



**Stories of restorative justice and school exclusion: an  
autoethnography of relational understanding.**

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## CONTENTS

Title Page	i
Supervisory Team	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Figures and Tables	viii
Acknowledgements	x
Abstract	xi
Abbreviations	xiii

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## Table of Contents

CONTENTS .....	ii
SUPERVISORY TEAM.....	iii
LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES .....	ix
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	x
ABSTRACT.....	xi
ABBREVIATIONS .....	xiii
CHAPTER 1: PROBLEM DEFINITION & RATIONALE .....	1
1.1. Introduction.....	1
1.2. Approaches to school exclusion .....	3
1.3. Educational equity and 'social justice' .....	10
1.4. School exclusion and proportionality .....	14
1.5. The research questions .....	16
1.6. Summary and organisation of the thesis.....	20
CHAPTER 2: SCHOOL EXCLUSION & SOCIAL JUSTICE .....	23
2.1. Introduction.....	23
2.2. Social justice, neoliberalism and social policy .....	26
2.3. Social justice and school exclusion.....	32
2.4. School exclusion approaches.....	33
2.5. The 'school to prison pipeline' .....	37
2.6. Relationships and life chances.....	39
2.7. Summary .....	42
CHAPTER 3: EXPLORING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE.....	45
3.1. Introduction.....	45
3.2. Definitions and terminology .....	46



3.3.	The history of restorative justice .....	48
3.4.	Restorative 'practices' .....	52
3.5.	The Wagga Wagga Model .....	54
3.6.	Restorative questions.....	60
3.7.	A theory of re-integrative shaming .....	62
3.8.	Shame and affect script psychology .....	64
3.9.	The 'Compass of Shame' .....	69
3.10.	Restorative Justice in the UK.....	74
3.11.	An explicit restorative framework .....	81
3.12.	Summary .....	86
	CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY & PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACHES.....	88
4.1.	Introduction.....	88
4.2.	Epistemological assumptions.....	88
4.3.	Narrative Inquiry .....	91
4.4.	Ethnography .....	92
4.5.	The 'pilot study' experience .....	93
4.6.	The case for autoethnography.....	98
4.7.	Settings and sampling.....	102
4.8.	A restorative justice pioneer .....	108
4.9.	Ethical considerations .....	109
4.10.	Issues of validity, reliability and generalisability .....	114
4.11.	Summary .....	116
	CHAPTER 5: FRAMEWORKS FOR ANALYSIS.....	118
5.1.	Introduction.....	118
5.2.	Assemblage and autoethnography .....	120

5.3.	Community autoethnography .....	122
5.4.	Analysis and legitimisation.....	123
5.5.	Assemblage as systematic analysis .....	126
5.6.	A framework for 'sensemaking' .....	127
5.7.	Summary .....	128
CHAPTER 6: ACCOUNTS OF RJ PRACTITIONERS .....		130
6.1.	Introduction.....	130
6.2.	Respondents and educational settings.....	133
6.3.	Exclusion policies in the school setting .....	135
6.4.	Use of restorative practices in the school setting .....	137
6.5.	Processes and key concepts.....	140
6.6.	Restorative practices and school exclusion.....	146
6.7.	Summary .....	151
CHAPTER 7: STORIES OF SCHOOL EXCLUSION .....		154
7.1.	A personal story .....	154
7.2.	Stories of adult experiences of school exclusion .....	157
7.2.1.	Hanna's story of school exclusion - the Parent.....	158
7.2.2.	Sue's story of school exclusion - the Headteacher.....	171
7.2.3.	Jessica's story of school exclusion - the SENCo .....	190
7.3.	Summary .....	211
CHAPTER 8: THE STORY OF A RJ PIONEER .....		214
8.1.	Introduction.....	214
8.2.	Déjà Vu? .....	214
8.3.	Telling your story - does context matter? .....	221
8.4.	They just don't get it! .....	224

8.5.	Working assumptions and a 'roadmap' .....	226
8.6.	Summary .....	232
	CHAPTER 9: DISCUSSION .....	234
9.1.	Introduction.....	234
9.2.	The research questions re-visited .....	237
9.2.1.	What does 'restorative justice' mean to practitioners in the school exclusion process? .....	237
9.2.2.	How do the adults in school exclusion processes account for their experiences of these processes? .....	241
9.2.3.	How does a restorative justice pioneer account for the development of restorative justice? .....	244
9.3.	Complexity and shared meaning .....	248
9.4.	Analytic autoethnography: reflections and some limitations	254
9.5.	Relational ethics in autoethnography .....	256
9.6.	Summary .....	257
	CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSIONS .....	260
10.1.	Introduction.....	260
10.2.	Key findings and original contributions .....	263
10.2.1.	Autoethnography .....	263
10.2.2.	Restorative Justice, relationships and self-identity.....	264
10.3.	Areas of future research.....	266
10.3.1.	Inter-disciplinary approaches, communication difficulties and relationships .....	266
10.3.2.	Developing 'Circles of Relational Understanding'.....	268
10.3.3.	Autoethnography as a relational methodology .....	270
10.4.	Summary .....	272

APPENDICES.....	275
Appendix 'A' The restorative conferencing 'script' .....	276
Appendix 'B' Biographical 'moments' – Preston and O'Connell ....	277
Appendix 'C' Leaflet shared by Local Authority team .....	281
Appendix 'D' Email from pilot study school.....	283
Appendix 'E' Extract from PhD Fieldwork diary .....	284
Appendix 'F' Educating Northants Conference flyer .....	287
Appendix 'G' Copy of online questionnaire .....	288
Appendix H Ethical approval .....	313
Appendix 'I' Consent Form.....	326
Appendix 'J' RJC information on research.....	328
Appendix 'K' Range of restorative questions used in practice .....	330
Appendix 'L' Core principles of the restorative questions .....	333
Appendix 'M' Key elements of a restorative process .....	335
Appendix 'N' Eliminating the need for school exclusions .....	337
Appendix 'O' The behaviour blueprint.....	339
Appendix 'P' Full conversation with O'Connell .....	340
Appendix 'Q' O'Connell presentation outline .....	369
Appendix 'R' Business sized restorative question cards.....	374
REFERENCES .....	375

## LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

### **Figures**

Figure 1	The Innate Affects	66
Figure 2	The Compass of Shame	70
Figure 3	The Restorative Conference Framework	73
Figure 4	The Social Discipline Window	83
Figure 5	The Eternal Verities	239
Figure 6	Circles of Relational Understanding	249

### **Tables**

Table 1	Pilot school characteristics	94
Table 2	Key characteristics of participants	106
Table 3	Educational settings and experience	133
Table 4	Behaviour and exclusion policies	135
Table 5	Use of RP in the school setting	137
Table 6	Who is involved in restorative processes	138
Table 7	RP and school exclusion	146
Table 8	Exclusions at Headteacher's School	172

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## ABSTRACT

The last three decades have seen the introduction and implementation, to the United Kingdom (UK), of a model of practice to repair the harm caused by crime and conflict, called restorative justice (RJ).

This research was informed by my own experience as a police officer when RJ was introduced to the UK, and later as a teacher and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) in schools for 4-11-year-olds in England, UK. This involved my own continuous involvement with the national and international RJ movement across the three decades. The research sought to gain a greater understanding around the core concepts and theoretical underpinnings of RJ that lead to positive outcomes for children and young people (CYP), in the English school system. The focus was on those at risk of school exclusion. It explored the interdisciplinary learning from criminal justice and education contexts through consideration of the accounts of restorative practitioners and adults involved in the school exclusion process and the story of a RJ pioneer who introduced his model of RJ practice to the UK (and me) in 1996.

The findings of the study provide a greater understanding of the principles that underpin the set of restorative questions introduced to the UK by the RJ pioneer Terry O'Connell (1998 & 2015), and how these questions might lead to positive outcomes for participants in a range of contexts where harm has been caused and relationships damaged. The broader findings including the thinking of the RJ pioneer, O'Connell, suggest that the core concepts, questions and values of RJ are of less importance than the way in which they are applied in practice and the motivations of those claiming that their practice is 'restorative'.

The use of autoethnography as a methodological approach, has shown that the inclusion of the 'self' in research can contribute to identity

formation at several levels, as well as a revised worldview of inclusive practice and relationships. Writing an autoethnography has provided a greater range of perspectives to improve our understanding of RJ and for me this has resulted in a learning process that is not only cognitive (an epistemological process) but also an ontological process of identity formation. This has been applied to my own experiences in the fields of criminal justice, education, restorative justice and academia.

Understanding relationships lies at the heart of this research and provides a contribution to how, as adults, we can more effectively support learning and the healthy development of our children and young people.



## ABBREVIATIONS

ACE	Adverse Childhood Experience
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CYP	Children and Young People
DfE	Department for Education
DoH	Department of Health
EHCP	Education and Health Care Plan
EP	Educational Psychologist
FGC	Family Group Conferencing
IIRP	International Institute for Restorative Practices
INSET	In-Service Training
LA	Local Authority
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
NI	Northern Ireland
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
PDA	Pathological Demand Avoidance
PS	Pilot Study
RJ	Restorative Justice
RJC	Restorative Justice Council
RP	Restorative Practices

SEBD	Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties
SEMH	Social Emotional and Mental Health
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCo	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SEN/D	Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities
SLCN	Speech, Language and Communication Needs
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SATs	Standard Assessment Tests
TA	Teaching Assistant
TVP	Thames Valley Police
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

# **CHAPTER 1: PROBLEM DEFINITION & RATIONALE**

## **1.1. Introduction**

This qualitative research began with the intention to explore an approach known as restorative justice (RJ) and focus on how that approach might be effective in reducing the harm caused by school exclusion. My own involvement as a practitioner in the introduction of RJ to both the criminal justice and education systems over the last twenty-five years became central to this research study, with my beliefs and background influencing the way in which the study developed from an ethnography into an autoethnography. The way in which my beliefs and narrative influenced the development of the research is therefore an integral part of this thesis.

Autoethnography reflects this journey into the 'messiness' of social science research (Muncey, 2010) which Law (2003) describes "as a form of hygiene".

"Do your methods properly. Eat your epistemological greens. Wash your hands after mixing with the real world. Then you will lead the good research life. Your data will be clean. Your findings warrantable. The product you will produce will be pure. Guaranteed to have a long shelf-life" (p.3).

My quest to produce 'good research' initially followed what might be considered a more traditional structure of 'defining research questions', 'reviewing the literature' and presenting a clear rationale for 'methodological decisions and choice of methods'. This led to some personal discomfort around my own previous research experiences which had resulted in unfinished postgraduate studies over twenty-five years ago. In the late 1990s, I successfully navigated the formal processes of internal review for an MPhil research study and carried out fieldwork and writing up whilst working full time as a police officer and with a young family. I had several changes of supervisor and this

had been my first return to studies since completing my undergraduate degree in 1985. The experience was a challenging one.

In the writing up stage of the MPhil, I was told by my new supervisor that my fieldwork did not answer my research questions and that if I were to submit the thesis for examination, I would fail. My self-confidence was severely bruised, and I chose to withdraw from studies rather than fail and did not pursue formal academic studies again until 2008. At this time, I was working with a senior lecturer at the University of Chester to develop vocational qualifications for RJ practitioners. As we developed the learning outcomes and qualifications together, he questioned why I was not pursuing further academic study myself and encouraged me to pursue a Master of Arts (MA) Degree.

The Work Based and Integrative Studies programme, offered by the University of Chester, accredited my prior learning and allowed for a negotiated learning pathway and award title that resulted in an MA in Restorative Practices and Relationships. The relationship with this senior lecturer, who then became my MA supervisor, motivated me to re-engage with academia and to be able to see the importance of research to inform evidence-based practice.

Insecurities around my own ability to research continued to exist however, and even though I successfully completed two MAs (2010, 2013) and two Postgraduate Certificates in Education (2009, 2012), my self-confidence as a researcher remained fragile. On reflection these insecurities remained suppressed until I began doctoral studies.

In chapter 4 (p.88) of this thesis, I outline the point at which I became consciously aware of how my own experience, influence and narrative was impacting on this doctoral research. The withdrawal of participants from what was proposed as a pilot study led to much self-reflection on my 1990s MPhil research experiences. The insecurities around

'fieldwork' and whether I was going to be able to answer my research questions to the satisfaction of examiners re-surfaced.

Greater detail around the rationale for an autoethnography is provided at this point in the thesis (p.98). In autoethnography the researcher can become "the epistemological and ontological nexus upon which the research process turns" (Spry, 2006).

My own experiences and reflections became central to the decisions I was making, and I realised that the inclusion of these reflections could add to the richness of the findings, discussion and conclusions.

This introduction to the research does not question the importance of structure and principles of ethics, validity, and rigour in research. It is shared at this early stage to help the reader navigate the thesis and understand the decisions taken around an autoethnographic approach.

The rationale for a focus on school exclusion relates to my own practice in criminal justice and education settings and the connections made between approaches used in these different contexts with positive outcomes for children and young people (CYP).

## **1.2. Approaches to school exclusion**

There is significant concern in the United Kingdom (UK) about school exclusion and the impact that this has on educational equity and social mobility for CYP (Gill, 2017; McCluskey et al 2019; Levitas et al, 2017). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) representing thirty-five, mainly European, countries suggest that equity in education means that schools and education systems provide equal learning opportunities for all students regardless of their socio-economic status, gender or immigrant and family background (OECD, 2017). Social and educational mobility and equity are viewed as important because they indicate the equality of opportunity in society (OECD, 2018).

Exclusion in its broadest form in the education context is “the removal of a child from their existing educational establishment due to their behaviour” (Gill et al 2017, p.10). There can be many different approaches to exclusion that range in the degree to which they focus on the prevention or the deterrence of what is deemed unacceptable behaviour in the educational setting. More punitive approaches aim to punish a pupil with a view that this will ‘disincentivise’ repeated bad behaviour whereas non-punitive approaches focus on efforts to understand the causes of bad behaviour and support the pupils to consider the consequences of their actions on others and repair damaged relationships (Gill et al, 2017; Wachtel, 2016; Hopkins, 2004).

Concerns relating to equity and inclusion in the school context have been highlighted in my own experiences and practice as a serving police officer and as a teacher and special educational needs co-ordinator in primary schools (4-11yrs) in the UK.

A disproportionate number of young people who have special educational needs, are excluded from school settings, and end up in the criminal justice system. This has been highlighted through my own practitioner experience and is supported by national data that highlights the social and financial costs involved (Gill et al, 2017; Preston, 2013):

“Every cohort of permanently excluded pupils will go on to cost the state an extra £2.1 billion in education, health, benefits and criminal justice costs” (Gill et al, 2017, p.7).

These longer-term outcomes of the school exclusion process are known to be socially harmful and as Gonzalez (2012) states, the fact that school exclusions “re-entrench disadvantage, and pave the way for future disadvantage” reinforces the need to avoid them where possible or at the very least reduce them.

Relational approaches, such as peace education, peer mediation and conflict resolution, used to manage harm and conflict in the school setting, existed long before the introduction of RJ to the UK (Van Slyck and Stern, 1991; Daunic et al., 2000; Behr, Megoran and Carnaffan, 2018; Cremin, 2018). However, the multi-disciplinary training of practitioners from a range of settings (including education) in O'Connell's model of RJ, led to the development of this model by educationalists in Australia and the UK (Thorsborne & Blood, 2013; Hopkins, 2004; McCluskey et al, 2008).

In the UK, the TVP RJ team developed multi-agency partnerships with a number of schools in the Thames Valley. One police officer was seconded full-time to a secondary school for children aged 11–16 years, serving Banbury in Oxfordshire. The headteacher of this school, worked in partnership with TVP from 1999 until 2004 and then went on to become the advisor for the Behaviour and Attendance Programme, in the Department for Education and Skills, England (Robb, 2005). This time involved a period of transition in the use of language associated with RJ and also coincided with my career break from the police to co-ordinate a Restorative Practices Training Association (RPTA) between Real Justice and Thames Valley Police (see Appendix B).

RJ was re-defined by practitioners in the education setting, as 'restorative practice' (RP) or 'restorative approaches' (RA), in part to distance the practice from associations with criminal 'justice' (Hopkins, 2016; Sellman et al, 2014; Wachtel, 2016). This change in terminology paid little attention to the impact this language had on practice and how this practice might be conceptually different from RJ.

Although some discussion of the possible differences has been offered (McCold, 2000; Wachtel, 2016; HM Prison and Probation, 2019), the definition still remains unclear in practice:

“the imprecise use of the emerging ‘vocabulary of restoration’ has created as much confusion as clarity about the fundamental concepts of the new paradigm. Restorative justice has come to mean all things to all people” (McCold, 2000, p.358).

Wachtel (2016) views RJ as a “subset” of RP. He states that RJ is viewed as reactive and focuses on “crime and wrongdoing” and how the impact of the harm caused can be addressed involving all those who have been affected. RP is defined as a set of formal and informal processes that “proactively build relationships and a sense of community to prevent conflict and wrongdoing”.

As with RJ, the only agreement in the literature about what constitutes RP is that there is no consensus as to its exact meaning or the core values and concepts that underpin the practice (Hopkins, 2016).

This research study is underpinned by one conceptual framework introduced to policing in England, by an early pioneer in the field of RJ (Hoyle et al, 2002). The practice model was developed by an Australian senior police sergeant Terry O’Connell to provide a more explicit rationale initially for his own policing practice (O’Connell, 1998). He had the opportunity to share his ideas when in 1994, he was awarded a Winston Churchill Fellowship that led to visits to the UK and North America (O’Connell, 1995). My own involvement with this model begins with this introduction to an English police force in a criminal justice context relating to youth offending and cautioning. It was simultaneously introduced to police complaints and grievances, so my exposure to the model in the broader context of repairing relationships also occurred at this time. I was also involved in the transition of this model to use in the English school system through multi-agency partnerships and training associations between the police and schools in the Thames Valley region.

Although the debate around terminology and definitions is important, it is this model of RJ introduced initially to policing in England that underpins this research thesis and links to the autoethnographic



reflections of my own practice in the fields of criminal justice and education. For clarity, in relation to the methodology and underpinning theoretical frameworks used, RJ will therefore be the term used henceforth unless other terminology is specifically used in the literature or by participants in this study.

Over the last couple of decades, in an international education context, RJ has been developed as one relational model to support behaviourist approaches to school discipline and culture that moves beyond 'zero tolerance' policies towards approaches that seek to understand what has happened and involve the people affected in repairing the harm (Morrison and Vaandering, 2012).

RJ had originally been introduced to the English criminal justice system to provide an approach in policing that brought everyone together who had been affected by a crime (Clamp and Paterson, 2016). I was part of a team of police officers trained to introduce this model in police cautioning processes in 1996.

In 2008 when I trained to become a primary school teacher (4-11-years), the principles from the introduction of this model of RJ and the subsequent multi-agency work that had taken place between schools and police in the Thames Valley region were also being used to repair conflict and harm in education settings. Initially, the introduction of RJ in education, was an alternative approach to discipline systems that traditionally relied on more punitive 'zero-tolerance' approaches such as suspensions and exclusions as methods of behaviour control (Evans and Lester, 2012; Stinchcomb, Bazemore and Riestenberg, 2006). The RJ approach, in contrast, was said to support the development of relational school cultures where behaviour is understood in a social context rather than being addressed through a punitive regulatory approach. (Evans and Vaandering, 2016).

As with any of the wide range of approaches to school discipline, RJ has both critics and supporters (Lyubanskey, 2019; Morris 2002;

Fronius et al, 2016; McCluskey et al, 2008). Criticism of any idea or practice can offer opportunities for refining a developing model or lead to defensiveness that is likely to stifle development (Schiff and Bazemore, 2001).

This has influenced the development of this research study as my own practitioner experience with RJ transitioned from a criminal justice context into the education context. My own experience of RJ in the school and criminal justice settings has been challenged regularly at both a practice and theoretical level. At an International Conference held in Hull in 2010, I made my first presentation as a qualified teacher on RJ in education (Preston, 2010). There was a strong focus on RJ in education at this particular conference and the terminology used related to restorative practices (RP). I received some personal challenges that questioned my ability to be able to relate my experience and practice as a police officer to the context of education especially as I was 'so new to teaching'. Initially I was defensive but in hindsight this was a critical point in my career and has shaped my own development as a practitioner and researcher in the field of RJ as well as shaping the development of this research study and the research questions. At this point in my career, I became much more self-reflective and questioned whether there were differences in RJ in different contexts and whether the restorative questions were transferrable between these different contexts. As Ellis (2004) states, "isn't ethnography also relational, about the other and the 'I' of the researcher in interaction?" I began to reflect on my interactions with other in the 'RJ world' and how I communicated my ideas about what it was to be restorative whether that was through my own practice, as a trainer or as a researcher.

In the UK, the debate continues at a national and international level. In the English education context, the general secretary of National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) has

stated that “bad behaviour in classrooms is being fuelled by fashionable ‘restorative justice’ schemes” (Turner, 2019) whilst the national director of education at the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) stated that teachers have “been expected to take part in the ‘restorative discussion’ as if they need to justify their actions to the pupil” (Turner, 2019). The Government Behaviour Adviser commissioned by the Department for Education in 2015 to lead a Behaviour Review Group (Bennett, 2017) responded to the NASUWT comments in this article by stating on his Twitter account:

“While restorative techniques are useful tools for rebuilding relationships, its overuse as a whole-school behaviour strategy is often responsible for deepening behaviour problems and I echo the concerns of members here” (Bennett, 2019).

The development of formal RJ processes world-wide, has a relatively short history and as Schiff and Bazemore (2001) highlight, “critics should be cautious about concluding at this stage that restorative community justice policies have failed”. Looking at RJ in the criminal justice system, they state that:

“It is one thing to point out that after 10 years of full implementation, restorative justice has failed to resolve pervasive justice system problems of insensitivity to minority cultures, legal coercion, or inadequate attention to due process. It is quite another to blame such longstanding problems on restorative and community justice” (p.309).

In my own research into RJ when it was introduced into schools in the Thames Valley region in the late 1990s (Preston, 2002), I identified the difficulties with definitions and began to outline the narrative being created that suggested that RJ was the most effective approach to address issues of school exclusion and social justice.

After two decades of implementation and further research including my own (Preston, 2013 and 2015) there is still lack of clarity around what is meant by RJ. There is disagreement within the field as to whether

there are a set of underpinning concepts which can be consistently applied in practice to provide increased social inclusion.

The following section will outline how this gap in understanding has influenced the development of this research study and informed the development of the research questions.

### **1.3. Educational equity and 'social justice'**

Gonzalez (2012) highlights that disengagement from education is a key indicator of future contact with the criminal justice system both at a young age and later in life. A general concern about the exclusion process in schools is that it "removes the child from a key socialising experience" (Parsons, 2018). As school behaviour management practices are often the first time that young people experience a form of state punishment and control, these experiences can become "critical in shaping their understanding of and response to punishment" (Deakin and Kupchik, 2018).

The fact that school exclusion can have such long-term consequences and lead to poor outcomes on a wider social scale has been identified in my own practice, beginning when I was a police officer in Thames Valley Police (TVP). In 1996, whilst working in the Community Safety Department, I was introduced to RJ as an approach to reduce offending (Wilcox and Young, 2007). TVP pioneered a model of RJ based on ideas developed in Australia by the then senior police sergeant Terry O'Connell. (Hoyle et al, 2002; Clamp and Paterson, 2016). Although many models have developed world-wide, it is said that O'Connell's model has,

"received the most academic and policy attention and been subjected to large scale independent evaluations thus providing more reliable data than are available from other police led schemes" (Young, 2003 p. 196).

The details of this model will be explored further in chapter 3 (p.54).

Following an independent evaluation of the introduction of the RJ model to police cautioning by the Oxford Centre for Criminological Research and the introduction of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act in 1999, the outcomes from the use of this model, especially in relation to youth justice were shown to be positive for all those involved and reduce re-offending (Hoyle et al, 2002). As a result, some other police forces and *all* youth offender teams introduced RJ measures into their responses to youth crime (Hoyle et al, 2002).

In 1999, I began a career break from the police and worked for the newly formed RPTA linking the newly formed Real Justice UK (later to become the International Institute for Restorative Practices - IIRP) with Thames Valley Police. This Association continued to train Thames Valley police officers in the use of O'Connell's model of RJ (O'Connell, 1998) but also marketed and submitted bids for training contracts nationally to a range of different organisations working in contexts outside criminal justice. This began an association initially with schools in the Thames Valley region but then to schools nationally who were seeking training in this model of practice.

I continued to be involved in research around the concepts underpinning the model and the development of standards and accreditation in the field (Preston, 2002 2008, 2013). In 2013 I became adjunct faculty for the newly accredited IIRP Graduate School. I helped to design and teach postgraduate courses and further the development of the international understanding of RJ (IIRP, nd).

During this period of my career as an IIRP trainer (1996-2003), the use of O'Connell's model (1998), began to be used (internationally) in other contexts and particularly in education (Evans and Vaandering 2016; Hopkins, 2004; Thorsborne and Blood, 2013;). O'Connell shared the model he had developed both in his home country Australia and whilst on his Winston Churchill study tour in Canada and the United States of America (USA) as well as the UK (O'Connell, 1998).

In the USA, following O'Connell's visit, educationalists Ted and Susan Wachtel began to develop the 'model' in their Community Service Foundation schools for "delinquent and at-risk youth" in south-eastern Pennsylvania, USA (Wachtel, 2016). Wachtel later founded the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) in 1999 in the USA and funded the organisation that I then began training for in the UK and Ireland as an affiliate of the IIRP.

In Australia, Margaret Thorsborne, then a guidance officer in the Queensland Education Department, contacted Terry O'Connell in Wagga Wagga to seek guidance around RJ. The first school-based conference in Australia was facilitated by Thorsborne in 1994 and O'Connell's model began to be used all over the world and in a range of different contexts (Thorsborne, 2020).

By the time that I had entered the teaching profession, in 2008 and also trained as a special educational needs co-ordinator, there was a small but growing body of research evidence around the use of RJ in the field of education (Hopkins, 2004; Morrison et al, 2005; Cragg, 2005). RJ in the education context was also at the centre of my own research studies (Preston, 2002, 2008, 2013).

In England my own position as a researcher with practical experience of RJ in both policing and teaching was unusual, maybe unique at that time. I moved from a high-profile national role linked to the introduction of RJ to police cautioning to teacher training and my Newly Qualified Teaching (NQT) year in a primary school that had not heard of RJ.

These experiences and the opportunity to role model and use the framework of RJ that I had practiced in policing laid the foundations for this autoethnographic study. My NQT teaching year (2009) was with a class of twenty-seven 7-8year olds in an area that was highest on the deprivation index and where over 30% of my class were on the special educational needs (SEN) register. My experiences through

police work with young people who had become disengaged from education and involved in crime influenced my approach to managing behaviour and creating an environment in my classroom that sought to build relationships and meet individual need. The political context in education at that time made this challenging and exhausting however and I still look back on that year as one of the hardest years in my professional career as I tried to provide an inclusive education alongside stringent performance targets for me and the children.

The system-wide, market-oriented, reforms introduced into school-based education from the 1980's onwards led to much greater emphasis around incentives and consequences linked to high stakes testing in schools in England (West, 2010). The quasi-market (a term used to describe changes to a system whereby a monopolistic state provider is replaced with independent competitive providers), introduced to English education by Conservative administrations, gave much greater parental choice when choosing a school for their child. This policy relied on a diversity of schools so that this choice could be exercised. When the Labour Government was elected to office in 1997, it did not change the fundamental principles of this quasi-market. These ideas of parental choice of school and funding following pupils with schools competing for pupils and hence income were embraced by the incoming Labour Government and continued to develop further (Hill, 1999; West, 2010). As well as carrying forward the Conservative Government's agenda on parental choice, the Labour Government, also introduced "targets" with the aim of increasing the overall levels of achievement in England. This became known as a 'high stakes testing system' which West (2010) states:

"... can be considered as one that is used to determine – or help to determine– the future of pupils, teachers or schools on the basis of test or examination scores" (p.25)

In 2008, as I began teacher training, the Government increased the proportion of children required to achieve the expected level in tests

at the end of Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics to 78%. This was to be achieved by 2011. They also introduced the National Challenge Policy (DCSF, 2008). This policy led to the targeting 638 schools (around a fifth of all secondary schools in England at the time) where fewer than 30% of pupils obtained five or more passes at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics in their General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSEs). The government has encouraged the setting up of academies and encouraged local authorities to close schools failing to meet these targets and replace them with a trust school, specifically a 'National Challenge Trust'. These Trusts involved "partnerships led by a successful school and a business or university partner" (West, 2010).

In 2009 as I began my NQT year, the tests had particularly 'high stakes' as the school was due an inspection by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). Low scores in the national tests can also result in poor Ofsted inspection results which then influence the ranking of the school in league tables. They not only affect the school's overall budget (determined largely based on the number of pupils enrolled in the school) but also who chooses to apply to a particular school. I certainly felt increased pressure to focus on the children in my class who were going to achieve the best results and my own performance was measured in relation to this.

I drew on all my previous experiences to address the needs of a cohort of children who through the high socio-economic deprivation rates on the estate and the high levels of recorded special educational needs were at much greater risk of failing to meet the targets and becoming disengaged from education.

#### **1.4. School exclusion and proportionality**

Alongside the different approaches to school exclusion, there are considerable differences in the rates of exclusion for different groups



of young people in different geographical areas of the UK. 97.4% of all children permanently excluded in 2016/17 in the UK - England, Scotland, Northern Ireland (NI) and Wales - were from England. Only 2.6% of exclusions occurred in Scotland, NI and Wales combined, making this a worrying statistic for English schools. It is still a concerning figure even when you adjust for the fact that there are five times the number of school children in England compared to Scotland, Wales and NI combined (McCluskey et al, 2019).

The Deputy First Minister and Secretary for Education and Skills for Scotland, attributes the dramatic decline in exclusions over time in Scotland to:

“the continued focus by schools and education authorities to build on and improve their relationship with our children and young people most at risk of exclusion in their learning communities. That relationship is at the heart of every story of success” (Scottish Government, 2017, p. 3).

In 1996, the year that I was introduced to RJ, the Audit Commission found that 42% of juvenile offenders had been excluded from school and a further 23% had truanted from school significantly. There was also a gender difference in the rates of exclusion with boys accounting for 83% of those excluded. Overall, 13% of exclusions were from primary schools, although the number was rising significantly and had shown an 18% increase since the previous year. (Audit Commission, 1996, New Policy Institute, 1998). There were also a peak number of permanent exclusions in England in the 1996/7 statistics with 12,670 exclusions from the whole school population (DfE, 2012). I had noted the connections between school exclusion and those receiving police cautions, anecdotally, as I facilitated processes using RJ with young offenders.

From my observations in the national and international education contexts, practitioners seemed to struggle to define ‘restorative’ or make explicit this practice or the concepts that underpinned the

practice. My practice experience in the criminal justice context and growing practical experience in teaching allowed me to test and challenge O'Connell's model and the restorative questions and begin to build my own evidence base of what worked in both contexts. Through self-reflection and inclusion of the autoethnographic 'I' the research provides original contribution through my own role as an 'insider' within this particular cultural milieu.

### **1.5. The research questions**

I remained involved with the national and international RJ movement, when I trained to become a teacher in 2008 and a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) in 2011, through my training with the IIRP. O'Connell also continued to work with the IIRP and so the relationship and discussions between us continued as his thinking developed around his original RJ practice model introduced to me in 1996. He began to define a more explicit RJ framework. We have presented at several international conferences together (O'Connell and Preston, 2005; O'Connell, 2006; Preston, 2006; 2010; 2016b) and discussed the model across these years including the concepts that O'Connell suggested underpinned his original practice framework.

My practitioner experience in primary education (4-11yrs) as a teacher and SENCo was demonstrating that exclusion from the educational setting continued to be associated with poor outcomes. A Department for Education review of exclusion (Timpson, 2019), identified that just 7% pupils permanently excluded and 18% of children who received multiple fixed period exclusions at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2015/16, went on to achieve good passes in their English and Maths General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) exams. Timpson identified these qualifications as "essential to succeeding in adult life" (p.8).

Research has also highlighted that children with some types of SEN, boys, and those who have been supported by social care or who are

disadvantaged are all consistently more likely to be excluded from school than those without these characteristics (Graham et al, 2019). Children with special needs are particularly vulnerable to being taken 'off the rolls' by schools that are under pressure both financially because of budget cuts and academically to improve their results in standardised tests. Testing begins in a formalised way when a child is in Year 2 of their primary education (7-8 years old).

Concerns about the motivations that lie behind exclusion processes feature in the wider debate about attainment and achievement in the UK and internationally (Parsons, 2011; Thorsborne and Blood, 2013; Cole, Daniels, and Visser, 2013; Children's Commissioner for England, 2019; Timpson, 2019).

There have been links made to the importance of organisational culture and ethos on criminal justice approaches as well. TVP are world renowned for their attempts to embed a restorative approach across a force that services roughly 2,000,000 people (Clamp and Paterson, 2016). However, they state that this came to "an abrupt end in the early 2000s" due to "a broader performance management culture that took hold over the criminal justice landscape in England and Wales". Targets became the dominant external factor that informed the sociocultural context of policing this had the ultimate impact of severely curtailing restorative policing practice and police officer discretion (Clamp and Paterson, 2016).

I experienced these changes in the sociocultural context of both policing and teaching as a practitioner and observed the impact that these pressures had on the approaches that both senior leaders and practitioners took in order to meet these targets. There is not a clear causal relationship between exclusion from school and juvenile offending although the relationship between education and youth crime has long been recognised in terms of social policy and public opinion (Stephenson, 2006; Cremin et al 2012). The research suggests that

educationalists and criminologists have failed to engage meaningfully with one another on the issue leaving a large gap between youth justice and educational provision and a failure to cross interdisciplinary boundaries. I identified this gap in relation to my own experiences in education and youth justice provision and particularly in relation to the development and research of a RJ approach. These personal experiences further strengthened the relevance of an autoethnographic approach to this research that included my own experiences, thinking and practice to address the gap in cross disciplinary research around RJ in criminal justice and education.

The need for 'joined up' research to help understand what is required to improve outcomes for young people in the fields of education and criminal justice in England is represented by the statistics in both fields of study.

Although covering England and Wales (the details of where the sample were at school is not provided), Ministry of Justice (MoJ) commissioned research identified that 63% of prisoners reported being temporarily excluded when at school. (Williams et al, 2012). 42% of this group had been permanently excluded, and these excluded prisoners were more likely to be repeat offenders than other prisoners.

The MoJ also identified that 30% of children who entered custody over the 2018-19 period were assessed as having special educational needs or disabilities, even though less than 15% of children in England and Wales fall into this category (Bulman, 2019).

The need to identify the most effective approaches in the school context to reduce exclusion and address the underlying causes that put certain young people at greater risk of both exclusion and poor future life outcomes is clear. My practitioner experience of RJ as an effective approach in both criminal and educational contexts highlighted that there were difficulties with the definitions and concepts that underpinned what made the approach 'restorative'.

O'Connell's model of RJ is said, by some, to be the basis for world-wide practice models across a whole range of contexts (Clamp and Paterson, 2016). Within the RJ movement, there is however, "still no consensus as to the nature and extent of applicability of the restorative notion" (Gavrielides, 2008).

This tension between the various definitional and conceptual positions, has had a negative impact on both the theoretical and practical development of RJ and has been said to encourage:

"a power-interest battle between different stakeholders within the restorative movement including practitioners, theoreticians, researchers and policy makers" (Gavrielides, 2008, p.165).

The relational approach to conflict and harm known as RJ has been highlighted by my own previous research and practice (Preston 2002; 2013) as an effective approach to minimising the harm caused by challenging behaviour in the school setting, whilst also addressing damaged relationships.

The lack of definition and confused understanding of the core concepts of what is or isn't considered to be restorative have consistently been highlighted in my own research and practice as areas in need of further research, particularly from the perspectives of the adults involved in these approaches.

In this study I sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What does 'restorative justice' mean to practitioners in the school exclusion process?
2. How do the adults in school exclusion processes account for their experiences of these processes?
3. How does a restorative justice pioneer account for the development of restorative justice processes and concepts?

Through autoethnography my overall aim was to use my own experiences and thinking around this one model of RJ to support the reflections and stories gathered from practitioners and a restorative

justice pioneer. My reflections on more than twenty-five years of RJ practice as a police officer, educator and special educational needs co-ordinator aim to bridge the gap between the development of RJ in English education and criminal justice disciplines.

## **1.6. Summary and organisation of the thesis**

As has been discussed earlier in the introduction to this thesis, the epiphany that moved a narrative inquiry towards an autoethnography came into sharp focus when I experienced the impact of my own narrative and experience on research participants. The self-reflections which took place during my “pilot study experience” (p.93) have become an integral part of the research and my developing researcher identity and add further original contributions relating to the relevance and importance of this methodology to cross-disciplinary research.

These self-reflections thread through the thesis and contribute to addressing the research questions. They also allow for reflections on the use of autoethnography in social science research. Academic writing and identity formation are woven into each other (Packer and Goicoechea, 2000), making the process of learning not only cognitive (an epistemological process), but more fundamentally an ontological process of identity formation. The way in which the thesis is structured and written is done to give “voice to personal experience” with the intended purpose to “extend sociological understanding” (Wall, 2008, p.38) around relationships.

Chapter 2 looks at literature focusing on school exclusion in England in the broader context of social justice and social inclusion. The parallels between approaches to challenging behaviour in both criminal justice and education are linked to my own role as practitioner in TVP and as a primary school teacher and SENCo and linked to the prevalent political policies that were adopted during that period and associated with my own professional and researcher development and thinking.

Chapter 3 outlines the literature relating to the history of RJ and the introduction of RJ to an English police force. The chapter focuses on the development of one model of practice that was first introduced to me and to the police cautioning in an English police force by one RJ pioneer. (O'Connell, 1998; Hoyle et al 2002).

The history and development of this model of practice is outlined in detail as it underpins the autoethnographic approach to answer all three research questions. The links are made to my own involvement in the development of RJ world-wide but particularly relating to my own practice in England as a police officer, teacher and special educational needs co-ordinator in England. Although this model is covered in detail, the broader context of RJ development is also covered in this chapter to highlight the wider field of RJ in which O'Connell's model began its growth in the UK.

