Eliminating Punitive Discipline Practices: A School Wide Restorative Justice Initiative

An guided thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in

International Community Development

By

Lina Takada

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CONTEXTUALIZATION
Introduction

In the summer of 2020, I first stepped foot onto the Spruce Street Inn facility, a group home for

foster youth in Seattle. This is where I spent the next couple of months observing, interacting,

and conducting my fieldwork. On my first day, I went into the facility with my own

preconceptions of what the group home would look like, what the staff and youth would be like,

and how I anticipated my presence to be received. In my mind, I was certain that my previous

experiences working as a youth soccer coach and an after-school teacher would have allowed me

to understand and relate to foster youth as well. I soon became aware that this was not the case. I

was humbled when I realized that I was approaching the foster youth the same way I would

approach youth as a soccer coach and teacher. However, the context of my fieldwork was

completely different as I was interacting with foster youth who have been through a tremendous

amount of trauma. It was through this fieldwork experience where I saw first-hand the

importance of contextualization and the need to understand the circumstances of a culture group

at hand.

From the start of the International Community Development (ICD) program, there has

been a great emphasis on the importance of contextualization. As community developers, we are

constantly surrounded by communities and cultures that are foreign to us. By understanding and

learning the context of the people group at hand, quality and authentic development can

transpire. The goal of sustainable community development is to build relationships and to work

in such a way that copowerment will emerge. In order to achieve these goals, it is always crucial

to understand the context and use this to enhance development work. In the following, the

importance of contextualization in community development will be uncovered as well as the

importance of contextualization in America's education system. I will also go into depth on my thesis project and its significant need for contextualization. Finally, I will conclude by describing the importance of contextualization in my future vocation.

The Importance of Contextualization

When conducting and designing programs, the key to a successful implementation is understanding the context of the community and culture group at hand. Geert Hofstede, a social psychologist explained that "the visitor in a foreign culture returns to the mental state of an infant, in which the simplest things must be learned over again. This experience usually leads to feelings of distress, of helplessness, and of hostility toward the new environment" (384). With this insight, it is crucial for community developers to immerse themselves in the cultural group that the program is intended for. Immersion will look different in every context but educating and understanding a culture will always start with relationship building and connecting. Dwight Conquergood, an ethnographer, gives great insight while studying the Hmong culture and states, "getting to know the culture is important not just as a technique for collecting appropriate materials and ideas to be worked into performances but as a way of earning the community's trust and respect" (222). This trust and respect from the community will become the foundation and will allow for more purposeful actions toward change.

In my fieldwork, I saw the importance of earning the youth's trust and respect. It was evident that the staff who went out of their way to earn this respect and trust from youth had a greater response and a more positive relationship with them. The staff who utilized contextualization to understand the everyday struggles that youth faced, allowed them to build a deeper connection. In an interview with Jennifer Simms, a residential youth specialist at Spruce Street Inn, she stated:

You have to learn how to best approach these youths. Since they have experienced

abandonment, abuse, and other traumas in their lives it is crucial to understand how to be

helpful without affecting them in a way that might re-traumatize or further trigger them. .

. Being trauma sensitive and adjusting the way you deliver care to a youth based on their

specific traumas and needs is crucial in this role.

Simms elaborated on how to cater to the needs of the youth, which emphasizes the importance of

contextualization in her role working with foster youth. With contextualization, it ensures that

the interactions that you have with foster youth do not re-trigger or re-traumatize them. Without

contextualization in this field of work, it is very likely that people who are working with youth

can bring further harm into their lives. Therefore, it was crucial for me to understand the context

at hand and approach the youth in a trauma sensitive way to mitigate the harm that could have

occurred. Through my fieldwork experience, one of the greatest lessons I learned was the

importance of understanding the culture, community, and their specific context and using these

things to build a foundational relationship with the community. With this, trust and respect from

the community will transpire, which will evidently foster positive results in developmental work.

Contextualizing America's Education System

America as a macro-culture has normalized the unjust treatment of minority groups, especially

Black Americans. This dates to 1619, when the first boat of enslaved Africans sold to colonists

arrived in America. For the next hundreds of years, Africans would be sold and treated as items

to be traded rather than given the humanity that every life on earth deserves. Even after the

abolishment of slavery, America still found a way to mistreat and dehumanize African

Americans through the prison system. Bryan Stevenson writes, "laws governing slavery were

replaced with Black Codes governing free black people- making the criminal-justice system

central to new strategies of racial control" (Stevenson). Stevenson reveals that the United States has the highest incarceration rate in the entire world. While America only represents 4 percent of the planet's population, it disproportionately represents 22 percent of its imprisoned (Stevenson). Statistics such as this reveal that the American prison system has become modern slavery even stemming down to the criminalization of black and brown students within schools in the United States.

The education system has adopted disciplinary practices that are carried out in the Criminal Justice System. Mandatory sentencing and three strikes law in the Criminal justice system is seen as the Zero-tolerance policy in the Education System. In addition, minority groups have been disproportionally affected by the enforcement of the zero-tolerance policy. Evette Simmons and Gwendolyn Cartledge explain that:

> For almost four decades, an abundance of research findings and national and state data have documented that students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds, particularly African Americans with and without disabilities, are overrepresented in school disciplinary sanctions compared to their enrollment rates across the United States. (5)

Furthermore, criminal justice-based mechanisms (i.e., surveillance systems, school resource officers, metal detectors, drug-sniffing dogs, and notification systems) are now commonplace within the school environment (Hemez, Paul, et al. 237). How can students focus on their education when their schools replicate the environment of a prison? Security guards once patrolled schools for outside intruders but now there are armed police officers patrolling innocent students. The education system in America needs restoration and it is evident that this change is attainable.

America is the country of opportunities and freedom. This freedom and equality are explained through Hofstede's cultural indices where America scores a low 40 on power distance. Hofstede defines power distance as, "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (61). America has a low power distance which translates to power being distributed equally within institutions. All people are equal and require mutual respect, even those that are in an authoritative position. Using the context of schools, Hofstede explains that teachers are supposed to treat the students as basic equals and expect to be treated as equals by the students (69). Consequently, the current state of the education system does not align with the culture of equality that America stands for. My proposal for a school-wide restorative justice initiative aims to combat this deep-rooted injustice and restore equality in schools. With mutual respect and equality between students and teachers, implementing practices of restorative justice has the ability to enhance the student-teacher relationship and the school culture as a whole. The hope for America's education system is to realign its values with the American culture of equality and justice for all. By bringing the values of the American culture into the education system, it will be a great step forward into reestablishing a safer and more just school environment for students to come.

Contextualizing the Thesis Project

I chose the context of my project proposal to be at Academia Del Pueblo because it is a charter school that specifically serves low-income families. This school takes into consideration the context of the population that they serve. The school is located in the heart of downtown Phoenix which is geographically known as a lower income community. By understanding the context of who their target population was, Academia Del Pueblo centrally located themselves in this

specific area. This school incorporates contextualization and takes initiative in catering to student needs even outside of education. Academia Del Pueblo provides free breakfast at the start of every school day to their students. This was initiated when the school realized that some students were coming to school hungry in the morning and would not be able to focus on class. Since the population they serve is low-income families, the school came up with a solution to cater to the needs of their community. In addition, they provide free before and after-school programs for students in order to support parents who are unable to afford or access childcare. Since many parents work multiple jobs to provide for their family, the school saw the need for childcare outside school hours. Academia Del Pueblo is a great example of an institution that has used contextualization to understand the immediate need of their community. By using context to gain a deeper insight in the needs of the students and their families, Academia Del Pueblo has made a great impact on their students and their community.

