewer incidents than the non RJ students.

Hypothesis 2

Students who participate in the restorative justice intervention compared to those who go through the traditional school discipline process will have less sever future incidents.

The results for this hypothesis were mixed. As with the results for Hypothesis 1, the severity of further offending for RJ youth appears to be associated with their prior offense history and, in the results from analysis one, poverty. The PAAs in both cases indicated that serious offending was reduced for RJ intervention students, but only for those students with a limited offense history.

Hypothesis 3

Students who participate in the restorative justice intervention are more likely than those who go through the traditional school discipline process to have an increase in their GPA.

This hypothesis was not supported, nor could it be adequately tested. Lack of cases in the first analysis and lack of data in the second analysis created broad limitations.

Discussion

Perhaps the most interesting finding in both of these exploratory studies is the relationship between prior offending and the success of an RJ intervention. The success of students with minor prior incidents in RJ suggests that it may be more effective for dealing with nonviolent students. Most of the minor incidents recorded for this study were public order type offenses. In general, these were nonviolent, verbal offenses (Appendix A). If these students were simply engaging in verbal arguments or disrupting class, a process that allows them to talk about the incident and resolve the issues surrounding the incident may equip them with skills needed to resolve these conflicts, and be a more effective alternative than detention or suspension. The traditional discipline process does not allow the parties involved in the incident an opportunity or a process to resolve the problems. According to the Department of Education (1996) if students are not given a chance to work out their problems and learn to change their behavior they come back to school with the issues that led to the incident being unresolved. A restorative justice intervention allows the students to talk about their problems and come up with solutions to fix them without taking the students away from school.

The success of RJ for students with minor priors may also be due to the fact that students with minor priors are more open to learning new skills. Restorative justice is not only a process that allows students to constructively work out their problems it is also an opportunity for them to develop skills that can help them avoid future incidents (Bazemore, 1998; Briathwaite, 1989; Elis, 2005; VanNess, 1993). According to the school researchers for this restorative justice program 90% of the students surveyed said

they learned a new skill and 89% used the skills they learned to "avert or resolve subsequent conflicts" (Lansing School District, 2007). It would be interesting to study the characteristics of these students and determine if they are the same as the students who reduced their offending.

The limited success of students with major prior incidents suggests that RJ might not work as well for more violent students. It could be harder for students to change their behavior once they reach a certain level of offending. Students with major priors may be resistant to learning new skills, or if they do learn new skills it may be harder for them to put them into practice.

Another reason why this analysis may not have shown RJ to be effective for students with major priors could be because the post intervention measurement period was short. According to Braithwaite and Mugford (1994) and Stinchcomb, Bazemore, and Riestenberg (2006), RJ is not necessarily a speedy solution, problems will not always be fixed on the first try and the offender will not be quickly cured. It may take several interventions before the problem is resolved or the offender gets the message. If this is the case, to get meaningful results on the effectiveness of RJ on reducing future incidents, RJ processes may need to be repeated and a longer study period is needed. In framing additional studies, a longer period of time and the ability to analyze the impact of additional doses of RJ would be valuable in attempting to disentangle these issues.

The results of the bivariate correlation in the analysis of the third semester (Table 5) shows that RJ was not correlated with a change in GPA, however the model also shows that the correlation between RJ and GPA is going in the right direction. Involvement in a restorative justice intervention is associated with an increase in GPA.

Although not statistically significant this finding is promising and it suggest that some features of RJ could potentially impact students' academic achievement. One of these features is keeping students in the school. If the students go through a restorative justice intervention instead of being suspended for an incident then it keeps that student in school and in class. If the student is suspended then they are not in class to do their work and when they come back they are behind. Just by keeping the student in the classroom RJ could be helping to improve their GPA. As explained earlier in order to better test this hypothesis and get meaningful results larger samples and a longer study period is needed.

While these two analyses could not adequately test the relationships among RJ, academic success, and prosocial outcomes, there are still limited findings that suggest that this relationship may be worthy of further investigation.