Chapter 4 provides the methodological approach taken to answer the research questions and explains the rationale for an autoethnographic approach and the methods used.

Chapter 5 presents the rationale for the use of a more analytical (rather than emotive) approach to the findings from autoethnography. This is a type of autoethnography described as community autoethnography (Ellis et al, 2010). 'Assemblage' and 'sensemaking' (Anderson 2006; Boylorn and Orbe, 2013) are used to link multiple perspectives and stories of the participants in this research study at a particular time, and place, in the life of the researcher.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 present the accounts, stories and findings from this study. They are interwoven with my own reflections and stories to support the development of a greater understanding of RJ and the key factors that help towards the development of healthy and positive outcomes and relationships in the school exclusion process. The literature is revisited, in the reflections in this chapter, through a cyclical process that has allowed me to continue to live in my worlds

of practice and maintain and develop the relationships. The research thesis captures this one point in time and my own reflections are added to support the research accounts of others in developing a greater understanding of RJ and relational approaches that in turn, build a greater understanding of adult decision making in school exclusion processes.

Chapter 9 provides reflections and discussion of these 'findings', including a critical analysis of the accounts of others and their links to my own reflections and insider view of RJ. These are linked back to the literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3, the rationale for the study and the research questions to demonstrate how the accounts and the autoethnographic approach to reviewing them has contributed to answering the research questions and contributing to a greater understanding of how RJ can address the harm caused by school exclusion.

Chapter 10 provides concluding thoughts and identifies the original contributions to knowledge from the use of autoethnography as a methodological approach as well as contributions to the field of RJ. The implications of these findings are discussed and areas for future research and publication are highlighted.



## **CHAPTER 2: SCHOOL EXCLUSION & SOCIAL JUSTICE**

### **2.1. Introduction**

In this chapter, I review the literature that contextualises approaches to school exclusion within a broader body of literature on social inclusion and equity. My own experiences and career path connect me to some of the dominant rhetoric that existed around the late 1990s and early 21<sup>st</sup> Century in both criminal justice and education contexts in the UK around approaches to behaviour management (Parsons & Castle, 1998; Sellman et al, 2002; Stephenson, 2006; Hayton, 1999; Visser et al, 2002; New Policy Institute, 1998). These experiences and links to my professional development have been used as the points of reference around which to focus the literature search and show the links between dominant political rhetoric and discourse in both criminal justice and education settings. I also used this breadth of experience and my own research in the field (Preston 2002, 2008, 2013, 2015) as the starting point for the literature search supported by focused searches using the Northampton Electronic Library Search Online (NELSON) system.

This development of neoliberalism and a market-oriented approach to punishment, rehabilitation and reparation (Ashurst and Venn, 2014; Kaplan-Lyman, 2012) coincides with my own professional experiences beginning in the 1980s as a police officer and continuing into the early 2000s as a teacher. These experiences influenced the development of this research study and the research questions. The changes and shifts in philosophy and paradigms regarding approaches to manage what (in legislation and policy) constitutes challenging or inappropriate behaviour, occurred at key points in my own professional development and my transitions between careers in policing and teaching. They lie at the heart of this autoethnography and the search for greater understanding of my own decisions, my self-identity and the way in

which this can help build greater understanding around what works in practice and why it works.

I have often questioned the judgements of adults involved in behaviour management in relation to their own motivations in both criminal justice and education. Questions around adult decision making, when CYP display challenging behaviour, underpin the development of this study. As French (1986) states:

“Only extraordinary education is concerned with learning, most is concerned with achieving: and for young minds these two are very nearly opposites” (p.387).

Although this statement was made in the 1980s, the socially and culturally constructed definitions of challenging behaviour continue to be questioned (Travell and Visser, 2006; Timimi, 2005, 2017; Quinn and Lynch, 2016; Visser, 2003 & 2005).

This is particularly evident currently in relation to the behaviours associated with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) which Quinn and Lynch (2016) identify as problematic stating:

“Some critics of the ADHD construct question the possibility that ADHD is perhaps nothing more than an example of the ‘medicalisation’ of behaviours in children which are the most annoying and problematic for adults to control” (p.62).

The rapid expansion in the use of what some term a culturally constructed diagnosis to control behaviour (Timimi, 2017; Mather, 2012; Quinn and Lynch, 2016) accompanied by stimulant medication has led some to cite ADHD as “a means of labelling and controlling children who exhibit difficult behaviours” (Mather, 2012).and “a damning indictment of the position of children in neo-liberal cultures, rather than an indication of scientific progress” (Timimi, 2017).

RJ practitioners and researchers in the education context challenge the concepts of reward and punishment and labelling. They are questioned as effective behaviour management strategies (Van Ness, 2014;

Thorsborne and Vinegrad, 2002; McCluskey et al, 2011, Sellman et al, 2014; Evans and Vaandering, 2016; Tyler, 2006).

Instead, approaches to behaviour management that engage participants and understand those individuals within the context of their communities and relationships are proposed. Such approaches tend to challenge the traditional hierarchical power dynamics for educators to manage, control, shape or mould students (Evans and Vaandering, 2016; Pranis, 2016).

As will be discussed further in chapter 3 (p.81) of this thesis, McCold and Wachtel (2003) looked at how those who they defined as being in 'authority', whether they be parent, teacher, employer or those in the criminal justice system, approached the choices they had around maintaining social discipline and developed the 'social discipline window' to offer an explanation for making those choices.

These developments in the understanding of the emotional dynamics and relational aspects of RJ conferences influenced the broadening of RJ approaches and definitions to focus on proactively building relationships as well as reactively dealing with harm and conflict (Wachtel, 2016; Kane et al, 2007; Vaandering, 2014). The framework could then be applied in a whole range of contexts and began to look beyond the exclusionary measures themselves and towards the impact of these measures on the broader socialisation of the young people involved.

Disciplinary exclusion was seen to signify a breakdown in relationships which were often left unaddressed and unresolved (Kane et al, 2007, Daniels and Cole, 2010, Middleton and Kay, 2019).

The act of excluding a child from the school setting, models little that we would want CYP to learn about the pro-social aspects of relating to others. As McCluskey et al (2016) state, school exclusion,

“rarely offers authentic opportunity for acknowledgement of harm done, conflict to be resolved or discussion of ways to repair relationships, all of which have been found to be helpful to schools and children themselves” (p. 535).

RJ was seen to be much more than the measurement of reductions in expulsions or suspensions and more to do with the development of a whole school ethos and culture. However, there were concerns about the interpretation of ‘restorative’ into practice. As Vaandering (2010) states:

“Is it really about establishing relationship-based environments or is it being employed to better manage and control students?’ When utilised to this end, restorative practice seems to be less geared toward transformative interactions and more about enforcing traditional structures of power and hierarchy within schools and reinforcing student conformity” (p.150).

The importance of the relational aspects of RJ are supported by the wider evidence around the development of healthy relationships throughout life. The evidence has implications for healthy development (physical and mental) and for the successful opportunity for young people to functionally adapt in the school context and form successful relationships throughout life.

## **2.2. Social justice, neoliberalism and social policy**

The late 1980s and early 1990s, coincided with the time that I left police training and began my first post as a police officer on foot beat in Bletchley, Milton Keynes (1985), saw a development of both political and public support for more ‘welfare’ based models of justice (Blagg, 1985; Wilcox and Young, 2007).

Morgan (1986) reviewing the work of the sociologist and criminologist Stanley Cohen describes the historical patterns of the state’s “criminalising of certain behaviours” and the “the employment of different control mechanisms” to manage “deviancy”.

Cohen (cited in Morgan, 1986) highlights changes that took place post industrialisation that led to:

“the growth of the state; the emergence of closed institutions; the classification, differentiation and segregation of classes of deviants; the foundation of professional control agencies; the focus on deviants' minds rather than their bodies; the development of positivistically inspired treatment as opposed to moralistic 'just deserts'”(Morgan, 1986, p.401).

The mode of control (of behaviour) became 'exclusive' rather than 'inclusive' and 'deviants' were held to be different and were increasingly set apart.

The background to more inclusive approaches that recognised such unacceptable behaviour as an opportunity for learning and growth, particularly in young people, had already been highlighted by Blagg (1985) in his review of the of the Corby Juvenile Liaison Bureau in Northamptonshire. He suggested that juvenile offenders were:

“an ideal target group for reparative work... making children repair the damage they have caused can be seen as being a good learning experience for the unformed personality” (p.267).

He suggested that reparation would be compatible with the existing formal processes and sit comfortably alongside a 'welfare' model of justice for the juvenile. The challenging or 'inappropriate' behaviour was seen as an opportunity for learning as well as the prevention of future occurrences of this behaviour.

In 1992, I returned from maternity leave to Milton Keynes Police Area to a newly formed Performance Information Unit as the only member of staff. The Unit had been established by the then Area Commander of Milton Keynes, Caroline Nicholl to support her newly introduced Problem Oriented Policing (POP) Initiative (Leigh et al, 1996; Nicholl, 1999). Nicholl had recently transferred from the Metropolitan Police, where POP had been introduced in 1983. She was supported by TVP

Chief Constable Charles Pollard and Assistant Chief Constable Ian Blair to develop the POP ideas of Herman Goldstein (Goldstein, 1979; 1990) in the Milton Keynes Police Area. These ideas coincided with the so-called neoliberal policies being introduced in New York City by the then Mayor Rudy Giuliani to address crime (Kaplan-Lyman, 2012). Neoliberalism is said by the author to be a:

“system of economic ideas and policy initiatives that emphasize small government and market-based solutions to social and economic problems” (p.1).

The Police Area was sub-divided into geographic sectors led by a police Inspector and focused on using timely management information to identify problems and apply creative solutions through partnership working between local Beat Officers and the community (Bennett and Kemp, 1994). My role was to provide each of the sector Inspectors with data and information that follow the POP systems of analysis including - Scan, Analyse, Respond, Assess (SARA) and the Problem Analysis Triangle (PAT) (Leigh et al. 1996; Watson, 1996). These models were implemented in Milton Keynes on each of the geographic sectors. I attended the meetings between the Area Commander and each sector Inspector and worked with the researchers from the Home Office who evaluated the introduction of Problem Solving Policing (Bennett and Kemp, 1994). I was also asked to present on the work of the Performance Information Unit to the then Home Secretary Kenneth Clarke when he visited the Milton Keynes Police Area in 1992. Clarke’s visit took place soon after his appointment as Home Secretary under the Conservative Party premiership of John Major. Commentaries of this period of Government suggest that:

“more continuity is apparent between the policies of the Major governments and the subsequent ‘New Labour’ Blair administrations from 1997 than the preceding Conservative Thatcher administrations, 1979-90” (Scott, 2009, p.).

It was also suggested that by the 1990s, the pursuit of neo-liberal policies in the public sector was beginning to “move away from the ‘Thatcherite’ experiments of the 1980s to fragment much of the essence of the public sector” (Scott, 2009).

This approach by the Major Government and particularly the Home Secretary Kenneth Clarke led to much greater emphasis on the size and performance of the public sector and was continued by the Labour Government that came into power in 1997 (Scott, 2009). I saw the impact of these policies on the civilianisation of police roles, the privatisation of some roles previously performed by police officers and the introduction of performance related pay. Between June 1994 and July 1996, I was seconded to a TVP Headquarters Review Team and was tasked with designing and implementing a research methodology to review all centralised police functions with a specific aim to improve efficiency and performance. This certainly influenced my approach to research and influenced my thinking when I returned from a second period of maternity leave in 1996 to the Headquarters Community Safety Team which then became known as the Restorative Justice Consultancy (not abbreviated in this thesis as RJC refers to the national RJ body, the Restorative Justice Council).

This return to a post in Community Safety coincided with a socio-political climate in England that was seeing some more general commitment by the newly elected Labour Government to the development of social policy that put equality and social justice at the forefront of policy formulation (Powell, 2002). Indeed, the newly elected Prime Minister Tony Blair asserted that:

“fairness and social justice, liberty and equality of opportunity, solidarity and responsibility to others – these are timeless values” (Blair and Schroeder, 1998, p.2).

This Government over the following decade under the leadership of Blair introduced a number of reforms that focused on the prevention

of exclusion from society including the establishment of the Youth Justice Board and the Social Exclusion Unit soon after the Government came into power in 1997 (Taylor, 2016; Social Exclusion Unit, 2004). The approaches to both juvenile offending and exclusion from the school setting focused on broader commitments to reducing social exclusion.

My own involvement with the Blair administration covered this same period of time and most certainly influenced the development of my own thinking around Government policy and social justice. The TVP Restorative Justice Consultancy presented to then Home Secretary Jack Straw on the early outcomes of restorative cautioning (BBC, 1997). This presentation and subsequent presentations that I was involved in at 11 Downing Street with members of the Government Exchequer, resulted in a Crime and Disorder Bill that included the introduction of youth offending teams and the widening of the restorative justice cautioning scheme. This was announced by Straw at a national conference on restorative justice that our team organised (BBC, 1997).

In 1998 when TVP was inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC, 1999), the force was noted for its integration of RJ into policing and was praised for its strategy and planning and analysis of performance in relation to crime management, police and community relations, restorative justice and complaints (p.14 & pp.46-47).

The research exploring the links between school exclusion and offending behaviour in young people (Berridge et al., 2001; Graham et al, 2019), as well as truancy and offending behaviour (Smith et al., 2001; McCormack, 2005), and truancy and school exclusion (Hodgson and Webb, 2005) highlight the fact that the links are complex and not the product of a simple causal relationship.



The analysis moves away from focusing on the deficiencies being within the individual child or young person and looking at the “complex interplay between social institutions and individuals”. (Sellman et al, 2002). This moves from a micro level analysis to broader inter-related models of analysis such as Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems model as a guide for more inclusive education (Anderson et al, 2014).

These models acknowledge that unacceptable behaviour is behaviour,

“which adults working in a professional capacity, deem inappropriate in the context in which they occur. Few behaviours are universally deemed inappropriate in all contexts or cultures” (Visser, 2011, p.176).

My personal experience with the juvenile justice system during this era influenced my own thinking about what worked and why it worked as I transitioned in 2008 to become a primary school teacher in an area of high deprivation where poverty, crime and drug and alcohol rates were the highest in the Local Authority area.

Ashurst and Venn, (2014), suggest exclusion is indicative of issues related to inequality and poverty and that ‘exclusion’ has become institutionalised as a strategy for dealing with a category of children targeted from the time of the Poor Law reforms of 1601 which “constituted the children of the poor as always potentially criminal” (p.155). They state that

“exclusion in one form or another, from transportation and transplantation to the colonies to specialised institutions such as Industrial and Reformatory Schools and Young Offender Institutions has been the preferred strategy of containment generated by the priorities of biopolitical power. Poverty, inequality and their ‘diseases’ are the common factors from the time of classical liberalism to neoliberalism today” (pp.155-6).

They link impoverished communities and the transgressions of youth to larger systems that reward those who abide by the state’s rules. These approaches to what are considered behavioural ‘transgressions’

apply in both criminal justice and education contexts and have influenced my own approach to practice as a police officer and teacher.

### **2.3. Social justice and school exclusion**

A general concern about the exclusion process in schools is that it “removes the child from a key socialising experience” (Parsons, 2018). As school behaviour management practices are often the first time that young people experience a form of state punishment and control (Deakin and Kupchik, 2018) these experiences can become “critical in shaping their understanding of and response to punishment”. Bourdieu, and other educational philosophers and theorists, describe schools as ‘institutions which reproduce the social order’ (cited by Nash, 1990). The policies and philosophies in education especially relating to what is deemed unacceptable behaviour therefore have clear links to the youth justice systems and whether those approaches are deemed more ‘controlling’ or more ‘caring’. These ideas linked my own thinking to the two dimensions of the social discipline window (McCold and Wachtel, 2003) ‘control’ and ‘support’ being used in the model of RJ that I had been using in the criminal justice context.

The cycles of youth crime in England have gone through this ‘swing’ of policy since the end of the Second World War (Crawford and Newburn, 2002). Three distinct phases have been identified by Crawford and Newburn. In the 1960s the dominant assumption was that punitive sanctions were ineffective and that social and welfare interventions could produce positive effects. From the mid-1970s until the early 1990s, there was a growing view that “state intervention per se was ineffective and costly”. This view continued apart from:

“the reassertion of the disciplinary hard edge of Conservative ‘law and order’, such as the, ultimately unsuccessful, introduction of the ‘short, sharp, shock’ initiative in the early 1980s” (Crawford and Newburn, 2002, p.477).

It is acknowledged that much of the discourse that debates the semantics of 'inclusive' education across the life-course, continues to cause confusion for those responsible for its delivery. Exclusion is seen as an opportunity to "separate and sort children into their allotted tracks, into the streams that assign them to unequal destinations." (Slee, 2011). The ramifications of this are considered important for the future outcomes and social mobility of young people (Topping, 2012; Pantić, 2015; Ashurst and Venn, 2014).

Social and educational mobility and equity are considered to be important in the broader international discourses because they indicate equality of opportunity in society (OECD, 2018). Schools and education systems that provide equal learning opportunities for all students regardless of their socio-economic status, gender or immigrant and family background are said to provide equitable opportunities (OECD, 2017). There is significant concern in the UK at the current time about the failure of social mobility particularly within the context of the population of young people experiencing school exclusion in England (Gill et al, 2017; McCluskey et al 2019; Levitas et al, 2017).

## **2.4. School exclusion approaches**

Exclusion in its broadest form is "the removal of a child from their existing educational establishment due to their behaviour" (Gill et al 2017). There can be many different approaches to exclusion that range in the degree to which they focus on the prevention or the deterrence of what is deemed unacceptable behaviour in the educational setting. More punitive approaches aim to punish a pupil with a view that this will dis-incentivise repeated bad behaviour (Gill et al, 2017).

The concern around young people being excluded is nothing new. The introduction of a Social Exclusion Unit by the Department for Education and Employment in 1998, was in large part due to these concerns. The commitments made by Government were informed by a,

“worrying increase in the number of permanent exclusions during the 1990s and the unrepresentative nature of this population” (Sellman et al, 2002, p.890).

Numbers of permanent exclusions had quadrupled between 1990/91 and 1996/97. There was also discussion at this time of difficulties in recording due to headteachers resorting to what were termed “grey exclusions” to avoid the financial penalties that were associated with the exclusion of pupils (Munn et al, 2000). These might have included managed moves which at that time fell outside the recorded figures and many of them were being educated in pupil referral units. The population of young people was also unequally representative of the overall school population, so 80% of them were male and there was an over-representation of specific ethnic minorities, children who were looked after, children with what were then statements of special educational needs and children who at that time were termed ‘traveller children’ (Sellman et al, 2002).

Research by Gill et al (2017) for the Institute for Public Policy Research stated that:

“Nowhere is Britain’s social mobility failure more obvious than in the example of school exclusion in England. Excluded children are the most vulnerable: twice as likely to be in the care of the state, four times more likely to have grown up in poverty, seven times more likely to have a special educational need and 10 times more likely to suffer recognised mental health problems. Yet our education system is profoundly ill-equipped to break a cycle of disadvantage for these young people” (Gill et al, 2017, p.7).

Although there is recognition that there have been many years of decline in numbers of both fixed term and permanent exclusion (Timpson, 2019) there is also the recognition that there have been several changes in methodology for recording these figures. There were significant differences between how the exclusion process was interpreted and implemented by headteachers and Local Authorities. The report highlighted,

“concerning evidence that some children have been made to leave their school without access to the formal exclusion process and the structure and safeguards this provides” (Timpson, 2019, p.10).

This practice was given the name “off-rolling” by the researchers (Gill et al, 2017; Timpson, 2019) with parallels to the ‘grey exclusions’ of the 1990s. The research by Gill et al (2017) highlighted that the implications were very similar to those that led to changes in the 1990s and stated that:

“Every cohort of permanently excluded pupils will go on to cost the state an extra £2.1 billion in education, health, benefits and criminal justice costs” (p.7).

There was also the recognition that in 2016, although only 6,685 young people were reported as having been permanently excluded, there were 48,000 pupils being educated in alternative provision which was meant to cater for excluded students. They also identified that still more pupils were not captured in any government data, yet functionally, had been excluded from mainstream school.

These considerable differences in the rates of exclusion (McCluskey et al, 2019) identified in chapter 1 of this thesis, highlighted that semantics and the interpretation of the legislation around exclusion continue to produce very different outcomes for groups of young people, even when looking within one country.

The Deputy First Minister and Secretary for Education and Skills in Scotland attributes the dramatic decline in exclusions over time in Scotland, to a focus by schools and education authorities to build on and improve their relationship with the CYP most at risk of exclusion. He states that within learning communities, “relationship is at the heart of every story of success” (Scottish Government, 2017).

The importance of relationships and their place at the heart of learning and behaviour management have been discussed by many researchers and are highlighted as a key feature of inclusive practice (Visser, 2002;

2011; Roffey, 2012; Rose 2010). The ability to develop healthy, caring relationships and knowing who to approach to make them, are important skills for young people to acquire if they are to become integrated members of society (Visser, 2011).

The review of school exclusion requested by the Secretary of State for Education in March 2018 and carried out by Edward Timpson (who was Minister of State for Children and Families in England and Wales from 2015-17), stated that their findings and recommendations were underpinned by a set of key principles including that,

“schools must be calm and safe environments and it is right that we support head teachers to establish strong school behaviour cultures, including by making use of exclusion where appropriate” (Timpson, 2019, p.5).

The review did not have the remit to look at the most effective ways to manage behaviour but did acknowledge that “the roots of challenging behaviour have long been debated by educational experts, and the debate can sometimes become deeply polarised”. The authors suggested that, at these polar ends, educational experts either perceived that challenging behaviour was a matter of choice and lack of boundaries or, at the other end, the communication of unmet needs.

The complexity of the issues and the need to establish high expectations was acknowledged alongside ensuring that the support is in place to allow individual young people to be able to meet those expectations. It is suggested that these principles are the early introduction for young people to systems of social control and punishment and are interpreted through the philosophical position taken by education leaders to ensure that their school community is a place in which teaching, and learning can go on without disruption. The delivery of ‘education to all’ links to the principles of inclusion rather than exclusion and notions of equity and equality of opportunity (Booth and Ainscow, 2016; Anderson et al, 2014).

Research to date has tended to favour inclusive education over exclusion for individual students (Ainscow et al, 2006; Loreman, Deppeler and Harvey, 2011). Inclusive education is also an area where meaning and understandings differ due to competing discourses (Anderson et al, 2014). They state that inclusive education is,

“a dynamic rather than a static process” and has moved away from “a focus on students with disabilities to encompassing the delivery of education to all” (Anderson et al, 2014, p.24).

## **2.5. The ‘school to prison pipeline’**

### **The relevance of this metaphor to UK school exclusion**

The ‘school to prison pipeline’ is a metaphor said to have originated in the United States of America (USA) with the adoption of zero tolerance policies and rhetoric when responding to disciplinary infractions on school grounds (Schept et al, 2015; Heitzig, 2009; McGrew, 2016). Some researchers argue that it is unclear whether the construct is a,

“useful heuristic or a descriptor of empirically validated relationships that establish school disciplinary practices as a risk factor for negative developmental outcomes, including juvenile justice involvement” (Skiba et al, 2014, p.546).

The ‘No Child Left Behind’ (NCLB) Act of 2002 in the USA, extended these zero tolerance policies beyond disciplinary procedures for behaviour infractions and into educational performance (United States Congress, 2002). Some authors argue that the Act put schools under pressure with its emphasis on test results at a time when school crime was falling (Fuentes, 2003). When the pressure on teachers, including the security of their job, relates to standardised test scores then the value base for those teachers is likely to change.

In 2002, when NCLB was published, I was visiting and working with the newly formed International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) based in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and founded by Ted Wachtel. Ted and his wife Susan Wachtel, both former teachers, had established

the Community Service Foundation and Buxmont Academy in Pennsylvania, USA in 1977. These organisations provided programmes “for delinquent and at-risk youth in south-eastern Pennsylvania, USA” (York, York and Wachtel, 1985). The Wachtels were disillusioned with the formal education system and looking for alternatives to the punitive approaches associated with zero tolerance policies. In 1985, Wachtel had co-written the book *Toughlove* (York, York and Wachtel, 1985) aimed to provide alternative solutions for parents who were struggling with “unruly teenagers”. The influence that the Wachtels had on my thinking at that crucial transition point for me from RJ in UK criminal justice and before deciding to enter the teaching profession myself was critical. The political rhetoric in both the UK and the USA at this time influenced my own thinking, reading and professional development. I had the opportunity to spend two weeks in the Community Service Foundation schools in Pennsylvania in 2003 and witness first-hand the impact of the Wachtel’s introduction of O’Connell’s model of RJ in education. The young people in these schools had all been excluded from mainstream education.

Reyes (2006) looked at data on disciplinary actions in Texas from 2000-2001 and found that almost half a million children from kindergarten through twelfth grade had been suspended from their classes, with a total of 1.1 million suspensions. 95 percent were for discretionary reasons. Noguera (2003) identifies an implicit social contract within schools which he believes acts to maintain order in schools. He states that:

“In exchange for an education, students are expected to obey the rules and norms that are operative within school and to comply with the authority of the adults in charge” (p.343).

The over-representation of certain groups of young people is highlighted in the literature around the ‘school to prison pipeline’ (Noguera, 2003; Berlowitz et al, 2017) and linked to the enactment of



zero tolerance policies of discipline in schools as well as juvenile delinquency (Ashurst and Venn, 2014).

The principles of different approaches to behaviour transgressions and learning underpin this research study and link to my own practice. The identification of the disproportionate number of young people excluded from school with Special Educational Needs in the criminal justice system has had a direct impact on my own professional development and the 'search' for evidence to support a more effective way to interrupt that cycle as early as possible. These are also the principles that underpin the research questions in this study.

## **2.6. Relationships and life chances**

The links between relationships and their impact on life chances have also been the subject of debate across the time periods and contexts covered by my own practical experience in criminal justice and education. As RJ was being introduced to TVP cautioning processes, Bentley (1997) wrote, "social networks are powerful determinants of an individual's life chances".

The need for a sense of belonging and to 'fit in' are important aspects of a child's developing sense of identity and are of key importance during the developmental years which coincide with education in the formal setting of schools from early years age four or five through into adolescence. (Blakemore, 2018). Advances in neuroscience in the last five to ten years have identified the fact that social emotional learning physically changes brain architecture (Davidson and Begley, 2018; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child 2004). The ability to regulate emotions is known to develop in a complex interaction between the child's environment and their ongoing mental, physical and social development. Davidson and Begley state that:

"as young children develop, their early emotional experiences literally become embedded in the architecture of their brains"

(National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004, p.1).

These advances inform our understanding about critical periods in the development of the brain and also that a process known as neuroplasticity means that neural scripts and 'unhealthy' neural pathways can be changed throughout the life-course and are impacted by positive adult relationships (Fishbane, 2007; Cozolino, 2006; Davidson, 2007).

Just one strong adult relationship is a key ingredient in resilience and provides a positive, adaptive response in the face of significant adversity (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2015). This research also highlights that "resilience requires relationships, not rugged individualism".

In the context of this research study, it is known that CYP with what were classified as social emotional and behavioural difficulties (SEBD) and now social emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties (DfES, 2001; DfE and DoH, 2015) are not good at making and sustaining positive relationships (Visser, 2011). Many of the young people excluded from mainstream schools are placed in Alternative Provision (AP).

These pupils are almost six times as likely to have Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEN/D) than children in mainstream schools, with 81% on the SEND register compared to 14% in mainstream. The primary need for four out of five young people with identified SEND is social, emotional and mental health (Centre for Social Justice, 2020).

Approaches that have been shown to successfully address social, emotional and behavioural difficulties emphasise the need to develop relationships that provide "emotional safety and protection, personal involvement and trust, and acceptance from others" (Visser, 2011; Pointer, McGoey and Farrar, 2020).

The experiences that a child or young person has around behaviour management in the school setting could therefore be said to be a crucial opportunity for them to develop their sense of self in a much wider community. They are the earliest opportunities outside the family unit to understand the relational skills needed to be a productive and healthy member of society. The balance of high expectations and support mentioned previously become central to learning. Educators continue to develop their understanding of the motivations that may lie behind punitive systems of punishment and reward and the motivators of learning first developed by Alfie Kohn (Kohn, 1999). The success or otherwise of punishment and reward systems apply to a range of judgements made around young people and the standardisation of those judgements. This is clearly seen in relation to academic progress and assessments and how these can impact on the judgements that are made about a young person especially by adults. As Kohn (2006) states:

"Rubrics make assessing student work quick and efficient, and they help teachers justify to parents and others the grades that they assign to students" (p.12).

The motivations behind this process of assessment often lie with the adult's need to be 'quick and efficient' and to justify to other adults rather than to support the learning of the young person.

There are parallels to other aspects of labelling and judgement that take place in the education system and begin to influence the way the young person sees themselves as well as how they are seen by others. Mabry (1999) concurs when commenting on assessment and states that although rubrics may be designed as scoring guidelines, "they also serve as arbiters of quality and agents of control over what is taught and valued".

## **2.7. Summary**

Over the last two to three decades, in the education context, RJ principles have been developed to support approaches to school discipline and culture that move beyond 'zero tolerance' policies towards approaches that seek to understand what has happened and involve the people affected in repairing the harm (Morrison and Vaandering, 2012). In education, RJ was initially introduced as an alternative approach to discipline systems that traditionally relied on more punitive 'zero-tolerance' approaches such as suspensions and expulsions as methods of behaviour control (Evans and Lester, 2012; Stinchcomb, Bazemore and Riestenberg, 2006). The RJ approach, in contrast, supports the development of relational school cultures where behaviour is understood in a social context rather than being addressed through a punitive regulatory approach.

The links between school education and future social justice, positive life outcomes and equity have been discussed. The links between risk factors in education and future involvement in criminal justice systems for young people have been identified. Noguera (2003) referred to the "educational pipeline," as the "path that would lead to prison," and highlighted the role that administrators play in "matriculating young people from school to prison." The literature that identifies the role of adults in this process of development and learning has been reviewed to highlight the range of approaches and the evidence that supports them.

The research evidence highlighted in this chapter shows that school exclusions have long-term consequences. Whilst serving a disciplinary purpose within schools, their use can have follow-on effects on a much larger social scale. These consequences have been clearly visible to me in my policing practice with young offenders and my teaching practice in areas of high deprivation and high numbers of young people on SEN school registers. The impact on those working within these

organisations has been shown to have a powerful impact on CYP. As Keaney (2019) states:

“When a struggling school is responsible for the rising number of excluded pupils it is often down to the school's own unmet needs, and, in an institutional way, this isn't too dissimilar to the kids who face exclusion” (online).

Internationally, research consistently points to a 'school to prison pipeline', where disengagement from education is seen as a key indicator of future contact with the criminal justice system (Gonzalez, 2012). This is occurring at both a young age as well as through adolescence and into later life.

Disciplinary school exclusion often seems to signify a breakdown in relationships. If these 'broken relationships' are left unaddressed and unresolved, then we seem to be doing little to model that which we would want CYP to learn about effective and pro-social ways of relating to and communicating with others. Zero tolerance or more punitive approaches rarely offer authentic opportunity for discussion of ways to repair relationships.

Communication and dialogue are central to a restorative process and these are core skills that many of those excluded from school and, who end up in the criminal justice setting, lack. Research by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) (2017) highlights that 66-90% of young offenders have low language skills, with 46-67% of these being in the poor or very poor range. Many of these needs have not been identified until they are in the youth justice system. Two-thirds of 7-14-year-olds with communication difficulties have additional behaviour problems. There is an imperative that these needs are identified early and addressed and that any process to manage challenging behaviour takes these needs into account (Snow and Powell, 2012). My own research with boys with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (Preston, 2013) highlighted the connections between behavioural difficulties and language difficulties.

School exclusions can be socially harmful, re-entrench disadvantage, and pave the way for future disadvantage too. It follows that they should be reasonably avoided or at the least, reduced and the underlying principles of approaches that make a difference should be clearly evidenced. This research study seeks to gather that evidence by evaluating the relational framework known as RJ in the context of adults who have experienced school exclusion.

## **CHAPTER 3: EXPLORING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE**

### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter will explore the literature and research relating to the development of a model of conflict resolution and relationship building known as restorative justice (Zehr, 1990; Wachtel, 2016). The literature reviewed links to my own introduction to RJ and to one particular model that has informed my own thinking and practice and the rationale behind the formulation of the research questions and the autoethnographic approach of this research study.

The development of my policing and teaching practice in the context of the neoliberal discourses taking place at that time and discussed in the previous chapter, influenced the way in which my own thinking and approach to young people and exclusionary practice developed over the period from 1996 until the present day and certainly influenced the development of the research questions.

The development of this O'Connell's model to address criminal behaviour especially with first time offenders (Hoyle et al, 2002) and its links to RJ development in an English police force is of particular relevance to this research study as it underpins the development of RJ across the UK and is the model that has been used continuously in my own practice in a range of contexts including policing, education and special educational needs.

The model of RJ conferencing (O'Connell, 1998; Hoyle et al, 2002) and the pioneer who introduced it to my practice as a police officer will be explored in detail. This personal involvement in the introduction of RJ practices to the UK, and my relationship with the pioneer who developed it, has underpinned my thinking, research and practice to-date. This resulted in the formation of the research questions for this

study and the rationale that lies behind the methodological decisions that have been taken.

The research questions in this study build on unanswered questions particularly from my own previous research in the school setting around the engagement in learning of boys with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (Preston, 2013). My own questioning and reflections of the theory and rationale behind the framework O'Connell developed has been included with stories of my own experiences. These stories are included to enrich the findings from the participants in this study and enhance the contribution to knowledge around what aspects of this model can lead to positive outcomes whatever the context.

The literature review begins with a review of the terminology and definitions around RJ and models of RJ practice taking into account my own experiences and how these may have influenced my own definition of RJ.

### **3.2. Definitions and terminology**

The different stakeholders in RJ (participants, practitioners, trainers, policy makers and researchers) have contributed to a 'tension' in the field perpetuating a lack of consensus around the concept of RJ (Gavrielides, 2008; Vaandering and Reimer, 2019). In many critical writings and evaluations this tension is either taken as a given and left unanalysed or its existence is disregarded all together (Johnstone, 2001; Vaandering, 2013; Strang and Braithwaite, 2001).

This debate has its roots in the late 1970s when the term restorative justice is first identified (Egash, 1977) and continues across stakeholder groups in the field today. As Zehr (2019), a key RJ proponent states:

"The concept of restorative justice is so simple, so intuitive – yet, so complex in development and application. It is not only



that academics like to complexify things (though they do that sometimes unnecessarily); the issues really are difficult and complex – and so important. Indeed, the integrity of the field and its vision is at stake” (Foreword).

McCold (2000) supports this viewpoint in relation to the development of RJ as a “new” approach to crime control in the early 1990s:

“the imprecise use of the emerging ‘vocabulary of restoration’ has created as much confusion as clarity about the fundamental concepts of the new paradigm. Restorative justice has come to mean all things to all people” (p.358).

The history, language and definitions of RJ will be discussed to provide the rationale and contextual focus for this research study. The importance of definitions and a framework or model will also be explored. Some researchers in the field suggest that RJ is no longer in its infancy and that the tensions around ‘definition’ need to move beyond practitioner led arguments.

“The research and development phase of RJ has now passed, and it is time to assemble evidence, using a range of methods. Without a definition of RJ that can be applied and assessed empirically, we are bobbling on a raft in a sea of hopes and dreams” (Daly, 2016, p.13).

The development of one model and framework for RJ will be introduced from my own perspective as well as the perspective of the pioneer who introduced the ideas to the UK (initially to the criminal justice system) in 1994. This framework is central to the way in which this research study has developed and the research questions (that this study seeks to answer) have been formulated. A fundamental aspect of the study links to the language and interpretation (including my own) of the term ‘restorative’ and the key concepts that underpin it. The language used that links theory to practice is important to help identify my own bias towards particular interpretations and the influence that this has on this study and my own interpretation of the findings. I will begin with some of the history around the term RJ that also places RJ into the

context discussed in the previous chapter around social justice, rehabilitation and equity.

### **3.3. The history of restorative justice**

The term “restorative justice” has been attributed to Albert Eglash (1958; 1977), an American psychologist who between 1954 and 1956 was a member of the Detroit Commission on Children and Youth and developed a “mutual help program for juvenile delinquents and youthful offenders” (Eglash, 1958). He suggested that ‘creative restitution’ could be distinguished from “reparations or indemnity” in the criminal justice system for the following reasons:

1. “It is any constructive act.
2. It is creative and unlimited.
3. It is guided, self-determined behaviour.
4. It can have a group basis” (p.619).

Eglash (1958) argued that punishment, takes the view that an offence “is solely against society” and is usually under compulsion either from the authority of the court, an individual’s conscience or derived from the expectations of others.

In this stage, the “offender has not yet squared or redeemed the situation, making it good”. He argued that creative restitution is concerned with the victim and involves the *restoration* of “goodwill and harmony”. It requires that:

“a situation be left better than before an offense was committed. This goes beyond what any law or court requires, beyond what friends and family expect, beyond what a victim asks, beyond what conscience or super-ego demands” (p.620).

He suggested that this was a form of psychological exercise “building the muscles of the self, developing a healthy ego” (p.622).

In relation to semantics and definitions, Eglash (1958) saw no easy solution but did suggest the use of the term "restoration" to describe this new "process". He suggested that whilst:

"punishment can increase fear, - motivation, guidance and restitution increase the capacity for choice and thus may bring release to an impulse-ridden individual" (p.622).

Several years later, Eglash (1977) elaborated his views and identified the key characteristics of what he now called '*restorative justice*' as:

1. "Being directly related to the criminal offence
2. Involving an active effortful role on the part of the offender
3. Being constructive and helpful for the offender and
4. Helping repair the damages done in the criminal incident" (p.99).

Restoration was linked to relationships and the restoration of goodwill and harmony, even if the individuals involved had not known each other before the offence took place.