My project proposal focuses on the idea of restorative justice (RJ) and these practices heavily involve the use of contextualization. Restorative Justice practices ask questions to seek context in a harmful situation and uses the context gained to heal the harm. Since RJ practice models can vary greatly, context is needed to determine the best model to implement in each setting. In order to distinguish which model will produce the best outcomes, the context must be first analyzed to cater to the needs of the community or group. The choice of model is dictated by the context in which practitioners are able to adapt their process to address the needs of those involved (Hopkins 10). In my project proposal, a larger group circle will be implemented in tier one of the preventative stage because students can engage and build relationships with their classmates and teachers. Since the first tier is focused on relationships and foundation building, it will be most effective to use larger group circles to initiate these relationships. However, in the

context of tier two and three stages where the focus is more on an individual, the face-to-face mediation model will be implemented. The face-to-face mediation model is a more intimate setting which will allow for comfortability and less pressure when facing tier 2 and 3 processes.

Even outside the importance of contextualization in RJ practices, contextualization within my project is key as it works directly with students from different upbringings, cultural groups, and backgrounds. Dr. Louis Robison stated, "If we were a society that could literally take personal information and use it to determine how to best improve student performance, we would be more successful". However, since this is not the case, contextualization is the next best tool to help teachers and school staff understand the different context and backgrounds that each student comes from. When using context to personalize and cater to individualized students, the school community will be more connected and inclusive. Working to bring an entire school community together is no easy task, however contextualization will be the key to enacting this change.

Creative Contextualization

A creative way to apply contextualization in my project is through classroom circles. Classroom circles, also known as talking or restorative circles, are the epitome of restorative justice practices. A classroom circle is a ritual that brings a group of people together in a circle to allow for safe and open communication. In the context of a school setting, a classroom circle is a creative way for students to get to know one another as well as their teacher and other school staff. Sarah Glasband a 9th grade teacher at Met West High School shared, "In circle their (students) relationships with each other actually kind of quiets something in them and allows them to be more present for each other" (Restorative Justice). These circles bring forward a humbling experience as people open up and become vulnerable to each other. As students and

teachers get to know one another, their respect for each other grows. With a school environment of students respecting one another as well as their teachers, the amount of misbehavior within students will begin to decline. Common school behaviors such as bullying or disrespecting a teacher will be reduced since students have a good relationship with other students and teachers. Classroom circles act as a preventative stage for disorderly conduct and decrease the number of students that must receive punishment in schools. With the reduction of misconduct, there will be an increase in the overall culture of the school community.

Vocational Work

My goal for my future vocational work is to be an advocate and a leader to create institutionalized changes within the education and juvenile justice system. Although I do not have a specific plan on where this work will take me, I know that contextualization will be key in anything I do. When working with vulnerable human lives and stepping into another person's world, it is necessary to understand their context. It is known that "true change starts with building relationships and getting to know your clients on a relational level" (Lewis). It is nearly impossible to have a genuine relationship with a client without first getting to know them individually. Without interpersonal relationships and trust, there will be no foundation to work off. Working towards social justice requires a large group of people trusting and working together to create change; with this comes the need for contextualization and understanding each other's views, beliefs, and backgrounds. This goes for any type of work within community development, the first step must be to understand one's culture or community. Contextualization is the difference between good work and work that is successful, sustainable and empowering. With this, I know that wherever I end up in my vocational journey, I will hold true the value of contextualization.

Conclusion

Engaging in my thesis research as well as crafting my thesis project has taught me the importance of contextualization. When proposing solutions to issues within America's Education and Justice system, it was made clear to me that understanding the context was a crucial piece to a successful proposal. As I begin my journey in community development, I will always remember the importance of bringing contextualization into my work. Without context, my work will always be missing a key aspect and will never be truly successful or sustainable. Parker Palmer, an American author and educator writes, "Rich people believe that God has especially blessed them, and that the poor somehow deserve their plight, while poor people hold a faith which promises a better life beyond this world" (13). My hope is to never make assumptions like the rich and always hold a faith to see people and communities for who and what they are.

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QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

Introduction

Every day on my way to work, a red light would stop me prior to getting on the freeway. As I would wait for the light to turn green, I would see the same man dressed in well-worn clothing holding a sign that read "Anything helps, God Bless". After driving past, I would create a narrative in my head wondering what his story or his circumstances were. It wasn't until I saw him one day in a convenience store parking lot, that I had the opportunity to stop and talk to him. I offered him a banana that I had in my car and we began to converse. He willingly opened up about his recent release from prison that left him without any personal possessions and no place to call home. The narrative that I created in my head prior to speaking with him was that he suffered from substance abuse as data would suggest. However, as we engaged in conversation my perspective was transformed. This personal experience highlights the power of qualitative research which uses words as data (Merriam 6). Qualitative research in practice allows one to interact and engage rather than relying solely on metrics and data. By taking the time to converse and gain insight into the man's personal life story, I was able to grasp a more holistic and inclusive understanding of his circumstances, and this is the importance of qualitative research.

Much like my personal experience with the homeless man, qualitative research has the ability to change the narrative and help unravel new insights. In the field of community development, it is crucial to incorporate qualitative research methods into one's work as it will allow for deeper understanding of the community and enhance the success of the work. In the following, I will explain in depth qualitative research, why it is useful in the practice of community development, and compare qualitative research values with core International

Community Development (ICD) values. I will then go on to elaborate how qualitative research was employed in my fieldwork and project proposal.

What is Qualitative Research

There are two primary forms of research, qualitative and quantitative. The most used of the two is quantitative as it seeks to comprise data through numbers (O'Dwyer 12). Qualitative researchers on the other hand do not analyze data through statistics, but rather by exploring questions like what, why, and how. The questions that are asked in qualitative research seek meaning rather than measuring (Keegan 12). Understanding the meaning behind why people think and believe what they do is an example of qualitative research. Merriam and Tisdell the authors of *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* explain that, "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (6). When qualitative research is conducted, it looks to find a deeper understanding of issues and often requires a more unconventional approach to uncover these answers.

Collecting data in qualitative research can vary greatly. Data can be collected in forms of interviews, focus groups, observations, surveys, etc. Gathering qualitative data involves small samples of people, is person-centered, and aims to understand people holistically (Keegan 13). With a holistic approach to data collection, it allows for a more thorough understanding of the research topic. Instead of strictly looking at numbers to identify a problem as quantitative data would, qualitative data dives deeper to understand why the numbers are the way that they are. Qualitative researchers seek to find this information by going to the source directly and interacting with the research subjects.

Qualitative Research in Community Development

Qualitative research should always be incorporated in community development work. Excluding a practice that is so necessary for true results could create a disparity in one's findings. There is a concept when conducting research that I like to think of as 'determining the root cause'. With major persisting issues that arise, they are often backed by a deeper issue, a root cause. The practice methods that are needed to identify these running trends must be inclusive and holistic. When using qualitative elements, they seek to find the true meaning of why certain things are happening. Through first-hand interviews, real-life observations, and cultural immersion, the root cause can be identified. This is how qualitative research aids the process of locating the root cause. Researchers are then able to discover the most strategic and appropriate methods that will produce the best solution. Overlooking important qualitative elements could create a gap in discovering what changes need to be made. Elements that allow for more effectiveness in overall evaluations often include the makeup of soft skills and intangibles. This includes learning more about the people, places, customs, and environments that are embedded in the very findings that you seek. When studying a different culture group, a community developer must take these customs and cultures into consideration. For example, an ethnographer Fadiman states that in the Hmong culture, if a man offers to shake hands with a woman, the women must indicate their lower status by placing their left hand under their right wrist in order to support the weight of his honored and important hand (93). If prior qualitative research did not take place, someone studying the Hmong culture would not know this and would likely disrespect and offend the culture. Qualitative research works to combat such a situation as this. It goes beyond the study of metrics and data but rather engulfs oneself in the research and findings. Interviews, surveys, polls, and establishing interpersonal connections are just a few items that community developers

should consider when trying to find ways to enhance the accuracy of their research. Furthermore, in community development, it is crucial to intertwine interpersonal connections with communal engagement. Through qualitative research, these two things are simultaneously implemented to achieve and transpire authentic outcomes.