Linking Back to Theory

Through surveys of students who participated in the restorative justice intervention, school researchers for the RJ program found that 95 percent of the offenders, 100 percent of the victims, and 88 percent of the students who were co-disputants in an incident were satisfied with the restorative justice intervention process. They also found that 90 percent of students who took the surveys said they learned a new skill and 89 percent said they used that skill to avoid future incidents (Lansing School District, 2007). The findings from this study (RJ's success at reducing or stopping future offending for some students and potential for improving students' academic achievement), in light of the survey results, suggest that RJ could be a useful tool for

improving students' prosocial behavior and commitment to school through building bonds, as suggested in the theoretical model in Figure 2.

Participant satisfaction ratings with the RJ process hint at possible strengthening of the bonds between the students and the school by building a sense of belief in the legitimacy of the school disciplinary process, in turn building belief in school rules. If students believe in the school rules they are more likely to obey them, leading to less incidents (Tyler & Blader, 2000). The reduction in the number of future incidents and the seriousness of future incidents by students who participated in a RJ intervention helps to keep them in the school community by preventing or reducing suspensions days. Just being in the school community keeps the students involved and linked to prosocial others and the conventional institution (school), which would lead to more prosocial behavior. Saving suspension days and staying in the school community also keeps the students out of the streets and away from antisocial people and choices.

The role of the family may also play a part in the success of RJ for some students. According the facilitators of the restorative justice interventions at the school, some parents are often a poor influence for their children. Facilitators report that parents often cause more problems during the intervention than the students who were involved in the incident. The actions of the parents at home may be shaping the student's behavior in school. Despite these reports on difficulties posed by parents and adult supporters, these same adults indicate that the process appears to be a positive experience for this group. By the end of the interventions, surveys given to the adult supporters of the students found that 98 percent of them reported they were satisfied with the RJ process (Lansing School District, 2007). It would be interesting to see if the parents were also able to learn

new skills during this process. If parents are learning better ways to handle conflicts, it could help to improve the student's bonds to their parents. If students feel a stronger bond with their parents, it could keep the students from acting out in the future so they do not damage those bonds. The link between an individual's bonds to their family and bonds to the conventional institution (school) in conjunction with the potential role between family participation and success in RJ holds promise and is worthy of future investigation (see Braithwaite, 2002).

What Can Be Learned?

Results from this study found that RJ seems to have the most effect on students with minor prior incidents. This could be for a number of reasons; the incidents they have are nonviolent or verbal, the incidents are better suited for an amends making process, the students with minors are more amenable to change than students with major incidents, or students with minor priors are better at applying the skills they learn in RJ to avoid future incidents. In order to better understand how and why students with minor incidents seem to do better in RJ, the types of minor incidents need to be better defined. Categories like, insubordination, disorderly conduct, and persistent misconduct are not clearly defined (Appendix A). What are the specific offenses being committed by the student? Is it disrupting class, being tardy, or disobeying teachers' orders? These are important question to help gain an understanding of what students are being disciplined for and the specific offenses for which the RJ process may work best.

School researchers for the restorative justice program found that 90% of the students surveyed said they learned a new skill in the RJ intervention. Another way to

test the effectiveness of the restorative justice program and one of its components, skill building, would be to analyze the relationships between prior offending, perceptions of the disciplinary process (RJ and traditional), and outcomes. Are the students reporting that they learned a new skill staying out of trouble and if so how are they applying the skill they learned? If they are the ones still getting into trouble, is there a better approach that could be used? It would also be helpful to expand the survey to include additional indicators of the potential outcomes of restorative processes (e.g. understanding the harm they caused, feeling respected and included in the process).