The values and principles of restoration, rehabilitation and restitution as approaches to crime, conflict and peace-making described by Eglash (1958; 1977) have been said to be grounded in ancient Greek and Roman civilisations (Van Ness and Strong, 2010). In these ancient traditions, societies are broken down into two broad categories, acephalous (Greek for 'headless') characterised by diffuse structure, kin-based organisations and strong adherence to group values or the 'State' characterised by societies with a clear hierarchical structure whereby the 'ruler' whether that be king, tribal leader or elected government, became the central leader for settling disputes and overseeing the administration and management of "citizen's affairs" (Gavrielides, 2011).

In Europe by the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century as the 'State' gradually took control of formal law and conflicts, so the rights and needs of 'State' gradually overshadowed the needs of the 'victim' and crime was mainly dealt with as an act against the 'State' and public interest.

Nils Christie (1977) highlighted the implications of these changes especially in Western justice systems by suggesting that the 'State' had 'stolen the conflict' and deprived society, the "opportunities for norm-classification. It is a loss of pedagogical possibilities" (p.8). He also speaks of exclusion, increased anxiety levels and misconceptions through the loss of personal encounters. He suggests that there are too many professionals now involved in social conflict and states:

"Let us have as few behaviour experts as we dare to... let us try to get them to perceive themselves as resource persons, answering when asked, but not domineering, not in the centre" (Christie, 1977, p.12).

Approaches to dealing with crime developed from this point as alternatives to the punitive and retributive responses to crime and conflict that were dominant in most Western criminal justice systems in the early 1970s (Barnett, 1977).

Victim-offender mediation in the UK began in earnest in the early 1980s, coinciding with the increased use of cautioning and intermediate treatment by the criminal justice system (Marder, 2018). This also coincided with the introduction of problem solving policing to the UK and the start of my police career (Appendix B). In the late 80s the Home Office funded four pilot victim-offender mediation projects and a formal evaluation. The projects were wide-ranging, from diversion of cases before court to intervention following conviction. The evaluation found that 'the majority of victims offered the chance of meeting their offender would like to do so' and 'the great majority looked back on the experience as worthwhile'. There was 'some cause for concern, however, in a few programmes that tended to place pressure on victims to take part' (Marshall, 1999).

In 1990, Howard Zehr outlined his RJ 'paradigm' in the book 'Changing Lenses'. Zehr is considered 'the grandfather' of the modern-day RJ movement and 'Changing Lenses', as a seminal work in the field

(Cremin and Bevington, 2017). He suggested the 'framework' chosen to address an issue makes a difference and asked:

"How do we interpret what has happened? What factors are relevant? What responses are possible and appropriate? The lens we look through determines how we frame both the problem and the solution" (Zehr, 1990, p.177).

It is argued that the term 'restorative justice' is a creation of the 1970s, the concepts and practices underlying it can be traced back to early civilisations and cultures (Gavrielides, 2011). In the first 'era' of RJ, the diffuse structure of kin based, 'acephalous', societies placed an emphasis on social safety and restoring harm. The absence of top-down regulation favoured RJ. In the Middle Ages, as acephalous societies became replaced by 'State' ones, conflicts became viewed as violations of the State and a more legally positivistic framework was favoured.

These principles and concepts that approach 'anti-social behaviour' or 'crime' as a violation of relationships have waxed and waned in the historical approaches to crime and conflict around the world. There were not 'victims' and 'offenders' in societies of the past and the definitions of crime, delinquency and anti-social behaviour have changed dramatically. If RJ is to develop as a paradigm, "postulates, theories, propositions and concepts all need to become established" (McCold, 2000).

Despite an abundance of definitions and studies on the meaning of RJ in the intervening years, there is still conceptual ambiguity (Gavrielides, 2011; McCold, 2000; Bazemore and Walgrave, 1999). Over the years that followed, some researchers suggested that tensions between the different views of RJ could be alleviated with the coining of a consensual definition that "could accommodate all of RJs normative and practical peculiarities" (Gavrielides, 2008, p.168).

This lack of understanding or, on occasions “positive misunderstanding” (Johnstone, 2001) occurs because there is often significant overlap with the aims of RJ and other existing programmes. Explaining RJ is a complex task which is often influenced by the backgrounds, ideologies, aspirations and methodologies of the practitioners in the field. The literature around restorative ‘justice’ in the criminal justice field is said to be most extensive (Gavrielides, 2008) but the development of a wider restorative movement which extends beyond criminal justice (schools, workplaces, families and neighbourhoods) has increased the tensions around conceptual agreement and led to the criticism of the “self-representations and self-understandings of its leading advocates and practitioners” (Johnstone, 2001). This is despite a large body of literature especially in the criminal justice field. As Gavrielides (2008) states:

“Despite the immense literature on RJ and the numerous efforts that have been carried out at national, regional and international levels to reach a common understanding about RJ’s nature and applicability, the confusion persists. This conceptual tension does not only exist between adherents and opponents of RJ. The confusion also exists within the restorative movement itself. People working in this movement have different visions of RJ” (p.178).

These misunderstandings continue to challenge the ‘field’ of RJ and it is therefore of no surprise that the emergence of the term ‘restorative practices’ just adds to the confusion. The literature that helps to contextualise the development of this terminology will now be briefly discussed as it is more commonly used in the field of education and is therefore of relevance to this study.

### **3.4. Restorative ‘practices’**

In more recent history, especially in western cultures, but for much longer in first nation and indigenous cultures, the approaches to ‘restoration’ have become more focused on the ‘relationship’ and

'social inclusion' concepts of RJ. These developments have led to the application of RJ in different contexts outside criminal justice and resulted in a re-definition of terminology to avoid the perceived limiting language of 'justice'.

The increased focus on relationships rather than harm and conflict means that the overlap with existing approaches is even greater and has been associated with many 'ancient' practices. Skelton (2002) refers to the African philosophy known as 'ubuntu' which she defines as "a guide for social conduct and a philosophy for life". It is said to lie at the heart of traditional conflict resolution, reconciliation, harmony and restoration. Ubuntu was referred to in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission by Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1999) who stated that the term was very difficult to translate into Western language but "speaks to the very essence of being human and means someone is generous, hospitable, friendly, caring and compassionate". He also suggests that it links to community and forgiveness "my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in theirs...our humanity is intertwined". The development of a range of approaches to conflict resolution and reparation have developed from an equally diverse range of traditional conflict and dispute resolution processes, for example peace education (Salomon & Cairns, 2010), non-violent communication (Rosenburg, 2004) and victim-offender mediation programmes (Umbreit et al, 2000).

Links to ancient cultures and practices have also been highlighted by many authors in the fields of RJ and RP, especially in the more proactively focused context of education (Evans and Vaandering 2016; Hopkins, 2004; Thorsborne and Blood, 2013). This has led to the widening of definitional disagreement of the principles and values that lie behind the term restorative. There "is still no consensus as to the nature and extent of applicability of the restorative notion" (Gavrielides, 2008).

John Bailie, the President of the IIRP suggests that there are “three dimensions of human dignity that are clearly evident in restorative practices scholarship”. He states that these are “expressed as three areas of universal human need... the need to belong and to have voice and agency” (Bailie, 2018).

The tensions in relation to definitions have been highlighted by Wachtel (2016) who stated in relation to the development of the IIRP that:

“Our purpose is not to label other processes or terms as positive or negative, effective or ineffective. We respect the fact that others may define terms differently and, of course, have every right to do so. Rather, we simply want to define and share a consistent terminology to create a unified framework of understanding” (p.1).

The aforementioned development of RJ in the UK directly links to the introduction of O’Connell’s model of RJ into policing in Thames Valley Police, UK from 1996 (Clamp and Paterson, 2016). The underlying principles that led to O’Connell’s development of this model of RJ will now be discussed in more detail as they have a direct link to the third research question around how O’Connell accounts for his practice now. They also reflect the model of practice used by me in both my criminal justice and education practice.

### **3.5. The Wagga Wagga Model**

#### **A restorative justice pioneer’s ‘conferencing model’**

Models of practice in a conflict resolution technique that have come to be known RJ, have developed in different ways in different contexts, countries and cultures. Marshall (1996) writes that RJ was first implemented in a more formal way in England in 1979. The Exeter Youth Support Team began to offer victim-offender mediation, receiving referrals from, among others, the local police force. Systematic implementation within an English force did not however take place until the early 1990s, when Sir Charles Pollard, Thames



Valley Police's Chief Constable, developed some of the prevailing ideas around interventions, known as 'caution plus' (Young, 2000).

The one model that forms the consistent thread through this autoethnography is the model developed by O'Connell in 1991 in the small community of Wagga Wagga in New South Wales, Australia. My own introduction to this more formal model of RJ happened in 1996 when O'Connell returned to Thames Valley Police and worked with the Community Safety Team that I was with to train police officers in Thames Valley to deliver 'restorative cautions.

The links between O'Connell's belief systems and the development of his model are therefore of specific relevance to the development of my own practice and thinking and underpin the rationale behind the research questions. They link to the development of my own belief systems and thinking around RJ and inclusive practice and form the basis for the reflections on the stories gathered for this research study.

This section will explore the literature that relates specifically to the O'Connell's model of RJ and the evidence and research that underpins the development of his framework for explicit RJ practice that then influenced the Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police to introduce the ideas that changed my own way of thinking and practice.

O'Connell joined the Australian police service in 1971. He reflects that his beliefs that "blame and punishment are counterproductive" (O'Connell, 2008) can actually be linked to his own internal belief systems stemming from his childhood and upbringing. These early experiences influenced the way in which he approached relationships both personally and professionally. It was, however, the specific approach that he took to policing the community of Wagga Wagga in New South Wales in 1991 as a police sergeant that is of particular relevance to this study and the development of RJ in the UK. The development of the model will therefore be discussed in this section

and how this model links to my own introduction to RJ and the development of this research study.

The development of a model of Family Group Conferencing (FGC) in the late 1980s in New Zealand (Connolly, 2004) and the subsequent introduction of 'The Children, Young Persons and their Families Act' of 1989 signalled a change in approach to juvenile justice in New Zealand and influenced the development of juvenile justice systems in New Zealand and Australia. They also coincided with a move by O'Connell to a new role as Senior Sergeant for the community of Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, Australia.

The model FGC taken as the basis for O'Connell's development of RJ was introduced in New Zealand in the late 1970s, following a series of reports that highlighted issues of institutional racism experienced by Maori, the indigenous people of Aotearoa, New Zealand. (Connolly, 2004). The practices had revolutionised social work with children and families in the childcare and protection area and incorporated principles affiliated with traditions linked to extended family, tribal affiliation, and familial kinship structure upon which Maori society is based (Connolly, 2004 and 1994). The practices were aimed to develop a culturally appropriate system of justice rather than to replicate the indigenous model of pre-European times (Daly, 2001).

The FGC was developed from these Maori decision-making practices and had three key stages: information sharing, private family deliberation, and the reaching of agreement. Some common themes that emerged from research into 'FGC' outcomes were that families believed these outcomes to be more positive if there was:

- "Active participation in relation to the meeting and outcomes, from a wide range of family members
- Decisions related to the whole family rather than just the individual child.
- A range of skills, intellectual capacity and experiences were used to contribute towards joint problem solving

- Voluntary and positive attendance at the meeting
- Acceptance of the issues resulting in the child protection/safeguarding concerns that led to the social services involvement” (Connolly, 1994, p.98).

The important broad context in which these ideas were being viewed links to how crime (especially juvenile crime) was being viewed not just in Australia and New Zealand but in other parts of the world as well (Umbreit, Coates and Roberts, 2000).

This ‘restorative’ paradigm viewed crime as a social phenomenon that is best addressed through social processes. As Moore, Forsythe and O’Connell (1995) stated:

“individuals must take responsibility for their behaviour, but so too must the communities to which they belong; the primary role of the state here is to safeguard just processes; the goal of such processes is not retribution by the state but restoration through social reintegration of victims and offenders” (p.3).

Three key factors were identified that provided the environment in which O’Connell could begin to develop his ideas (Moore, Forsythe and O’Connell, 1995). The first was the introduction of Community Based Policing (CBP) by the new Commissioner for New South Wales Police in 1987. The second was the introduction, in the same year, of Community Consultative Committees (CCCs). The chair of the new Committee in Wagga Wagga suggested “adapting the practice of beat policing to local conditions”. The third was the appointment of Senior Sergeant Terry O’Connell to establish beat policing in Wagga, Wagga.

O’Connell was completing his bachelor’s degree in community social welfare at that time and researched beat policing in the UK and North America to develop his ideas around community policing. In 1991, O’Connell convened a Beat Police and Community Seminar in Wagga Wagga that involved 300 participants over two days to identify the priorities that they wanted the Beat Police Team (BPT) to pursue over the next five years. The five priorities nominated by the community

were: “juvenile crime, anti-social behaviour, licensed premises, police in schools and neighbourhood watch”. (O’Connell, 2017a).

As a result of this information, O’Connell and the BPT that he led, prioritised ‘youth’ and began to develop closer links and working relationships with schools. This decision (in January 1991), “established the foundation upon which the Wagga Wagga model was established and formally started 12 months later” (O’Connell, 2017a).

This engagement and closer relationship with schools and the community led O’Connell to identify that:

“it soon became apparent that the linkages between those young people being suspended or excluded or those who were school refusers (truants), and those (young people) being dealt with by the police were the same group. Everyone apparently knew this, so it was relatively unsurprising. Yet, when discussion centred on how this knowledge was used, no one could offer anything worthwhile. It was just one of those things” (O’Connell, 2017a, p.40).

O’Connell commented that the approach by schools was “largely confined to the normal hierarchy of interventions: detention, suspension and for some exclusion”. He stated that the school refusers were usually referred to the Home School Liaison Officer (HSLO) but they were also likely to be suspended as this was “often seen as a way of legitimising truancy”.

For the police, their interventions were defined by procedural requirements set out in the Police Commissioner’s Instructions and most young people (under 18) would get a caution for the first offence and would then be charged for any further offences. What O’Connell (2017a) noted at this point was that young people who experienced multiple suspensions would also have “experienced many ‘cautions’ prior to coming to police”.

As well as links to the community through the CCCs, O’Connell was also Deputy President of the Police Association and able to consult

widely with operational police officers on developing models of policing (Clamp and Paterson, 2016). O'Connell states that he was well aware of historical failed attempts to change policing (O'Connell, 2018a) and the process of engagement with stakeholders in Wagga Wagga was fundamental to the creation of an environment in which RJ conferencing could begin to be established. David Moore, involved in evaluation of the restorative cautioning pilot, recognised that at this time, Wagga Wagga was "probably the only policing jurisdiction in New South Wales capable of making this happen" (Moore and O'Connell, 1994).

The developments in relation to community beat policing in Wagga Wagga coincided with a visit in 1990, by John MacDonald, a principal youth and juvenile justice adviser and Steve Ireland from the policy and planning department of New South Wales Police to New Zealand. McDonald and Ireland, (1990) identified that under the New Zealand conferencing model, 90% of youths were diverted out of the criminal justice process. In New South Wales, 80% of youths were being charged and brought before the court. (Clamp and Paterson, 2016). Their guidance on their return was that cases in New South Wales should be diverted out of the criminal justice system at the first point of contact i.e. the police (Moore and O'Connell, 1994). Although adding to the evidence to support O'Connell's approach, O'Connell had already developed and was operating a principled framework to inform and guide practice for working with young offenders. This additional evidence resulted in a pilot project becoming established in Wagga Wagga with O'Connell providing a structured set of questions or 'script' to be used in the cautioning process with young offenders (O'Connell, 2018a).

### **3.6. Restorative questions**

O'Connell (2018b) states that he "knew that respectful dialogue was critical to engagement". Although others believed that he developed his series of questions for RJ cautioning from the New Zealand Family Group Conferencing protocols, he states that this was not the case:

"This was not so, as I had no knowledge of their protocols. Rather, with six months of facilitating many restorative cautions, I had developed a 'conference script' that remains largely unchanged today. I suggest the answer has a lot to do with 'intuitiveness' that came from my life experiences. as well as what I describe as a universal 'innateness' about the human condition" (O'Connell, 2018b, p.6).

O'Connell refers to a defining experience in relation to his policing approach and his development of an explicit line of questioning when, in 1973, he responded to a call for police to attend a fight outside a community hall and was assaulted by a 14-year-old boy. He states that in hindsight, this proved to be "a watershed moment in my policing". The young man was on a 'good behaviour bond' and any breach would have led to a sentence of minimum 12 months in juvenile detention. O'Connell took him home and the following day met with the young man and his mother. He clearly remembers the questions he asked. The first were to the young man's mother, "What has this been like for you?" and "tell me about your son?" (O'Connell, 2018b).

These questions provided an opportunity for "an immediate outpouring of painful emotions" and the discovery that the boy's father had been killed fourteen months earlier. The conversations that followed allowed for the young man to repair the harm he had caused to the person he was closest to and allowed his mother to identify how he could rebuild her trust.

Fifteen years later, O'Connell (2018b) bumped into the young man in the same community who thanked him and stated that his life had turned around and he was now "the father of two with a good job".

The questions that O'Connell (2015) introduced to his 'conferencing script' in 1991, that were then used by the policing team at Wagga Wagga and later became the basis for the model introduced elsewhere in the world, took the following format:

When things go wrong:

- What happened?
- What were you thinking at the time?
- What have you thought about since?
- Who have you affected by what you did?
- In what way?
- What do you think you need to do to make things right?

When some(one) has been hurt:

- What did you think when you realised what had happened?
- What impact has this incident had on you and others?
- In what way?
- What do you think needs to happen to make things right?"

(O'Connell, 2015, slides 9-10).

The questions were used in this order and developed into a written 'script' for use by police officers in Wagga Wagga. From a very early stage, it became clear that the conference process and 'script' were achieving "far more than originally anticipated" in relation to outcomes for all the participants (O'Connell and Moore 1992). There was little understanding at that stage as to how the questions achieved these outcomes. An evaluation, of the cautioning scheme, was commissioned to seek greater understanding of what it was about the process that led to such positive outcomes (Moore, 1994).

The evaluation identified some core concepts that underpinned the process including the 'shame' emotion (Moore, 1994). Moore sought to

identify theoretical perspectives that might help with the understanding of 'shame' in the conference process which led to the identification of the work of Australian criminologist John Braithwaite on a theory of re-integrative shaming (Braithwaite, 1989). This theory helped the practitioners and researcher (Moore, 1994) gain a greater understanding around what was happening in a RJ 'conference' and will therefore be covered in more detail.

### **3.7. A theory of re-integrative shaming**

The evaluation of the Wagga Wagga RJ conferencing model was conducted under the auspices of Charles Sturt University's Centre for Rural Social Research, Wagga Wagga, New South Wales. It included a grant from the Australian Criminology Research Council (Moore, 1994). The study was commissioned to look at what procedures made for successful 'conferences' and under what conditions were the most satisfactory outcomes likely to be achieved for all those in attendance. Whilst studying the New Zealand model of family group conferencing, John MacDonald, the principal youth adviser to the New South Wales Police, heard about the work of criminologist John Braithwaite's on a theory of re-integrative shaming (Braithwaite, 1989) and approaches were made to discuss the Restorative cautioning work with Braithwaite (Moore, Forsythe, and O'Connell, 1995; Braithwaite 1989; 2000).

This theory postulates that:

"re-integrative shaming communicates disapproval within a continuum of respect for the offender; the offender is treated as a good person who has done a bad deed" (Braithwaite, 2000, p.1).

Braithwaite (2000) highlighted evidence to support this through the comparison of cultural responses to offenders stating that:

"societies that are forgiving and respectful while taking crime seriously have low crime rates; societies that degrade and humiliate criminals have higher crime rates" (p.1).



In his introduction of the theory, Braithwaite (1989) suggested that individuals were interdependent and constantly seeking validation and approval from those around them. This theory provided O'Connell (1998) with a way in which to explain the communitarian nature of the developing Wagga Wagga model. O'Connell interpreted Braithwaite's (1989) theory of re-integrative shaming into his series of questions, in a way that utilised 'shame' in "a positive and constructive way with a focus on strengthening an offender's links to his/her community" (O'Connell, 2018a).

Braithwaite and a co-researcher (Braithwaite and Mugford, 1994) became involved with the restorative cautioning project and observed a number of the first RJ conferences that O'Connell facilitated in Wagga Wagga as well as community conferences in Auckland, New Zealand. They identified that:

"shame and shaming is commonly used in both programmes to describe what is going on; reintegration is commonly used in Wagga, while healing is more commonly used in Auckland for this aspect of the process" (p.140).

Braithwaite also acknowledged that his re-integrative shaming theory although helping to provide a greater understanding of the 'shaming process', did not provide an adequate explanation of 'shame' as an emotion:

"a profound deficiency of Braithwaite's [1989] theory is that is it just a theory of shaming, with the emotion of shame left sadly under theorised" (Braithwaite, 1999, p.20).

Those evaluating the Wagga Wagga model of RJ sought to identify a more appropriate theoretical framework which might explain the emotion of shame that they observed in the RJ conferences rather than just the 'shaming process'. (Moore, 1994).

Scheff and Retzinger (1991; 1997) researched the role of shame and rage in destructive conflicts. They suggested that:

“virtually all of the shame that occurs in social interaction in Western societies is unconscious, either in the bypassed or overt, undifferentiated form” (Scheff and Retzinger, 1997, p.275).

Rather than being individualistic, they suggested that shame was a signal of threat to the social bond and as such is “relational and cultural”.

They too became involved in the Wagga Wagga cautioning project (Scheff and Retzinger, 1991; 1997). Through observations of the RJ conferences, they identified that the most significant information was conveyed through symbolic, rather than material, reparation and was often focused on non-verbal forms of communication including body posture, facial expressions and gestures (cited in Van Stokkom, 2002, p.341). The emotion of shame was identified as key to understanding the dynamics of what was happening in conferences (Retzinger and Scheff, 1996; Moore, 1994) and evaluators and observers of RJ sought theory to help them gain a clearer understanding of the shame emotion and its role in RJ conferences.

### **3.8. Shame and affect script psychology**

Braithwaite (1989) claimed that the proper use of ‘shame’ might motivate offenders to seek reconnection with the community. He highlighted that his theory of re-integrative shaming did not go far enough in terms of an understanding of the ‘shame emotion’ (Braithwaite, 1999). He and others began to look for theories that provide a greater understanding around the ‘emotion’ of shame.

According to Scheff and Retzinger (cited in Van Stokkom, 2002):

“shame is a ‘master emotion’. Shame is part of nearly all daily acts, comprising shyness, humiliation, modesty, inconvenience, discomfort, failure, rejection, insecurity and lack of confidence. Most other emotions, from aggression to compassion, derive from it” (p.343).

They also state that shame is the sign of a “threatened or severed social bond” and that the bond can be repaired by bringing people together.

Those evaluating the Wagga Wagga RJ ‘conferences’ (Moore and O’Connell, 1994; Braithwaite, 2000) identified that the affect script psychology theory of Silvan Tomkins (Tomkins, 1962; 1963; 1991), developed by psychiatrist Donald Nathanson (1992), might help them to gain a better understanding of what was happening in RJ conferences.

Tomkins’ (nd a) theory distinguishes between affects, feelings and emotions in the following way:

“**Affect** is the innate, biological response to the increasing, decreasing or persistent intensity of neural firing. This results in a particular feeling, facial and body display, and skin changes. Affects feel rewarding, punishing, or neutral in their own ways. Affect makes things urgent.

Awareness of an affect is a **feeling**.

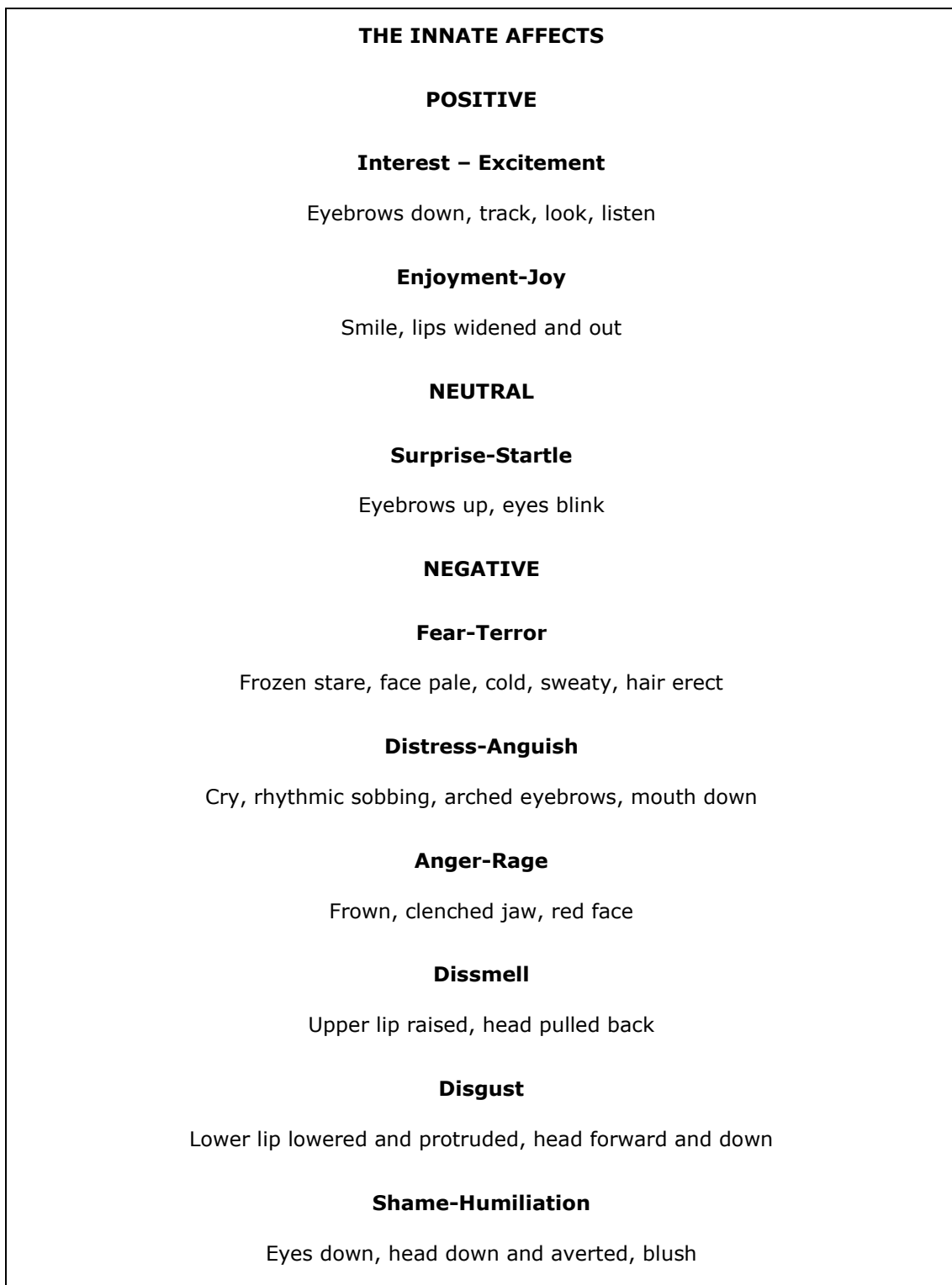
A feeling plus memory of prior similar feelings is an **emotion**.

Often, out of awareness, we develop ‘rules’ to try to get more positive and less negative affect. Tomkins calls those rules **scripts**” (Tomkins Institute, nd a, online).

These ‘scripts’ were very different to those developed as part of the RJ process and referred to the neural scripts developed to manage affect.

The ‘negative’ affect of shame is said to modulate “the positive affects (enjoyment and interest) and may be triggered by any sudden impediment to the positive affects” (Van Stokkom, 2002, p.342). In infants, shame is said to be observed as “they confront their limits” and seek ways to “protect themselves from physical or social dangers” and is conveyed through a range of non-verbal communication. (see Figure 1 and Nathanson, 1992, p.136).

**Figure 1 – The Innate Affects**



Nathanson (1992) states that shame is an innate physiological mechanism “dependent on the integrity of certain structures in the central nervous system... and on the organizing principle stored in the

subcortical brain as the affect program" (p.149). This theoretical view of shame-humiliation as a "scripted firmware mechanism" is developed in Tomkins theory to explain the existence of the 'affect' in infants well before they have any idea of self-concept and well before they know enough about the "self-system to see it as damaged" (p.196).

Nathanson (1992) recognises that this is in stark contrast to definitions of shame in the psychoanalytical world where he states:

"it would be unthinkable to consider shame as an innate affect, a physiological mechanism that limits the expression of interest-excitement and enjoyment-joy" (p.196).

He highlights the difficulties of "adult-oriented emotion vocabulary" which he states prevent us from understanding the broader experiences we have when an affect is triggered. Within this theoretical framework Nathanson (1992) states that the,

"task is to define the self in the new language made possible by affect theory and the recent decades of research in infant observation. We must show how the child's growing self-concept becomes intimately linked with the affect of shame and the emotion of pride" (p.196).

Shame has become a modulator of other physiological mechanisms and can, through communication, bring people closer together. If it is not counterbalanced by positive affect, the protective mechanism of shame can become toxic and cause the person experiencing it to "feel weak, inattentive, defective, lacking in control, degraded and exposed" (Van Stokkom, 2002).

During the RJ 'conferences' observed by evaluators of the Wagga Wagga cautioning pilot (Retzinger and Scheff, 2000), changes in the ideology and accompanying narratives that each side would tell of itself and others, about the conflict, was seen to either perpetuate the conflict or resolve it. It was suggested that:

"the practice of restorative justice conferences aims to redirect aggressive emotions and elicit shame and other hurt

revealing emotions that can lead to empathy" (Van Stokkom, 2002, p.343).

Retzinger and Scheff's (2000) research suggested that a process of transformation could take place when these negative emotions 'revealed' suffering, rather than 'masked' it, and that this related in particular to the inducement of shame.

This understanding of the shame 'affect' appeared to the researchers to be important in terms of 'a turning point' in the conferences making "reacceptance possible between parties" (Van Stokkom, 2002).

This point within a restorative conference was interpreted as a key point which could provide opportunities for the process to become a,

"moral learning process: overcoming anger and indignation, expressing feelings of shame, empathizing with the vulnerable condition of the other party, and expressing regret" (Van Stokkom, 2002, p. 345).

Moore (1994) contends that Nathanson's (1989) concept of 'empathic resonance' precisely captures the powerful experience of shared emotions in RJ conferences. Moore, (1994) states that shame works to,

"modulate the two positive affects of 'interest and enjoyment', those two affects which, when broadcast, create such strong empathic resonance between people" (p.219).

Shame is triggered by some impedance to positive affects which reflects badly on the self and when shared is contagious and "creates empathic response". The process that takes place when shame is shared therefore becomes important in relation to the outcomes and future possibilities around self-identity for the participants.

The identification of a sense of 'collective vulnerability', triggered by the shame affect, helped Moore (1994) to explain shame in his evaluation of RJ conferences. It provided a greater understanding of shame in the context of Braithwaite's re-integrative shaming theory.

If participants in the process focus on *defending* themselves against 'shame' then they will miss the learning that might come from shame, "If shame is avoided rather than accepted, its developmental role is lost" (Moore, 1994).

This point in the 'conference' when shame was 'revealed', was identified as a key moment for individuals. They could either be offered an opportunity for re-integration through a collective and empathic stance or stigmatised through an autocratic and individualistic approach that threatened to destroy opportunities to develop an interpersonal bridge (Moore, 1994; Braithwaite, 1989; Retzinger and Scheff, 2000; Nathanson, 1992). The creation of a safe environment provides the context in which participants feel more able to expose vulnerability, to express a range of difficult emotions and to develop empathy (Brown, 2012; 2013; 2019).

Nathanson (1992) identified four negative ways in which people could respond when 'shame was revealed'. These defensive positions were pivotal in RJ conferences as their appearance offered the opportunity in the process for both learning and re-storying that had the potential to resolve the conflict and re-build relationships. If left unacknowledged or not addressed, then opportunities for repairing and re-building relationships would be reduced.

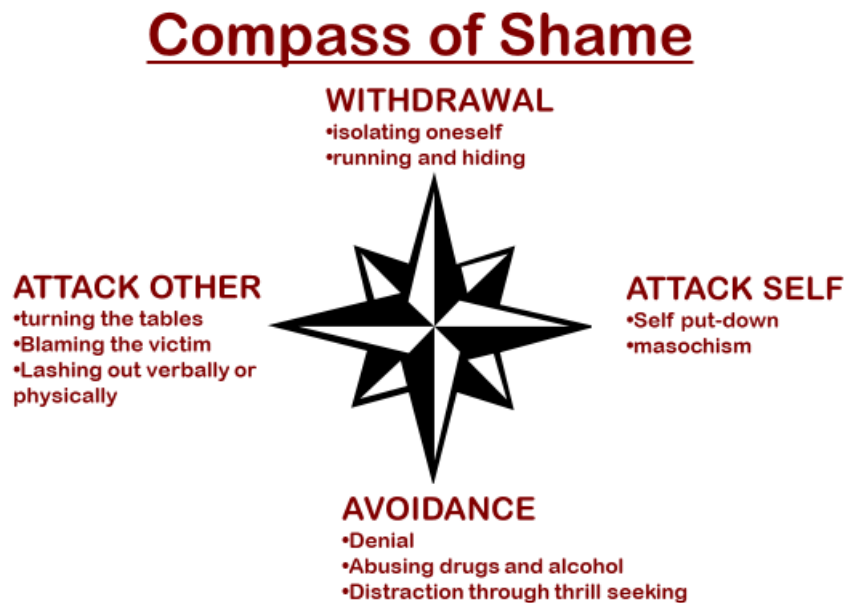
These four negative responses were explained by Nathanson (1992) as a 'compass of shame'.

### **3.9. The 'Compass of Shame'**

Nathanson (1992) describes the shame *affect* as the central social regulator and if dealt with positively can draw our attention to something we wish to know about ourselves and provide an opportunity for growth. If we react negatively to 'shame' then Nathanson proposes a four point 'compass of shame' with each of the

points representing a way in which people protect themselves against shame (Figure 2).

**Figure 2 The Compass of Shame (Nathanson, 1992)**



Shame and pride are seen as two opposites and Nathanson states that healthy personal development and growth requires a dialectic between them (Nathanson, 1992). This dialectic becomes particularly important in adolescence prompting a range of behaviours to avoid embarrassment and is also linked to attentional difficulties (Nathanson, 1992, Lansky and Morrison, 1997).

Nathanson (2003) suggests that these developmental phases, when combined with the school context, can have implications for relationships:

“One of the reasons our schools have become a particular focus for shame related activity/danger is simply that education by its nature focuses our attention on what we don't know and does it while we are in the company of others” (p.10).



He suggests that a “medievalization of modern life” has meant that ‘not knowing’ becomes a ‘shameful’ experience that is managed through the ‘Avoidance’ and ‘Attack Other’ behaviours which

“make the classroom a place of conflict rather than sanctuary and ranking becomes more than an ancillary source of shame through invidious comparison to one’s fellow students... Intimidation of other students, assault, ridicule, and bullying have no useful explanation outside this understanding of shame psychology” (p.10).

He states that schools need to be places for children to feel equally safe whether they do well or do poorly. The relationships particularly between adults and young people become crucial to learning.

Tomkin’s (Tomkins Institute, nd b) developed his theory of affect to identify a ‘blueprint’ that stated that humans were at their most healthy when they were able to:

1. “Share and reduce negative emotions (best achieved by listening and acknowledging),
2. Share and promote positive emotions (achieved by affirming),
3. Encourage expression of emotions in order to experience 1 and 2, and,
4. Do more of 1, 2 and 3 (essential for building and maintaining good relationships)”

(Tomkins Institute, nd b, online).

The RJ conference ‘script’ including the sequencing and nature of the questions developed by O’Connell (1998) was shown to satisfy those conditions prescribed in the ‘blueprint’ and allow participants to provide both factual information and express emotion in a manner that allowed them to mutualise and minimise negative affect and mutualise and maximise positive affect (O’Connell, 2018a; Moore, 1994; Retzinger and Scheff, 1996).

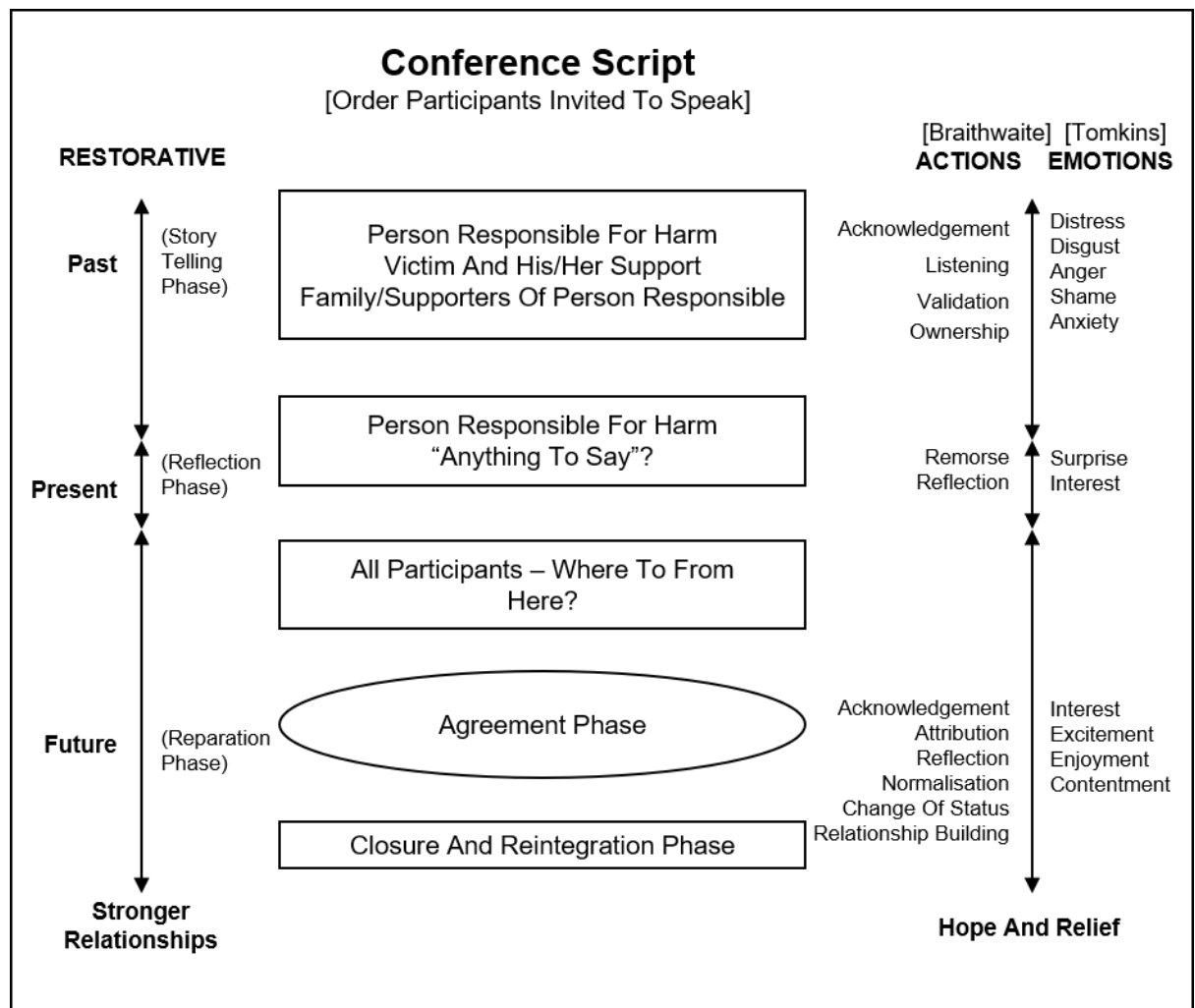
Those researching O’Connell’s RJ ‘conferences’ suggested ‘shame’ as the master emotion in the process and the “sign of a severed or threatened social bond” (Van Stokkom, 2002). They identified that

Nathanson's (1992) concept of 'empathic resonance' "captures precisely the powerful experience of shared emotions" in the process and allowed for others to share a collective level of vulnerability which was seen as a transition point to positive future possibilities (Moore, 1994).