When analyzing a demand of any scale, it is important to pay attention not only to your intent but to the underlying need as well. With this, utilizing the appropriate practices as a community developer can have a tremendous impact. Earnest Stringer argue how generalized solutions must be modified and adapted in order to fit the context in which they are used (6). In this same way, a community developer must take into consideration the context of their work and alter the solution accordingly. The passion and intention to create change must also be coupled with the intent to utilize desirable practice methods and strategies. To integrate these specific approaches, it is crucial to know the quality and impact that each strategy would have. When anticipating the need, one must identify what effective qualitative approach fits a specific circumstance or hardship. This in turn will build and enhance the work as an agent for social change because you are able to readily identify trends and pair them with justifiable ways to resolve the overall issue. When these items are incorporated, community developers can gain the ability to learn the personnel much more intimately. Being an agent of change means that you are the representation and the voice. Having inclusive qualitative practices means more in-depth learning about where aid is needed, which will make you a better ambassador when it comes to advocating for change.

Qualitative Research and ICD Values

The ICD program upholds three values: contextualization, copowerment, and collaboration. These three values create the standards of the ICD program and help to shape the courses that are

taught. The ICD values resonate with values that inform qualitative methods because it seeks to gain context and understanding from the community all while empowering and collaborating alongside them. Without these values, neither the ICD program nor qualitative data would be successful. In the paragraphs below, I will explain in detail each value and its relation and importance to qualitative research and community development work.

Contextualization. Contextualization in community development allows for better understanding of the communities at hand. By bringing context into community development work, it enables clear insight into the population that is being served. Getting to know the culture and their circumstances makes for an individualized approach where every client and community is treated differently. Community developers are then able to cater to their personalized needs and create an individualized care plan. The ICD program prides themselves on teaching regarding cultural sensitivity and awareness. When bringing contextualization into community development work, it allows developers to prioritize cultural awareness. Geert Hofstede in his book *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* uncovers that people are faced with many common problems around the world that need cooperation for their solution. Hofstede continue by explaining that one of the reasons why so many solutions do not work or cannot be implemented is because the differences in thinking amongst people around the world have been ignored (4). Hofstede highlights the importance of cultural understanding and considering the differences in thinking for people in different cultural groups. With this, bringing context into the work of community development will help to make aware of these cultural differences and find solutions that take this into account. In order to accomplish contextualization, community developers must conduct qualitative research to gain these insights. Through observation and interviews with different people in a foreign culture group, a new perspective can be found. Qualitative research

methods enhance the ability for community developers to acquire proper cultural understanding to provide quality work within communities. Additionally, when contextualization is brought to community development efforts, relatability and personal connection is able to transpire. With these aspects in place community development work will likely be more successful and sustainable.

Copowerment. Copowerment is another ICD value that is crucial in successful community development efforts. Copowerment comes from the word empowerment which means giving someone power and authority to do something. With this, copowerment is defined as having mutual power and authority that is given and received by both parties. Copowerment is critical in the field of community development as it transpires mutual respect. Sharing respect with the community at hand will build trust that can be a great catalyst for success. Trust and respect come into play when there is equality amongst all parties and their voices can be heard. Starhawk states that, "empowerment transpires in a collaborative setting when people feel that they have an equal voice and a sense of ownership, pride and investment in the group" (4). When copowerment is established, the foundation is built on respect, equality, and trust, which allows community developers to perform qualitative research in a more effective way. When people of the community know that their voice matters, they are more likely to be willing to share their stories and be vulnerable. In these ways, it is key that qualitative data is coupled with copowerment as it will evidently enhance developmental work.

Collaboration. Much like copowerment, collaboration is a similar concept that is necessary in community development and qualitative research. Collaboration is defined as the "frank acknowledgement of organizational limitations, the affirmation of another group's capacities, and the joining of abilities and resources in pursuit of mutually established goals" (Inslee). When

working to solve an issue or problem, the solution must be found in collaboration with the people in the community. When the input of the people in the community is lacking, there are major issues that arise. The ICD program emphasizes this very point, where we as community developers must not go into a community thinking we have the solutions to their problems. Without conducting proper qualitative research to give evidence and credibility to solutions, they will most likely fail. Therefore, going out into the field and collaborating with the people in the community is crucial. The success rates will tremendously increase when people are able to collaborate and work together to meet a goal. Collaborative groups, when they are working well, create fertile ground where empowerment can flourish (Starhawk 4). In the previous paragraph, I explained the importance of copowerment, where people can empower each other. With positive and successful collaboration, empowerment can take place. With these two elements intertwining, research and development efforts will benefit greatly and result in successful change.

Qualitative Research in Fieldwork

My fieldwork is a great example of the effectiveness of qualitative research in a community development setting. I conducted my fieldwork at Spruce Street Inn (SSI), a group home for foster youth in Seattle, Washington. The purpose of the research was to contextualize a model that emphasized rehabilitation and long-term stability for youth at SSI. My initial research question was: How can Spruce Street Inn cultivate a trauma informed, culturally appropriate facility that targets a more rehabilitative environment for youth to have long-term stability? Going off the central question, the following sub-questions were also explored:

1. What is currently being done at SSI to rehabilitate & create stability for youth? What needs to be changed or altered?

2. What are the greatest challenges to implement and offer these services at SSI?

3. How do you cater to the specific and individualized needs of each youth in a program like SSI?

4. How can SSI leave a long-term positive impact on the youth? Or is this even possible in such a short timeframe?

Although these questions were the basis of my research, I approached my fieldwork with an open mind to explore different themes and ideas. Michael Patton states, "approaching fieldwork without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis contributes to the depth, openness, and detail of qualitative inquiry" (14). With this in mind, I was able to dive deeper into other questions that arose and gain detail in those questions.

In my fieldwork, I utilized qualitative research methods to gather data which was key in the results of my findings. My primary methods of data collection were through ethnography, observations, and interviews. Given my fieldwork site was also my full-time job, I was able to spend over forty hours a week engaging in ethnography and immersing myself in the culture of the facility. Ethnographers immerse themselves in a fieldwork setting to understand a particular culture and they become culture detectives (Gullion 3). In this way, I became a cultural detective at SSI seeking to better understand the dynamic of the foster care system. Being an active participant in my fieldwork enabled me to engage and create relationships with the youth at SSI. Through conversations with the youth and staff, I was able to grasp a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding the foster care system.

A portion of my fieldwork was dedicated to simply observing the day-to-day interactions of the staff and youth at SSI. This aspect allowed me to take a step back and take note of things that I would have missed when I was a participant in the work. Observing the youth, staff, and

the daily endeavors that they faced shed light into the foster care system and its interconnection with the juvenile justice and education system. I noticed that there were many alarming findings that left me questioning the systems. One was the fact that only a very small amount of youth attended school during their stay at SSI. Two, most of the youth residing at SSI have previously been involved with the law. In an interview with Chris Young, a former Juvenile Detention Officer and worker at SSI, he stated that he saw many youths that he originally met in the Juvenile Detention Facility show up at SSI. Young explained, "It makes me sad when kids that I worked with at JD (juvenile detention) come to Spruce because I realize that they are foster kids who don't have parents… No wonder why they ended up in jail." In interviews like these, I was able to couple my observations with the personal interviews which often confirmed my new insights and findings.