In this study the measure for commitment and attachment to school was academic achievement. As mentioned in the limitations there were many issues with using that variable in this study. In the future, commitment and attachment to school should be measured using a variety of variables. For example, unexcused absences from school. If students are committed and attached to school they are less likely to skip school. Similarly, participation in extracurricular activities could be used. If students are involved in school government or are on a sports team they have more of an attachment to school and are less likely to be involved in antisocial behavior. The student's effort in the classroom could also be measured. Sometimes grades do not reflex the effort that a student is putting into their studies. Many of the students who are involved in incidents are special needs students, and they may work hard in the classroom but it just does not show in their GPA. Additionally, the survey could be expanded to include measures of commitment and attachment.

In order to address the limitations encountered in this exploratory study, (e.g. insufficient amount of follow-up time), longitudinal studies should be conducted to

follow students throughout their school career or at least for two to three years. It may take time for the effects of the RJ intervention to work on some students, it is not a quick fix (Braithwaite & Mugford, 1994). A longitudinal study would also help in addressing a sustainability issue. If restorative justice does help to reduce future offending and seriousness of future incidents, how long does it last? If there is a point when the effects fade how long does it take and what can be done about it? Would it be helpful to have follow-up sessions for students who were involved in a RJ intervention and how long afterward? These are questions that a longitudinal study could help answer.

Surveys could also be issued to the students and the teachers to examine if they see any effects of the restorative justices process. Teachers can assess students' attitudes and behavior in class and the effort of students in the classroom. Surveys can be given to both students who participate in the RJ intervention and those who do not. Surveys for the non-participants can asked questions about changes in attitudes of students in the school. They can also be given to students involved in incidents (victims and offenders) who did not go through the RJ process to see what they thought about the outcome and fairness of the traditional process and compare that to the surveys of the RJ participants. While the surveys currently taken by the school researchers provide some interesting results, these surveys are anonymous and are not linked to any outcome measures. This limits the ability to link attitudes and attitude change to behaviors and behavioral changes.

Conclusion

Does a restorative justice intervention, compared to a traditional school discipline process, improve commitment and attachment to school, leading to school success for middle school students? Although this study did find that restorative justice helped to reduce or stop future offending for certain students (students in poverty with minor priors in the third semester and students with minor priors in the fourth semester), it did not find a link to school success. There are a number of reasons, listed in the limitations section, that could have produced this result; sample size, missing data, or length of the study; all which can be solved with more data and more time.

There is, however, another reason RJ may not be reaching its full potential and affecting more students in the school; implementation and quantity. According to Morrison, Blood, and Thorsborne (2005) successful outcomes of restorative justice practices seem to be linked to broader school reform. Having a restorative justice program as an alternative to the traditional disciplinary process is good but there needs to be more of a comprehensive presence. A cultural change needs to occur within the school so restorative practices are used in the classrooms not just as a way to help resolve conflicts. If restorative processes are used throughout the school, students will have more exposure to them and more chances to develop new skills to avoid conflicts and use those skills in supported and routinized processes.

Such a cultural change could also help to decrease reported incidents in school and detention or suspensions because teachers will be able to use these restorative practices in the classroom and incidents that might have led to a disciplinary action could be solved within the class. With student incidents being resolved in the classes or

between each other the chances of suspension should go down, keeping students in school and giving them a better chance of doing well academically. A change in school culture could also lead to the student feeling a stronger commitment and attachment to school also providing an opportunity for increased academic success.

Appendix A

Seriousness of incident was coded as 0 for no incident 1 for public order offenses and 2 for serious offenses.

Public order offenses include:
Insubordination
Disorderly Conduct
Persistent Misconduct
Disrespect for Safety Patrols
Possession/Use of Tobacco
Abusive Language
Verbal Assault
Malicious Destruction
Obscene and/or Lewd Behavior
Tresspassing/Loitering/Unauth
Possession of Beepers, Pagers, ect.
Possession of Games or Toys

Serious offenses include:
Bullying
Sexual Harassment or Intimidation
Ethnic/Racial Harassment/Intimidation
Intimidation/Stalking/Threat
Possession/Use of Other drug
Sale/Use/Distribution of Drugs
Sale/Possession/Use of Explosives
Theft
Fighting
Physical Assault (Student)
Physical Assault (Teacher)
Extortion/Robbery

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