The negative 'affects' (Nathanson, 1992) which resulted in uncomfortable emotions could be shared, in a RJ conference, through a process that separated the act from the actor and the deed from the doer thus allowing for mutual empathy and a process of reintegration (Braithwaite, 1989; Braithwaite and Braithwaite 2001; Retzinger and Scheff, 1996; Van Stokkom, 2002).

Tomkin's (1962; 1963; 1991) theory of affects and the central role of the 'shame' affect in RJ conferences (Nathanson, 1992), helped to provide the framework for researchers (Moore, 1994; Retzinger and Scheff, 1996; Braithwaite and Braithwaite 2001) to understand what might be happening in these processes. O'Connell (2005) incorporated the theoretical perspectives into his RJ model (Figure 3) and the development of the RJ conferencing 'script'.

**Figure 3. Restorative Conference Framework**



(O'Connell, 2005, slide 34)

It was this framework and the restorative conferencing 'script' (Appendix 'A') that O'Connell (1998) introduced to TVP in 1996, when he was asked by the then Chief Constable, Charles Pollard, to train the team of police officers (myself included) to introduce RJ cautioning in Thames Valley.

This introduction of RJ conferencing to the Thames Valley Police has direct relevance to me and ultimately to the development of the focus of this research study into exclusionary practice in the school setting. The model of RJ conferencing developed by O'Connell in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales provided the basis for the structure and RJ

conferencing 'script' that O'Connell introduced to TVP in 1996 (O'Connell, 1998).

The context of policing priorities in TVP, the people he met, and the circumstances that accompanied O'Connell's visits to the UK impacted on the development of his model of practice into a more explicit model of practice and will be reviewed in more detail to provide the background to the research questions for this study.

### **3.10. Restorative Justice in the UK**

#### **The Thames Valley Police experience**

As a result of the pioneering work in Wagga Wagga on the RJ cautioning project, O'Connell (1995) was awarded a Winston Churchill Fellowship scholarship in 1994. The study tour reviewed victim/offender mediation programmes in several countries including the UK. He visited schemes in England including the juvenile diversion scheme in Northamptonshire (Blagg, 1985) and met with Charles Pollard, the Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police, who was very interested in the success that O'Connell had had in Wagga Wagga with RJ cautioning. Pollard invited O'Connell to visit Thames Valley to share his model and train a team of police officers (myself included) to implement RJ conferences in Thames Valley.

O'Connell's studies and work during his time on this study tour influenced the development of his restorative conferencing framework (O'Connell, 1998, 2017a) and led to the model of RJ that has influenced me and my own practice ever since. The links to the development of an explicit framework of practice within the context of youth justice, are therefore an important part of the literature review. The literature supports the rationale for this research study and the development of the research questions. The context and political context behind O'Connell's visit to the UK will therefore be explored. They link to the key influences for the literature search and provide the 'back-story' to

this research thesis and link to my own story discussed in chapters 1 and 2.

As in many countries around the world, RJ in England and Wales was preceded by a range of victim-offender mediation programmes in the early 1980s (Marshall, 1996, Umbreit, Coates and Roberts, 2000; Wright, 1999). This included a juvenile diversion scheme in Northamptonshire that was the forerunner to the youth offending team model of the late 1990s (Blagg, 1985). This was one of the key projects that O'Connell visited on his study tour.

The studies of the Corby Juvenile Liaison Bureau in Northamptonshire stated that:

"The lessons of the Corby experience are that reparation used in the right context and with careful preparation can be a meaningful experience for juvenile offenders." (Blagg, 1985, p.278).

This scheme coincided with the increased use of cautioning and intermediate treatment in the criminal justice system. In the late 1980s the Home Office funded four pilot victim-offender mediation projects and a formal evaluation. The evaluation, carried out by the Home Office in conjunction with a number of external research teams, found that "the majority of victims offered the chance of meeting their offender would like to do so." (Marshall, 1999).

A large majority (80-100% in the programmes studied) also looked back on the experience as worthwhile (Marshall, 1996). There was however some cause for concern relating to a few programmes that were viewed to place pressure on victims to take part. At that time, the national 'Mediation UK' organisation established practice guidelines to address some of these shortcomings (Mediation UK, 1993).

In the early 1990s, TVP practice particularly in relation to the way in which officers dealt with first time offending and offenders emphasised the broad penological aims of rehabilitation and reparation (Wilcox and

Young, 2007; Marshall, 1999). These approaches included the involvement of victims and community members. This was the environment in which I began my policing career. After a probationary period, I very quickly moved into a role of community beat policing where I was part of a small team that provided community policing for two estates in Milton Keynes. The focus was on building local relationships, linking with schools and community organisations and providing a visible presence and opportunity to get to know the residents and their problems and issues. There was an emphasis on building relationships and dialogue.

Police discretion to deal with minor offences without formal prosecution was delivered through what was termed a 'caution'. Although there was no statutory basis for police 'cautioning' until a Royal Commission on Criminal Justice in 1993 (Campbell, 1997), police forces across England and Wales had been following a process of police cautioning, which had a long history going back into at least mid-Victorian times. Cautioning was regarded by Steer (1970) as "a sensible and useful way of dealing with certain types of offender". He stated that through the early part of the twentieth century, the use of "police discretion not to prosecute is exercised widely".

The 1993 Royal Commission reflected a failure of advice in successive Home Office Circulars to promote consistency across police areas in the use of cautioning practice. Campbell (1997) noted that over five decades of research into the limitations of cautioning had "failed to understand the practice in a relational way".

Wilcox and Young (2007) suggest that "cautioning is a social process in which offenders come face to face with legal authority as represented by the police." Traditional police cautioning as it developed in the second half of the twentieth century was believed to offer a positive opportunity to "forestall the development of a criminal career"

and avoid the stigma of criminal proceedings whilst still acting as a deterrent.

When Pollard became Chief Constable of TVP, he very quickly put the prevention of re-offending and the needs of victims and community, at the top of his agenda and vision for policing in the Thames Valley (Wilcox and Young, 2007). This built on the previously discussed introduction of problem solving policing and the retail theft initiative by the Area Commander of Milton Keynes (Chapter 1, p.28 ).

O'Connell's study tour visit included the opportunity to visit the retail theft initiative (RTI) in Milton Keynes with adult and juvenile shoplifters that involved store managers (representing the victim) in the cautioning process (McCulloch, 1996, Nicholl, 1999). I had been involved in this work which linked to the introduction of problem-oriented policing, the RTI and the gathering of community focused performance information.

The most explicit aim of the RTI was to reduce re-offending, through an educative process of those accused of retail theft. A Home Office Policy Research Group study concluded that:

"For first-time offenders who attended the RTI, the rate of re-offending was just 3 per cent compared with 35 per cent for first-time offenders dealt with in other ways" (McCulloch, 1996, p.1).

When Pollard heard O'Connell speak at a seminar for police officers on his restorative cautioning model and practice in Wagga Wagga, the ideas of working with all those affected by harm resonated with his views on a "more balanced approach which took into account the needs of victims and the wider community". (Wilcox and Young, 2007).

Pollard, when later reviewing RJ in Thames Valley commented:

"Restorative justice provides the sort of rational, problem-solving response to social conflict that is highly resilient to the demands of different policing situations and promotes more of the human, face-to-face contact with victims and

offenders that so many [police] officers intuitively recognize as essential to rebuilding social capital and community confidence" (Pollard 2001, pp.166–7).

Following a further invitation from Pollard to speak to the Association of Chief Police Officers, O'Connell returned to England in 1996 to train several Thames Valley officers involved community safety or in existing initiatives, such as the retail theft initiative in his model of RJ conferencing. My role at that time was within the Headquarters based Community Safety Team.

In April 1997, TVP created the Restorative Justice Consultancy, to follow up O'Connell's training with the development of strategies for the effective implementation of high-quality RJ. The members of this small (five police officers) 'Consultancy' team developed and delivered RJ training, which was ultimately provided, not only for TVP officers, but also for other police services, schools and public-sector agencies in the UK.

Pollard (2001) was keen that the principles of working with people were also applied internally to develop a change in culture within the organisation. O'Connell's (1998) model of RJ 'conferencing' was therefore also used for police complaints and grievances and independently evaluated by the Police Complaints Authority (Dobry, 2001). In her report, Dobry commented:

"The Thames Valley project is based on over six years familiarity with the restorative approach, backed by on-going training for managers. It is a gradual process which is essentially to do with changing police culture, learning that it is a sign of strength, not of weakness, to look someone in the eye and say 'sorry' " (p.54).

The application of O'Connell's model of RJ to cautioning was rolled out across all TVP Areas on 1 April 1998. A Chief Superintendent joined the original team of five (including me) to lead the roll-out. As well as training practitioners across the 12 TVP police areas, we also facilitated cautions, complaints and grievances ourselves and developed our



policy guidelines on the use of RJ in Thames Valley 'with' our own staff as well as a strategic development of the cautioning process.

O'Connell (2017a) remained a 'consultant' to the team. He was keen to continue to learn from the Thames Valley experience, about how the model and framework he had initially developed in Wagga Wagga, achieved consistently positive outcomes for all those involved and harmed by the crime.

Pollard sought funding for the restorative 'cautioning' initiative to be independently evaluated and invited a range of academics and professionals from across the Thames Valley to join an Advisory Board (Hoyle et al, 2002). A bid was submitted to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation for an independent evaluation of restorative cautioning in Thames Valley to be carried out in 1998. The funding was secured for a three-year action research evaluation to be carried out by the Oxford Centre for Criminological Research (OCCR). I personally acted as the link between the TVP RJ team and the independent researchers and this had a great influence on the literature and evidence that I began to read and explore myself from 1998 onwards. It also was an influential time that re-ignited my interest in research and its relevance to practice.

The (confidential) first year interim report produced in October 1999 was based on researcher observations of 23 cautioning sessions and 135 interviews relating to these cases (Young and Hoyle, 1999). The confidential report included 81 recommendations which the researchers stated were,

"designed to close (or at least narrow) the gap we detected between the programme's protocols and the behaviour of the facilitators we observed" (p.10).

These recommendations and the independent evaluation of O'Connell's model of practice influenced O'Connell to continue to develop his understanding of what key concepts underpinned the model and

develop further evidential support for the theoretical construct on shame and affect that had been identified in Wagga Wagga (Braithwaite, 1989; Nathanson, 1992; Retzinger and Scheff, 2000).

Over the three years of the OCCR evaluation, 1,915 restorative conferences took place at which victims were present. In a further 12,065 restorative cautions, the views of any absent victims were relayed by the cautioning officer. It was the first and largest RJ programme in the UK (Hoyle et al, 2002).

The final report highlighted some key findings in relation to the model and the RJ conferencing 'script'. The researchers stated that:

"Implementation of the restorative cautioning model in individual cautions was often deficient. Police facilitators sometimes side-lined the other participants and occasionally asked illegitimate questions" (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2002, online summary).

The reasons behind the 'illegitimacy' of the questions was not clear but it did highlight the need for the framework and reasons behind the 'script' to be made more explicit. (O'Connell, 2008). O'Connell identified the need to provide a framework to support the consistent use of what 'intuitively' they knew worked. He stated in his address to the Australian Catholic University on receipt of an honorary doctorate that:

"My role as a facilitator (as opposed to being a problem solver), has allowed me to engage others in dialogue that encourages stories about how people have arrived at a particular point and then to engage with them in a way that assists all involved to come to a shared understanding and, importantly, to then work out what will help them go forward. Talking about the world we share with others is the foundation stone upon which civil societies are built" (O'Connell, 2008, online).

He identified that "the main limitation of most restorative practice is its lack of explicitness" and suggested that practitioners were often able to articulate *what* worked but not *why* it worked. This meant that

others were “unable to easily replicate what works” (O’Connell, 2017a).

The rationale that underpinned his consistently used set of questions in the RJ conferencing script needed to be understood further. The practice that developed following O’Connell’s Winston Churchill Study tour influenced significant research developments that would support O’Connell to develop this more explicit model for practice that is now used in a range of contexts world-wide (Liebmann, 2007).

### **3.11. An explicit restorative framework**

O’Connell’s thirteen-week Winston Churchill Fellowship study tour involved meetings which impacted on his own thinking and the development of a more explicit framework of RJ (O’Connell, 1998). He highlights the following key meetings which impacted on his thinking about a RJ framework:

Kay Pranis, the RJ planner for the Minnesota Corrections Department, first introduced O’Connell to the concept of RJ and what he termed, a principled framework, that she had developed to guide discussion, development and practice (O’Connell, 1998).

Don Nathanson and O’Connell spent time together during his visit to Philadelphia, which provided him with an opportunity to gain a better understanding of affect script psychology and the compass of shame. These theories had been identified from the research into his Wagga Wagga cautioning pilot (Moore, 1994; Braithwaite, 1989, Nathanson, 1992).

Ted Wachtel and O’Connell also met in Pennsylvania, USA. Wachtel went on to become the founder of the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP). O’Connell states:

“History, however, will identify the presentation given by Don Nathanson and myself to a criminal justice audience in nearby Bucks County, Pennsylvania, as a significant event

because it was in this forum that Ted Wachtel first heard about conferencing” (O’Connell, 1998, online).

After meeting the Wachtel’s in 1994, O’Connell established another influential relationship which resulted in ‘The Real Justice’ programme founded, in 1994, under the auspices of Buxmont Academy. This programme was the fore-runner to international work that continued as Real Justice in Australia with O’Connell and became the IIRP in the USA and subsequently several other continents - IIRP Europe, Latin America, North America. (Wachtel, 2016). The work of Wachtel and O’Connell provided the next key concepts to support his explicit framework.

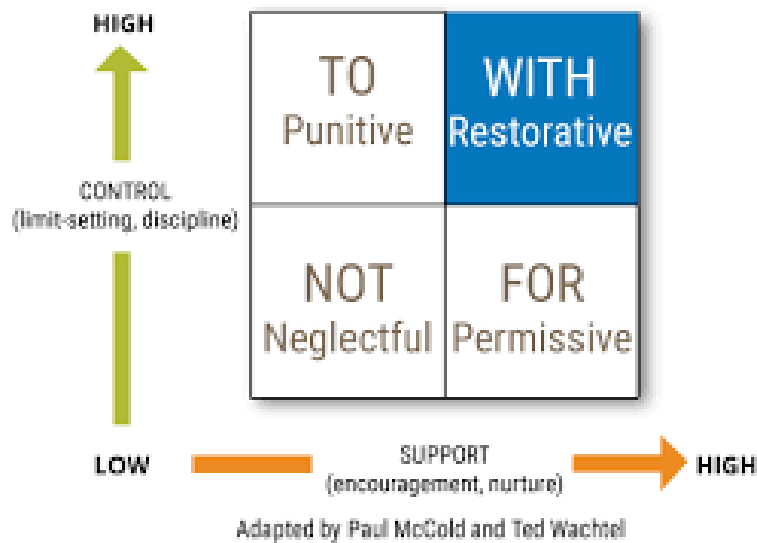
Wachtel and the research criminologist Paul McCold, (also now working with Wachtel in Pennsylvania), developed Braithwaite’s (1989) re-integrative shaming ideas that suggested that:

“reliance on punishment as a social regulator is problematic because it shames and stigmatizes wrongdoers, pushes them into a negative societal subculture and fails to change their behaviour” (Wachtel, 2016, p.3).

They adapted some of the ideas of University of Illinois corrections researcher Daniel Glaser to develop a model which they termed the ‘social discipline window’ (Glaser, 1964; McCold and Wachtel, 2003).

The ‘window’ was created by combining two continua which they identified as ‘control’ and ‘support’. ‘Control’ represents a continuum of high to low in relation to expectations, limit-setting, discipline or rules. ‘Support’ represents a continuum from high to low in relation to nurture, encouragement, love and assistance. By looking at these continua in relation to each other, they defined four approaches to the way in which behaviour could be managed or regulated (see Figure 4 - McCold and Wachtel, 2003, p.2).

**Figure 4 The Social Discipline Window**



They defined approaches which were high on expectations, limit setting, discipline and high on encouragement and nurture as restorative and opportunities for those in 'authority' to disapprove of the behaviour whilst affirming or acknowledging the intrinsic worth of the person. These approaches were opportunities to address the behaviour with the active involvement of everyone affected by it and offer an opportunity for engagement, dialogue and learning. They aligned with Braithwaite's (1989) idea of an opportunity for re-integrative shaming by separating the behaviour from the person and providing an environment where the individual could be supported by people who cared about them to change.

The 'social discipline window' became what Wachtel referred to as "the cornerstone" of the RJ framework introduced by O'Connell to the UK in 1996 (Wachtel, 2016). O'Connell (2005) added the principles of working 'with' people rather than doing things 'to' them or 'for' them to his 'explicit framework'.

It was within this mix of developing research and practice internationally that O'Connell (2005) identified the work of Kim Chan and Mauborgne (2003) on what is necessary for people to experience

a fair process. He identified that for participants to engage and often sit with discomfort and vulnerability, it was important to be listened to and heard which came out as the key principles from Kim Chan and Mauborgne's research.

This research looked at the links between trust, idea sharing, and corporate performance and the key finding was that employees would,

"commit to a manager's decision—even one they disagree with—if they believe that the process the manager used to make the decision was fair" (Kim Chan and Mauborgne's, 2003, p.1).

They identified that this decision-making approach addresses the basic human need to be valued and respected and highlighted three key principles that were important to their research participant's perception of a fair process. These were:

- *"Engagement* — involving individuals in decisions by inviting their input and encouraging them to challenge one another's ideas.
- *Explanation* — clarifying the thinking behind a final decision.
- *Expectation clarity* — stating the new rules of the game, including performance standards, penalties for failure, and new responsibilities"

(Kim Chan and Mauborgne, 2003, p.1).

These three key principles provided O'Connell with a greater understanding of what was important to the process and framework of a RJ process and were incorporated into the framework and 'conferencing script' (O'Connell, 2005).

O'Connell (2005, 2006), now drawing on the work of others (Kim Chan and Mauborgne, 2003; Braithwaite 1989; Nathanson; 1992; McCold and Wachtel, 2003) combined these 'key concepts' into what he described as a 'unified framework' (O'Connell, 2005). This framework also provided the *explicit* terminology and supporting evidence that O'Connell argued was necessary for consistent effective practice.

The key concepts were linked to the RJ questions and 'script' to help explain what was happening in a RJ conference (O'Connell, 2018a). It was suggested by O'Connell that any 'restorative' process should include practices that took the following key theories or concepts into consideration:

- Re-integrative shaming (Braithwaite, 1989)
- Affects and the Compass of Shame (Tomkins, 1962, 1963, 1991 and 1992; Nathanson, 1992)
- The Social Discipline Window (McCold and Wachtel, 2003)
- Fair Process (Kim Chan and Mauborgne, 2003)
- Restorative Questions (O'Connell, 1998)

This is a framework that I have contributed to through my practice and research with O'Connell, Wachtel and the organisations that developed this model for training (Real Justice and the IIRP). It has underpinned my own practice for twenty-five years in criminal justice and education contexts and links to the development of this research study and the research questions (O'Connell and Preston, 2005).

Through those intervening years, my RJ practice has developed in criminal justice and more recently in education and specifically supporting those young people who encounter difficulties engaging with the education system.

This thesis explores how adults involved in school exclusion processes account for their experiences of exclusion. What helps them to achieve positive outcomes? Their stories are analysed in the context of the key concepts that underpin O'Connell's (2005) explicit framework of RJ to develop a greater understanding of what works and why it works.

This framework of 'justice' that underpins my own practice 'journey' from policing into education and the study of special educational needs will be explored in the context of approaches to school exclusion and the outcomes that these approaches aim to achieve.

### **3.12. Summary**

The literature reviewed in chapters 2 and 3 identified the need to understand how the underlying principles of an approach known as RJ have been developed by practitioners to address issues of social justice and equity specifically linked to school exclusion.

My own practitioner experiences in policing and education were linked to the prevailing political approaches of the time and how they impacted on the often-conflicting approaches to dealing with what practitioners and managers in those settings deemed to be inappropriate behaviour (Ashurst and Venn, 2014). Differences in approaches to the maintenance of discipline were highlighted within the UK, especially between one English police force and schools in England which linked to my own practice and experience.

Research evidence suggested that the relational aspects of RJ were linked to a range of positive outcomes for CYP in the school exclusion context but also highlighted an 'uneven playing field' in relation to outcomes for CYP, due to the responses of adults in the school exclusion process (Kulz, 2015). Links were made to the pressures on adults in the education setting to meet performance targets and inspection criteria which

The lack of definition and clarity around what constitutes 'restorative justice' practice and how RJ is defined has informed the third research question which focused on finding out how a pioneer who introduced RJ to the UK criminal justice and the US education systems, accounts for the development of the RJ framework and the principles associated with this framework that are now used in practice around the world. The reflections on these conversations aim to gain a greater understanding of the underlying principles behind the most effective way to reduce and manage school exclusions including the wider implications for social inclusion.



Pryor (2010) states that research questions are most frequently identified as “a heuristic device for the researcher”. They help to provide focus for what the study is about and just as importantly what it is not about. They have guided the literature search and challenged me as the researcher around the rationale for the inclusion or omission of literature. The relevance and importance of my own experience and involvement has also guided the decisions about research design and the types of ‘data’ to collect and from whom. They also help to shape the way in which the ‘data’ is analysed and written up (Bryman, 2016).

## **CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY & PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACHES**

### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter will present the rationale for the methodology and research design which seeks to answer the research questions and explain how the development of that methodology has been influenced by my own experiences.

Key dates and biographical 'moments', that are of particular relevance to this research thesis, relating to me and O'Connell, are provided at Appendix 'B' for the reader to refer to throughout the thesis.

### **4.2. Epistemological assumptions**

Research methodology is an overall combination of beliefs that ground a study and the choices and decisions made involve paying attention to the "paradigm or interpretive framework" that guides action (Guba, 1990; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). My experiences to date in my own areas of research have led me to question the value of 'distance' between the researcher and the researched as most of my own research has been practitioner led within organisations where I have continued to work (Preston, 2008, 2011, 2013). Remaining a detached and objective researcher in the social sciences is challenging. Porter (1996) states that:

"objectivity arouses the passions as few other words can. Its presence is evidently required for basic justice, honest government and true knowledge. But an excess of it crushes individual subjects, demeans minority cultures, devalues artistic creativity and discredits genuine democratic political participation" (p.4).

Porter (1996) goes on to suggest that "someone who isn't objective has allowed prejudice or self-interest to distort a judgment".

The point at which I ventured into the field and began my search for participants is the point at which I consciously identified my own influence on the participants and when I clearly associated this with anxiety from previous studies (chapter 1 p.2). This was also the point at which I began to reflect more deeply on my own past experiences and how they might connect to rationale behind my research study and the approach to formulating the research questions.

I identified the ways in which my own experiences and 'stories' have impacted on the participants in my previous research and my own learning, I have needed to broaden my notions around the "paradigmatic purposes and constructions" of this study (Hughes and Pennington, 2017) in order to demonstrate how the stories gathered contribute to answering the research questions and contribute to a greater understanding of RJ in the school exclusion process.

All three of the research questions sought to address how practitioners, trainers and a RJ pioneer understand or account for the meaning of RJ and as such are associated with a world view that seeks to,

"find out what kinds of things are happening rather than to determine the frequency of predetermined things the researcher already believes can happen" (Lofland et al, 2006, p.76).

One of the key underlying assumptions of qualitative research is that reality and truth are constructed and develop as a result of the interactions between people and the environments in which they live (Mariza, 2014; Silverman, 2000; Freebody, 2003).

My research questions sought to gather the accounts of practitioners, parents/carers and a RJ pioneer around the meanings they attribute to experiences of both RJ and the school exclusion process. In relation to O'Connell, I wanted to understand how he accounted for the development of the RJ model and key concepts which he developed in the early 1990s as a framework for practice that was introduced to the

UK in 1996. The literature review highlighted the need to focus on the nature of adult involvement in the school exclusion process. This highlighted the link between the approaches of adults to the school exclusion process and the resultant differences in outcomes for CYP (Dix, 2017; Kulz, 2015; Graham et al, 2019). Every aspect of this related to my own career and development as a practitioner and researcher and led to a decision to turn an ethnographic or storytelling gaze inwards as well as maintaining an outward gaze on the larger context in which my own experiences have taken place.

This worldview is informed by social constructivism and naturalistic inquiry (Cresswell and Cresswell, 2018; Lincoln and Guba 1985) which seeks to understand the world we live in by developing *subjective* meaning of experiences rather than objectively determining that meaning through observation. This has also been the 'world view' that I have applied to previous research in RJ and particularly in the context of education and special educational needs (Preston, 2013). The approach is based on the postmodernist view that the methods and the activities that are used in research are ultimately and inextricably tied to the values and subjectivities of the researcher (Bochner, 2001).

I am interested in the stories that others tell about themselves and the social contexts in which they exist. My own story has also been an important part of developing that understanding. Individual constructs are elicited and understood through interaction between researchers and participants, where the stories themselves become "the phenomena under study" (Caine, Estefan and Clandinin, 2013).

The framework that I have used in my own RJ practice includes a series of questions that are underpinned by affect script psychology and linked to our innate human need to decrease negative affect and increase positive affect to remain emotionally healthy (Tomkins, 1991). One of the key concepts in this theory is the role of the 'shame' affect as the interruption of positive affect (Nathanson, 1992). This has

been discussed in the literature and led to the focus of the research questions around this particular model of RJ.

The RJ questions allow people to engage in free and appropriate expression of emotion, which in turn allows them to understand and tell their own stories or narratives (Mirsky, 2011; Wachtel, 2016). Within the qualitative tradition of methodology, there was therefore an existing set of experiences and association with the qualitative principles and traditions that are associated with narrative inquiry and ethnography. Both approaches have their historical roots in human experience and anthropology (Frey, 2018) and will be discussed individually to build the rationale for the methodology used for this research study.

### **4.3. Narrative Inquiry**

My position supports the argument that researchers do not carry out the research for or to participants but with them. This led to a methodology that supported this approach to social action and change and recognised that no research methodology is value free. It began with a narrative or ethnographic approach to elicit stories to gain a greater understanding of approaches to reduce school exclusion and developed into an autoethnography when my own influence on participants became clear.

Narrative inquiry is one of many interpretive approaches used in the social sciences and has been used, for over 25 years, as an approach to understand the ways in which humans experience the world (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). The approach stems from Jerome Bruner's ideas that humans make meaning in and out of their lives with narrative (Bruner, 2004). There is however a need for definition in respect of 'narrative' as highlighted by Caine, Estefan and Clandinin (2013) who identify that various uses of 'stories' have been co-opted under the label 'narrative inquiry'. A narrative ontology implies that

experiences are continuously interactive, and that this results in changes to both people and contexts. The authors highlight the different ways in which narrative and stories can be used as data, as representational form, as content analysis, and as structure, or where the stories themselves become “the phenomena under study” (Caine, Estefan and Clandinin, 2013).

Narrative inquiry as an approach to storytelling mirrored the principles of the RJ framework which seeks to allow participants in the process to develop a shared understanding of their lived experiences and take back control of their own stories (Gottschall, 2012; Wachtel, 2016). Narrative inquiry “rests on the assumption that experience can, through stories, become part of consciousness” (Squire, 2008). This approach was purposively chosen to fit with the researched as well as the stories I contribute as the researcher. It is an approach that acknowledges that human beings need to make sense of their own stories (Storr, 2019).

#### **4.4. Ethnography**

The development of ethnography as a methodological approach dates back to the 1900s (Frey, 2018) and was originally located in anthropological studies of people, community or group. These ideas were extensively developed in the 1980s when researchers identified that:

“The ‘facts’ and ‘truths’ scientists ‘found’ were inextricably tied to the vocabularies and paradigms the scientists used to represent them” (Ellis, et al, 2010, p.2).

They identified new relationships between authors, participants and text and suggested that stories could be complex, constitutive, meaningful phenomena that “introduced unique ways of thinking and feeling, and helped people make sense of themselves and others” (Ellis et al, 2010).

The qualitative traditions of narrative inquiry and ethnography use theory and conceptual models to develop a broad explanation for behaviours and attitudes. The development of a theoretical lens can thus become,

“a transformative perspective that shapes the type of questions asked, informs how data are collected and analysed and provides a call for action or change” (Cresswell and Cresswell, 2018, p.62).

The literature on the emerging use of RJ in education, suggested that a strong theoretical framework was lacking in the field and would help to reduce any misunderstanding, mis-use or dilution of the practice that could cause more harm (Evans and Vaandering, 2016). The research design developed to include elements of both narrative and ethnographic methodological traditions, in order to gain a greater understanding of the meaning that participants placed on experiences in relation to school exclusion as well as developing a greater understanding of key concepts which might help to build a more explicit theoretical framework for RJ practice. The ethnographic characteristics of learning from the stories of others have been developed into 'auto'ethnography to include the critical and reflexive study of my own stories (Reed-Danahay, 1997). These are reviewed in the context of my relationships in the criminal justice, education and RJ worlds and how those stories can build a greater understanding of exclusionary practice.

#### **4.5. The 'pilot study' experience**

In my professional role as a senior lecturer in special educational needs and inclusion, I made connections with a group of individuals, working in various roles in SEN and Inclusion in a Local Authority (LA). They were also trained in RJ and interested in how we might work together to offer support to schools to use RJ to manage behaviour and reduce exclusions in the LA. They were keen to support any research I might

wish to do in this context and this was the beginning of an ongoing association with local educationalists in this field. This group shared a flyer outlining my research with schools in the LA (Appendix 'C') and this resulted in early contact from a Headteacher who agreed to be part of the research and act as a pilot study school. The key characteristics of this school can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1 - Pilot school characteristics**

School Type	Federated Infant and Junior Academy (part of one Secondary and seven Primary schools in Multi Academy Trust)
Age range/No pupils	630 pupils age 4-11 Three form entry
OFSTED rating	Infant 2016: Outstanding Junior 2017: Good
Leadership Team	Executive Headteacher Deputy Head Assistant Head/Curriculum Assistant Head/SENCo

This 'pilot study' primary school (given the code PS) had a child at imminent risk from permanent exclusion and senior leaders within the school were looking for ways to prevent the exclusion. I was informed by one of these colleagues in the LA that the school were keen to talk to me and be involved in my research. Meetings were held with the Head and SENCo and consent was gained for the research to progress. The SENCo at PS stated that she would speak to both parents to gain their consent to be involved and ethical consent forms were left with her. An email was received from the SENCo stating that she had gained the mother's written consent to be involved. I asked if I could come and speak personally to the parent to explain the research and ensure that she understood the purpose of the research and to ensure that



her involvement was voluntary. The SENCo (PS) suggested that I attend the next multi-agency meeting to be held at the school.

Before this multi-agency meeting took place, the school were successful in securing a place for the child part-time at a County nurture unit for two days a week. The remaining days at school were also part-time (mornings only). When I arrived at the multi-agency meeting, I sat in the reception area with the parent and the Nurture Unit teacher but had not been introduced so waited for the SENCo (PS) to arrive. The parent discussed with the Nurture Unit teacher that her son had not taken his medication for ADHD at all over Christmas and had only had one "meltdown" on Christmas Day. She had started him on his medication on the first day back at school. When the SENCo (PS) came to meet us in the reception area she did not introduce me but said:

SENCo (PS) "Where is the Inclusion Officer? Is he coming to the meeting?"

Me: "I don't know"

SENCo (PS): "Oh sorry, I thought because he was a friend, you knew him, you'd know".

We were then all asked into the meeting room and after waiting for a few minutes to see if the Inclusion Officer was going to arrive, the SENCo introduced me and asked me to explain my research to the whole group (3 school staff, nurture unit teacher and parent). The SENCo (PS) stated in front of the group that the parent did not wish to meet with me on her own. I offered to meet with the parent separately after the meeting if she had any further questions. I was then asked to leave the meeting.

The following day I received an email from the SENCo (PS) which stated,

"Hi Nicola

Thank you for coming to the meeting yesterday. After the meeting I received an email from mum stating that she no longer wants to take part in the research.

Many Thanks

SENCo (PS)"

*(See Appendix 'D')*

I replied, asking whether the school wished to continue to be involved, but received no response.

Reflections on the reasons for withdrawal of consent were included in my fieldwork diary (see the relevant extract at Appendix 'E') where I reflected on the perceptions of school staff and the parent around my 'personal association' with the Inclusion Officer. I reflected on how this may have influenced my involvement and the relationships between us all. The withdrawal of consent required a rethink of my approach to participant involvement and influenced my decision to take a less direct approach to engage potential participants for this study. Pilot studies are an important feasibility study and opportunity to give advance warning of where a research study might fail (Malmqvist et al, 2019; Kezar, 2000; Van Teijlingen et al, 2001). This self-reflection is an important part of the research process:

"Back and forth autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations" (Ellis, 1999, p.673).

The 'experience' also underpinned a methodological 're-think' around my own involvement and impact on the research process. It influenced my decision to take a less direct approach to engage potential participants for this study. This was also the point at which I identified the importance and relevance of my own experience and beliefs and the impact that this was having on the research study.

My ontological and epistemological approach to this research study has been influenced by my own experiences, as well as the participants, and the 'pilot study' (that didn't happen), highlighted that these were becoming more and more difficult to exclude from my writing and the study itself. This ontological commitment shaped the direction of the research as I began to reflect on my own experiences of RJ and how they were impacting on the direction of the research. I became more aware of a need to develop a "relational means of researching" and a commitment to work 'with' participants to develop a greater understanding of the RJ approach through the stories lived and told by myself as well as others. (Clandinin and Caine, 2012; Caine, Estefan and Clandinin, 2013).

As I began this research study, I situated my thinking around traditions of narrative inquiry. As the study developed, my involvement in the introduction of RJ to the UK criminal justice system in 1996 and subsequent involvement in the development of training, standards and accreditation in the field led to the identification of a 'closeness' to the area of study that has impacted on the research decisions and influenced the development of relationships. This 'closeness' resulted in a series of assumptions having been made around the term restorative and its meaning as well as the impact that my own knowledge and experience of RJ might have on others including potential research participants.

My own research studies (Preston, 2002; 2008; 2013) into RJ had used a conceptual framework and terminology which failed to acknowledge the lack of consensus around the core concepts of RJ and highlighted the need for further research into these underlying concepts.

Wagner (2010) highlights a potential 'blind spot' in research which he states is created by "looking at one thing but missing another and thus obscuring the truth we are trying to produce through our research".

Wagner (2010) suggests a more modest and humble approach in relation to any claims around 'truths'. He argues for a "more inclusive approach to knowledge" that recognises expertise but looks to knowledge communities beyond the "researcher's inner circle".

The assumptions made in the early stage of this study were based on my own 'closeness' to a particular RJ framework that underpinned the development of practice in the UK. The 'pilot study experience' experience, combined with 25 years of practitioner experience in relation to RJ, resulted in an impact on the relationships with research participants early in the study. As a result, the direction in which the research study developed changed into an *autoethnographic* study that introduced 'the self' into the study and research methodology.

#### **4.6. The case for autoethnography**

Autoethnography is part of a broader range of qualitative approaches that includes ethnography, self-study, and narrative inquiry (Warren and Hytten, 2004; Hughes and Pennington, 2017). As a method, autoethnography combines characteristics of autobiography and ethnography and can be used as methodology and/or as method:

"Rather than seeking to escape subjectivity, teachers and teacher education researchers of the new millennium are considering autoethnographic techniques precisely because of the qualitative genre's capacity to engage first-person voice and to embrace the conflict of writing against oneself as one finds oneself entrenched in the complications of one's positions" (Hughes and Pennington, 2017, p.9).

As this study progressed and I identified the ways in which my own experiences and 'stories' impacted on the participants in the 'pilot study experience', I have needed to broaden my notions around the purpose of my research paradigm and how the study should be constructed.

One of the main criticisms of autoethnography emanates from the more traditional social sciences that emphasise the need for objectivity in research. The early criticisms of the approach question validity on the grounds of the research being “unrepresentative and lacking objectivity” (Maréchal 2010). Qualitative researchers have been called “journalists, or soft scientists,” and their work, including autoethnography, is termed “unscientific, or only exploratory, or entirely personal and full of bias” (Denzin, 2000). Postmodern developments in research methodology acknowledge that it is not always necessary to carry out research purely from an impersonal, neutral or objective standpoint (Bochner, 2001; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Rorty, 1990).