Conducting interviews was another qualitative research method that I used throughout my fieldwork. Interviews helped me to learn from people who have lived through these experiences. The aspect of first-hand knowledge brought a whole different dimension into the understanding of my research. From the data gathered through ethnography and observations, I started to shift my interview questions to figure out why youth were not in school and why they were so heavily involved in the juvenile justice system. My conversations with staff, social worker, and youth revealed a trend that youth who did not attend school for a plethora of reasons were more likely to get involved in things like substance abuse, gangs, and other activities that would result in their involvement with the law. An interview with Naomi Paige, the Assistant Director at SSI uncovered that youth in the foster care system move around so frequently that they often can't stay at the same school for very long. Naomi stated:

Foster kids, especially as they get older, get moved around quite frequently. A youth

might be at a group home in Tacoma for a couple of months then get moved to a foster

home nowhere near Tacoma. Then, another couple of months go by and they get moved

to a completely different area. With so much moving around, foster youth are not able to

stay at the same school for very long. Also, many of these foster youths do not have a

stable adult figure in their lives encouraging them to prioritize their education. Especially

when they are in a group home setting, instead of focusing on school, youth get

influenced by other youth and become exposed to drugs and other things that get them in

trouble.

As I continued to seek answers, I used qualitative methods to aid this process. This fieldwork

process guided me as a fieldworker to step out and adopt an outsider' perspective through

observing unfamiliar patterns while attempting to unveil the many layers of behaviors and beliefs

that make people think as they think and act as they act (Sunstein & Tisdell 7). Through

ethnography, observations and interviews in my fieldwork, my initial research question

transcended into brand-new insights and curiosities. These new insights also sparked the idea for

my thesis project proposal. Having experienced and conducted my own qualitative research, I

now know the importance and necessity of qualitative methods in community development

efforts.

Qualitative Research in Project Proposal

In my proposed project, qualitative research will be heavily influenced to evaluate and ensure

project success. When approaching this project, I relied on past qualitative data to guide the

process. In order to measure the outcomes of my proposed project I have created outcome

markers. With this, I have the ability to measure my outcome and visualize what my project is seeking to achieve. My outcome markers are as follows:

1. The overall culture of the school becomes more positive and inclusive.

2. Student expulsion and suspension rates decrease.

3. Parent involvement in school related events increase.

These outcome markers are there to guide me in my evaluation process. In order to measure the impact of my proposed project, I will use both qualitative and quantitative research methods. With qualitative methods, I can conduct more interviews to understand the student and faculty's evaluation of the project. Alongside the interviews, I will conduct program evaluation surveys for students to relay their feedback on the project. With these qualitative methods, I will be able to grasp an idea of how successful my project was. In addition, I would incorporate quantitative data by examining school expulsion and suspension statistics as well as other metrics that the school collects. By exploring the data through numbers, it will allow me to compare from previous school years and with other schools. These quantitative sets of data will assist greatly in the overall measurement of impact. In using both quantitative and qualitative methods of evaluation I will be able to gain insight from people's opinions and statistics. By having a wide range of research methods of evaluation, I hope to grasp a good understanding of my outcomes and use my findings to improve my project in the future.

Conclusion

The field of community development requires a substantial amount of research and investigation. Although quantitative research can provide necessary numerical data, qualitative research allows researchers to step into the shoes of the people in the community. In an interview with Herbie Sanders, a residential youth specialist at SSI, he shared, "Being with these youths and interacting

with them every day, you start to understand them and their struggles… when you hear some of

their stories, it becomes real and you can feel their pain and hurt". This is a testimony that

through qualitative methods such as ethnography, interviews, and observations it allows

researchers to truly understand the research subjects and connect in a way that you are able to

feel what they are feeling. This idea of stepping into their shoes through qualitative research

brings forth a dimension of relatability and understanding that quantitative data fails to provide.

The characteristics of qualitative research also blend with the core values of the ICD program.

These two things intertwined create culturally appropriate and sustainable work in development

efforts. As I move forward into my vocation, I will take with me the core values of the ICD

program as well as remembering the importance of qualitative research.

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ICD VALUES

Introduction

My experiences in the International Community Development (ICD) program have helped in the shaping of the person that I have become. The course material not only educated me, but shifted my way of thinking, being, and doing. My personal transformation throughout the duration of this program has been exponential. I now understand and see social justice, copowerment, and service in a completely different light than I used to prior to this program. My hope is to take my newly learned perspectives into my future vocation as a community developer and change agent. In the following, I will further elaborate on the ways in which these values have been impacted in my life and what I plan to do with my future vocation.

Personal Transformation

Going into high school, my mind was set on becoming a nurse. I absolutely adored children and I loved helping people, so therefore pediatric nursing seemed like an obvious career path. In addition, my dear aunty was a pediatric oncology nurse and I admired her and the stories that she would share about her experiences helping children. In my mind, I was convinced that nothing could change this decision to become a pediatric nurse. As my senior year started to roll around, I began my college search to find the best nursing school. When I found a school that not only had an amazing nursing program, but also was offering me a scholarship to play collegiate soccer, it was a no brainer to choose to attend Northwest University. Little did I know that my college experience at Northwest University would soon transform me.

I went into my first semester of college taking the basic pre-requisites as a nursing major. However, as I sat in my chemistry class, nothing made sense. My brain did not comprehend what compounds, molecules, and elements were and I wondered if the nursing path was really for me.

In that same semester, I took a general psychology class where I started to learn about the human mind, behaviors, thoughts and feelings. This was a class that I woke up excited to attend and knew that I could master. Psychology was intriguing and relatable, which resulted in me wanting to learn more. As my first semester of college ended, I made a terrifying decision to let go of my nursing dream and change my major to psychology. This decision would soon open the door to pursuing a master's degree while still obtaining my bachelors.

After changing my major to psychology, I felt lost as I did not know where this path would lead me. With nursing, you become a nurse but with psychology there are so many different career paths that one can pursue. One day I was walking to class and saw a flyer on the wall that was advertising the ICD program. I didn't think much of it, until my academic advisor gave me a pamphlet that explained the program and offered testimonies of what graduates of the program were doing. This pamphlet alone drew my curiosity and I started to imagine what my future career could be if I pursued this program. Fast forward a few months, I was officially accepted into the ICD program ready to take my first couple courses, culture studies and community development. These courses forced me to really re-examine the way I saw the world and the most importantly, realize that there are so many ways to help people outside of the medical field. In high school, I thought that nursing was the only career path that allowed me to help people in need, but as I took these courses I was exposed to the great needs of the world. It seemed like every system was broken and every problem stemmed from greater structural and systemic issues. I started to lose hope that I would ever be able to create change in a world so utterly broken.

As I proceeded in the ICD program, I continued to feel overwhelmed by the tremendous number of injustices deeply embedded in our world. The more I educated myself on the great

changes that need to be made, the more hopeless I became. Julie Clawson, author of *Everyday Justice,* states that "too often we live compartmentalized lives that don't allow for the different spheres of our existence to interact. . . But encountering justice issues changes all of that and we realize that our lives are a part of a bigger picture" (13). A pivotal moment in my personal transformation was when I engaged in readings like Clawson, and I started to understand that my life is a part of a bigger picture. This realization was a tremendously overwhelming experience. Every decision I made whether it was choosing what to eat in the morning or figuring out which shampoo to buy at the store impacted the greater society and world that surrounded me. I started to build personal awareness of the world outside of my immediate life. Prior to the ICD program, I was sheltered from the outside world and if it did not affect my life directly, it did not matter. However, this was a complete shift in mentality and way of living that forced me to understand how my personal choices affected others and the world around me.

Another significant turning point in my personal transformation was when I started to conduct fieldwork. This was the first time that I was able to witness first-hand the content that has been taught up to that point in the program. All the course material before my fieldwork was merely just text in a book, but fieldwork allowed me to have real tangible exposure to community development work. In that moment, I knew that I was on the right path for my future career. I felt alive as I interacted with people and soaked in every interview, observation, and conversation. Although my heart broke every with story and testimony I heard, it also ignited the fire inside of me to fight for change. It became clear to me the importance of storytelling as it ". . . allows a listener to allow an idea to grow naturally to fit the hearer" (Spaulding 4). In this way, the stories that I would hear would really sink deep within me and would fuel me to take action.

Fieldwork forever changed the way I saw the world and allowed me to find my passion to fight for injustice and be a voice for the unheard.

Social Justice

I first understood social justice as creating a society where everyone is treated equally. To fight against social injustices people would protest, march, and make their voices heard. However, throughout the ICD program, I have come to understand social justice and the fight to restore justice to be so much more. It is evident in this world today that there is a great need for social justice. One of the most pivotal moments during the ICD program was when I started to realize that fighting for social justice is more than just marching with posters or attending protests. Seeking social justice in a broken world means being on the ground and connecting with the people being affected by injustices. It's one thing to post a Black Lives Matter picture on social media, but the real change occurs when we take the time to have a conversation with Black Americans and hear their truths. On the topic of racial injustices, author Carolyn B. Helsel asserts:

> The movement toward greater racial justice needs more than just radicals. It needs people like you and me…Not everyone can work full-time doing anti-racism work. However, everyone can learn how to talk about race, to stay in the conversation long enough, so that when the opportunity for you to act comes, you will know what to do. (2)

This is exactly what the ICD program instills in us as community developers and change agents. The uncomfortable conversations and the raw truths that come with these interactions can bring light to a situation that may be foreign. When people are willing to connect and hear the stories of ones affected by injustices, those stories can change the perspectives and minds of those who it may not affect. If you have not suffered as a result of racial injustice, it may be less likely for

you to be aware of these issues. However, when you know a personal friend or family member who has experienced racial injustice, it becomes more real. The more real it feels; the more likely people are to care and want to fight for change. For people to start experiencing the reality of social justice movements, they must interact and connect with the people it affects. Whether that is racial justice, food justice, environmental justice, it takes people learning and understanding the severity of the issues to truly see it as significant. This is best done through personal connections and listening to testimonies of others. With this, we can look to build a more just society for the next generations to come.

Social justice is more than just fighting to bring justice to the oppressed, but a big part is instilling and spreading love. In my personal faith, God continuously encourages us to love each other with every facet of our being. The commandment to love your neighbor as yourself is the core of what it means to seek justice for our brothers and sisters (*New International Version,* Mrk. 12.31). In a society filled with hate, we as a nation are divided. In order to restore justice, we must follow the commandment to love our neighbors. No matter what a person's beliefs, background, class, or race love must still be shown to our neighbors. If our society, nation and world can come to understand and spread love instead of hate, we have the opportunity to transform the state of our world. Cynthia Moe-Lobeda in her book *Resisting Structural Evil* emphasizes the importance of love and uses the term justice-making love. Moe-Lobeda states, "Love that seeks justice is the counterpoint of structural evil" (19). When love is intertwined with the fight for social justice, this is the justice-making love that can conquer over structural evil.

As I continue into my career path, my goal is to bring this justice-making love into my social justice efforts. Not only should my influence be to help aid and assist where my efforts are

needed, but also be a light for God's love. This means standing by scripture that commands us as Christians to love our neighbors. I hope to serve as an influence for social justice in the future by showing this love to people through compassion, empathy, and genuine care. When encountering a new community or people group, it will be this love that I use to approach my relationships. When I think of the life that Jesus lived, he treated everyone he encountered fairly, equally, and with love. Even when their problems did not affect him personally, he saw people's hurt and took it upon himself to help those in need. Seeing such an amazing example of character on display gives me optimism and hope to reflect His goodness in my future endeavors.

Copowerment

The understanding that I have developed of copowermnet has become a lot more transparent throughout the duration of the ICD program. The word copowerment was first introduced to me during the program's orientation and I remember pondering why this word does not exist in the dictionary. Copowerment is a spin-off of the word empowerment which means giving power to someone to do something. Not only does empowerment give power, but it "is something that gives people hope and dreams, brings them courage, and prompts them to be filled with the strength to live" (Harris 1). The ICD program created the word copowerment, which means that this power is shared between both parties mutually. This hope and dream is encouraged to be shown by each other and creates a dynamic where everyone is empowering each other to live out their fullest potential. Copowerment is crucial in development work and I saw this firsthand throughout the ICD program especially as I entered fieldwork.

My fieldwork location was a very hectic place filled with constant commotion and chaos. When you imagine working in a group home for foster youth, you might picture a nice welcoming home with structure and love. However, this was most definitely not the case at my

fieldwork site, Spruce Street Inn. Youth would often run away from the facility, staff would find

contraband in youth's rooms, youth may become upset at a staff and a fight might break loose.

Nothing was out of the ordinary when it came to the facility and there was always something

going on. In a place like this, I saw the importance and the desperate need for copowerment

between the staff and youth in the facility. If the relationship with the staff and youth in the

facility were not positive, then the facility would not run smoothly. However, if the staff were

showing respect and constantly encouraging the youths, then the youth would most likely

reciprocate this behavior. Although there were some staff who displayed copowerment, it was

not the culture of the facility. This meant that no matter how much copowerment a staff would

encourage, since the whole facility was not on board, this dynamic often failed. A lot of this

comes down to respect. The amount of respect that the staff and youth have for each other as

well as the respect for the facility is crucial in determining if effective copowerment would be

displayed. When copowerment is a main theme in a collective group, it enables all those

involved to respect one another and therefore feel their sense of purpose and belonging. This is

what was lacking at my fieldwork site and seeing it first-hand showed me how important it is to

prioritize copowerment in my future work.

 In my future work, I will find ways to incorporate copowerment into everything I do. The

first step in any project or program within a community must be relationship building. Creating a

trusted and respectful relationship with the community will enhance collaboration which

evidently will transpire copowerment. If the project or program has a foundation of trust and

respect for one another, then success becomes possible. In community development work, it will

be crucial to seek this collaboration from the community. In *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for

the Voice of Vocation,* Parker Palmer states, "we need not carry the whole load but can share it

with others" (89). In this way, it will be my goal to share the load with the people in the community to make a collaborative effort to seek change and encourage copowerment in my future work.

Theology and Philosophy of Service & Future Vocation

Much like my view on social justice and copowerment, my theology and philosophy of service has changed drastically. I went from a young high school graduate thinking serving meant providing people with physical and tangible needs and resources, but I have come to realize that true meaningful service comes from the heart. The purpose of service must be intentional and come from a place of love and authenticity. By this, I mean to say that passion must drive service efforts and the reason behind serving others has to come from within. This intangible aspect is what brings success to small startup organizations and changes that we want to see in this world. It must come from people who have genuine care for the injustice and the hurting. Robert Schnase argues that "if someone responds only to needs for which they have no passion, they work slave-like for purposes that do not compel them" (14). Without the passion for service work, the services being offered are most likely ineffective and not genuine. Therefore, I have learned that passion and heart is what leads to true and genuine service for communities.

Everyone has a passion, an injustice they see that makes them want to stand up for change. For me, I was able to find this passion through the experiences in this program. I always knew I wanted to work with children and youth, but I did not know what my specific niche would be. Palmer asserts that, "vocation does not come from willfulness. It comes from listening" (4). This was a lesson that I learned though out my journey in the ICD program. In my fieldwork, I started to really focus my efforts on listening and being a sponge to my surroundings. Through this experience, I discovered the injustices in the education system and

the juvenile justice system. The more I listened, the more I understood what changes needed to be made and this is the reason I created my project proposal which looks to bring change to the deep-rooted issues in the education system. The system is broken and is resulting in over criminalization and under education of minority students in America. With this, I hope to create a change in the education system in America and bring justice to these students in need. I do not know exactly where this will take me, but I know that I will never lose the passion to serve and more importantly I will never stop learning. I have always been eager to learn and explore new things which have helped me widen my world view. Conditions and circumstances are always likely to change however, I must continue to evolve my approach and perspective as a servant to those in need. There is a correlation between the drive and passion that a servant holds to the amount of learning and studies that goes with it. One cannot thrive or coexist without the other. I want the work that I do to have sustainable impact and be a true blessing to the entities that need it which means that I will continue to learn and educate myself.