To construct new knowledge, data of various forms are used to test, explain or illustrate propositions about my area of interest. Constructing new knowledge is, however, a daunting prospect and Wagner (2010) suggests that it can be useful and pragmatic to begin from a point of “ignorance” or “collective deficits in academic understanding” and aim to reduce that ignorance rather than create new knowledge which may be perceived very differently outside the researcher’s field of interest or discipline. This leads the researcher to develop questions that investigate either ‘blank spots’ or ‘blind spots’.

Those questions that are already familiar to researchers and their colleagues “define blank spots in emergent theories and conceptions of knowledge” (Wagner, 2010). These are areas that researchers know they do not understand. Other kinds of research,

“illuminate blind spots” and “extend outwards from patterned phenomena that existing theories, methods and perspectives actually keep scholars from seeing, patterns they have not yet noticed” (p.33).

My initial research proposal focused on research questions that made assumptions about RJ and accepted that there was a clear understanding of the concepts that lay behind the practice. The

significance of the study was argued in relation to growing concerns around the effectiveness of approaches to educational exclusion. The aim of the research was to fill in a 'blank spot' with an assumption that the term RJ and the concepts that underpinned the approach were defined and understood and that the questions to be answered focused on the use of RJ in this specific context.

As the research progressed, my personal reflections on twenty-five years of involvement in RJ, including being involved in the introduction of RJ to the UK highlighted a 'blind spot'. This blind spot involved my own bias towards an approach that I had personally seen impact in positive ways on many hundreds of people in a whole range of contexts. I and many others within the 'restorative' community of both practice and research still struggled to define and articulate the term 'restorative' and often remained defensive about what was or was not 'restorative'. This realisation resulted in a change in approach to answering the first two research questions and the addition of the third research question: How does a restorative justice pioneer account for the development of restorative justice processes and concepts?

Acknowledgement of this 'blind spot' helps to explain how my own experiences and relationships have influenced the course and direction of the study. This relates specifically to my introduction to RJ through a pioneer in the field, Terry O'Connell. The resulting decisions taken in relation to my methodology, as well as the way in which the research study is written, are as important to share in this thesis as the specific findings from the participants who took part in my focused study into school exclusion.

The aim from the outset, is not to reject conventions of research or academic writing, but to justify and explain the reasons behind an autoethnographic approach that some have said:

“interfere(s) with normativities of practice that have come to sanction what is recognizable as academic writing and examinable as thesis text.” (Honan and Bright, 2016, p.732)

The thesis is written in a way that seeks to share the experiences gained from the research process alongside seeking to answer the research questions. This approach is considered by some to challenge some of the notions of objectivity, reason and truth that have historically been considered more traditional in social science research (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). This approach will highlight the ‘blind spots’ in the field of RJ for practitioners and researchers alike.

The approach will also allow for reflection on my own development as a researcher. As discussed in chapter 1 (p.1) academic writing and identity formation are woven into each other (Packer and Goicoechea, 2000) and my own narrative in relation to the research questions as well as the involvement in this study, form part of my developing self-identity.

As discussed in chapter 1 (p.1), considerations of previously ‘unfinished’ academic studies (Preston, 1997), still produce a sense of anxiety around deviating from the norm in relation to established methodological traditions. This research study is informed as much through reflections on my own practice, thinking and relationships, as it is by the stories gathered from research participants. “How we write is just as important as what we write” (Weatherall, 2019).

This study developed into an autoethnographic study in relation to both methodology and methods because of early experiences with the ‘pilot study experience’. The decisions taken at that point however had implications for the way in which the whole study was conducted from that point forward and the interpretation of the findings that will be discussed in chapter 5. Douglas and Carless (2013) suggest that, “in telling our story, we hold fast to the conviction that evoking the personal can illuminate the general”.

I will therefore focus on the use of autoethnography to explicitly link concepts from the literature to the narrated personal experience (Holt, 2003). This will provide an approach that is both rigorous and can be justified to the same degree as any other form of inquiry (Duncan, 2004). Discussions of postmodern qualitative methodologies state that “our texts must always return to and reflect the words persons speak as they attempt to give meaning and shape to the lives they lead” (Denzin, 2014). Through the choice of an autoethnographic approach I include myself in that process.

Researchers who use and support autoethnography state that it is “a relational pursuit” (Turner, 2013) and a way of telling a story that “invites personal connection rather than analysis” (Frank, 2000). It is an approach that “accommodates subjectivity, emotionality and the researcher’s influence” (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011). As a human activity, research is inextricably saturated in language because this is how human beings make meaning (Hall 1997). Writing is the language to “make available one’s thinking to oneself and to others”. Writing requires attention to the ontological fit between my own worldview and way of being, and between thinking, research and narrative (Piantanida and Garman, 2010).

#### **4.7. Settings and sampling**

The focus on school exclusion in this study, links to my transition from primary school teacher and SENCo into the role of senior lecturer in SEN and Inclusion at the University of Northampton and my work as lecturer and programme lead for the National Award in SEN Co-ordination. As I began my doctoral studies and considered the questions raised from previous research in RJ and special educational needs and inclusion (Preston, 2013), Northamptonshire were also addressing a problem with permanent and fixed period exclusions (Department for Education, 2019).



The 2017/18 figures for permanent exclusions in the County were slightly above the national average for all schools (0.11% of pupils as compared to the national rate of 0.1%) and this was in the context of a year-on-year increase in the number of permanent exclusions nationally since 2013. In relation to fixed period exclusions, there had also been a year-on-year increase in the national rate since 2013 from 3.5% of pupils nationally to 5.08% of pupils receiving a fixed period exclusion. In Northamptonshire, these figures in 2017/18 were slightly lower than the national figure at 4.5%, but the trend since 2013 was continuing to increase and the reasons for exclusion were consistently high for physical assaults (against pupils and adults), verbal abuse/threatening behaviour (these were higher against adults) and persistent disruptive behaviour. There was also emerging evidence that the process known as 'off rolling' (Rowe, Neale and Perryfrost, 2019) when a pupil is removed from the school roll without using a permanent exclusion, was of concern within the County and had been highlighted to the Local Authority specifically in relation to ten schools in the County (Bradbury, 2018; Ward, 2019).

My previous research studies (Preston, 2008; 2013) had highlighted anecdotal evidence from my experience in both criminal justice and education contexts that suggested that building and maintaining relationships through RJ processes helped to 'repair the harm' that was often associated with behaviour considered 'unacceptable' by schools. A restorative approach helped adults (as well as CYP) to focus on building, managing and repairing these relationships when behaviour was challenging in the school context. Research evidence linked to the development of RJ in settings other than criminal justice, was emerging that demonstrated that positive outcomes to reduce conflict and build relationships (Hoyle et al 2002; Vaandering, 2013; Wachtel, 2016; O'Connell, 2018a). These outcomes were found to be more likely (in any setting) if a consistent framework and set of questions were

used. As highlighted in chapter 3 (p.46), these key concepts that underpinned the framework and RJ process are still open to debate.

My own experiences of working with CYP and their families in both the criminal justice and education systems gave me some very personal experiences of young people moving from education into the criminal justice system. These experiences have had a profound impact on my research to date and my motivations through this study to evidence what might make a difference and then share that as widely as possible. The impact that adults have on the educational outcomes for those young people whose behaviour is challenging or who are not meeting the education system's academic targets is a central theme of this study. This in no way diminishes the importance of the voice of the child but aims to contribute to a greater understanding of how the decisions and actions of the adults can influence the outcomes for these young people who have already been identified as at risk of poor future life outcomes. The 'school to prison pipeline', identified in chapter 2 (p.37), and the impact that adults can have on the 'exclusion' process informed the focus of the study on adults in the process.

Following the 'pilot study experience' and the broadening of the research to an autoethnographic study related to my own impact on participants, the process of identifying participants changed to reduce this personal influence on participation. A process of purposive sampling (Lavrakas, 2008) was used to identify schools in the County of Northamptonshire, UK who were interested in being involved in a study to reduce exclusions. Purposive sampling is "based on study purpose with the expectation that each participant will provide unique and rich information of value to the study" (Suen et al, 2014).

This change in approach to identifying research participants, coincided with my involvement through the University of Northampton with the development and expansion of a county-wide initiative. A Northampton Town education working group had been working for a year to address

key priorities for schools in the area which included the reduction of exclusions and in-year school transfers. This had involved the Faculty of Education as research partners. These meetings led to further discussions and the setting up of a group of local educators who called themselves 'Educating Northants'. This group sought to bring together local teachers and educators keen to develop a more positive approach to children, young people and education in the county with a vision "to flip the narrative and tell a good news story about education in Northamptonshire." (Educating Northants, 2018).

In March 2019, the University hosted a one-day conference for 'Educating Northants' which brought together 600 delegates and delivered 115 workshop sessions to educators in the County. More than 50 local teachers presented sessions to share their ideas and practice and I contributed to a panel discussion entitled 'Where next for the inclusion and exclusion debate' and a workshop on 'Restorative practices and inclusion'. The timing and practical involvement in the setting up of the conference provided me with an opportunity for the less direct approach to participation in my research through the inclusion of a flyer (Appendix 'F') in every delegate pack providing information about my research and requesting support with finding out more about exclusion in the County. The flyer was also available at my conference sessions and requested support for the research by completion of an online questionnaire. The final question in this questionnaire asked if they would like to be involved further in the research and to provide contact details if this was the case. There were only 5 responses to the questionnaire, but these resulted in three schools who were interested in being further involved in the research. Visits to these schools resulted in consent from a parent, a headteacher, and a SENCo willing to share their experiences of school exclusion with me. The key characteristics of these three participants are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2 - Key characteristics of participants**

'Parent'	Single parent 4 children – all at or been to the same Junior school Older son now at special school Son at risk of exclusion – 9 years old Junior School ages 7-11 (480 pupils) Part of small Multi Academy Trust (four junior and infant schools) Ofsted: Requires Improvement
'Headteacher'	Substantive Head for 3 years Previously Deputy Head at same school Junior Church School 7-11 (420 pupils) Ofsted: Good
'SENCo'	Teacher – 30 years SENCo – approx. 5 years SENCo at current school – 2 years Infant and Junior School part of Multi Academy Trust Ofsted: Requires Improvement

Further interest from other parents and headteachers was shown but no consent was received before the end of the summer term and therefore cannot be included in this research study. The focus on RJ in this research and the key concepts that lie behind the process and practice led to a conscious decision to not have an 'interview schedule' but to use the restorative questions as the basis for the 'conversations' with these participants.

My presentations at both 'Educating Northants' and the International Institute for Restorative Practices (Europe) Conference in Kortrijk Belgium in May (IIRP, 2019) resulted in further interest in my research from the independent third sector membership body for the field of RJ

in the UK – the Restorative Justice Council (RJC). A request was made through the RJC in May 2019 to circulate an online questionnaire to members that focused on the use of RJ to reduce school exclusion (Appendix 'G'). My request focused on RJ in the school exclusion process and deliberately did not define 'restorative' or 'restorative justice'. It did however use the term restorative practices as this was to a school-based audience where this terminology was more commonly used. I sought educators to share their experiences and views around the use of the restorative framework in the school setting. Due to administrative changes in the RJC team, this was not followed up and so I pursued the other opportunities with the Northamptonshire schools and educators.

In November 2019 I was asked to write an article for the RJC membership publication 'Resolution' (Preston, 2019a) and present a keynote at the RJC Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Annual Conference (Preston, 2019b). An announcement went out to members in their online news on 4 November and my article on restorative practices in Higher Education appeared in the RJC magazine (Restorative Justice Council, 2019) also in November. I made a keynote speech at the RJC Conference and AGM on November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019. This exposure of the research to the RJC membership resulted in several emails from practitioners who really wished to contribute to the research and complete the questionnaire. The closing date was extended and it remained open until the end of December 2019. This also addressed my own insecurities around access to 'voices' other than my own and O'Connell's linking to Anderson's (2006) ideas around the fidelity of analytic autoethnography in that it is "grounded in self-experience but reaches beyond it as well".

It was not possible to gain the numbers of members, from the total RJC membership, who have an education background. It is not therefore known how representative the sixteen completed

questionnaires are of the education-based membership. There are, however, no claims being made to the generalisability of the responses received.

The online questionnaire was created using Jisc Online Surveys (Jisc, nd). In the analysis of the responses a unique number is assigned to respondents to refer to their voice and protect their anonymity.

The questionnaire was designed to cover four broad areas that linked RJ and school exclusion (the term RP was used as this was the term recognised and used in the school setting):

- Behaviour and exclusion policies in the school setting
- How restorative practices are used in the school setting
- The process and key concepts that underpin the restorative process used
- Restorative practices and school exclusion

The responses received will be discussed in chapter 6 in relation to these broad areas and my own rationale and motivation for the questions will be included in this discussion. Where possible a breakdown of the responses will be included in table format linking the respondent to their response and to the broad area being covered in that section of the questionnaire.

#### **4.8. A restorative justice pioneer**

O'Connell's continuous mentorship for the past twenty-five years and the sharing of his own thinking and development of an explicit framework, has been key to the development and implementation of my own thinking and implementation of RJ training and practice. O'Connell has suggested that this framework underpins any definition of restorative (O'Connell, 2017a).

Collaboration with O'Connell has also been central to my own development as a restorative practitioner and researcher. His development of an explicit restorative framework as discussed in

chapter 3 (p.81), underpins this research and is therefore an important aspect of developing meaning and understanding in relation to all three of the research questions being addressed.

As identified in the literature, the theoretical concepts that underpin RJ and the associated practices and approaches, remain contentious (Gavrielides, 2008; Vaandering 2010; Llewellyn and Howse 1999) but there is very limited research since the introduction of the ideas into the UK in the late 1990s that looks at the key concepts underpinning O'Connell's model that remain consistent across contexts and how they relate to 'justice' and 'inclusion'. O'Connell is recognised within the RJ movement as the pioneer of the use of model of RJ introduced by him in Australia, the UK and North America (Liebmann, 2007; Clamp and Paterson, 2016) that continues to be used well beyond the policing context for which it was originally intended (Clamp and Paterson, 2016).

Reflections on my own 'closeness' to O'Connell's conceptual framework and its development in practice, including any unintentional bias, will also be included as important aspects of the search for a consensual agreement around the notion of restorative.

A range of data including conversations with O'Connell, joint presentations, correspondence and papers shared by him, form part of this study and have been used to develop a greater understanding around the literature and the views of others, including myself, in this study. They have also enabled reflections on the potential 'blind spot' that was highlighted early in the research around an 'insider' view of RJ. They have also helped me to gain a greater understanding of my own self-identity.

#### **4.9. Ethical considerations**

Hughes and Pennington (2017) highlight the fact that autoethnographers must consider relational ethics as a "crucial

dimension of inquiry". It is thus important not only to protect the identities of others mentioned in my studies but also to be aware of any potential breaches of anonymity or confidentiality that may occur through the sharing of my own stories and experiences, that could cause harm to others (Anonymous and Emmerich, 2019).

As Turner (2013) highlights, "auto-ethnography is a relational pursuit" and the 'pilot study experience' highlighted early on in this research that those relationships can change and lead to changing ethical obligations. Reflections on the reasons behind the withdrawal of the 'pilot study experience' school alongside the change in methodological approach highlighted aspects of relational ethics.

The purposeful inclusion of myself as well as others such as the RJ pioneer, O'Connell, raises particular questions relating to ethics which require careful consideration beyond the usual Institutional reviews required for any human or social research.

Guillemin and Gillam (2004) describe two kinds of ethics, procedural ethics and ethics in practice. Procedural ethics are of the type mandated by the academic Institutional Review Board and ethics in practice or 'situational ethics' deal with the more subtle and often unpredictable moments that come up in the field. Ellis (2007) adds a third kind of ethics which she calls 'relational ethics' which are "ethics of care". She states that a relational ethics approach:

"values mutual respect, dignity and connectedness between the researcher and the researched, and between researchers and the communities in which they live and work" (Ellis, 2007, p.4).

In relation to Institutional ethics, this research has been carried out under the auspices of the University of Northampton and ethical approval has been sought through the University Research Ethics Committee (see initial ethical approval Appendix 'H'). Changes have been referred to supervisors throughout the research process. I have



also continuously referred to The British Educational Research Association (BERA) ethical guidelines as the research has progressed. BERA state that ethical decision-making is “an actively deliberative, ongoing and iterative process of assessing and reassessing the situation and issues as they arise”. (BERA, 2018). As this research has developed into an autoethnographic study, key ethical principles especially in relation to the inclusion of my personal stories and the writings and thoughts of professionals who I have an ongoing relationship with, have been re-visited. Institutional ethical applications rarely focus on relational issues as they are often grounded on the premise that research is being ‘done’ on strangers with whom we have “no prior relationship and plan no future interaction” (Ellis, 2007).

This study weaves my own experiences into the experiences of others and the re-assessment of ethical principles continues even as I write up. Denzin (1989) states that “our primary obligation is always to the people we study, not to our project or to a larger discipline”. This key obligation mirrors the principles of preparation for any RJ process in that the main aim of a restorative process is to ensure that no harm (or further harm) is caused and that the involvement of participants is voluntary and involves their informed consent.

The Academy of Social Sciences (AcSS), after extensive consultation with members (including BERA), developed a set of five key ethical principles that they state should guide all those engaged in social science research. The last of these states that “all social science should aim to maximise benefit and minimise harm”. (AcSS, 2015).

I have remained conscious of my own interpretational ‘power’ as the writer and the potential implications for others included in my study around the presentation of their stories. Sikes (2015) states that autoethnographers “need to think very carefully about the potential for

harm when writing lives” as their written narratives have consequences for people’s lives.

An autoethnographical study needs to consider the necessity to continue to “live in the world of relationships in which research is embedded after the research is completed” (Ellis et al, 2010). I value the interpersonal ties with my participants and the organisations we continue to work with. I do not regard my research participants as impersonal ‘subjects’ only to be mined for data. It is therefore important in such a study to pay attention to not only protect the identities of others mentioned in my studies but to also ensure that my own agenda and identity does not sacrifice the credibility of my studies. (Hughes and Pennington, 2017). Other people will always be present in self-narratives. As (Chang, 2008) states:

“As you play a multi-faceted role as researcher, informant, and author, you should be reminded that your story is never made in a vacuum and others are always visible or invisible participants in your story” (p. 69).

Anonymity where not possible has been discussed in advance and written agreement has been sought from those participants who have voluntarily relinquished anonymity. All participants have been offered the opportunity to read their responses for inclusion prior to the submission of the thesis. O’Connell, whose anonymity could not be guaranteed, was consulted at the outset of the research and agreed this in writing on his consent form (Appendix ‘I’). All those who agreed to share their experiences face to face with me were asked for their permission to tape record the conversations for analysis purposes. They were informed that the recordings would only be used by me for transcription purposes and that the recordings would be held on password protected secure drives on University of Northampton systems. The same principles of withdrawal were offered in relation to the recordings as discussed with participation. All gave their

permission for the conversations to be recorded and this is confirmed at the beginning of each tape recording.

Tolich (2010) developed ten ethical guidelines for autoethnographers as a guide for research studies. The first three of these focus on informed consent which includes what Ellis (2007) calls 'process consent' or checking with participants at each stage of the research to ensure that they still wished to be part of the study. This principle has been followed throughout the research process.

The next three of the guidelines are grouped under the heading of consultation and include principles around not writing anything that would not be shown to the people in the text. The opportunity to read anything written about them was offered to all participants at the point of our conversation, in the consent and included in the introduction to the questionnaire (Appendices 'E', 'F' and 'H'). The final five guidelines are grouped under the heading of vulnerability and are underpinned by an assumption that all people mentioned in the text will read it at some point and thinking about one's own vulnerability as well as others. "No story should harm others" (Tolich, 2010).

Traditional fieldwork studies have tended to focus on entering 'the field', gathering 'data' and then leaving the field to return to professional lives. How easy this is to do in practice is questionable and certainly became a challenge within this study. The implications around developing 'friendship' with research participants were highlighted by the 'pilot study experience'. The focus of this research around the principles of RJ also guided my ethical stance in this research study to ensure that, as in any restorative process, relationships were built and maintained and great care was taken not to cause harm.

Relationships develop with participants, particularly in qualitative research and, in my opinion, are inextricably linked and need to be acknowledged. The interpersonal ties and responsibilities that researchers have to their participants is an area of growing interest in

research methodology and RJ (Ellis et al, 2010; Braithwaite and Pettit, 1990) and this has implications for all the members of a researcher's network. As Tolich (2010) states:

"any research is potentially compromised when researchers address ethical issues retrospectively rather than by anticipating these issues" (p.599).

Care has been taken at each stage of the research to minimise any potential harm to others through both the participation of others in the research process and the writing up of the thesis. Denzin (2014) states that the goal of autoethnography is "to write... texts [that] move others to ethical action". It can become a place where the researcher may not feel comfortable within their own discipline. Through this process, the autoethnographic researcher may be more able to open some challenging spaces allowing the reader to see the intentions of the researcher as author, witness or participant.

Through experiencing and writing about the discomfort of stepping outside that safe space and deconstructing their own discourse, the researcher can open the possibility to see "more of what we might ignore in both ourselves and others, asking why is it ignored, and what might we do about it?" (Dauphinee, 2010). All the actors including the self can then maybe represent professional practice more fully and bring about change and ethical action. (Denshire, 2014).

#### **4.10. Issues of validity, reliability and generalisability**

The importance of acknowledging bias through the use of a methodology that some suggest is emotive storytelling or "a self-indulgent genre" (Allen-Collinson and Hockey, 2008) might be considered to be of increased importance in an autoethnographic study and my recognition of this will be reflected in my writing through continued reference to wider literature, research and the stories of

others as well as self-reflection. This will allow the reader to make their own assessment of the validity of the arguments presented. The traditional "holy trinity" (Sparkes, 1998, 2007) of validity, reliability and generalisability are seen very differently in this methodology.

Ellis et al (2010) state that:

"autoethnographers value narrative truth based on what a story of experience does, how it is used, understood, and responded to for and by us as writers, participants, audiences and humans" (p.9).

There is a recognition that people who experienced the same event will often tell different stories about what happened. This leads to words such as reliability, validity and generalisability being viewed differently. This is particularly meaningful to my own story and the way in which I have 'remembered' the development of RJ since my introduction to O'Connell's model in 1996. The inclusion of my own stories and reflections therefore makes any bias more visible to the reader.

Reliability becomes more closely linked to the narrator's credibility and in this research study, as narrator, I have identified the need for self-reflection from the beginning. This approach has informed the study from the crafting of the research questions and throughout the study. These self-reflections will also be incorporated into the critical analysis of the 'stories' of the participants. Plummer (2001) states that:

"What matters is the way in which the story enables the reader to enter the subjective world of the teller—to see the world from her or his point of view, even if this world does not 'match reality'"(p.401).

From the viewpoint of autoethnographers validity equates to how useful the story is and how it can be used to improve the lives of others. (Ellis et al, 2010).

Generalisability in autoethnography focuses more on the readers than the study participants and asks whether the "story speaks to them about their experience or about the lives of others they know". Can the

writer and researcher illuminate unfamiliar cultural processes (Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Ellis et al, 2010).

This research study has considered the criticisms that arise from the blurring of boundaries between researcher and subject. Any interpretative practice is open to questions around whether that interpretation is credible and truthful and whether one interpretation might be more credible and truthful than another (Schwandt et al., 2007). Interpretivists would claim that every interpretation is made in the context of beliefs, practices or traditions and therefore there is always an intersubjective aspect to interpretation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

I have developed the methodology seeking verisimilitude with the aim to evoke in the reader the belief that the experiences described are believable and possible and the way in which they have been represented could be true. (Ellis et al 2010; Allen-Collinson and Hockey, 2008). The study also follows the approaches relating to authenticity and trustworthiness developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The language that they use is aligned with assumptions that see "interpretations as socially constructed undertakings with significant implications for the ways in which we inevitably use those interpretations." The focus is on making sense of or understanding one another and acting with confidence on those understandings. They use a language of fairness, ontological authenticity and educative authenticity which align with both the research focus and my own beliefs and assumptions. (Schwandt et al., 2007).

#### **4.11. Summary**

In this chapter I have provided the epistemological and ontological assumptions that underpin the way in which this research has been conducted to address and seek answers to the research questions.

The rationale behind the development of an autoethnographic approach has been explained from the outcomes of a 'pilot study experience' and my own reflections on the reasons for participant withdrawal. My own 'closeness' to the field of study and the unconscious bias of this position has been acknowledged in advance and highlighted as a potential ethical consideration.

The methods employed for the identification of participants and the collection of their stories have been discussed. The methodological decisions taken argue for a way in which the stories I collect from others might be compared with my own stories to provide multiple perspectives and allow the reader to come to their own conclusions about the trustworthiness and integrity of the findings and their relevance and usefulness to the implementation of positive change.

The next chapter will discuss the way in which these 'findings' will be analysed to address the research questions and communicate the contributions being made to the field through this research study.

## **CHAPTER 5: FRAMEWORKS FOR ANALYSIS**

### **5.1. Introduction**

Chapters 1 to 4 of this thesis outlined the rationale behind the development of the research questions with a focus on adult involvement in relational approaches to school exclusion. My own narrative and involvement with a pioneer of one such approach known as 'restorative justice' influenced the development of the methodology towards an emerging postmodern philosophy described as autoethnography (Wall, 2008). Through self-reflection and a critical analysis of self and the literature, I identified the learning that had come from my own 'closeness' to the development and introduction of RJ practice in England, UK, in the fields of criminal justice and education. This cross disciplinary approach to RJ has been influenced by my practitioner and researcher roles as police officer and teacher for the last thirty years. The self-reflections influenced and impacted on the methodology choices and the underpinning paradigm that has guided my actions towards autoethnography, as the research developed.

With the foundations of autoethnography in the lived experiences of self and others, Rodriguez et al (2017) describe the "messiness and pain" of finding one's phenomenon of interest and linking it to the research questions. The second part of this thesis will focus on finding and highlighting the 'phenomenon of interest' and how the findings have led to a greater understanding of adult involvement in school exclusion, RJ and relational practice.

This part of the thesis begins with the rationale for the way in which the 'findings' have been analysed in relation to the research questions and the self-reflections that have accompanied the research process that help to explain why the analysis has been perceived by the author as uncomfortable.



The qualitative research methods associated with autoethnography have been used in this research to explicate my own role in relation to the research participants and to use self-reflection to support and challenge what might be considered to be 'taken for granted knowledge' in the field of RJ (Milner, 2003). My own subjectivity, emotionality and influence is included to contribute to a greater understanding of the complexities of the school exclusion process and add to the knowledge base within the fields of education and RJ.

Personal experience (auto) alongside the experiences of others (ethno) of RJ and school exclusion will be interwoven to provide a systematic analysis (graphy) and interpretation of the stories we tell and the implications for future practice. The intention is to offer insights that will improve outcomes for CYP. This analysis includes consideration of my own potential complicity in the problem that I am addressing and as such will involve revisiting the literature and the interpretations of RJ outlined in Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis.

As discussed in chapter 4 (p.114), the communication of these 'findings' has been done in a way to make my research decisions visible and allow the reader to gain and appreciate what is going on in the social and cultural setting that has been identified for this research study. This provides an opportunity for others to draw from these findings some of what might have been (unintentionally) ignored or overlooked in a more traditional thematic process of analysis. The intention is to write a text that provides evidence to "move others to ethical action" (Denzin, 2014).

My own experiences within the RJ movement and as a practitioner in criminal justice and education are shared in reflexive and dyadic conversations with the participants in this study. This personal reflection is included to "add context and layers to the story being told by participants" (Ellis, 2004).

The methodological tools of autoethnography are used alongside the literature and personal experiences to open a wider lens on RJ, school exclusion and the world in which I have lived and worked for thirty years. The framework and structure used will be discussed in more detail.

## **5.2. Assemblage and autoethnography**

Unlike evocative autoethnography, which seeks “narrative fidelity only in the researcher’s subjective experience” Anderson (2006), this study sought to provide analysis beyond the self and to be a relational activity. The idea of ‘assemblage’ is one approach to analysis in autoethnography where researchers consider purposefully how they might “expose gaps, inconsistencies and associations when they compare the stories of others to the stories they tell themselves” (Gurin and Nagda, 2006). When this is translated into methodology it involves the gathering of a collection of evidence including literature “that fit together to provide multiple perspectives and rich multi-layered accounts of a particular time, place or moment in the life of the autoethnographer” (Hughes and Pennington, 2017). The starting point for this ‘assemblage’ in relation to the ‘particular time and place’ that link to my own career and my introduction to RJ is therefore important to help explain the accounts that form part of this study and the purpose behind their inclusion and how they link back to the literature and my career path. Although autoethnographic methods include many types of ‘qualitative methods’ such as interviews, participant observation, document and artefact analysis and research diaries (Wall, 2008) the degree to which the self is centred in the studies varies widely and the location of meaningful, personalised central questions are sometimes difficult to locate (Hughes and Pennington, 2017).

My philosophical approach to working in a way that puts dialogue and relationships (including my own) at the forefront of everything I do has therefore shaped and influenced my approach to gathering data in this study. Milner (2003) suggests that reflection alone is insufficient but “conversely a reflexive complicit lens challenges an author to question taken-for-granted knowledge”.

I have sought to gather narratives around school exclusion through questionnaire feedback and conversations from and with adults in the education system who are most commonly involved with the young people at risk of exclusion. The narrative conversations align with a type of autoethnography described as community autoethnography in which the interviews are interactive (Ellis et al, 2010). I have used my personal experiences as a restorative practitioner, teacher and SENCo to facilitate community building research practices that facilitate opportunities to develop cultural and social understanding beyond the remit of this specific study.

I have also engaged in a more focussed process of self-reflection through conversations with the one person (Terry O’Connell) who has had the greatest influence on my thinking around RJ practices. This will provide a greater understanding of the development of my own thinking around the theoretical framework that I have used in my own RJ practice as well as the relevance of this thinking to broader concepts and constructs in the field. These conversations will involve much more of my ‘self’ and as such, align more closely to the type of autoethnography described as an interactive interview that looks at the development of the relational experience and learning between O’Connell and I around a RJ framework (Adams, 2008; Ellis et al, 2010). This type of autoethnography is intended to provide a way to reflect on research relationships that cross boundaries into more personal spaces such as friendships (Cann and DeMeulenaere, 2012).

### **5.3. Community autoethnography**

The narrative conversations gathered through the research process are interactive. The methods and methodology sit within the interpretivist and transformative methodological traditions that hold up the importance of social justice and the 'lived experiences' of those who have shared their stories around RJ and school exclusion (Mertens and Hesse-Biber, 2012).

As a relatively new methodological approach, autoethnography addresses social complexity by moving away from distinctions between micro-level analysis (based on the individual) and macro-level analysis (based on society as a whole). The use of such a methodological approach leads to what Rodriguez et al (2017) suggest is a "heavy burden of proof on the part of the researcher". The need for the analysis to be systematic becomes more challenging as the 'messiness' of self-critique sits alongside the stories of others and a re-storying of my own understanding of experiences.

As Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) state, "the aim of self-study research is to provoke, challenge, and illuminate rather than confirm and settle". Their studies into teaching and teacher education suggest that the inclusion of 'the self' should be approached from multiple levels of that lifelong educational experience and with a reflexive lens. They state that the endurability of self-study is grounded in the trustworthiness and meaningfulness of the findings both for informing practice and for moving the research conversation forward (Bullough and Pinnegar, 2001).

Questions of validity, voice, values and textual representation in the autoethnographic paradigm have been raised as issues (Lincoln and Guba, 2000; Schnelker, 2006) and continue to be controversial. A systematic and legitimate method of analysing these narratives is

needed to address these questions and achieve these aims in this research and the practice it will help to inform.

Denshire and Lee (2013) argue that there is a danger of highlighting or emphasising personal over broader social and cultural accounts in autoethnographic writing and that this is addressed in the methodology by key features that are associated with the 'analytical' tradition of autoethnography (Denshire and Lee, 2013; Anderson, 2006; Chang, 2008).

#### **5.4. Analysis and legitimisation**

Traditionally, researchers have ensured the value of their work by following research traditions and methods common to their field of study (Hughes and Pennington, 2017). Autoethnographers who diverge from some of those traditions need to be able to legitimise their work in the same way. What is my claim to 'insider' knowledge and what right do I have to represent the views of others? (Hughes and Pennington, 2017; Dwyer and Buckle, 2009).

I have addressed these potential criticisms by seeking to highlight to the reader, my own subjectivity, interpretations and personal influence on the research throughout. When analysing the accounts of others, I have made it as clear as possible to the reader the distinction between the words of others and my own interpretation of those stories and accounts. This follows a more structured and analytical approach (rather than emotive and evocative) in autoethnographic methodology (Anderson, 2006). 'Rigor' and 'reflexivity' are key concepts that have been developed in autoethnography to contribute to legitimising the research (Anderson, 2006). Reflexivity is demonstrated through an in-depth awareness of the reciprocal influence between myself and the research participants and a desire to better understand myself and others through an analysis of my dialogue with the participants in this research (Anderson, 2006). This reflexivity is seen as contributing to

the rigor and thus legitimisation of autoethnographic research (Anderson, 2006; Hughes and Pennington, 2017; Holman Jones et al, 2013). This also accords with Toews & Zehr's (2003) view of the researcher as "facilitator, collaborator, learner more than neutral expert". They call this transformative inquiry where process is valued as much as product.

This self-conceptualised world-view will be made visible through the analysis and interpretation of the accounts gathered for this research using an approach that could be said to be at the more analytic point on a spectrum (analytical to emotive) if you were to look at autoethnography in that way.

Anderson (2006) highlights that much of the literature around the theoretical underpinnings of the autoethnographic paradigm focuses on the importance of "evocative or emotional autoethnography". He suggests that this may eclipse approaches to autoethnography that fit with some of the more established traditions of social inquiry rooted in symbolic interactionism and postmodern ethnography. He distinguishes 'analytic autoethnography' as a subgenre of autoethnography and proposes five key features:

1. "Complete member researcher (CMR) status
2. Analytic reflexivity
3. Narrative visibility of the researcher's self
4. Dialogue with informants beyond the self
5. Commitment to theoretical analysis" (Anderson, 2006, p.378).

Anderson suggests that the purpose of a more analytic approach to this autoethnography, is to document my personal experience or 'insider's' perspective alongside the accounts of one of the pioneers of RJ practice and the accounts of adults involved in the area of focus for this thesis – school exclusion. This thesis includes the accounts, attitudes and feelings of others to broaden social understanding as well as enrich my self-understanding and the wider fields of education and RJ.

This is not however to ignore the more personal, self-reflective aspects of 'evocative autoethnography' (Ellis 1997) which will be applied intentionally to my own position as author of this thesis. I remain the storyteller at the intersection between the personal and social worlds, but not the "the focus" of the story:

"I am the one who tells and the one who experiences, the observer and the observed.... I am the person at the intersection of the personal and the cultural, thinking and observing as an ethnographer and writing and describing as a storyteller" (Ellis, 2009, p.5).

The way in which the accounts will be presented to address the research questions will incorporate some of the key features of 'assemblage' identified by Anderson (2006) and others (Marcus and Saka, 2003; Denshire and Lee, 2013; Rodriguez et al, 2017) and the reflexive process of 'sensemaking' identified in autoethnography by Boylorn and Orbe, (2013) and other communication scholars since the 1970s (Weick 1995; Weick et al, 2005; Dervin and Naumer, 2009).

These key frameworks for analysis will provide the conceptual scaffold for the research material and experiences. Through the sharing of accounts, stories and self-reflections, I intend to build a more systematic analytical approach to the findings, including the reflections on my own involvement in the research.

Assemblage and sensemaking are not the only terms in use in theoretical work on ethnography and autoethnography (Denshire and Lee, 2013; Markus and Saka, 2006; Schnelker, 2006) and other terms such as collage (co-locating objects) and bricolage (using found objects) also offer what Markus and Saka (2006) suggest is "hope of a working access to the difficult and elusive objects".

The scaffold for this research is intended to allow for what Markus and Saka (2006) describe as:

"an evocation of emergence and heterogeneity amid the data of inquiry, in relation to other concepts and constructs,

without rigidifying into the thingness of final or stable states that besets the working terms of classic social theory” (p.106).

This will allow for the critical analysis of the accounts collected to be juxtaposed with my own accounts, experiences and reflections of RJ and school exclusion.

## **5.5. Assemblage as systematic analysis**

The concept of assemblage in autoethnography (Denshire and Lee, 2013; Gurin and Nagda, 2006; Hughes and Pennington, 2017) is argued to complement and extend analysis by:

“destabilizing the distinction between the individual and the social and by foregrounding complexity, heterogeneity, and materiality” (Denshire & Lee, p. 233).

This process is used in autoethnography to address issues of ‘reader confidence’ in the research which have more traditionally been addressed in the social sciences by the process of triangulation (Merten and Hesse-Biber, 2012a). Triangulation is said to put the evidence gathered into a more comprehensive explanatory framework. It develops reader confidence in the credibility of the researcher’s interpretations and arguments and that the research has been conducted systematically.

The ideas of triangulation were originally used as measurement techniques by surveyors to “locate an object in space by relying on two known points in order to ‘triangulate’ on an unknown fixed point in that same space” (Merten and Hesse-Biber, 2012a). They were ‘borrowed’ by social scientists to use in the validation process. Assemblage is said to rival triangulation as a promising innovation for autoethnography by providing the opportunity to juxtapose multiple accounts about a particular phenomenon of interest related to the research questions (Rodriquez et al, 2017). The analysis of the findings from this research will be linked through a personal story, in chapter 7, that provides the



reader with the time and the place that I found myself in, when the research questions were first drafted.

In the following chapters, analysis of these accounts will be presented to provide a multi-layered perspective of the key concepts of RJ in the context of school exclusion. The intention is to produce a “material, conceptual, relational, and affective landscape of practice and experience” (Denshire and Lee, 2013).

## **5.6. A framework for ‘sensemaking’**

‘Sensemaking’ has been used as a theoretical framework by autoethnographers and researchers seeking to understand human behaviour in various contexts (Dervin and Naumer, 2009).

‘Sensemaking’ is defined as the process of,

“turning circumstances into a situation that is comprehended explicitly in words and that serves as a springboard into action” (Weick et al., 2005, p.409).