In addition, one of the biggest factors that will serve as an influence for me going forward is my personal faith and the true meaning of Christianity. Leaning into my faith will allow me to couple my true passion to help this world with the tangible information that I have gained throughout his program. All these elements will benefit my ability to impact the world around me, and even more so to live out what my faith calls me to do. To love my neighbors and be a light for God's love. Being cognizant of what Jesus stood for, will always play an important role in my future endeavors. It will allow me to continuously be mindful about the purpose and intent of my services to this world, which in return will translate to authentic and loving service. No matter what my path may end up looking like, I will ensure to uphold the ICD values all while spreading the love and light of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

It is evident that the ICD program has been a journey of personal transformation and great lessons. The foundation in which this program lies creates a sounding board for ideas to transpire. I was blessed enough to build this foundation within myself to now carry into my future vocational work. The importance of meaningful and authentic social justice and copwerment are key to creating the relationships needed for successful community development efforts. Petra Kunkel the author of *The Art of Leading Collectively* states, "in human collaboration, there will always be hurdles and pitfalls. But strengthening a pattern of human competencies in interaction increases the resilience of the system of actors and their capacity to better co-create" (77). There are bound to be hurdles along the way, however, the values that the ICD program has taught me have prepared me for my future work. As the program comes to an end, I will keep the ICD values near to my heart and ultimately serve to be the light for God's love.

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PROJECT PROPOSAL
Introduction

For years now, schools across America have been implementing punitive discipline practices that

have created a culture of exclusion and fear in students of color and students with disabilities.

Additionally, punitive discipline practices such as school arrests, expulsions, and suspensions are

disproportionately affected and experienced by students of color and students with disabilities.

The unjust treatment of marginalized groups of students results in the under education and over

criminalization of innocent students leading to what is known as the school-to-prison pipeline: a

collection of punitive laws, policies, and practices that push youth of color and youth with

disabilities out of school and into the criminal justice system (Thompson 331). In order to

address and combat the school-to-prison-pipeline, school systems must eliminate punitive

discipline and instead implement restorative justice practices as a way of addressing misbehavior

amongst students. The elimination of punitive discipline practices will not only confront racial

inequalities, but it will also look to decrease the criminalization of minority students and

challenge the school-to-prison pipeline.

This project proposal seeks to combat the school-to-prison pipeline through a school-

wide restorative justice initiative at Friendly House's Academia Del Pueblo. The well acclaimed

Oakland Unified School District's Restorative Justice Implementation Guide will be used as a

model and basis of this proposal. The goal for this project is to shift the school's culture of

retributive justice to restorative justice and create a community of connectivity and inclusion.

The proposal will break down the problem, the need, and then go into the steps of

implementation of restorative justice practices. The implementation will be broken up into three

tiers, tier one focuses on community building and prevention, tier two highlights the restorative process and intervention, and the third tier is for supported re-entry and re-integration.

The Problem

Human stories have the ability to shed light on the society that surrounds us. Kiera Wilmot was a model high school student who was arrested and expelled after her science experiment accidentally exploded (Klien). Noe Nino de Rivera was a 17-year-old boy who got caught in the middle of a school fight. He may have been trying to break it up but was tased by a School Resource Officer and spent 52 days in a coma (Michels). Dontadrian Bruce was suspended for almost half of the school year after he was accused of being involved in a gang for holding up his football number with his fingers and was thought to be flashing "gang signs" (Chiles). Kaia Rolle, 6-years-old with sleep apnea, was handcuffed with zip ties by a School Resource Officer and processed at a juvenile facility after throwing a tantrum in class (Horton). The stories could go on without end.

These are just a handful of the countless stories of young students criminalized in a school system that enforces punitive discipline practices. For many of these students, these incidents will change the trajectory of their young lives as they face emotional and mental repercussions from these unjustifiable experiences. There is a painful reality that most of these students affected by this injustice are students of color. Marginalized groups, especially African American students and students with disabilities, are disproportionally affected by this policy. Brian Sellers claim that 56% of students who are expelled and 70% of students involved in school-related arrests and referrals to law enforcement are either Hispanic or African American (60). The disproportionate treatment of students of color in schools speaks to the institutionalized racism embedded within America's education system. Many teachers and school staff hold implicit

biases which contribute to the racial disparities in student discipline based on racial groups. Alongside the policies and practices, schools in America are also implementing criminal justice-based mechanisms (i.e., surveillance systems, school resource officers, metal detectors, drug-sniffing dogs, and notification systems) which have become commonplace in schools (Hemez et al. 237). With school's replicating practices that are implemented in prisons, the culture and community of schools in America have become an unwelcoming and unsafe place for students.

The origin of the School-to-Prison Pipeline can be correlated to the implementation of the zero-tolerance policy. The zero-tolerance policy is a strict enforcement of regulations and bans against behaviors and possessions of items deemed undesirable by said schools. An American writer, Jeremy Thompson, explain that the purpose of the zero-tolerance policy is to deter disruptive behavior and increase school safety, however, it has not deterred disruptive behavior nor created safer schools for students (332). He continues to write, "in fact, once enacted, zero-tolerance policies actually increase out-of-school suspensions and expulsions" (Thompson 332). When students are expelled or suspended, they are missing out on important education that they cannot get back. By missing school for extended periods of time, students fall behind on their schoolwork, which often results in failing a grade or in more extreme cases, dropping out of school all together. When youth drop out of school, it increases their likelihood of entering the juvenile justice system (Jones). It is time that schools eliminate the zero-tolerance policy and focus their efforts on more effective and sustainable practices such as restorative justice when addressing discipline in schools.

The Need

There is a pressing need for systemic change in the American school system. This project proposal is a step in the right direction to execute this type of change. By implementing

restorative justice practices at Academia Del Pueblo, this proposal seeks to build a positive

environment and culture. Restorative Justice (RJ) originates and is influenced by the practices of

indigenous people in the Americas and New Zealand. The RJ approach emphasizes mitigating

harm; attending to root causes of conflict; and, fostering relationships, empathetic dialogue, and

community accountability (Sandwick et al. 3). When Restorative Justice is implemented in a

school setting, students can take responsibility for their actions all while understanding the

impact of their behaviors. Restorative justice has been found to decrease suspension and

behavioral incidents, while improving school climate- particularly when embraced as a

schoolwide ethos, rather than a targeted disciplinary strategy (Sandwick et al. 1). RJ asks these

three main questions when analyzing the problem:

1. What is the harm?

2. What are the needs and obligations of all affected by the harm?

3. How can all the affected parties create a plan to heal the harm as much as possible?

In contrast, retributive justice asks:

1. What law or rule was broken?

2. Who broke it?

3. What punishment is deserved?

 It is evident that when comparing the differences in these three questions, RJ is a more ethical

approach in analyzing and resolving a problem. In RJ practices, the victim and offender engage

in a process called restorative circles. Restorative circles bring together the victim, offender, and

anyone else involved to have an open conversation about the harm inflicted. Through restorative

circles, the victims can seek closure and answers to unresolved questions in hopes that they can

shift their perspective and see the offender as a human being (Katic 126). By allowing both the perpetrator and victim to come together to restore the harm, they are able to better heal from the incident.

Problem behaviors and incidents are not the only time that restorative circles can be effective. Implementing restorative circles within the structured school day for every student to engage in can act as a preventative for future issues. This is the first tier in the RJ implementation process that will be further explained in the section below. Incorporating circles in school classrooms allow students to openly express themselves in a shameless and safe environment. Kelley and Kelley in their book *Creative Confidence,* introduces the idea of karaoke confidence which is the absence of fear and judgement (183). Most people, especially students, are scared to be creative due to failure and the fear of judgement. However, karaoke confidence removes the fear of failure and judgement which allows people to express their creativity freely. In a setting like the restorative circles, students will be able to show their karaoke confidence because they will know that they will not be judged by their peers. This practice encourages students to be creative and express their creativity in the classroom. Bornstein and Davis state, "students enlisted to think creatively about improving their school, community, or city will grow into more powerful citizens" (86). With this, implementing restorative circles will enhance the school to nurture positive communication and relationship building by creating a safe environment where creativity can flourish. With strong student relationships and the school being a safe environment, students will have less conflict and issues. Through these restorative practices, the school will seek to eliminate the traditional punitive discipline practices and create a more inclusive community. By implementing practices of RJ,

Academia Del Pueblo will take the first step into positive change within school systems in America.