Whilst ‘sensemaking’ is seen as a cyclical evolution of experience, observations, interpretation, evaluation and action, they characterise three key stages that lead to “ecological change”. (Weick et al, 2005).

These are broken down into three key stages by Boylorn and Orbe (2013). The first is enactment which occurs when “individual expectations of social life in a particular environment are violated and individuals seek to enact sense back into the world in which they live”.

Selection represents the second stage of ‘sensemaking’ when an individual will generate an interpretation, often represented in the form of a narrative, of the “violation”. This involves “intrapersonal cognitive processing, separate from and related to extracted cues from the environment.”

Retention is the final stage which is,

“directly related to attempts to reduce uncertainty and create acceptable meaning of the event that triggered the

enactment stage. The goal is the creation of plausible interpretations that become part of one's identity" (p.190).

I identified these three stages of 'sensemaking' in my analysis of the findings although, as discussed further in chapter 6 (p.130), the process was difficult to apply systematically to all stages of my analysis. Initially, in relation to these three stages of 'sensemaking', I identified the school exclusion process as the 'problem', where 'individual expectations of social life in a particular environment are 'violated'. I gathered the narratives of others and included my own narrative to make sense of what was happening in this context and how one framework of RJ might help to make sense of how adults deal with that 'problem'.

## **5.7. Summary**

In the chapters that follow (chapters 6,7,8,9 & 10), I discuss and interpret the responses to my questionnaire and the narratives to create meaning around the RJ framework in the school exclusion context and to answer each of the research questions. I also apply this process to my own identity and how these findings can link to "ecological change" for the futures of young people (Weick et al, 2005) through the stages of 'sensemaking'. I reflect on the challenges of reflecting on questionnaire responses with the associated 'distance' from participants that this entails.

Wall (2008) states that "autoethnography begins with a personal story". Personal narratives can help to address some of the key theoretical debates around macro and micro linkages and their impact on sociological understanding and social change. This thesis began with personal stories of my own career and the epiphanies that came to influence my own practice and the evolution of this research study and the research questions. My own personal influence and motivations were revealed (to me) at a specific stage of the research process and

my own development as a researcher. This 'epiphany' or 'revelation' occurred at a point, which in the more traditional research process, would link to my own expectations that I should be 'gathering fieldwork data'. The experiences in this study, linked to previous emotive fieldwork experiences in postgraduate studies (Preston, 1997), changed the direction of my philosophical thinking around the research and the way in which it has been carried out.

The chapters that follow (chapters 6, 7 and 8) address each of the research questions in turn. Chapter 6 presents the findings from RJ practitioners that link to the first research question around what RJ means to practitioners involved in the school exclusion process in England and Wales. Their views from the questionnaire sent out through the RJC are discussed in relation to the key concepts that underpin their practice and also in relation to some of the difficulties associated with analysing these through the autoethnographic processes of assemblage and sensemaking.

Chapter 7 presents the stories of school exclusion from the accounts of a parent, headteacher and SENCo. The chapter begins with a personal story to explain how my own interpretation of an 'insider' influence on potential research participants, led to a rethink on the methodological approach to be taken in this research study. This change of direction, acknowledging the inclusion of myself, then becomes an integral part of the questions I ask of participants and my critical reflection of the accounts that were offered.

Chapter 8 presents the findings from a conversation with a pioneer of RJ reflecting on his journey of understanding around RJ and a framework for practice. This chapter is also intrinsically linked to my own story and these reflections are presented in both the questions asked and my own reflections on O'Connell's responses.

## **CHAPTER 6: ACCOUNTS OF RJ PRACTITIONERS**

### **6.1. Introduction**

The decision to distribute a questionnaire about RJ resulted from the insecurity around fieldwork experienced when permission was withdrawn by the 'pilot study' school. The study was at that point not consciously an autoethnography and I was keen to ensure that I had participants who could provide me with the 'data' to answer my research questions. In hindsight, the decision to access practitioners through a familiar network within which in Anderson's framework for analytic autoethnography, I had complete member researcher status (Anderson, 2006) was one that provided a greater likelihood of success.

The questionnaire was sent specifically to members of the UK national membership organisation for RJ – the RJC. The questions asked of these RJ practitioners, link to the first research question which sought to understand what RJ means to these practitioners specifically in the school exclusion process. The intention was to also help provide the context for the accounts gathered from adults involved in the school exclusion process who did not necessarily know anything about restorative 'justice' or restorative 'practice'.

I received several emails from those involved in criminal justice and community and family work who were interested in the research and highlighted the importance of the crossovers between the sectors especially in relation to school exclusion. This resulted in some ongoing conversations, but these individuals did not complete the questionnaires. The term 'restorative practices' was used in the questionnaire as this is more widely used in the field of education.

As discussed in chapter 4 (p.102), a unique number for each respondent will be prefixed by 'R' for respondent. The online survey

software provided different reference numbers to the respondents for each section of the questionnaire and therefore it is not possible to link all responses to a respondent from start to finish. The responses will be linked to the broad areas covered by the questionnaire (see chapter 4 p.108) starting with information about the respondents and their educational experience and then moving to the four broad areas:

- Behaviour and exclusion policies in the school setting
- How restorative practices are used in the school setting
- The process and key concepts that underpin the restorative process used
- Restorative practices and school exclusion

The responses to the questionnaire are intended to support and contextualise the accounts of myself and others. The questionnaire respondents are distinguished from those who give their accounts in chapters 7 and 8, because all but two of the respondents can be identified as *educators* with training in RJ and practices and *all respondents* worked within settings that are members of the RJC thus suggesting that they or the organisation they were working for when they completed the questionnaire has an interest in these practices. Through an anonymous questionnaire, these respondents are also distinguished from others as there was no opportunity for 'relationship' between researcher and researched.

The first stage of the 'sensemaking' process of analysis (discussed in ch.5 p.127) is 'enactment'. In the questionnaire, enactment occurs through the recognition of a breakdown in the social norms that lead to school exclusion. The adult responses to this 'violation' of acceptable behaviours within the school setting were identified as the issues to address and understand. The introduction section of the questionnaire stated that the overall research study sought to gain a greater understanding of how restorative 'practices' might help school staff and parents/carers understand the reasons behind the behaviours that put certain CYP at risk of being excluded from the school setting.

The questionnaire was designed to address the next two stages of the 'sensemaking' process (selection and retention) by seeking responses from the participants that would help to interpret these behavioural 'violations' and create acceptable meaning and a plausible interpretation of what is happening and how the 'violation' might effectively be addressed.

This framework for 'sensemaking' proved difficult to apply from the outset. I identified that the cyclical evolution of experience, observations, interpretation and evaluation (Weick et al, 2005) could not be applied to each set of accounts in isolation and required a thread of commentary throughout to build and develop the interpretations and the meanings from both myself and the participants in this research. The intention is to still follow the broad principles that Weick et al. (2005) describe when they state that:

"sensemaking can be treated as reciprocal exchanges between actors (Enactment) and their environments (Ecological Change) that are made meaningful (Selection) and preserved (Retention)" (p. 414).

As one of these 'actors', my own scrutiny of the responses and stories therefore begins from this point forward and is interwoven into the remainder of this thesis through commentary and my own reflections on the accounts given, the questions asked, the stories told and my own relationship with the participants. This becomes the process of 'sensemaking' that allows the reader to make their own judgements as to the validity and relevance of these interpretations to furthering our understanding of RJ and relational approaches to improve outcomes for CYP at risk from school exclusion. Chapter 9 (p.234 of this thesis) provides final reflections and interpretations that support the retention of these new meanings and their preservation for use by practitioners and participants in RJ processes in the future.

## 6.2. Respondents and educational settings

The first section of the questionnaire provides an overview of the background and experience of the respondents including their experience of RJ and its use in the school setting.

The following Table (Table 3) provides an overview of the questions, responses and the respondents in relation to the settings they work in and their educational background and roles. Where possible their unique R. number is included.

**Table 3 - Respondents - their educational settings and experience**

Question	Response	Respondent Reference Number (R)	Number of Respondents
Area of UK you work in	England	1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 12; 13; 14; 15	
	Wales	16	
Gender	Male		4
	Female		11
	No response		1
Time as practitioner in Education	1 year or less		0
	1-5 years		1
	6-10 years		1
	More than 10 years		14
When did you qualify to become a teacher	In last 5 years		0
	6-15 years ago		4
	More than 15 years ago		7
	Not a qualified teacher		4
	Other	6	1 - Psychologist/RP practitioner
	Yes		12

Currently working in school setting	No	6 – work in school setting and in the community	3
What type of school do you currently work in? Tick all that apply	Maintained or State School		8
	Academy		4
	Independent or fee-paying school		1
	Special school		3
	Other	8	1 - Pupil referral unit
What is the age range of the school you currently work in?	Early years		0
	4-11 (UK Primary)		7
	11-18 (UK Secondary)		4
	4-18 ('right through)		1
	Other	15	1 - 11-16 years
What is your primary role in the school	Teacher		1
	Headteacher/Principal		7
	SENCo/Inclusion Manager		0
	Behaviour Manager		2
	Other	6;  7;  8;  9;	RP facilitator and crisis intervention  Head of student pastoral support Pastoral  Peer mediation trainer
How much formal training have you received in restorative practices (estimate total in days)	Less than a day		2
	1-3 days		2
	4-7 days		3
	More than 7 days		9
	None		0



There were thirteen respondents who stated that they currently work in school settings and eleven of these stated that their current school used restorative practices. Of the remaining two one stated that their school would be implementing it in the next six months and stated that they had “visited another school that does and read Paul Dix’s book ‘When the adults change, everything changes’ ”(R.11 see Dix, 2017).

Fourteen of the sixteen respondents (who were either working *in* schools or *with* schools) had received formal training in restorative practices and nine of these had received more than seven days of formal training.

### 6.3. Exclusion policies in the school setting

As the segue into school exclusion, there were several questions asked about school policies relating to behaviour and exclusion. Table 4 summarises these responses and shows the different respondent codes associated with this section.

**Table 4 – Behaviour and exclusion policies in the school setting**

Question	Response	Respondent Reference Number (R)	Number of Respondents
Does the school you currently work in have a behaviour policy	Yes		13
	No		0
If yes, does this policy refer to restorative practices	Yes	1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 12; 8	8
	No	9; 10; 11	3
Does the school you currently work in have a policy for exclusion	Yes		9
	No	7	3 1 - Exclusions are referred to in our behaviour policy

If yes, does this policy refer to restorative practices	Yes	4; 13;	
	No	9; 10; 1; 16; 6; 12; 8	

Thirteen of the respondents, (those working *in* a school setting), responded to the questions about behaviour and exclusion policies in their schools. All of them stated that their setting had a behaviour policy in place. Eight of the thirteen respondents stated that their behaviour policy referred to RP and a further two stated that they were transitioning to include RP in their policy once they had received training. One respondent added more detail about their policy stating: "Our policy is titled; A Restorative School: Our Behaviour Policy and Guidance for Enhancing Community Relationships and Learning" (R13).

Nine of the thirteen respondents had a separate exclusion policy and of these, six stated that RP was referred to in this policy. A further respondent stated that RP was not currently referred to in an exclusion policy - "we rarely exclude though as have worked restoratively for a while at SLT [Senior Leadership Team] level" (R.10).

This question in the questionnaire, highlighted the difficulty of linking comments back to specific respondents. Their unique respondent numbers were only included by the online software programme, when there was an open-ended question allowing for comment. It was, therefore, not possible to analyse any differences between respondents who did or did not have behaviour/exclusion policies.

The sample is very small, and it is not the intention to make any generalisations from these findings. They provide a 'snapshot' of restorative practitioner's views on RJ in the school exclusion process.

## 6.4. Use of restorative practices in the school setting

Respondents were asked to talk about how RP has been used in the school setting from their own experiences. They could select as many responses as applied and the responses are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5 – Use of RP in the school setting**

To deal with conflict and harm	<b>16</b> (100%)
To deal with specific issues e.g. bullying, behaviour etc.	<b>15</b> (93.8%)
To build relationships e.g. circles	<b>12</b> (75%)
As a whole school approach	<b>12</b> (75%)
Other	<b>2</b> (12.5%)

Those who specified 'other' stated that RP was used to "teach conflict resolution skills" (R.2) and "to develop empathy and understanding of and for students that are finding 'things' challenging" (R.7).

There were fifteen responses to the question regarding how RP *should* be used in the school setting. Several respondents specifically mentioned the importance of RP for developing communication skills and looking at all behaviour as communication (R.2; R.6; R.8; R.11; R.13). These ideas are linked into the need for involving everyone and summarised in the following quotes:

"I think that they (RP) should be used across the whole school consistently to deal with all situations involving conflict so that everyone's voice can be heard" (R.11).

"By using the Restorative Approach, it allows ALL parties to have their say AND be listened to" (R.13 – respondent's use

of upper case for ALL and suggesting an emphasis on these words).

There was also consistent mention of RP as a “way of being” (R.12) and the development of a culture and ethos underpinned by a focus on relationship building skills (R. 14, 4, 6, 5, 16, 10, 9, 13,14). These responses referred to the whole school/all the community and are exemplified in the following quotes when answering the question ‘please explain how you believe that restorative practices should be used in the school setting?’

“To encourage understanding and support for all the community, to help students acquire the skills to use these practices in the wider community and into their adult lives. To create a safe and supportive environment with high levels of respect and accountability” (R.7).

“To support an ethos of inclusion, support and understanding, and so that children can take responsibility for their own choices, and the impact of this on others” (R.14).

When those who currently work in a school setting were asked about who was involved or given the opportunity to be involved in restorative processes, a range of options were provided with the opportunity to add others not covered in the options provided. They were again asked to tick *all* that applied. The responses are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6 - Who is involved in restorative processes**

Teaching staff	<b>11</b> (68.8%)
Pupils	<b>11</b> (68.8%)
All staff	<b>13</b> (81.3%)
Parents/Carers	<b>7</b> (43.8%)
Wider school community e.g. Governors/Board members, outside agencies etc.	<b>9</b> (56.3%)
Other	Local Authority Local Church

Although there is no detailed breakdown of this information, it appears that a greater percentage of respondents use the approaches *within* the school and there were smaller numbers who engaged parents and carers in the processes. As mentioned on p.136, such small numbers of responses cannot be said to be statistically significant, but this feedback did suggest that the 'community' and 'whole-school' mentioned in other responses was less likely to involve the wider community around the child or young person at the centre of these processes.

The next section of the questionnaire focused specifically on the process and core concepts that respondents used to underpin their practice. No particular process or training model was alluded to in the questionnaire to avoid influencing the respondents in relation to any one model of practice. There was a specific question that asked, 'do you use a series of restorative questions in your practice?'.

This was included because the quality of the 'facilitation' of RJ 'conferences' in the evaluation of the Thames Valley cautioning project (Hoyle et al, 2002) had highlighted that more positive outcomes for participants were linked to use of the restorative conferencing 'script':

"Whilst flexibility is certainly needed in the use of the script, the empirical evidence strongly suggests that facilitators who keep within the parameters it establishes for their role will achieve the better outcomes, particularly if they prepare the participants properly in advance of the session" (p.59-60).

This had been further supported by my own research around standards and accreditation in RJ (Preston, 2008). These evaluations had identified that the core values that underpinned the restorative questions developed by O'Connell in 1991, remained key elements of all training programmes that were accredited by the RJC and linked to their standards and best practice guidance (RJC, 2011). Since the evaluation of the TVP model of police cautioning (Hoyle et al, 2002), the 'script' and the RJ questions had been interpreted in different ways

in practice. This applied particularly in relation to training organisations and trainers working in different contexts in the UK (Hopkins, 2016; Gavrielides 2008; Miers et al, 2001; Braithwaite, 2002).

The focus of the questionnaire was on school exclusion in an education system covered by a political jurisdiction that operates in England in relation to curriculum and policies. The questionnaire responses were all from educators in England (bar one from Wales). The geographic location of the respondents is only considered relevant to these findings in relation to the political structures and processes that impact on the schools in England, within which these practitioners work. The relevance of the English school system links to a much broader philosophical approach to managing what is considered 'challenging behaviour' of CYP in the school setting.

## **6.5. Processes and key concepts**

The first question linked to this broad area looking at the key concepts and 'questions' underpinning restorative processes. Respondents were asked whether they used a series of restorative questions in their practice.

All sixteen responded and fifteen said that they did use a series of questions in their practice. The one who answered no, stated that they were "not yet consistent but we have started" (R.11). The rationale behind this question was to gain a better understanding as to whether the questions developed by O'Connell originally for use in a criminal justice context, (O'Connell, 1998) were commonly used by RJ practitioners in the education system. As stated, the numbers are small and therefore not representative of the wider population of restorative practitioners in education. There were, however, some general patterns which are relevant to this study around the use of a common set of questions which O'Connell developed into an explicit framework (O'Connell, 2015) for application in a range of different contexts. I was

interested to know whether the respondents underpinned these questions with a set of core concepts or values.

The full responses relating to the 'restorative questions' can be seen at Appendix 'K'. Of the fifteen respondents who gave details of the questions they used, one respondent just stated, "I use all the RP questions" (R.6) so this response could not be analysed further.

All fourteen of the remaining respondents used the question 'What happened?', or a very close variation of this, at the start. This initial question was followed by questions relating to thoughts and feelings characterised by "What were you thinking? (then and now). What were you feeling? (then and now)" (R.4). They all included a question that related to who had been affected and how they had been affected, exemplified by the following response: "Who has been affected? And how? Who else?" (R.5). There were then a range of questions that looked to the future such as:

"What do you need now so you can move on? How can we address everyone's needs together?" (R.2)

"What else could you have done differently? What would you do next time? what needs to happen now?" (R.3)

"What was the hardest thing for you? What can you do to help put things right?" (R.5)

"What is the right and fair thing to do?" (R.8)

"what's needed to make things right? what have we learned from this?" (R.10)

These fourteen responses all followed O'Connell's (1998; 2005) basic framework of a chronological exploration of the incident, issue or conflict. They began with the past - 'what happened', moving on to the present - 'what are your thoughts now' and concluded with questions about the future - 'what needs to happen to put things right'. They all involved an opportunity to share thoughts and feelings and the questions were the same for all participants.

The next section of the questionnaire sought to explore the respondents understanding or interpretation of what core principles were important in relation to the restorative questions used in their practice. Respondents were asked, 'if you use a series of questions, what core principles underpin the questions to make them 'restorative' in your opinion?'

There were thirteen responses to this question which I have grouped under seven broad headings. These headings, using the autoethnographic approach to trustworthiness as discussed in Chapter 4 (p.116), highlight my own interpretation of the responses and the use of my experience, knowledge and the literature to provide a descriptive heading for the 'core principles' the respondents are describing. The quotes provide key examples of each broad category (responses in full at Appendix 'L'):

### **Responsibility and accountability**

"The sharing of responsibility" (R. 4).

"They are managing their own behaviour and how this might be in the future" (R.12).

### **Core inter/intrapersonal values and emotions**

"worth (each person has equal worth)

\*koinonia

compassion

empathy

forgiveness" (R.2)

\*Author's note: koinonia is a translation from the Greek meaning communion or fellowship, joint participation

"developing empathy" (R.3)

### **Non-judgmental/unbiased/inclusive approach**



"Inclusive, equal, unbiased, non-judgemental and open" (R.16).

"No blame, no focus on sanctions" (R.7).

### **Building relationships**

"They are focused on repairing and building relationships" (R.12).

"The emphasis is not managing behaviour but focusing on building, nurturing and repairing relationships" (R.13).

### **Repairing harm and making things better**

"Children need to know conflict happens and learn to resolve it well" (R.2).

"consideration of what actions need to be taken to make the situation" (R.7).

"Repair the harm" (R. 8).

"all involved are harmed in some way, we can make things right" (R.10).

### **Participant voice and communication**

"Behaviour is communication and we need to know what is being communicated and teach children appropriate ways to communicate well and express emotion - this is a journey" (R.2).

"The questions give the person a voice - have their say" (R.12).

"Allowing those involved to articulate what happened and its impact to themselves and others involved" (R.6).

### **Neuroscience and social and emotional learning**

"The questions are sequentially promoting left /right brain balance. Emotional then logical" (R.12).

"awareness of feelings and emotions of self and others, developing empathy" (R.7).

The questionnaire continued to explore the key concepts of the restorative process from the respondent's perspectives and looked at

what they believed were the key elements of a restorative process that make it an effective approach to use in schools. The responses built on the core concepts that had been highlighted in the previous questions and some further rationale and explanation was offered as to why these “key elements” make a difference.

The full range of responses from thirteen respondents can be seen at Appendix ‘M’. The central theme was relationships, and this was captured in the response from R.12 who stated:

“Relationships, Relationships, Relationships! It strengthens the relationships in the school and the school community”.

There was also a development of the link between relationships and the development of a range of skills that linked to the concepts of fair process and the social discipline window in O’Connell’s framework (see p.81) linked to working ‘with’ others rather than doing things ‘to’ or ‘for’ them and also the engagement, explanation and expectation clarity principles from Kim Chan, and Mauborgne’s (2003) model of fair process.

Thus R.9 stated “fairness, listening, positive communication” and R.11 said, “listening and also having clear consequences that are shared, consistent and driven by the people involved in the incident” and R.2 said that “staff must not judge must listen well, must not problem solve for the children, culture needs to come from the leadership team and be modelled all the time”.

Relationship building work was also seen by the respondents as important in character building and identity formation. Thus R.3 stated, “in terms of relationship building and solution focussed work it is key in character development, citizenship, critical thinking and building a community” and R.4 stated that “the contribution to social & emotional learning and the development of shared accessible everyday ethics” were key elements of the restorative process that make it effective.

The final area covered in this section focused on any instances in the school setting when the respondents felt that RP should not be used and if so why. Training of all those using the practice was mentioned by many of the respondents and this was linked to whether it should be used in practice. As R.3 stated,

“I can see no reason not to use it I think it is most effective where it is whole school, this requires time, training, commitment, buy-in and recognising there will always be doubters”.

Several respondents highlighted the importance of voluntary involvement. As R.4 stated, “RP must be voluntary, and adults have a responsibility to ensure processes are safe”. This was linked to potential for making things worse rather than better if participants were not participating of their own free will. As R.7 stated, the process should not be used,

“where the students are not ready, where bringing people together makes the situation worse. If there is risk fear or danger to the safety of any party involved”.

There were three specific situations mentioned when respondents felt it should not be used. R.2 said it should not be used when,

“a child is experiencing/ recently experienced major trauma and cannot regulate at this point in time and cannot accept responsibility for their actions or make changes at this point in time”.

The other two were just listed – “bullying” (R.9) and “domestic abuse situations” (R.8) but the reasons behind these views were not included in the responses.

The importance of timing and preparation was mentioned by several respondents. R.15 stated that RP might be inappropriate in “the heat of the moment” but that it was still possible to use the processes when the participants were more able to reflect.

R.10 suggested that RP “can always be used in the end but sometimes we need to wait until the time is right for all”. This respondent when asked about core principles that underpin the questions had stated that “all involved are harmed in some way, we can make things right”.

## 6.6. Restorative practices and school exclusion

The final section of the questionnaire explored RP and school exclusion. Table 7 provides an overview of responses to questions about school exclusion. The more detailed explanations are discussed further after this overview.

**Table 7 – RP and school exclusion**

Question	Response	Respondent Reference Number (R)	Number of Respondents
Does your school exclude children <b>permanently</b> ? Please describe the reality of this (even if it is a last resort) and explain the process that would be followed	Yes (even if very rare/last resort)	2; 3; 1; 4; 5; 12; 8	7
	No	13; 9;	2
	Haven't for more than 3 years, but still in policy and would if necessary	10; 11; 16; 6	4
Does your school exclude children for a <b>fixed term</b> ? Please describe the reality of this (even if it is a last resort) and explain the process that would be followed	Yes (even if very rare/last resort)	2; 3; 1; 4; 5; 9; 12; 8; 10; 16; 6	11
	No	13;	1
	Haven't for more than 3 years, but still in policy and would if necessary	11;	1
Do you use restorative practices in relation to the exclusion process	Yes	2; 3; 1; 12; 4; 5; 13; 9; 8; 10; 11; 16; 6	13
	No	12	1 – not done training yet

From your experience, are you aware of whether rates of exclusion have changed when restorative practices have been introduced	Yes fallen/for certain types	2; 3; 1; 5; 13; 14; 12; 8; 10; 6	10
	No/too early to say/uncertain	12; 4; 16;	3
	Not applicable	7;	1
From the list please select <b>two</b> groups that are <b>most</b> at risk from exclusion in your school	Boys		5
	Girls		0
	Children/Young People with Special Educational Needs		7
	A Particular Ethnic Group		0
	No particular group is any more at risk than another		3
	There is no exclusion in my setting		0
	Other		6
	Children whose parents will not engage with us and agencies to make changes or enforce boundaries and expectations	R.2  R.3	
	SEMH and students that don't think they have been placed in and appropriate setting, so they want to get excluded.	R.6	

	<p>Most of the exclusions seem to involve boys who appear to have problems which have not been diagnosed early enough if at all leading to disaffection and lack of respect for the school setting.</p> <p>Students that are placed at the school that don't think they should be at the school and want to be excluded. Students whose Mental health is such that they cannot regulate their own behaviour.</p> <p>Young people affected by domestic abuse</p> <p>Children who have experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) and trauma.</p>	<p>R.7</p> <p>R.8</p> <p>R.12</p>	
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The respondents were asked to explain the reality of permanent (permanently excluded from that school setting) and fixed term (exclusion from that school setting for a fixed period of time) exclusions in their school. They were asked to state whether they used the processes and if they did, then what process was followed. Of those who stated that they did use permanent exclusions, all stated that permanent exclusion was "an absolute last resort" (R. 15, 7, 6, 5, 3, 2). As R.15 stated, "an absolute last resort where every other possibility has been explored". Other responses continued this theme stating that permanent exclusion would be in "extreme situations" (R.13) where,

“the safety of students (or staff) is put at risk by a student presence at the school, but again we would look to move them on i.e. managed move rather than exclude” (R.3).

Fixed term exclusions were also used rarely and only after other options had been exhausted. Only one respondent answered ‘no’ to using fixed term exclusions in their school, so this process was still part of the policies that existed within the school setting. The interpretation of the fixed term exclusion policy was highlighted by all respondents as a ‘last resort’. One respondent stated that fixed term exclusion was in their behaviour policy, but they had not needed to exclude at all for several years.

The main reasons given for fixed term exclusion also linked to the exhaustion of expertise *within* the school and as one respondent highlighted:

“To be honest, the fixed term exclusion ensured the local authority accept you are at crisis point and have exhausted all your expertise within the school, then things can start happening for child that will help reduce the risk of PEX [permanent exclusion]. We hold a TAC [Team Around The Child] meeting with a multi-agency approach, a plan is developed. It is reviewed to ensure success” (R.12).

If they did exclude, then all the respondents used RP as part of the re-integration process when students returned to school. As R.3 stated:

“we use a restorative re-entry meeting, which features moving forward rather than being about blame, we focus on responsibility to self and others”.

These respondents also spoke about changes in rates of exclusion once RP had been introduced to their school. Several stated that rates were already low in comparison to other schools in their LA area but that they had all reduced further and in the case of R.2 they stated that rates,

“drastically dropped as we changed the approach and asked ourselves what the underlying causes of the behaviour were and listened to the children and made changes to what we

were doing or the provision for the child - also safeguarding referrals went right up”.

R.15 stated that although numbers had decreased, they did “maintain some key and repeat offenders” and this linked into the next question which asked about any particular groups of young people who they saw as being most at risk from exclusion. Table 7 shows the groups that respondents felt were most at risk which was highest for children or young people with special educational needs and boys. Three respondents felt that no one group was any more at risk than another. In the ‘other’ category mental health, trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) were linked to the particular categorisation of the ‘at risk’ group.

The responses linked to the literature (see p.14 & p.39 of this thesis) which highlighted particular groups of CYP being more at risk from school exclusion. It also interested me that a restorative practitioner used language from the criminal justice setting to describe this group as “repeat offenders”. This raised further questions around labelling and language that were not covered by the questionnaire but suggested, to me, further questions around identity for young people. When a label is applied by adults to developing CYP what is the impact on their developing self-identity? This is an important time in life for wanting to ‘fit in’ and in the school setting, CYP need a sense of belonging and to **not** feel ‘different’. This has not been covered in this research but is an area of interest for future research and is discussed in chapter 9 in relation to areas for future research.

The respondents in the questionnaire were asked, in the final section, to consider the future of the restorative process and to provide their reflections on what would need to happen in the ideal world to eliminate the need for school exclusions. The full set of fifteen responses is shown at Appendix ‘N’.



Three of the respondents felt that there would always be a place for exclusions although this would be far less than at present. Others felt that there needed to be more paradigmatic changes. As R3 stated:

“Government, Ofsted, and school ethos would need changing to focus on individual need rather than academic results. Sufficient funding would need to be made available that adequately supports schools to have the staffing ratios to enable individualized support. Staff would need to have additional training”.

Several mentioned the need to move away from high stakes accountability and league tables and move towards earlier intervention that is needs focused and informed by evidence from child development and adverse childhood experiences. This included several mentions of the need for more effective inter-agency working and support for CYP with special educational needs. Several also stated that changes were needed in the relationships between schools and families. As R2 stated, there is a “need to break down the barriers further between disaffected parents and school/agencies” and R.16 stated:

“Parents need to play a greater role in the way families and schools work, too much ‘them and us’, somewhere in the middle is an opportunity to fix, learn and move on”.

## **6.7. Summary**

The questionnaire has begun to address the first two research questions which sought to gain a greater understanding of what restorative justice means to the adults involved in the school exclusion process. This perspective focused on practitioners who have been trained and are aware of RJ practices.

When analysing the responses, I was conscious of my own bias and the way in which as a restorative practitioner, especially in education, I often sought to justify the ‘notion’ of restorative practice to fit my

narrative and provide the evidence for what I thought needed to change.

In the questionnaire responses, there were some emotive statements:

- “get rid of academies”
- “an educational inspectorate that ensured school improvement...”
- “if education was not political...”

The questionnaire was focused on school exclusion. The key theme that emerged was that if the problem is the exclusion of CYP from educational settings, then the root cause of the problem is the breakdown of relationships. The pressure to meet targets and objectives rather than spend time on build and repairing relationships exacerbates the problem.

As R13 states “relationships need to be strong and at the heart of all practice”. I certainly agree with this statement, but it raises many more questions about what a ‘healthy’ relationship is and what a “strong” relationship looks like in the education setting for all the participants. The responses to the questionnaire in this study have come from a small number of educators who all support and believe in RP. They have helped to identify some of the consistently used concepts and ‘restorative questions’ used in practice. They have also provided insight into the ways in which these practitioners account for the effectiveness of a restorative approach in reducing school exclusions and strengthening relationships. On its own the evidence provides limited additional knowledge, although it does support my own experiences and the consistent use of the restorative questions as a framework. Further self-reflections will be made in conjunction with the other evidence gathered for this research study.

The next chapter presents a set of accounts that shine a lens on adults directly involved in school exclusions to provide personal accounts of

their experiences. This approach fits with the last two key features of Anderson's (2006) model of analytical autoethnography:

- Dialogue with informants beyond the self
- Commitment to theoretical analysis

The chapter begins with a personal story which provides the context and autoethnographic rationale for the stories that follow. The stories that follow my own story, will be told in the order in which they were shared with me as no one story is considered more important or meaningful than another.

## **CHAPTER 7: STORIES OF SCHOOL EXCLUSION**

### **7.1. A personal story**

This research thesis became an autoethnography following a PhD supervision session when I realised that I needed to 'gather data' to answer my research questions. The sharing of part of my personal story, at this point in the thesis, is done to help the reader to contextualise the other accounts that have been gathered to address the research questions. The conversations and quotes shared are with the full permission of those who are being quoted and care has been taken to ensure the anonymity of others who may be referred to within my own story but who were not specifically participants in this current research. For key biographical details and timelines for me and O'Connell, see Appendix 'B'.

As I applied to the University of Northampton to begin my doctoral studies (Preston, 2016a), I was a full-time teacher and SENCo in a UK school, as well as teaching online postgraduate RJ courses for the IIRP Graduate School. The latter activity highlights the point that I had reached in my career following an uninterrupted period of twenty years practice in RJ in the UK. During 2016, I had also spent two weeks with Terry O'Connell (the pioneer referred to throughout this research) in Costa Rica presenting at conferences, teaching at a school and attending meetings with the Ministries of Justice and Education in Costa Rica (Preston, 2016b).

O'Connell, who, as previously discussed in chapter 3 (p.74), introduced RJ to the UK (and me) in 1996, has been a mentor, colleague and friend since that time. The conversations we were able to share during that time in Costa Rica involved much reflection and influenced the focus of the lens that I then applied to my research questions.

O'Connell (2017b) shared with me, in an email, that he had been struggling with the ways in which RJ was being defined. He stated:

"I realised that I had been viewing the definition through a relational lens and others, it seemed viewed it through a behavioural lens. I began to question myself. How did I end up viewing restorative practices through a relational lens? Initially, I struggled to answer it, then as I looked back, I realised that my restorative journey had begun well before I became a cop in 1971. In fact, when I was about 15, I sat with a group of tradesmen who had just [physically] fought one another and I got them to talk about it. I was their electrical apprentice. As I retraced the major experiences [achievements] in my working life, I started to appreciate their significance, and importantly, the impact I have had in so many areas. It all started to make sense. I needed to better understand my own story as this is key to understanding why I view everything through a relational lens. I should mention at this point that I believe that looking through a relational lens as opposed to a behavioural lens makes a significant material difference in terms of how restorative practices are articulated and practiced" (O'Connell, 2017b, email).

At that time, I was working as a teacher and SENCo with additional responsibilities for behaviour management and safeguarding within the school. The findings of my most recently completed postgraduate research study (Preston, 2013), on the engagement in writing of 5 to 7-year-old boys with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, was prominent in my thinking. In my final chapter of this research on the implications for future research, I had written:

"The research was driven by an idea that restorative practices and particularly the relationship aspect could have a positive impact on engagement in learning. My limited piece of research highlighted to me the importance of relationship skills to learning and how many of the children that I work with lack the communication skills and emotional intelligence to develop and manage relationships in a positive way. They need to be taught. If they are not, then the outcomes for these children are diminished and they are going to find it harder and harder to engage in learning within the existing education system which is traditionally based on compliance and conformity" (Preston, 2013, p.78).

I had identified at this stage, although I noted that this was anecdotal, that,

“the approach of the teacher to behaviour and relationship building appeared to have a direct correlation to the number of behaviour incidents and engagement in learning” (Preston, 2013, p.79).

Teachers had described to me their “frustration with having to manage behaviour in the class and the need for consequences to be seen to be enforced for those children who did not adhere to the behaviour policy”.

One child in this 2013 piece of research, aged six, told me that “the teacher did not like him”.

The impact of the adults in the school setting on behaviour and learning had been a key outcome for me from this small-scale piece of action research. Although the six boys involved in my research project had had changes of class teacher, they all made significant progress in their writing over one term, I stated:

“It was the way that my relationships developed with these boys and their parents and teachers that had the most interesting impact on their behaviour and their attitudes to learning and my approach to my role as SENCo in reducing barriers to learning. The ‘project’ changed the way that I interacted with parents, teachers and children and these ‘findings’ have had the biggest impact on my own practice and I *believe* the practice of others” (Preston, 2013, p.69).

I focused on the ‘anecdotal’ findings of my previous research and practice in the school setting and developed the research questions around the adults in the school system and their impact on behaviour that led to exclusion from the school setting.

The reflections on these conversations link broadly to the autoethnographic frameworks of assemblage and ‘sensemaking’ as discussed earlier (p.126 & p.127). The reciprocal exchanges between

actors will be shared to help make sense and meaning of a particular environment in which those actors live and work (Weick et al, 2005).

## **7.2. Stories of adult experiences of school exclusion**

As discussed in chapter 4 (p.105), the participants who agreed to share their experiences of school exclusion were identified from a call for participants sent out in the 600 conference packs for an Education Conference held at the University of Northampton in March 2019 (Appendix 'F'). There were three schools from the East Midlands region who responded to say that they would be willing to be included in research. One school, due to external pressures on the Headteacher and teaching staff, was unable to contribute to the research within the timeframe of this study. This purposive sampling (Lavrakas, 2008) resulted in a parent a SENCo, and a Headteacher agreeing to talk to me about their experiences. They were not all from the same schools and were also from different LA areas.

The aim of this sampling process was to minimise my 'researcher' influence on involvement as much as possible. It is recognised however that I was talking about RP at the Education Conference in both a panel discussion on inclusion/exclusion and a breakout session on 'Exclusion through a restorative lens' (Preston, 2019c). This may have influenced participant interest in being involved in the research. Although the project title included restorative practices, there was no request in the flyer that the participants should know about or have any training in RJ or RP. I did not mention restorative justice/practice in the conversations unless the other person mentioned it first.

The order in which the conversations took place was parent, Headteacher, and SENCo so their stories will be shared in that order. As discussed previously (p.109) my own relationship with each of the participants was an important part of the autoethnographic

contribution to the research and developing an understanding of relationships. I was therefore conscious of the questions I asked and how I responded to the participants when they shared 'affect' and emotion around their experiences. I highlight this in the stories that follow by including my own line of questioning and interjections to the stories. My commentary, that was not part of our conversation on the day, is not in italics and conversation not spoken by participants is in square brackets.

There is thus, some personal reflection included in the stories that follow, relating to my rationale for the questions I asked. In the main, this section of the research thesis is left to the participants to give their accounts of school exclusion.

### **7.2.1. Hanna's story of school exclusion - the Parent**

The parent who was willing to share her story of exclusion with me will be given the pseudonym Hanna and her son has been given the pseudonym Matthew (assigned by random name generator).

Hanna is a single parent with four children. Her eldest child attends a special school and Matthew attends a small village primary school which is also attended by her two other children. Matthew was at risk of permanent exclusion and Hanna was keen to be included in the research due to her experiences with her older son who was also excluded from school before gaining a place at special school.

Matthew was aged nine at the time of our conversation and had already been excluded from the school on several occasions. He was at risk of permanent exclusion. Hanna stated that she was very happy to talk about her experiences as she already had another son (given the randomly generated pseudonym Harry) aged thirteen, who was in a local Special School. This experience, she stated, had given her some ideas about how things could be improved for Matthew.



The Headteacher at Matthew's school had identified several children at risk from permanent exclusion and agreed to give information about my research to the parents of these children. Hanna was the only parent who came forward and agreed to participate and my first face to face meeting with her was also the day that the conversation took place. Hanna and I were introduced to each other in the reception area by the school secretary and then taken to a small meeting room in the school. I thanked Hanna for her time and went through an explanation of the research and ethics principles in the consent form (Appendix 'I'). Hanna signed the consent form and agreed that she was happy to proceed with the 'conversation'. As discussed in chapter 4 (p.106), I did not have an 'interview schedule' and used the first of the restorative questions I had been 'trained' to use by O'Connell in 1996, as the introduction into Hanna's story.

As I met with the participants in this study, I realised that these restorative questions, that I had followed in my practice since they were first introduced to me, had become a sub-conscious personal 'script'. I used them for any conversations I had that focused on allowing another person to tell their story. I use them to help others navigate and express difficult emotions. This conscious awareness of how I used the restorative questions in my research led me to continue this approach with all the participants who shared their experiences and therefore, rather than using the term interviews, I refer to 'conversations' or 'stories' in my own reflections.

I sensed that Hanna was feeling slightly nervous as she apologised for coughing and said, "I don't really know where to start". I focused on the first of these restorative questions and said "that's fine, maybe you could start by telling me how you first became aware of the problems with Matthew at school? What was it that happened first?" Hanna began to talk and settled very quickly into telling me her story.

**Hanna:** Obviously, he's always had the late development and a bit behind. Most of his.... at the Juniors year 3 to Year 5 he was fine he was still struggling and then up until about maybe I'll say 6 months it's probably less than that Matthew's behaviour kind of switched overnight. Which is what I got feedback from the school and.....

Hanna paused and looked to me for what I perceived to be reassurance.

**NP:** What happened, did they phone you, call you into the school...?

**Hanna:** They rang me up and told me obviously to come up to the school and said that there were some issues with that particular day and they couldn't understand why he switched. So one minute he was fine, he wasn't because they were saying he was being abusive all of a sudden dictating, demanding threatening.

**NP:** What age was he?

**Hanna:** He's 9

I couldn't understand why, because at home, I have 4 children, I have another special needs child who is 13 now but I don't experience the behaviour because obviously I have a fair but firm consistent routine. So after that day when they said Matthew had just switched like a light switch and told me a few things I've just mentioned, after that he was just getting sent home he was lucky to sometimes to be here an hour/ hour and a half but I was being told I had to come and get Matthew he's not cooperating so I was up and down with Matthew.

I then used the next of the restorative questions which linked into thoughts and feelings.

**NP:** And how did that make you feel?

**Hanna:** Well I was kind of a bit mixed I was very stressed, a bit cross, felt that rather than try and find a solution and resolving it, was just ringing me straight away it seemed like on the first thing he done, to come and get him because there's a problem and they don't want the problem which don't help Matthew because it's his education at stake. He was getting confused because one minute he's in school, then he's not in school, then he's being asked to, one minute he's

*learning the school curriculum and then when he's at home I was obviously teaching him I went out and bought him stuff that I thought would help I was not quite sure which level he was at in his education. I did ask the school to provide me with the information so he's getting two different learning sides which caused him confusion that went on for some time. Then I said to the school this isn't fair he's entitled to full time education. Special needs has just as much rights as children without special needs and the lunchtime hour I'm happy to take him out because that isn't education and I did say, if you can't provide him the support that he needs to keep him safe and cater for him, you need to make a decision very quickly because this can't go on because he's still very young and we can't go on and on with this and the longer it goes on the more damage it's going to do to the child, to Matthew.*

Hanna had initially said she felt nervous talking but at this point she said that she was glad to talk and share her story. The next stage of the restorative framework that I consciously began to explore was to help Hanna to identify the source of the negative affect (Nathanson, 1992), to allow her to express this and to be heard. I had already identified that Hanna was potentially experiencing the 'shame' affect in relation to relationships with the school staff. My assessment in relation to the theory of affect and the 'compass of shame' (Nathanson, 1992) highlighted that Hanna's responses were beginning to move to the point on Nathanson's model that he calls 'attack other' (see p.70 of this thesis). I said to Hanna:

**NP:** *Who were you mainly speaking to?*

**Hanna:** *I was speaking mainly to the head teacher and the SENCo but I didn't feel I was getting the feedback and their support towards my child as what I would expect should be happening and obviously because I've been through 9 years of my other child, I know how it all works and I felt at the time it was only me that had my child's best interests at heart*

**NP:** *And with your older child did he get excluded from school?*

**Hanna:** *He didn't get excluded he didn't come over to the juniors he was just at the infants and from the age of 4 his behaviour came up very quickly so up until about 5 and a half*

*to 6, his behaviour escalated He was always out of class he wasn't allowed to go on school trips he wasn't allowed to do quite a lot of things and I said that's not fair you shouldn't be taking him out of the environment the surroundings and putting him to one side because that can also make them worse because they feel like they are different and that's not what we want. So obviously behaviour escalated and I said I'm up and down here several times a day and it's just not fair for me or him so I feel strongly you can't cater for him anymore and you're holding him back and by the age of 7.... when I say holding him back, he couldn't read an ABC book let alone write his own name. I said to them I don't feel he should go to juniors, obviously next year, and if you feel you can't cater him, I'm not going up and down. That lasted 2 days and I got a phone call to come up and have a meeting with the head teacher at the time of the juniors and the infants themselves and they did agree that it wouldn't be fair to send him to the juniors because he wouldn't cope he had a statement as he was obviously medicated very young*

**NP:** *What did he have? What was the medication for?*

**Hanna:** *ADHD, controlling behaviour disorder and emotional and social needs so he then went to a special school and literally from 4 weeks after being there he done everything within the 2 years he missed out in infants. He caught up so quickly and he's done amazing ever since and Matthew he went to the infants and I did say to them I didn't think juniors would be right for him because although his behaviour didn't come out early I did believe it was going to come out, but there were there were little blips happening in the infants. When I say blips there were times in the playgrounds when Matthew would ...he loved to cuddle and he used to go up behind children and put his arms around his necks and obviously quite tight so to children he was being horrible, strangling them but to Matthew he was cuddling them. There were a few other incidents but it was building up and obviously because I've been through it, 9 years with Harry, I knew, I could see the signs. Year 4, I wouldn't say it was great but it was OK but his learning was slipping. The only thing that I notice that was coming on was his writing, everything else was little steps not big steps.*

I could hear that Hanna was not happy with her perception of the way that the school had managed Matthew's behaviour and so to seek

clarification, I returned to the 'what happened' question to explore the particular incident that she had suggested was a turning point. I asked:

**NP:** *You said it was almost overnight, what happened? Was that a real escalation of behaviour or was it a particular incident?*

**Hanna:** *OK, there was an incident it was 3 days prior where they rang me and said Matthew's switched like a light switch. I said... they were trying to tell me so much in depth... I said I don't think that to be worse than what it was, they said he was being defiant, swearing, disruptive and wandering. So, then a couple of weeks after this because this was going on for a couple of weeks I was getting phone calls couple of weeks after this I had a phone call you need to come and get Matthew when I arrived in school I said where is he they walked me down the corridor to the deputy head's office and he was locked in. Where they locked him in a room he destroyed that room and then barricaded the door now I believe that was unfair, one you shouldn't lock a child in a room, two he's going to feel intimidated by 2 adults standing in front of the door he's going to feel frightened especially a child with delayed development and learning difficulties that happened on 3 occasions And I said that I just feel that you could have avoided doing that because now you've just... it scared him.*

*I was very upset because my children have never experienced from a home point of view and I've never had to shout at my children It would never ever have crossed my mind to lock them in a room I've never ever put hands on my children and to see that somebody that's done that let's say an outsider that's done that to my child with special needs and scared my child that was really upsetting for me and obviously there were 2 more occasions that I witnessed that the things ..where things have escalated with Matthew I think it was about a week after this after experiencing 3 occasions when he was put in a room that last time he was put in a room was by the head teacher. So you've got a full grown man and a little 9 year old boy who's again got delayed development special needs they put him in there because they said he was being destructive on the playground my other child who comes to this school who doesn't have special needs he witnessed and told me after school that Matthew done nothing it was another child who knew how to provoke Matthew and knew that Matthew would react because he's*

*got issues and that child done it twice. The head teacher put him in his room and stood in front of the door.*

*Matthew was in his office when I turned up. The head teacher said I was stood in the door, he was kicking me and swearing at me and I said well the thing is Matthew is obviously scared because he's obviously been locked up 3 times by the school. He [Headteacher] said: he's also tried to pick up the phone and ring. He wanted to call his Mum, but I put the phone down and then he tried climbing out of my office window. And I said well that's because he's scared, you've blocked him from getting out, you've refused him from ringing his Mum, so he tried to fight and now he's going to try and flee which is why he tried to climb out of the window to get to his Mum. And then I removed Matthew from the school and within 5 minutes he was back to being Matthew. He was giving me so many hugs telling me he was feeling safe he didn't feel safe at school and that he was scared of them because they hurt him so they agreed to put Matthew on a part time schedule so it was 9:30 to 10:30 to start with but for a few weeks I was getting phone calls and he was no longer in school then about 15 minutes they were ringing me up because they were saying he was wandering, he wasn't cooperating other times he's being destructive another time when he said a swear word well one swear word I'd say ignore it and if you don't make a big thing of it you may not hear another one and just carry on or there's other ways and choices that you can use of distraction to keep this child in school but this went on for a few weeks he was there for 15 minutes/half an hour.*

At this point in the conversation, I stopped and checked for any safeguarding concerns that Hanna had. There were no concerns, but Hanna did highlight that she felt that the school were accusing her of poor parenting. This highlighted to me what Braithwaite (1989) would describe as stigmatising shame which was in Hanna's view accusations from the Headteacher of poor parenting.

Hanna stated:

**Hanna:** *I was very disappointed in the school the only answer that I got was that they tried to turn it around on me ...they believed strongly... the head teacher said to me, I think I have concerns that there is something going on at home. I said, really, shocking, but OK what concerns do you have? Matthew always wants to be at home he never wants to come to school*

*which makes me think something's going on at home he says and when I look at your other 3 children compared to them Matthew looks very poorly really and why do you feel this what are your indicators he said well Matthew is very pale he looks always very tired. Well I said he looks very pale because he's always had a very pale complexion and he's tired because for a year I've been trying to sort his glasses out because he's got special needs his glasses have to be specially made and they've been marking him so where he's not been able to wear them full time, that causes tiredness so that makes him look tired and Matthew only wants to be at home because he's fearing school because he's told me he's scared of everybody here.*

I again stopped the conversation to explore these concerns for any potential safeguarding issues and asked Hanna whether these might have been genuine concerns from the Headteacher about changes at home or health issues that the school and the Headteacher needed information on to be able to meet Matthew's needs. I was aware at this point that I was offering an alternative explanation to help Hanna think about a possible alternative meaning.

Hanna agreed that things had been followed up with the optician about the glasses and tiredness and that when Matthew had become aggressive, the school had used trained staff in restraint to keep Matthew from hurting himself or others. She did not however feel that she was listened to or that there had been any understanding of the difficulties of parenting her four children on her own.

This stage of the process had brought me to the questions in the O'Connell restorative framework (see p.85 of this thesis) that focused on who has been affected and how have they been affected. I said to Hanna:

**NP:** *Has this had an impact on your relationship with the school or with the people at the school?*

**Hanna:** *I haven't changed on my side, I still try and keep it, you know, you still got to work together no matter what, because if you've got other children in this school, it can't, it can't be a... you know you've got to keep some kind of*

*relationship there. Obviously, this did affect Matthew. This is why he was acting up because of everything that had happened to him by staff, so in his way of showing his feelings he done it, it was his behaviour rather than him saying to the school, so then it made it a bit more of a clearer picture of why Matthew didn't want to be in school and why he was getting excluded. But even so I didn't feel the exclusions were for the reasons they gave I didn't feel Matthew should have been excluded anyway.*

Hanna shared with me some of the things that she had learnt with her older son that had worked and how she had tried to share these strategies with the school but felt that they hadn't listened to her and hadn't tried these things. I said to Hanna:

**NP:** *Has anyone at the school explained what they have been doing and maybe why they are not using your ideas or using their own ideas?*

**Hanna:** *They haven't explained that to me, why they haven't been using mine and why they think theirs were better. They basically went over my head and got a company in who are people who deal with... which help the school manage children's behaviour.*

At this point in the conversation, I felt that Hanna had been given an opportunity to express her negative affect and talk about how she and Matthew had been affected. It was a point in the process to start to look to the future. I said to Hanna:

**NP:** *So, what do you think needs to happen?*

**Hanna:** *I think the school they need to obviously because living with it is a lot different to just working with it and when you live with it you learn a hell of a lot more, you know, how to deal with different situations a lot better than somebody just having it a couple of hours a day, you know, and no disrespect to learning it from a college but again that's learning it from a book but if you haven't been around that or around children like that before and haven't lived with it then you can't kind of say you know best. I just think they should listen to parents more, try what parents suggest, work with parents not against. They just need to put a bit more time and listen to parents rather than keep trying to chuck the problem out because eventually a child will feel neglected*



*and you can only chuck them out so many times before they start to feel sectioned off and then that gives them more reason to not want to come to school.*

I then returned to what Hanna felt had worked for her older son.

**Hanna:** *It is a special school, yes, it's a fantastic school because there are smaller groups, they are trained from all aspects, from right at the bottom to right at the top because the children are there until they are 18. You know they use so many different measures and choices and they put so much time into the children and they treat them like they're their own. It's not just a job to them they're not just there because they're just a teacher. For example, my son this year and last year his teachers are superb they treated him like their own kid they give him that time and support. There's no rushing, they will get there, but they haven't got to finish Year 5 to get to year 6 for example. I think it's family orientated, that's how it is over there, the support towards parents, you know, it's amazing, they are like my best friends. That's cool, I can tell them anything, nothing's alarmed them, they wouldn't be quick enough to pick up a phone they wouldn't judge you and they're there and it's just a completely different world my son's come on heaps and bounds.*

**NP:** *And what you've just said, are those the sorts of things you'd like to see in this school?*

**Hanna:** *Yeah, I think a mainstream school can cater for that as well. I just think it's about having the right attitude you know I understand where... so I've lived with it for 9 years with my eldest son I've been there so it's an everyday routine for me it's nothing different to me it's not hard work I just get on with it and that's it. So I can see from the school's point of view, I understand, so if they haven't got anybody... say the headteacher, if he hasn't got anybody in his family who has got disabilities or had to live with anybody with disabilities I suppose it's really hard to adjust and get used to because you kind of don't know, you know, what you're doing really. I strongly believe that you know because I just think as a parent what would I... what would happen if I thought and that's it I just walk away what happens to my children if I give up or if I have that attitude I don't have to put up with this and throw them out or I leave and it's the same with the school OK no one has to put up with abuse no one has to put up with but these are children we are talking about with special needs they don't see the consequences*

*they don't see the wrong in it sometimes if they've got delayed development attached to them you know so I just think well that's what they're doing when they are excluding them.*

We had a wide-ranging discussion on some of the pressures that mainstream schools face and how that might be different to her other son's special school. On reflection, this was my way of using my own experience to offer some additional information to Hanna to improve the relationships with adults at Matthew's mainstream school.

We also discussed the fact that Hanna feels that Matthew has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Harry, her older son, has a diagnosis of ADHD and is on medication. Matthew does not have a formal diagnosis from a paediatrician and does not currently have an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP). Hanna felt that she had lots of previous experience from Harry and kept returning to the need to feel heard at Matthew's school.

**Hanna:** *We don't have meetings of ideas. I don't think they listened to anything that I had to say. I just feel that I get little bits in where I can but I think that because I feel that because they're kind of higher up than me it's like I'm there but I'm not there and they will get the last say and I don't think that's fair because I'm the parent and at the end of the day parents should always have the last say because it's their child and if you can't always agree then try to negotiate so that everybody is happy but I don't feel that I've got that with Matthew at all.*

**NP:** *In meetings do you feel that they're trying to tell you how to do your job as a parent and they might feel that you're telling them how to do their job is a teacher.*

**Hanna:** *No I don't feel like that but when they asked me what I think and I tell them but then I don't see anything of what I've said come out and it's not about telling each other ... you see I would never tell somebody to do something. I would ask and recommend, but I would never tell anybody because that's rude. I think things aren't going to work if you do that, you have to have a mutual, you know, but I feel that the school try and dictate to me - well he's in our school and that's it what we say goes as soon as my back turns and I*

*don't like that. I've never heard once anybody say in a meeting, what do you think, what would you like to happen, what do you think we can do that will make Matthew happy and make things easier all round for everybody? Not anybody, at all the meetings I've had in Year 5 with Matthew, has anybody said that to me.*

Hanna then became more reflective about the way in which she has been affected by the lack of relationship with the school staff at Matthew's school and compared it to Harry's school.

**Hanna:** *It's the little things that make a big difference as far as I'm concerned, and you know, I think as well, I've never heard anybody say in this school to me, do you know what, you're on your own, with 4 children, 2 with disabilities, one a high risk, your children always look lovely, clean, tidy, lovely, they are always happy, you do a grand job. Because everybody out there, it's just nice to hear it now and again. Whereas Harry's school, they'll ring me up at the end of the day and tell me about his day, how are you, how are you feeling, I bet you must be tired, do you know what just remember you're amazing. The rest of the conversation don't matter to me that one word do you know what when I think even days when I could be hitting my head off a brick wall with the school and one thing and another, that brings a whole different, you know it brings a whole, whole different person. And I think you need that and that's what it should be I think, you know, in the school, let's say, the school and me we're in it together. We're in it together, so let's work together. Let's be there for one another and learn from one another, you know, because doing that is what keeps things together and I think it helps with the special needs children because they will sense and they will pick up when something is not right and it has a massive impact on them.*

We had been talking for over an hour and Hanna needed to go and collect her children, so I concluded the conversation with a question about the impact of the adults on the children.

**NP:** *So, are you saying that they'll [the child or young person] pick up on the adult's feelings?*

**Hanna:** *It's the atmosphere isn't it, they do absolutely, because I remember a meeting I had here a couple of months ago with the juniors and I was so frustrated I was very tearful actually. I knew I had to come back for Matthew in half an*

*hour and I was like, oh God, my eyes were red, you know, I cleaned myself up and it didn't look like I'd been crying, picked Matthew up and I kept it normal, you know, I said right thank you, great for having a good morning, see you tomorrow. I didn't get any response, obviously I was saying it on my way out, but there could have been 'okay see you tomorrow' and I would have heard that, and it would have been nice, and Matthew said is everything okay Mum? What's happened? Is everything.... why didn't they speak to you Mummy? I do believe that, you know, communication is very, very, important.*

The conversation ended at this point and I thanked Hanna for giving me her time to talk about her experiences and re-iterated what would happen with the information. I made sure she was aware of my contact details on the information sheet and that she could contact me at any time. Hanna stated that she was very happy to talk to me at any-time in the future and I stated that I hoped the research would lead to better outcomes for CYP at risk from exclusion.

I reflected that the process had been an experience that I had had on many occasions before when I prepared for a RJ conference and when I had been involved with parents of children with SEN, especially ADHD and behaviour issues. In this instance, however, I was not going to be speaking to the others involved in this breakdown of relationships for Hanna and would not have the opportunity to explore the stories of others involved or work towards a developing a shared understanding of the needs of the school and the family. I reflected that this opportunity would likely have a positive impact for Hanna and Matthew though.

The conscious use of the restorative questions allowed Hanna to express the negative affect associated with the way in which Matthew's behaviour was being addressed by the school. They had also allowed me to work 'with' Hanna to share that affect in a safe environment and think about what she needed and how she and others might have been affected by Matthew's behaviour. She had shared some clear ways in

which she felt that things could improve and how her own needs could be met. She had also felt safe enough to share with me how she had been affected. She felt that the way she had been treated by school staff had led to a breakdown in relationships. It was clear that her perception was that no-one at the school wanted to listen to her.

### **7.2.2. Sue's story of school exclusion - the Headteacher**

The school is a small junior school – for pupils in Years 3 to 6 (aged 7-11). There are 420 pupils. In 2012, the school was rated by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) as 'Requires Improvement'. In 2014 Ofsted rated the school as 'Good' and in a short inspection in 2018, Ofsted stated that the school continues to be 'Good'.

I was given a tour of the school and then went to the Headteacher's office to have our conversation. This provided us both with an opportunity to build rapport before we began the more 'formal' conversation that was part of the research. As a researcher, I was very conscious of how important this part of the process in creating the environment where people feel 'safe' to share their stories and take responsibility for their own part in those stories.

I have given the Headteacher the pseudonym Sue (randomly generated). All words spoken during the conversation are in italics and any clarification of terms or words used that were not spoken by 'Sue' are placed in square brackets.

I thanked Sue for agreeing to talk to me and asked for a bit of her background in relation to the school.

**Sue:** *I've been substantive head for 3 years. Previous to that I took over mid-year from the Head who was here before who had some difficulties and found he could no longer do the role so I as the deputy at the time and governors asked me if I could step into the role of interim head which I did gladly well kind of gladly. When you're thrust into it sometimes you go*

*'can I really do this?', with something like impostor syndrome, less so now that I have been doing it for so long. It was a really tricky year we had a particularly difficult parent of the time and we had a particularly difficult cohort of year 6 as well. And I think it just got a bit too much so I stepped into the role at that point to continue the rest of the year and then interviewed and now this has been the end of my third year. So I'll be going into my fourth year in September as the substantive head of the school.*

I then asked Sue about exclusions at the school. Sue provided me with the figures (Table 8) for fixed term and permanent exclusions for the years since she had taken over as interim and then substantive Head:

**Table 8 - Exclusions at 'Headteacher's School'**

<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>Fixed Term Exclusions</b>	<b>Permanent Exclusions</b>
2014 - 15	14	1
2015 - 16	14	1
2016 - 17	9	0
2017 - 18	13	0

**NP:** *When you took over as interim head what were exclusions like at that point?*

**Sue:** *I will get you exact figures [see Table 8 above] but exclusions were high we had a permanent exclusion the year before and we were dealing with a very difficult child at the time when the head left. I had to finish that process and permanently excluded that child which, from my point of view was where some of my reading up on restorative practices came to the fore because I was devastated at the thought of letting down that child in that family. He was very violent and aggressive, and I felt pressured by parents and staff because I was wanting to look after their well-being. I had to be seen to be doing something, but never felt comfortable with doing it and then really from that point on, taking over where exclusions, not just permanent exclusions, sorry I shouldn't say 'just', but exclusions day on day, if fixed term exclusions were high at that point and it seems to be ingrained in the school. That was just what happened, if a child didn't conform to the rules then exclusion was our ...was in our toolkit if you*

*like it wasn't to say we didn't try to do other things to support families. Actually, that was very much a part of that toolkit and that continued into my headship I always knew there was ...I didn't want to continue along this route, so started to do a lot more reading and around restorative justice and saw an amazing film. It wasn't to do with schools, but it was to do with restorative justice in prisons and it was a chaplain of a prison who, I can't remember his name, but he got the prisoners with their victims and it was a very emotional film to watch and it was very difficult sometimes, well always for some victims of some quite violent crimes, to face up to their perpetrator. But it really felt like at that point watching that film, that that unlocked something really special that the perpetrator could hear and understand how the victim felt and sometimes the other way round as well, so the victim got an understanding somehow of the background of that person and it helped to bring closure. So that's where I started, and I think well I need to do something in school. The exclusions, fixed term exclusions, are too high. I knew that I was never going to permanently exclude anyone ever again that was too painful an experience for me for the family for the staff and I knew it was wrong. So, I then started to think well then, I need to I need to change the system. I'm the head of this school and I have the power not to exclude. So, I gave an INSET [In Service Training] last September with my staff because it had been something that had been highlighted as part of our Ofsted as well, you know, that fixed term exclusion was too high in school. Well I thought, well I knew that it wasn't news to me when they came to say that, so I gave an INSET.*

Sue then told me about the programme that she had introduced at the training which she stated is "our version of restorative approaches". The ideas had been given an acronym that encapsulated the ethos of the process, but I will refer to it as 'RP' in this thesis to protect the anonymity of the school.

The process included the following seven questions which they called the 'Super 7' and were consistently used:

1. What happened?
2. How were you feeling?
3. What happened after?
4. Who else was involved and what were their feelings?

5. Who else was impacted on by the incident but not directly involved?
6. What have you learned and what could you do differently?
7. How can we repair the situation?

These questions were on the wall in Sue's office and were all around the school on the walls in classrooms and in the reception areas.

**Sue:** *I gave an INSET about something that we call 'RP' which is our version of a restorative approach where we share with the children a set of 7 questions which they can work through as a group. The INSET with staff, that was really important because I shared with them the 3 elements of my learning improvement plan:*

- *the first was to reduce the attainment gap for pupil premium*
- *the second was to increase progress and*
- *the third one was to further improve learning behaviour and decrease the fixed term exclusion.*

*What we've actually done is eradicate fixed term exclusions. So actually, I knew that was my ultimate goal, but I wanted to give myself a number of years in which to do that. But actually once 'RP' was accepted by the staff and bought in.....I did a thorough INSET, because I think that's an important point to mention here, I wanted to give them the background related to white working class boys that they were the children and they were more likely to end up in prison, than end up in Higher Education, so our whole ethos of the school became about changing the culture and making children, and giving the children the understanding that we were ambitious for their futures and we wanted them to be ambitious for their futures also. And that included not when a situation happened putting your hand up and saying you're not welcome here, you need to go home, it's all about no, you are welcome here, because this is the place where change can happen, if we exclude you that's not what we are about, the culture of this school is inclusion and the culture of this school is about all are welcome.*

*We also run something called 'No Outsiders' [Moffatt, 2015] which I'm sure will come out while we're talking but that's about everyone is welcome regardless of their behaviour, of their culture, of their religion, of their sexuality, their gender, all are welcome, so I couldn't hand on heart have 'No Outsiders' big and strong in the school but actually, you're*



*not welcome. It didn't work it couldn't work the two cannot work hand in hand. It needs to be all are welcome, full stop.*

Sue continued to tell me about how following the INSET for staff and Learning Support Assistants (LSAs), the training was then rolled out to the whole school community:

**Sue:** *The next layer was lunchtime supervisors, had to all be on board, so they came to bespoke training that I gave for each year group. So all the children were part of INSET as well, if you like understanding 'RP' and what that meant. And all the lunchtime supervisors, because they play a pivotal role, you know, lunchtime supervisors and caretaker are amongst the most prized members of staff because they see the children, especially the lunchtime supervisors, see the children in very unstructured times, often where disagreements and altercations happen, so they had to be fully on board with it and are fully on board with it.*

Sue was keen to share with me how they reviewed the implementation and sorted out any "teething problems" using the 'RP' process to engage staff and children. From this process Sue identified that they needed "a quiet space" and "the full listening and understanding of the member of staff who is leading that". Some children in Year 6 (10-11-years-old) are also trained to lead the process with their peers and link in to two other training programmes that are run on anti-bullying and teaching communication skills.

**Sue:** *We talk about and teach communication because, actually, that is where we feel, having run 'RP' and coming out of the conversations we've had, it's children's inability sometimes, because of their age or their experience, of actually communicating well together so we teach them communication skills which is also then having a knock-on effect with how the behaviour is in school.*

*So we've kind of met the problem head on with 'RP' but also now we're looking at children, specific children, from different classes who have issues in communication so hopefully by teaching them the skills you know looking at the person who is speaking, waiting until they finish speaking, just the basics really, but we have a little program and that's working really well and we have year 3 and Year 5 work together to do that*

*mentor and mentee and we have year 4 and year 6 working together.*

Sue had spoken for just over 12 minutes in relation to my initial question and stated, "I feel like I've just garbled on there". We laughed, and I reassured her that this was not the case and that actually, her passion for the children and the school community came through.

Although the conversation was being tape recorded, I wrote on my notepad that I became conscious of the 'relationship' with Sue at this point. I was of a similar age to Sue, a parent, teacher and a researcher carrying out research into an issue that impacted on the lives of CYP. We had a lot in common.

The pause in the discussion, suggested to me that Sue was seeking feedback and reassurance that related to our relationship. This 'relationship' was at several levels: researcher and researched; parent to parent; teacher to teacher. I reflected that this short pause and the few words exchanged also suggested a 'check' as to whether synergy existed between our personal values and whether I was showing empathy towards the issues she was dealing with and telling me about.

After this I explained that a couple of points had come up which I would like to explore in a bit more detail:

**NP:** *At the beginning you mentioned that when you took over as interim Head, there was pressure on you, and there had been on the previous Head, from staff and parents in relation to what was happening, particularly in relation to permanent exclusion. Can you just explain a little bit more about that feeling, on you as a headteacher, in terms of the pressure and what you were feeling in relation to those adults?*

**Sue:** *It's a really tricky one when you take-over the Headship. I'm sure if I went to a completely new school... as well there's the sort of feeling that things will work, things have always worked like this and you but being in a position where you have already been here, I was part of that leadership team, it was partly that feeling, like I had let down*

*the school, just as part of the senior leadership team, by not challenging that before.*

*And then I went into the Headship, but I felt this real pressure knowing that in my heart it was the wrong thing to do, but parents of children who had been physically hurt and attacked on the school grounds. I mean that was the basis, he was attacking children in his class, he was up-turning tables, his behaviour had become unmanageable. We didn't know.... we had CAMHS [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service] involvement lots of other involvement, we had an EP [Educational Psychologist] looking at this child trying to unpick his behaviour, but parents were standing at the door almost and emailing me, 'what are you doing about this child', 'what are you doing about my child's safety' 'my child does not feel safe coming to school', and my main role in school is to make sure that everybody feels safe.*

*I'm designated safeguarding lead as well so with all this mix off like a web of things feeding into this and I could see it from their point of view. If we removed that child from the situation then their children wouldn't be being hurt, but me and my faith as well, I'm a Christian, so that feeling that all are welcome again, it was just being battered all the time by this constant understanding from these parents. I knew their children were being hurt but I also thought what about this child, who is caring for him and we worked with other agencies to try and get him some... so as part of the exclusion we did find alternative provision for him, which is working 1:2 in a small school, well not a school, it was more of a unit attached to a school. We were helping in that way to build, get him the help he needed. He had come to the point at this school, he had no friends because everybody was afraid of him, so there was all of that mixed up in this, as well parents were very supportive of the decision to exclude actually because they could see that he had run out of options here. It was a very strange situation and we tried to support him with home school support worker who supported that family through to transition and find him this alternative provision.*

*I constantly felt I was letting him and the family down, but also, I wasn't because I help find them the alternative provision. I felt like I was letting down the children in the class where he was up turning tables you know. He caused a bloody nose on one child, smacking them, full punching them in the face and the rest of the parents were up in arms. 'What are you doing about this' and as a young Head, I felt really torn. I think that's where my real vision, that things had to*

*change from me... and I certainly now, a bit later on in my career, I certainly wouldn't accept the pressure from parents that I once did because I'm wiser now, because I'm able to, yeah, I just feel better in my skin, more confident in my ability than I did. So, I think there are lots of things that could be done now but I certainly wouldn't permanently exclude now and I haven't done for the whole of the duration of this year given fixed term either and I don't want to go back down that route.*

**NP:** *You've mentioned the parents of this particular child and that they were supportive of trying to find something. Did you have discussions with them about how they were rationalising their son's behaviour in relation their own role as parents?*

**Sue:** *They were a split family and antagonistic towards each other so that didn't help the situation. But they were together in the fact that their son's needs weren't being met here that's how it culminated. They came to a conclusion that they felt that we weren't able to continue to meet the child's needs so they grasped that. Mum had various alcohol and drug dependency problems as well which we had helped her.... to signpost her to the right places.*

*So, I didn't think there was much communication between the two of them at all. They did come to meetings together, but it was a very frosty relationship between them, but they could see that we were trying to support him the best that we could, but he had, through his troublesome behaviour, he had alienated them, the rest of his core group of friends, they were frightened of him because they'd been hurt.*

**NP:** *You said at that point in time there was quite a lot of pressure on you, and I guess for the previous Head as well, coming from parents. Did that also come from staff?*

**Sue:** *Well definitely, the class teacher had been hurt as well and two learning support assistants had been hurt, as well my deputy, myself and my home school support officer were all hurt as well.*

*He was a big boy and he cracked my head against the fence when we were trying to de-escalate a situation. I was just talking quite calmly with him sitting on the grass with him and he just lurched forward push my head so at that point I suppose that was the moment when I thought I can't deal with this anymore.*

*And I don't know, out of all the agencies that were involved, and they felt that also this was not the place for him, he needed some specialist counselling and work related to his past and related to some of the things that were happening in the family.*

*So, at that point, staff were saying to me I don't want to work, I don't want him in my class, so we did move him to another class but then you see he was without any of his friends who he had felt alienated from anyway. But, of course, the rumour was round, he was an aggressive boy, and some children, being very unkind, do like to find that in other children and almost goad him.*

*He started to hurt others, so we moved him, because we are fortunate we've got 3 classes in each year group so we have got the capacity to sometimes move children but that didn't work at that point. The EP had suggested that we give him a fresh start which we tried to do but of course because of things that had happened before and children had witnessed it... he also tried to throw himself down the top landing because we moved him from the bottom classroom up to the top classroom and he threatened to throw himself down the stairwell.*

*At that point I was seriously concerned for his mental well-being so it kind of all culminated in...you know we have to draw a line here and parents have been... I've had conversations, I didn't just bring them up one day and say your child's permanently excluded. It wasn't like that it was a long process of me, meetings, of working with the parents, of working with the child, working with staff and it seemed to get to the point where I didn't know, I didn't know what else I could do to help him. I felt really useless and looking at the other children in my care there's 420 children here and 419 I was putting at a risk and I was putting the child at risk of being ...of hurting himself and hurting others it was such a catch 22 situation, horrible experience to go through.*

*We've got children at the minute who are runners, who have got issues, but I think my experience and the experience of the staff I have with us now, we know much more and we are much more able to cope with situations and we would never... it's not even something that's part of our discussion with parents - exclusion not ever - not even fixed term.*

This was an emotive and emotional part of the conversation and I empathised with Sue at this point teacher to teacher. It was an

opportunity for Sue to make her own interpretation of her story and her decisions. I responded:

**NP:** *I totally empathise, having been in a similar situation. That particular incident seemed to have a huge and lasting impact on you in your role as leader of this community? Could you just talk... because that situation it seems, and I don't want to put words into your mouth, that situation... what influenced the way that you then went out to seek ways that this would never happen again? Was it the adults, in terms of parents and carers, the school staff and the rest of the school community, that you were seeking to protect and prevent that situation ever happening again? Do you feel that you identified core principles? Is that the point when you went out to look for research?*

**Sue:** *Part of the learning improvement plan, it was born out of the data, the data was not looking good. But it is also a natural feeling that I was not doing my job properly. If I was excluding children, especially vulnerable children, especially children with special educational needs and well-being and family problems, how could I continue?*

*If I didn't make a change... I think that the books I read and the internet information that I looked at, was really pivotal. I took from various different points and then came up with [their version of] the restorative questions. So, in a situation we find out what happened and I think a very important part of this is giving children the space in which to speak and getting the full picture.*

*But also who else was impacted in this situation, so it may be the victim or perpetrator, for want of better words, but also there's other people in this situation, the adult who spent time sorting this out, who might have witnessed somebody being hurt, and giving them a broader vision of the situation by letting them hear the experience of everybody else in the room.*

*That was really important, and also no one is more important than the other. But the repair is certainly how we want to ..... so what would we do differently, what have we learned about this experience, how would we go about it in the future, it is also how are we going to repair this situation.*

*I've used these in so many different areas ... well we've got a conflict between two members of staff or maybe a member of staff has been too sharp with the child or used a loud voice*

*and the child has been upset. This is very helpful in all sorts of situations I use it with parents.*

*I've shared it in my bulletin. I've also run a workshop where parents could come and find out what 'RP' was about. Because there was the initial, in the September/October, 'well this is just a namby-pamby way of dealing with situations' and 'where's the punitive' because this community that we are part of is very quick to jump up and say well 'what about this, what about my child'.*

*So there's that perception out there, that this is just not powerful, but it is, it's so powerful, it's been the change in this school, it's been the change and the power and the passion that I have for it working, I drive it, I keep on it. So it's a constant conversation that's really important in this working. It's not one of those things, it has to be constantly fed, if you like, I don't know how best to explain that, but there are some things that come into primary schools that come and go like the wind. This is not going to come and go like the wind, this is to stay, this has had such an impact and I'm passionate about that.*

**NP:** *Can I take that point a bit further please, about your leadership. especially with the staff and the parents and that consistency? What's important about that? Do you think, do you hold staff to account in terms of the process and the underlying principles? What is key about the process? If you have a member of staff who is saying this is namby-pamby, I'm not going to do that in my class. How do you remain consistent?*

**Sue:** *It's hard, I'm not saying it's easy, but I'm very fortunate to have a group of staff, all of my staff are on board with this. I don't know if that's because of the hard work that I put in at the beginning, telling them about... they know me, they know me as well, they know what I stand for and they have been very supportive in that. I've never had a staff member come to me, because I've done a staff survey as well, and I haven't had anyone who's come forward and said they don't want to do this.*

*So, in a way I've had it easy because they can see that it works, and the children drive it and ask now, they are very good at asking, 'I'd like to do an 'RP', so we've given them that voice we've given them that power.*

I then asked Sue about the questions she included in her model.