Project

Friendly House Inc. Friendly House Inc. is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization in the heart of Downtown Phoenix, Arizona. Friendly House Inc. was established in 1920 by the Phoenix Americanization Committee as a local initiative that provided educational resources to refugees and immigrants. Over 100 years later, this small initiative has grown to become one of Arizona's pioneer social service agencies. They now focus on four major pillars of service: Education, Workforce Development, Family Services, and Immigration. Within those pillars they offer programs in Early Childhood Development, K-8 Charter School, Youth Education Services, Family and Emergency Services, Workforce Development, Adult Education, and Immigration and Citizenship Services. Throughout the years Friendly House has been committed to the meaning of its mission: To empower Arizona communities through education and human services.

Alongside their mission is their vision to be Arizona's leading provider of superior education and human services. They are committed to their mission and vision by incorporating the following seven core values: Integrity, Results, Teamwork, Respect, Excellence, Innovation, and Empowerment. Friendly House's efforts far exceed just services and resources provided to the community, but rather they seek to empower the community and work alongside them. Brian Myers, author of *Walking with the Poor* state, "if we have the humility to know that we do not know enough to do someone else's development for them, then seeking local participation is the only safeguard against our doing unwitting damage" (214). Friendly House's mission takes into

consideration the importance of local participation, which is evident in their work and their success for over 100 years.

Academia Del Pueblo. Academia Del Pueblo is a Kindergarten through 8th grade charter school that is a part of Friendly House. The mission of this academy is "to provide a challenging curriculum that fosters citizenship and builds a strong community that collaborates to prepare our students for higher education and a changing global society" (Academia Del Pueblo). They offer a curriculum that employs high academic standards designed to meet and excel Arizona College and Career Readiness State Standards. Their vision is "to provide 21st century school experience that promotes an academically and socially aware community of student leaders in an innovative, collaborative, and digitally-integrated learning environment" (Academia Del Pueblo). Academia Del Pueblo emphasizes the importance of collaboration and takes into account the values of humility, mutuality, and sharing for the clientele they serve (Inslee). Their focus on mutuality translates to their collective school environment and culture at Academia Del Pueblo.

Oakland Unified School District Restorative Justice Implementation Guide. The Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) has been extremely successful in their implementation of a school wide RJ model within their entire school district. They have since decreased their expulsion and suspension rates and have built a more positive and connected school community. In hopes that other schools will attempt to implement this model, OUSD in partner with Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth and Be the Change Consulting has created a Restorative Justice Implementation Guide. Using this guide as a model, I have proposed the implementation of the same RJ practices at Academia Del Pueblo. This step-by-step guide was designed for restorative practice facilitators to create an implementation plan to introduce restorative practices

to a school, school wide. With the Three Tier model, I will be explaining the purpose and importance of each tier.

Tier 1- Community Building *(Prevention/Relate)*. Tier 1 in the RJ implementation is the prevention phase, where strong relationships are built to eliminate and target behavior issues before they even arise. This tier focuses on social emotional skills to build relationships, create shared values and guidelines, and promote restorative conversations following behavioral disruption (Yusem). This process is conducted through classroom circles where students can express themselves openly in a safe space. The goal of this tier and the classroom circle is to build a caring, intentional, and equitable community with conditions conducive to learning (Yusem). This first tier is the foundational ground work that will set the stage for the next two tiers.

Classroom circles will take place in advisory classes for students. Advisory is a class incorporated within the school day where teachers can meet with a small group of students and advise them on their academics as well as their well-being. Every day in advisory, students will engage in a classroom circle and discuss assigned topics of restoration all while opening up and learning more about their classmates. Met West High School in Oakland, California is one of the high schools in the Oakland Unified School district to have implemented RJ practices. A Student from Met West High School opened up about his experience with RJ and shared:

> "Our advisory is like a family, I've been through police brutality, tragedies, and stuff like that and instead of me being depressed about life I know I can come in (to advisory circle) and talk to my community. They understand and most of the time if it's something I'm going through they've probably already been through it before." (Restorative Justice)

This testimony reveals the effectiveness and depth that classroom circles can bring into a school community. This practice allows for students to lean on each other for support and guidance which contributes to the enhancement of the school culture.

The implementation of tier 1 practices of restorative justice requires extensive training and coaching for people involved. There will be thorough training on restorative justice practices such as conducting classroom circles. The training will primarily be for teachers, but will also include counselors, administrators, school security officers, support staff, and after-school program staff. In order to make the environment of the school restorative, it must start with the staff. It is crucial for all staff members to be on board and on the same page when it comes to this RJ implementation. Therefore, every staff member will be included in the training and education process. The UOSDIG states that, "children learn by emulating the behavior of adults in their lives" (19). If Tier 1 is implemented properly, it has the ability to foster a strong interconnectivity that can transform the culture of the school as a whole.

During this training process, school staff will be required to take implicit bias training. Implicit bias training applies "contemporary psychological research on bias towards the reduction of racism and other forms of prejudice" (Lee 2). It is crucial to confront the implicit biases that teachers and faculty may have when working with students of color. When school staff hold implicit biases, they are more likely to associate bad behavior with a certain bias they may have which can result to harsher punishments solely based on the specific bias. For example, if a teacher has an implicit bias toward African Americans, they may use harsher punishments toward African American students than a Caucasian student even if they were to break the same rule. This is the type of behavior that is being confronted through this training. Implicit bias training will be a great tool to bring awareness to one's own biases which can limit

the potential harm caused to victims of discrimination. In addition, implicit bias training is an "effective, research based strategy for guiding people to encounter, reflect on, and ultimately shift their own potential for biased action" (Lee Jackson 2). Through extensive and thorough training, the school staff at Academia Del Pueblo will be well equipped to serve their students.

A crucial part of prevention in this tier will be heavily focused on parent/guardian involvement. In an interview with Dr. Louis Robison, the former executive director at The School District of Manatee County in Florida, he stated:

> The primary deficit in a student's success is the mother's relationship with the child and the mother's education level. If the mother does not have a good relationship with the child, it is likely that the mother is not involved or invested in the student's education. This does not just go for mothers, it is any parental figure. It is crucial for teacher to partner with parental figures and have parents be active participants in a student's academic success… It all begins in the home.

As Robison stated, it is important that student's parents or guardians are involved and invested in student's education for them to be successful. With this, we will have bi-monthly meetings where teachers, parents/guardian, and the student come together to discuss the student's school performance. This will be a time where teachers, parents/guardian, and students can express concerns and address issues in a more intimate setting. These meetings will help build a positive relationship with all three parties as well as create a collaborative environment where a student's success is put in the center.

Tier 2 – Restorative Process (Intervention/Repair). Tier 2 circles are known as the restorative process where intervention and reparations take place. It is a restorative alternative for disciplinary infractions and can dramatically alter the school's detention and suspension rates

(Yusem). With proper implementation of this tier, it can minimize out of school suspension and expulsions. Tools like community conferencing, harm circles, and mediation will help students to truly take responsibility for their actions and see the impact that their actions have caused. The goal of this process is to address the root cause of the harm by supporting accountability for the offender and promote healing for the victim, the offender, and school community. This process is carried out through group circles and involves the perpetrator, victim, teachers, parents, counselors, and any other people who were involved to come together to discuss the incident.

Much like in tier 1, this tier also emphasizes the importance of parent/guardian involvement. It will be important for parents of the perpetrator and victim to be heavily involved in this process. As Robison mentioned, "it all begins in the home", so it is important to have accountability and input from people in their home. Although the involvement of a parent/guardian is encouraged, there are bound to be students who may not have parents/guardians who are able or willing to engage in this process. In a situation where the parent/guardian is not available to participate in the RJ process, it is crucial to have the engagement and support of the school staff. With the wrap around support from the school staff in concert with people in the home, the student will be surrounded with people who are investing in their success. With support like this, it is likely that the student will remain out of trouble and be encouraged to be successful in school.

Tier 3 – Supported Re-Entry (Individualized/Re-Integrate). Tier 3 focuses on a supportive re-entry process for students who are returning to school from suspension, expulsion, or incarceration. This tier focuses on the induvial offender and allows them to re-integrate back to school in a supportive and comfortable manner. When students are absent from school for extended periods of time, it can be exceedingly difficult to return to a structured school routine.

Therefore, this tier is specially focused on these students who are entering back into the school community. Properly integrating a student back to school after a suspension, expulsion, or incarceration could be the deciding factor on their success and retention to continue with their education. The goal is to welcome youth to the school community in a manner that provides wraparound support and promotes student accountability and achievement (Yusem). With this, students will be required to meet with school counselors weekly to monitor their transition and provide additional support if needed.

In this tier, the ultimate goal is to keep the student in school and not let it become a cycle of suspensions, expulsions, or incarcerations. Aaron Andu, a former teacher and a youth coach at the King County Juvenile Detention Facility stated:

> You look at their (incarcerated youth) childhood, their families, you begin to see cycles
>
> of violence, drug abuse. There are situations where they are born into gangs or end up
>
> joining gangs for protection. So, you begin to see many systems in play that the kids
>
> don't know they are a part of and they can't identify those things as red flags or cycles.

It is important to help students identify these cycles and red flags that Andu explained. When these cycles are prevalent in a family structure, they become patterns that are second nature and it is very difficult to break this cycle. Once a pattern is established within a person, they must first unlearn the pattern before being able to learn something different, and unlearning is more difficult than learning for the first time (Hofstede 5). This is where teachers and school counselors come into play to aid and support this unlearning process. Their role is especially important in this tier as many students who have reached this point do not have the support from home. Without a parental figure guiding these students in the path to academic success, teachers and other faculty members are the student's adult figure. With this, teachers have the ability to

really guide and support these students in need. In this tier, school staff must be proactive and aware of this very fact and do their part in supporting these students.

Although the goal of this tier is to have students re-enter the school after an incident, it is also necessary to ensure the safety of the victim and the school as a whole. Unfortunately, there will be cases where the student who was suspended, expelled, or incarcerated caused extensive harm to other students or the school. In a circumstance as this, the school will have to put the safety of the victims and the rest of the student body at the center. These students will still have the opportunity to engage in a restorative circle, however, if the victims do not feel safe or comfortable, the school will have to look for alternative options. An option may be transferring the formerly suspended, expelled, or incarcerated student to a different school. There are alternative schools in Phoenix, Arizona that cater to specialized needs of individual students who may be struggling in a traditional school setting. This is a great alternative to ensure that all parties are still able to succeed in the future. Although these circumstances will not be common, it is important to understand and have a plan for these situations. Ultimately, the purpose of the RJ implementation is to create a safe and collective community at Academia Del Pueblo and this will be the goal in all decisions made.

Measurable Outcomes. Monitoring measurable outcomes will be conducted by me alongside the school teachers. The evaluation of the success and outcomes will be conducted in the form of a pre, mid, and post survey. These surveys will be completed by students, parents/guardians, and faculty members. The initial survey will be completed during the implementation of each tier. Therefore, there will be a pre-survey completed at the start of Tier 1, 2, and 3 for a total of three pre-surveys. The Mid surveys will occur during the midpoint of the school year in hopes that we will be able to use this feedback as a tool to adjust implementation if needed. The post survey

will be initiated at the end of the school year to provide feedback and an overall gage on how effective or successful the implantation was.

Alongside the surveys, evaluators will be using school data as a source of measuring outcomes. Some examples of the data that will be compared include: office referrals, suspension rates and incidents, racial disparities in school discipline, truancy, physical altercations, and standardized test scores. The data will be analyzed quarterly to ensure that adjustments and alterations are conducted to the needs of the outcomes. It will give a gauge on what is working and what needs to be more of a focus. The data gathered will expose the areas that are needing more attention, and the school faculty as a whole will be able to come up with solutions to resolve those areas.

Means for Sustainability. This project emphasizes the importance of sustainability. Once the fundamental practices of RJ are implemented at Academia Del Pueblo, the culture of the school will become a place of restoration and interconnection. The main importance of ensuring sustainability in this project will be to conduct on-going community circles and training sessions. If the school faculty and staff can maintain a high level of understanding of RJ practices, it will be directly translated to the overall culture of the school and community. It is just as important to continue evaluation and monitoring the outcomes using data and surveys. School data is key to understanding the trends and targeting the issues at hand. In addition, the feedback that is collected through the conduction of surveys will allow for constant improvement for more positive and effective results. Through consistent and thorough evaluation and adjustment, Academia Del Pueblo will be able to maintain and sustain RJ practices and foster a culture of inclusivity and restoration.

Conclusion

The use of the zero-tolerance policy as a way of addressing misbehavior in schools has not been effective and has contributed to the unjust discriminatory practices being employed against minority groups. These policies and practices inevitably contribute and lead to the school-to-prison pipeline where minority students are being funneled into a life in the juvenile justice system. To put a stop to this injustice, there must be a great shift in the way that schools discipline their students. Punitive discipline practices must be replaced with restorative justice practices to promote and create a culture of inclusivity and justice. This project proposal to implement a school-wide restorative justice model at Academia Del Pueblo will be a step in the right direction to acclaim justice. This proposal is not only initiating restoration and healing for these students, but it is an initiative to create a sustainable future of academic success and relational connectivity.

Appendix

What?

This project seeks to combat the school-to-prison pipeline through a school-wide restorative justice implementation at Friendly House's Academia Del Pueblo. The well acclaimed Oakland Unified School District's Restorative Justice Implementation Guide will be used as the model that will be the basis of this proposal. The goal for this project is to shift the school's culture of retributive justice to restorative justice and create a community of connectivity and inclusion.

What is Restorative Justice?

Restorative Justice (RJ) originates and is influenced by practices of indigenous people in the Americas and New Zealand. The RJ approach emphasizes mitigating harm; attending to root causes of conflict; and, fostering relationships, empathetic dialogue, and community accountability.

What does RJ ask?

1. What is the harm?
2. What are the needs and obligations of all affected by the harm?
3. How can all the affected parties create a plan to heal the harm as much as

A School-Wide
Restorative Justice
Initiative

A School-Wide Restorative Justice Initiative

Tier 1- Community Building

Prevention/ Relate

Tier 1 in the RJ implementation is the prevention phase, where strong relationships are built to eliminate and target behavior issues before they even arise. It is characterized by the use of social emotional skills and practice to build relationships, create shared values and guidelines, and promote restorative conversations following behavioral disruption.

-Advisory restorative circles

-Parent involvement

-Bi-monthly parent meeting

Tier 2- Restorative Process

Intervention/ Repair

Tier 2 circles are known as the restorative process where intervention and repair take place. It is a restorative alternative for disciplinary infractions and can dramatically alter the school's detention and suspension rates. With proper implementation of this tier, it has the ability to minimize out of school suspension and expulsions.

-Community conferencing

-Harm circles

-Restorative circles

-Mediation

Tier 3- Supported Re-Entry

Individualized/ Re-Integrate

Tier 3 is focuses on a supportive re-entry process for students who are returning to school from suspension, expulsion, or incarceration. This tier focuses on the induvial offender and allows him/her to re-integrate back to school in a supportive and comfortable manner.

- Re-integration back to school

-Warp around support

-Counseling

-Addressing cycles

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