**NP:** *Where did you take the questions from?*

**Sue:** *Various different readings. So basically, I changed the questions related to how I thought it would work in our setting.*

*I often get them sitting round and I'll say I'm just going to give you a couple of minutes to have a think before we start the questions. making sure I follow the process they can see that that's important to me but they are encouraged to think first of all and what they say is as clear as it can be and then I always offer somebody that's really brave or courageous to go first so I don't dictate who's going to go first.*

*I recognise children love a bit of a drama. If I think their contribution is relevant and is needed particularly then I'll keep them here. I do give them options, if they want to leave, to be able to leave. So the thinking bit is really part of all of these questions because I'm asking them to think about 'the how', 'the what', 'the who'. 'The where' is not here, but that often comes out.*

*The repair is almost threaded throughout the whole thing as well, because the repair really starts from question 5 onwards. We're thinking about who could potentially have been involved, what would we do differently and then the ultimate is how would we repair, alright we don't just want to stick a plaster over the top with this, that's not what this is about, because that's then going to mean I'll see you again next week if that's the case.*

*I talked in the INSET about a 'dirty wound' and if you don't properly clean out that wound, then it's going to become infected because, you know what, no matter what you do with that wound put a plaster over the top of it, that's not going to repair, that's just going too actually possibly fester and maybe get worse.*

*And I talked about that in relation to the problems and the struggles that we are having. So this part is that, gently very carefully, cleaning out this wound and making sure all the grit and all the things maybe that people are feeling about what happened, if you leave a tiny bit of grit in there, we are not going to get the ultimate repair.*

We then went back to talk about the young man who Sue had had to exclude and who had had such an impact on her approach to exclusion. Our previous discussion had been an emotive part of the story for both



of us and I related to a 7-year-old in my first (Year 3) class as a Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT). He was always getting into fights with other children and could not sit in class for any more than 5-10 minutes. I worked hard with him and his parents who were initially very hostile towards me. We developed a good relationship and trust (parents and child) and when an issue occurred with a member of staff where this young man was treated unfairly, I was able to resolve it through the use of the restorative questions. The boy was eventually diagnosed with ADHD but left primary school with good results in his Year 6 Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) and confident in his own abilities. A year later, it saddened me greatly to hear that he had been permanently excluded from his Secondary School for taking drugs and violence. I was conscious of this in relation to my own bias and need to make meaning of my own experiences. I said to Sue:

**NP:** *Can I take you back to the young man you talked about who was permanently excluded. Was he at the school from the start of his education?*

**Sue:** *He came in year 3 which is when we start, and he left us just at the beginning of year 6. I know his Grandma who goes to my church, so I see her every week. So, I've kept abreast of this young man, just carefully not wanting to delve in and he's actually now at a local secondary school, not in a unit, he's actually back on track. I think the alternative provision really supported him and changed him and gave him the 'want' to get back into education. His parents have now completely separated because they were in each other's lives, but not in each other's lives. It was a bit turbulent for him so he's now back into secondary education and he'll be 14 now.*

**NP:** *Do you think, for him, if he came into this school now as year 3 starting at the beginning of next September, what would be different and what would help you prevent?*

**Sue:** *Well I have a very active home school support worker, who would be part of, and is part of, any transition in the summer term. This summer term we've been meeting with our two main, feeder infant schools and we have knowledge of those families coming in, whereas we didn't have that*

*before and I think that's really important. Parents at welcome meetings are given an understanding of what this means so that's really helpful.*

*I think if he was in this school now, I think it's also to do with me and my experience now. I wouldn't be excluding him; I would be much more confident that we were the place and could look after him. I'm pretty sure of that, pretty sure of that. The systems that we have in place safeguard and check that children and families, understand that that's our culture, that's our ethos.*

*I spend a lot of time talking about our 'No Outsiders' policy, which is that all are welcome regardless of how we behave. We talk a lot to our children about if they make a mistake it's not them, it's the thing that they have done that we need to unpick. So it's you're not wrong, the thing that you may have done was wrong, or somebody had felt wronged by that, but it's not the person which I think is a definite shift from where we were 4 years ago - that punitive system where exclusion was part of that whole. It was just there, it was written on our policy for behaviour and management whereas it's now not written on there, so actually by not writing it on there we are forecasting into the future that that will never happen. It's not in our toolkit so actually we have to find other things and are clear about what they are now so permanent exclusion is not on there so it's not an option.*

**NP:** *What's important to create a safe environment consistently?*

**Sue:** *The culture and the ethos of the school. I've read in a book that 'culture eats strategy for breakfast', that's a saying and that's absolutely true. It's how we are it's how we feel, it's how we behave with one another, it's how the staff model how to speak well to one another and part of the 'RP' stuff was about how we disagree. You are entitled to your opinion, I am entitled to my opinion, they may well be different, they probably are going to be different because we are different human beings but it's how we then merge the two ideas, the differences. we can remain respectful towards one another. That's the relationship that we have here at school. We've signed up to this process where if domestic violence happens in a child's family the police will automatically contact the school, so we've got an awareness. One in 5 women and families are affected by domestic violence. We've got 35 children in a class so we're talking 7 children at any one time could possibly be experiencing domestic violence. I say, 'good*

*morning' to every child and at the end of the day 'have a nice evening'. I do it as head teacher, it's about clocking those faces and it's about sharing that with my staff and my staff do it exactly the same. So we can identify those children who do come in with their head down, now that might just be because they argued over what breakfast cereal they can have, but it could be something serious too and we've got to be prepared for that.*

*The change in our culture has all worked alongside these different things. I don't think it's been specifically the questions or 'RP', although I like to think it is, because I'm passionate about it. They are aspects that have been part of this culture shift in school I'm bringing parents along with me as well as making them feel part of a community. It's our partnership between the two.*

*I also recognise that if my staff are OK, and not many heads and I will say this out loud, because I actually believe this, my children are very important to me here, all 420 of them, but actually if my staff are OK then everybody's OK. Then if the staff are okay, the children will be OK, if the children are OK, their parents will be OK. So actually, staff are integral to me and always have been relationships between my senior leadership team and staff and my relationship with staff is paramount I've always felt that I've worked for heads that want to put the children first which I get And I do that also but actually but driving staff to a point where it's all about the children all the time that's not real.*

**NP:** *You talked about the next INSET as being about culture and ethos. What has provided you with the evidence to develop the culture and the ethos?*

**Sue:** *So, I think I want to make really clear exactly what is part of our culture and what isn't part of our culture.*

*It's just part of the 4-year cycle. We're at that point now, we've got no staff leaving us this year, which is amazing. Which is also wonderful because we are obviously doing it right. If they're not going anywhere, that's how I read into it. It's probably not, it's probably just systems and probably their lives but... so on the INSET as part of that cycle we're now back to behaviour again and it's right that we do it now because 'RP' started last September. How has that made a difference? What do we need to reflect? Do we need to tweak some of these questions? Does this need to develop? where do staff feel... and me talking about the importance of what a*

*welcoming and loving community is, what it means, because that's actually what we are, we are a caring community, where everyone is welcome.*

*And staff conduct in terms of being careful about what we say to children, and how we present ourselves, you know banter is the latest thing, about, you might have conversations, you don't know the situation that that child might have come from, so it's being really careful and very implicit about what's acceptable and what's not acceptable in line with the culture and the ethos. Of course staff induction is really important if we have new members of staff all of this is part of a pack they are given by a senior leader to read and then there's a follow up meeting to go through all of the aspects that form what this school looks like school bubble if you like when you sign up to work here this is what you can expect from us and this is what we expect of you so it's a clear partnership.*

**NP:** *Do you have a behaviour policy?*

I was interested in the aspects of the RJ framework that I am familiar with, that identify 'behaviour' on a continuum from punitive to permissive. These are the principles that I have understood to be important in relation to being firm but fair, and the social discipline window (McCold and Wachtel, 2003) has provided the theory to support that. How would Sue explain her approach to behaviour?

*Sue: It's not called behaviour we changed it, what's it called? I can't remember what we call it. It's not called a behaviour policy. We changed that name because we didn't like behaviour policy. I'll find it, but no we don't call it behaviour, because that is negative in itself. I can't for the life of me, it's gone out of my head.*

Sue found and shared with me their 'Behaviour Blueprint' (Appendix 'O').

**Sue:** *It incorporates behaviour, inclusion, rewards, you know, all the things, it's not just the sanctions. So, what we do to support children and bring them on. it's the stickers. it's the stamps. it's the verbal praise, all of those things. When I first came on board it was heavily weighted towards: 'first you do this' and 'then you get that', 'then we get parents in' 'then we...', which are all part of that and I get that, but*

*also, what are we doing to make these children feel welcome from the beginning, what are we doing to praise good behaviour, it is behaviour, I suppose, isn't it? But I didn't want this heavy, weighted towards the punitive, thou shalt not, sanctions, because it's got to be a bit of both.*

*I do think they need to know and be clear, about boundaries, what's acceptable and what is not acceptable in this community. But thinking about children, also with special educational needs, and children that are pupil premium, and children that are coming from vulnerable positions, they do still need a boundary, but it's also about a greater understanding about what that might mean for a vulnerable family, yeah, it's being much more careful about that.*

**NP:** *Do the expectations come out of the 'RP' process?*

**Sue:** *We have [an online behaviour management system] where we have what's called snapshots and the snapshot, it's basically a system of warnings. So verbal warnings and then it would be snapshot one. Snapshot one, so we would sit the child down and go on the system which is our behaviour log and we'll say exactly what's happened. It's got the response to that, who else was involved, but we fill that out with the child and we're able to see very clearly where they are on our system.*

*This is warning number one, this is now snapshot one, then this set of other warnings, then there's meeting with parents, if it's the same behaviour, so it's not necessarily if they have not finished their homework or... it's clearly defined what it is, what is a warning and what is not a warning.*

*The parents are met, and in that meeting, will be the class teacher, the child, which is really important and our home school support worker, and maybe the assistant head from that year group. But we want to keep it small and minimal at the beginning and then we set an expectation. Maybe setting targets, a couple of targets, maybe keep your hands and feet to yourself, and we bring that out from the children. What do you think is needed next? The 'RP' situation again, you know what happened, how are we going to repair this situation, what would help you in terms of support? Lunchtime stickers, do you want a phone call home at the end of the day or the week, 'bigging' you up, would you like a praise pad, you know what would you like to see? That's turned a lot of children's behaviour around, just by accentuating the positives, rather than the negatives. Actually, let's turn this round, I've got*

*kind hands and feet. It's just giving an alternative look, a fresh look at the same thing, but in a positive light. Glass half full, rather than glass half empty or glass full, never mind half full, that's been really helpful.*

*And then another parent meeting, to share this good stuff and by that time, you have found that on about 95% of children who have this are back on track.*

*Then you see you've already got that relationship with parents and it's much easier than to support that parent. We've had child, who was permanently excluded from the Infant School, who came to us when he missed the entire last summer term. So we had to do our transition by going into the home, making your relationship with that family. He's now got his EHCP [Education and Health Care Plan], we've got an ongoing relationship with an EP who has taken the reigns. All sorts of different things we've been able to offer that child.*

*He's the first child I've come across... he was diagnosed or partially diagnosed for PDA [Pathological Demand Avoidance] which I've never come across. I've come across children who are demand avoidant but actually... so he's in school now at the end of Year 5 going into Year 6. We managed to turn his behaviour around. I'm not saying it's been easy it's been hard but supporting him has been my life's work.*

*It's about our children who may be vulnerable and who could have in the old scheme of things, been classed as possible exclusion. We now have senior members of staff take an interest in that child and family. I've got a boy in Year 5 and I have a constant relationship. He comes here at lunchtime, he'll just poke his head around the door - can I have a cuppa? Yes, come in, let's have a cuppa. That's his signal to show me that he's having a bit of a wobble and then he'll say can we phone Mum? We have speakerphone conversations regularly with Mum - how are you feeling? A bit wobbly? And that's the word I use, the word blip, 'just having a blip', so that's that.*

*Then there's a little boy who my deputy head has taken on board, there's a little boy who my assistant head has taken on board... so all these children have named people who are their bridge between home and school.*

**NP:** *So those relationships start from the first indications on your system?*

**Sue:** *If it's flagged up on the system, that they get to warning three, I make it my business, to either get myself, or my deputy, or my assistant heads involved in the situation. Up until that point it has been class-based, still getting parents involved at a fairly early stage, because that's one of our earliest interventions. Is there something going on at home? Can we help? And my home school support worker is trained in a parenting programme, so maybe it is something that... maybe they need some help within parenting. Once they get a reward system in at home, that is linked to school, so that is one of the interventions that we do the home support worker will go to all SEN meetings.*

*We have 'AFM's which are Ambitious Future Meetings. All our pupil premium children have a meeting every term. A bit like the old SEN when they used to have their target meetings, well we still continue that process, we've never given that up, because there's a high proportion of children, that have behaviour, who have SEND as you know. And we do the same thing for our pupil premium children and also, we have something that we've invented in school that we call our 'halo children' as well. So, they're not pupil premium but we think they ought to be. For one reason or not, they're not on free school meals but they're still what we class as a vulnerable family. So we give them an ambitious future meeting as well. This is something we started three years ago, my deputy and I. The earlier you can intervene in these situations the better the outcome I'm convinced of that. The earlier that we can spot something, either a parent comes to tell us, yes there's an issue, or we have spotted something through our online system the better.*

*I've got three at the moment, two in Year 5 and one in year 3 who are 'bubbling', but we intervene with them on regular occasions to try and support them. It's an ongoing family relationship, it doesn't stop and start, being involved with those families, it's part of the jigsaw, but a really important part. Without that early intervention, that constant vigilance for children who are vulnerable, in terms of behaviour... and it fits again...*

*It's quite fascinating, isn't it, how just talking with you today, I was aware of all these things but actually now seeing it as plain as the nose on my face, there's that jigsaw, there's that jigsaw piece and they all fit together to make the culture. It's the culture jigsaw piece and without one aspect of it, it's not the same thing anymore, it needs all of those aspects. I could talk about it forever.*

At this point, we had been talking for an hour and a quarter and Sue needed to go to another appointment. She said that it had been really useful talking it through and how the conversation had helped her to clarify things. This consolidated my own thinking around building a shared understanding and how structured dialogue could facilitate that process.

I thanked her for sharing her story and shared with her how inspiring it was to hear someone talk so passionately about children. We agreed to remain in touch and this highlighted to me again, as with the parent, who I had spoken to for this research, how difficult it was to separate out the relationships in research.

Sue's school have now had two years with no fixed term or permanent exclusions.

### **7.2.3. Jessica's story of school exclusion - the SENCo**

This conversation took place with a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) at a primary school with 460 pupils (at the time of the conversation) in a small town in the East Midlands. The school had received a full Ofsted inspection in 2018 when it was graded 'Requires Improvement' in all areas. In 2020, the school was again inspected by Ofsted and rated 'Good' in all areas except 'Behaviour and Attitudes' where the rating remained at 'Requires Improvement'.

I have given the SENCo the pseudonym 'Jessica' (randomly generated). I re-visited ethics and the consent form and ensured that Jessica knew that the conversation was voluntary, and that she could stop at any point or withdraw from the process. We were in the SENCo's office which had two desks and a meeting table. We sat at the meeting table. I requested permission to record the conversation. Jessica was fine with this asked whether it was OK for a Teaching Assistant (TA) to come in to "do some admin" at some point. I stated that we would stop the conversation at that point. Jessica stated that



this would not be necessary as she was quite happy to continue. A little later in the conversation when talking about TAs, she stated about the TA that might come in to do admin:

**Jessica:** *I just have to be careful actually. I haven't said anything that I don't want her to hear but, she's a bit of a 'whitterer', so if she does come in, I might ask her to give us a few minutes.*

There were two or three knocks at the door from children but apart from these, the conversation continued uninterrupted.

I started by asking Jessica to give me a bit of background to her role as SENCo.

**NP:** *How long have you been a SENCo?*

**Jessica:** *My goodness, so I've been teaching 30 years and I started the SENCo role after 5 years. So, SENCo and inclusion and then went to some deputy head work and then dropped the SENCo, but there's always been a bit of inclusion in there all the way through. I wasn't necessarily the lead on that, because I had a different role as the assistant head, so quite a long time on and off.*

**NP:** *So, thinking about that experience, especially in relation to behaviour and the inclusion role, what do you think has changed in relation to the way that schools manage inclusion and exclusion?*

**Jessica:** *I think there's a lot, well I suppose it depends on the school you work in.*

**NP:** *That's interesting. So, what makes the difference?*

**Jessica:** *It **is** interesting because I've only worked in mainly three or four schools, but, for maybe less than a year, I worked for two days here alongside two days in a smaller village school. It's half the size of this school, but the behaviour concerns weren't as great in that school. So, the catchment area dictates what you're getting in obviously.*

*So, what we had at the other village school, where I was for 2 days, was the odd character and their behaviour tended to be more extreme because it showed up more compared to the other children who were sitting in class getting on with their work sensibly.*

*A school like this one, we are almost immune to it on a day-to-day basis. Where children would show those behaviours but we wouldn't exclude because that's just that level that we are used to dealing with, if that makes sense?*

**NP:** *In the other school would it have been lower-level behaviours that would have led to exclusion? What would have happened next, in terms of a child that was maybe disruptive in the class?*

**Jessica:** *Well at that school they were dead against exclusions, completely.*

**NP:** *Was that the Head?*

**Jessica:** *The Head, yes, and then it filters down to the Deputy, very much worked against exclusions, mainly. There were only two children who were displaying excludable type behaviours. One child was on a dual placement and eventually went to the special school so that child was almost, like, that's fine. The other child was worse in their behaviour in terms of hitting, kicking, punching, staff, but the Head refused to exclude and her view was that it wasn't going to benefit the child because the child actually wanted to go home. The child had attachment difficulties so that behaviour... the child was never excluded, I don't think the child was ever excluded, I can't quite remember if she was, but her behaviour was extreme.*

**NP:** *Was your role as SENCo in that school at that time?*

**Jessica:** *Well yes, inclusion.*

**NP:** *What did you feel about that?*

**Jessica:** *I felt that the child should have been excluded for the behaviours that she was exhibiting because you have a duty of care for your staff and the staff were covered in bruises, black and blue. The trouble was, the member of staff that was covered in bruises, black and blue, didn't want the child excluded either, but the rest of the staff were quite uptight and upset that actually this child they saw it as, she's getting away with it.*

*And that's not my view, that she's getting away with it, but actually at some stage you have to say to the parent that this is unacceptable behaviour, and to the child that this is unacceptable behaviour, because what happened with this child, she just escalated it and escalated it and escalated it.*

*Her behaviour, she started off just the odd kick and when she knew that she could just kick and there wasn't a... I'm not saying exclusions... the only consequences you can give when a child and the parent... when there was no sort of formal consequence... the child then started kicking repeatedly and then punching and literally this lady was covered in bruises.*

*Then, when we had the Educational Psychologist involved, the child proceeded to kick the Educational Psychologist and you think, well there's got to come a point in time when something more substantial is done in terms of consequences or some way of not just a consequence but trying to sort of say that this is. you don't hit and kick... we've got to try and do something.*

**NP:** *So, in that particular instance, how engaged was the parent or parents?*

**Jessica:** *I think in all fairness the school were frightened of the parent. The parent was very vocal, the parent dominated things. I think they were frightened of the repercussions of her 'you can't possibly exclude my child' and it was difficult. I'm not at that school now, obviously, I didn't last very long there I didn't like the whole set up of how it ran there.*

**NP:** *How did that make you feel in terms of your role?*

**Jessica:** *I felt very undermined, because what we had was... I thought quite highly of the Head actually I liked... there was the Head, the Deputy and then this, um, behaviour mentor, who was a TA and who wasn't trained in behaviour, but somehow acquired this role of behaviour mentor.*

*So, didn't have the skills, didn't have the knowledge, didn't have the understanding, and at that school it felt as if I was working for her [laugh]. It was quite frustrating, and she was so unskilled and because she was sort of feeding the Head... 'well I don't think this girl should be excluded' and she was the one covered in bruises, black and blue, all up and down her legs. I can understand one bruise, one bite, one something, but she was covered daily and laughed about it and would compare notes with the Deputy who actually had to step out of the situation because she became pregnant and she was on the receiving end of the kicks and punches.*

*And I said but I'm not going to be put in the firing line of the kicks and punches, because they were allowing it to happen. One of the strategies of the behaviour mentor... we'll just let her carry-on kicking until she stops. And I remember walking*

*past, they've got her in a room to calm down a bit like this one, but it was empty, but it had that window in the door. And I walked past and the behaviour mentor was being pushed into the glass by this little girl. And that's the level it got to, because there was not even... forget the exclusion... there was nothing else... the person wasn't trained enough to be able to... she was out of her depth. Gone off track a bit, but there you go. The person I took the role over from, obviously left and seemed quite happy with the setup. It was just... so, I'd come from a team at a previous school where staff are skilled, they were trained, to this behaviour mentor. How she got the role, I will never know, because she didn't have any skills or areas of expertise in that field.*

At this stage in the conversation I identified the 'shame affect' from Tomkin's theory of affect (see p.65 of this thesis and Nathanson, 1992) and that there was an interruption of 'positive affect' in Jessica's time at this school. My thinking in relation to questioning was that Jessica had felt undervalued and not listened to at that school and that it would help my understanding but also her understanding, if I helped her explore this in a bit more detail. I began to do this by asking about Jessica's relationships, as one of the adults in the school with responsibility for this child.

**NP:** *So, was it the fact that you couldn't have those conversations with her [the behaviour mentor] or was it that she went directly to the head or the deputy?*

**Jessica:** *I couldn't have really, had the conversations with her, because... no not really, I was only there two days a week anyway. It was very difficult to, there was lots for me to do when I got there. This is only one isolated case really, but I very much felt an outsider, coming in with a different viewpoint to what was going on at the school. I felt my views on how behaviour management should be, was not shared by the behaviour mentor and the Head and Deputy, so you know, I just thought, you know, it's easier if I just go.*

**NP:** *What happened with while you were there? Who had the conversations with the parent?*

**Jessica:** *The parent did come in because there was an EHA [Early Health Assessment] in place. EHAs were led by me and the head. This was in place for the child and the family,*

*because it was an awful situation with the family. Mum had four children and the girl was one of a twin and there were twin brothers, younger, and Mum obviously wasn't coping. But I think the main issue was that the people in school weren't taking charge of the situation and having control of it so that it went out of control.*

**NP:** *Did you ever have an opportunity to explain that to the school, to the Head or the Deputy?*

**Jessica:** *No*

**NP:** *Did you choose not to, or what?*

**Jessica:** *I would have done, right at the very end, just prior to me leaving. I think in the last week, just in the last week, we had Ofsted and that pretty much took over. And it was very difficult, because Ofsted came in, they were in for a day, or was it two days? The school was a 'Good' school. They had a massive turnover of staff though at the end of that year. I very much kept myself to myself.*

**NP:** *So, did it come out as a good school from that Ofsted?*

**Jessica:** *It did, it did, but I only know that a lot of the staff and parents made it known to the Inspector [Ofsted Inspector] that the behaviour management was not good at the school.*

*I wasn't asked my views by the Ofsted Inspector, although I would have supported the Head, that's my role. I wouldn't have, I wouldn't have... my job is to support her. So, I wouldn't have landed her in it. I would have supported her 100%, whether I agreed with it or not. But the behaviour mentor was interviewed by the Inspector and I was thinking, this is crazy. But I think the Head had put her up for it and kept me quiet, over 'the SENCo's not in today', I think, I'm guessing. It's just a bit odd that there were so many complaints about behaviour, but the Inclusion Lead wasn't spoken to, but the behaviour mentor was.*

**NP:** *Had you handed your notice in by then?*

**Jessica:** *Yes*

**NP:** *So, there was a parent survey done by Ofsted?*

**Jessica:** *Yes, it came back terrible.*

**NP:** And was that because a small number of children were having a big impact on the rest?

**Jessica:** I think some of it was that I think there was also a history of people not being happy. I think a lot of people we're not happy with this behaviour mentor role, because they could see that... because it was a one form entry school and a smallish school, the behaviour of the few, the minority, the real minority... because it is such a small school, no corridors, classrooms off the Hall, everybody knew what was going on. And with this child hitting and kicking, everyone knew, yes it happens, but you've got to do something about it. We all accept that children do that, they do that here, but it's how it's handled here, how it is managed.

**NP:** Were there any opportunities as a whole school or as a senior leadership team to discuss what was happening and how that could be changed?

**Jessica:** No not really, it was literally the head and the deputy. There was a senior leadership team, as such, there was me on there, another member of staff, but it was a strange school to work in. It was just a fixed mindset of this is how we do it and...

**NP:** So, the principle of, 'we will not exclude'?

**Jessica:** She did exclude, she did exclude the other child that ended up in special school. But this girl, who was Year 2 at the time, they didn't exclude because they didn't want her to go home because her the situation at home wouldn't help the child.

Mum was a bit... not coping brilliantly... she still fed and clothed the child, she did all the physical things that you need... but the child wanted to spend more time with Mum and they said, well if we exclude, she's getting what she wants. But they just didn't take it seriously. This child was literally kicking and punching.

**NP:** Did the parent ever say anything about it?

**Jessica:** No, she didn't seem that fazed by it, because she did it to her Mum. And the boys were younger, they were in Reception.

**NP:** Thank you for that. Can you tell me what's different here? Because I understand that you still have some very challenging children and more of them?

**Jessica:** *Far more here, far more challenging.*

**NP:** *What makes a difference?*

**Jessica:** *People who are skilled in dealing with this, definitely. Since I've come here we've put into place behaviour support plans for high priority children....*

*So, we've got nine or ten behaviour support plans in place for children across the school. So, we've categorised children into stage one, two, three or four, so we can also get a feel for what the class is like.*

*So, if you've got the majority of children in your class who are at stage one, which is what you want your child to be... so stage one is a well-behaved child, who comes to school, like I would have been when I was younger, I would have been that child, that comes in, tries hard and goes home and does her homework.*

*Stage two, is the child that occasionally does the odd little thing but is easily bought back in.*

*Stage three is where you've got more of a concern about behaviour, maybe that's when you invite parents in, put them on a little chart. It's more disruptive, but it's manageable.*

*And then we've got some children at stage four, who are at risk of exclusion because of their behaviour. So we put a support programme around those children in terms of the behaviour support plan, which we put in place through me, class teacher, the TA and involve parents and the child. Less so for the child because the plan is for the adults.*

I was interested in exploring the involvement of the adults and was ready with a clarifying question, but as Jessica reflected on her response, she identified an aspect of this herself and continued without prompting:

**Jessica:** *Interesting, we had an incident yesterday where one of our children in Year 4, he is on a behaviour support plan. And one of the things on his plan, is that he has to have one to one support at morning break because he just doesn't cope. And he went out yesterday break time, morning break and the teacher on duty came in really unhappy - Year 5 teacher - really unhappy because she'd been hit repeatedly by this child on the arm. He'd gone out with a tennis ball and*

*was lobbing the tennis ball at the wall really hard. And she said to him you know you need to stop doing that. He [the child] said to the teacher I want you to clear this space so that I can play ball. He's autistic and she said, 'well, we can't do that, because it's a free playground and actually you're not allowed tennis balls outside. You can only have these foam balls that are provided by the school'. He refused to give it to her, carried on lobbing it as hard as he could, he's quite powerful, if you like and aiming it at the children, at the wall. He lobbed it another time and it bounced towards the teacher on duty, and she caught it on the rebound. So of course, you've got it, so she kept it. Well, red rag to a bull, he went over, 'give me my ball back', 'well it's not safe' da da da, 'I need to keep hold of it, I'll give it back at the end', 'you're not my Mum, you can't tell me what to do, give me my ball back' and then just proceeded to whack her on the arm repeatedly.*

*She was really unhappy, because he hurt her, and it wasn't just a slap, he was hitting her really hard. The Head and I met with her, and she was really unhappy, as staff would get, because they've been attacked. 'What's going to be done about it?' So, I said I need to look into what has happened because on his behaviour support plan, it says that he should have one to one support. So, we said, well where was his support? She was in the staff room having a cup of tea. Why was she, you know... and so take it back.*

*If that support had been in place, that wouldn't have happened, because she would have frisked him before he went out, got the tennis ball, because she's got that relationship with him, where she could have got it off him and said, 'we'll do a 5 minute at the end of the day with the tennis ball, don't tell anyone', or some joke, because he's also got PDA as well, so she knows how to handle him.*

*So, when the Head and I we're chatting about it and saying, if the support had been in place, we've identified he needs that, we are at fault, if the lady had gone out with him, we know that wouldn't have happened. So, under any other circumstances, that would have led to a formal exclusion for attacking a member of staff quite violently. But the Head and I felt we couldn't do that.*

**NP:** *How did the conversation pan out with that member of staff who was hurt?*



**Jessica:** *I met with her, she understood, fortunately, I get on well with her and she understood. And I said look we can't exclude him because Mum is one of these parents, she's part of the plan, she helped create the plan, she knows that we have to go by the plan. She knows that we are a mainstream school and that sometimes things don't always go according to the plan.*

*But I had to ring Mum as well and explain what had happened. Because we always do a reflective conversation with a child. And I have to tell her that there's going to be a consequence and what he's done. so that she can she wants to know so that the child knows that school and home are working together. So I thought, how am I going to... Mum will know straight away. That the support wasn't out there and she would not support, I wouldn't support the exclusion, she won't support it, she'd appeal it because it's on the plan.*

*I did speak to the class teacher and said, look I know you've been hurt, I'm really sorry, but somewhere along the line somebody is at fault. They haven't gone out. And then we had to have the conversation with the TA who hadn't gone out.*

**NP:** *And how did she respond?*

**Jessica:** *Not very responsibly actually. She was 'Oh I didn't know I had to go out'. But we're having that in this school. For a long time, the TAs here have had an easy ride, if you like... there's no like... and we're pulling them up on things. So she knows, she knows she's done wrong.*

This part of the conversation continued to interest me in relation to my understanding of the 'shame' affect in Tomkins' Theory of Affect (p.65 in this thesis). Within this 'conflict', it was the behaviour of the Teaching Assistant that was being addressed.

I was also conscious that I needed to allow Jessica to reflect and not lead the conversation with my questions. I broadened the conversation out to challenging behaviour and how dealing with this was managed with staff and parents/carers. Jessica began with the ideas that she had initiated in relation to TAs. First, she highlighted that she had only been at this current school for under two years and that only recently had she been working full time in the role. She had taken over from a

SENCo, who had also been a full-time class teacher, and she recognised that this was very challenging:

**NP:** *You talked about the relationships and that you've noticed differences between the different settings that you've been in, in the way in which things are done by the adults? In terms of those high expectations if an adult doesn't live up to those... can you explain this a bit more?*

**Jessica:** *Yes. The TAs at my previous school, they were really all on board. They knew that they had to get this done, this done, they were very proactive, and there's a lot of complacency here, with some of the staff who haven't had that sort of... the SENCo here before me, it wasn't his fault, he was class based. He only had, I don't know what time he had out of class, but there's no way that he could have done the job. He was doing the best he could. He's since left and I've come in, but I'm not class based so I've got the chance to do more. The difference I see with the TAs, compared to my previous school, it's really quite large.*

*They are very aware that they haven't been asked to do certain things in previous years, so I've started to lead, for the last year, TA meetings. Whereas in my other school, everybody would have just turned up because that's the expectation you just turn up if there's a TA meeting you just turn up. And here, I went to the first one and I had a register that they ticked off their names, so I knew everyone had the same message and it was almost like... 'oh so and so says she can't come.' Well first of all, that person hasn't come and spoken to me, why can't you come, nothing so important in school day that you can't leave your class for half an hour. And it's just that sort of sloppiness, no tightness around it.*

*My first TA meeting here, when I first joined the school, I sat opposite one TA and she just sat, like that [arms folded] staring at me. And I thought, I'm not used to this, you know you're used to people being professional.*

*Now that I've had regular TA meetings with them, about a couple of months ago I introduced them to training to create greater independence. So some children are demanding so much time and expecting you to sit next to them, so I said we've got to move away from that because that's not healthy to have a TA stuck to you. That's why I thought it was funny that one TA sent her apologies via somebody else because she couldn't come because she couldn't leave her one-to-one child. I thought that's quite ironic because that's exactly what*

*this meeting is all about. I'd ask them to go away and do some reflection sheets when they're working with a child. They just had to tick off what sort of questioning or what prompts they were giving. You'd think I'd asked them to write a 10,000-word essay... 'oh I haven't possibly got time'. They are so set in their old ways, where there's no rigour, and this is what you are expected to do. Then when I suggested that we do peer to peer reviews, oh my goodness, 'oh no'... they were all... never done it before, so they were really... I can understand they were nervous and apprehensive, so I've actually left that.*

**NP:** What do you think underpins that nervousness of peer-to-peer feedback?

**Jessica:** *Well, either they don't want to be exposed, because I know we've got some weak ones, or they are just feeling a bit out of their depth, because they've just never done... they just come into their class, they do what they are comfortable with, what they know and now I'm asking them to do a little bit more. It's met with a bit of resistance. I just know full well that if I had told a TA at the previous place...*

At this point in our conversation, the TA comes into the room.

**Jessica:** *Would you just, I've got to talk about a few general things would you mind if we had just 15minutes?*

**TA:** *No, no probs.*

**Jessica:** *Is that all right? Bless you, thank you. [TA leaves room]*

*I just have to be careful actually I haven't said anything that I don't want her to hear but she's one of the TAs and she's a bit of a bit of a whitterer.*

Jessica continues on her previous point...

**Jessica:** *It's made me realise that I can't presume that it's going to happen. I'm going to have to be more explicit in the future, because I'm almost running with what I'm used to at my previous school and expecting it here.*

*I know full well that if I've got a behaviour support plan in place at my previous school and I had said to the TA, 'right you need to be out every-day 1:1 it would have happened. Here she's having a cup of tea and not realising the actual importance of... she's probably thinking 'oh I'll get away with*

*having a cup of tea they're not support my child and it's that level of... the difference.*

*When I first came here, they've not had TA meetings before so obviously they were a bit either didn't turn up or 'sorry I'm late' and strolling in, sitting down and having a chat. The Head said he'd speak to them and I said, 'no it's fine, I can deal with it'. But every fresh year in September, start as you mean to go on, isn't it? If you re interviewed our team of TAs, a quarter you wouldn't re employ, because they're just not up to the job.*

I was interested to understand how Jessica interpreted and shared her understanding of this in relation to Kim Chan and Mauborgne's (2003) idea of 'fair process' that also forms part of the RJ framework. The three key principles of engagement, explanation and expectation clarity (Kim Chan and Mauborgne, 2003 & p.84 of this thesis) seemed to be key principles to ensuring that the learning came from the 'break duty' incident with one TA and the meetings and training for all the TAs.

**NP:** *And do you think, even with additional training, they wouldn't be up to the job?*

**Jessica:** *There is potential for some of them, yeah, but the ones I'm thinking of in my head, they come in, they do the job, they are not passionate about it, it's a job. And I think you have to really like children and want to make a difference, but there are some really good ones, here, really, really, good ones. Like the lady that didn't go out on break duty, she's a really good one, she works really well with that child, she really can get him round when he's on one. So, you think, oh that's so disappointing.*

**NP:** *Do you feel having had the conversation She understands what went wrong and she knows what she needs to do, and she also feels that it was right for her to be 'called out' on that behaviour?*

**Jessica:** *Yeah, yeah.*

**NP:** *Do you know if there was any discussion about it with the child?*

**Jessica:** No, I think Mum might have spoken to the child about it at home last night but no. That's an interesting point isn't it, whether anybody said anything to him about his support not actually being there? But I think we were trying to cover it up at the time so it didn't get back home to Mum. [laughter]

At the other school I was at before I came here, [this is a school previous to the village school talked about in relation to the behaviour mentor] there was a very, very, consistent approach. So, if a child did this, then it was always followed up in some way, and it was a different catchment area, but we had more parental back up at that school. It was similar, the amount of problems that we had there, but the parents were much more on board, whereas here, the parents are less engaged.

This opened an opportunity to talk about relationships with parents and school exclusion.

**NP:** So how important do you think those relationships with parents are?

**Jessica:** Well yes, the 9 or 10 children that we've got on behaviour support plans we've got some parents like this one [parent of the 'break duty incident' child] that I had to ring yesterday who comes in. We meet every four weeks, just to look at the plan and check everything's in place. Because we tweak it all the time, it's a working document basically, and she is really great, because she actually helped us put the plan together with loads of strategies.

Because she's one of those Mums, she's proactive at home, she really cares about her child. She's just one of those Mums who would be like me or you if you're a Mum, you know would be putting our child first. So, she came up with loads of strategies for us, loads that work for her at home, and so she was really part of the plan. So she knows the plan inside out and we can work with her, because she was really important in creating that plan. So she's a bit too familiar, she says in emails hi 'Jessica', Hello again. [laughter]

But we've got other children on plans, where the parents just don't, there's no back up from home at all. And that's really hard, because she will follow through consequences at home you see, so I was really cross yesterday because this happened at morning break and he hit somebody. Even though he hadn't got his support, he still did the hitting, so

*there has to be a consequence. We couldn't exclude because that wouldn't have been right, but you had to have a consequence, so I said, well it's got to be immediate, it's got to be today. And they were all going up to the field in the afternoon, his class, I think no another class were going up the fields to do PE. And the child had been asked to go and help as part of the normal thing that he's been doing the last few weeks, because the end of term is quite difficult for him. So, I said, well he won't go to that, he'll have to stay here and do something else, but he won't be allowed to go up to the field.*

*So I was on the phone to Mum explaining that he would have to have a consequence and she's straight away said well where was his support at playtime. And I had to tell a little fib because I couldn't say she was having a cup of tea in the staff room because that would make us look incompetent and really not good at all. I had to do a little story saying she turned her back for a minute and it all happened. And I thought she's not stupid she knows I'm telling a little 'porky-pie' here but obviously we won't be excluding him but he will have a consequence and he will have to miss his time up at the field and she said that's fine, I totally agree, he needs a consequence and I'll reinforce that at home.*

*So you get that and it's great, she'll have a conversation with him at home and then we start afresh the next day and that was agreed with the TA that she was going to make sure that he didn't go up to the field and then 10 minutes later I went to check that he was OK because Mum had said that he might kick off so I went to go and check and heard that the whole of the year group had gone up to the field and it wasn't possible for him to stay back. No one had taken the decision, or followed it through, that he has to stay behind. So, he'd gone up and it was too late for me to go and get him because if I had then gone and got him from the field in front of all his year group I would have had another problem on my hands so I had to let it go.*

*Then I had to say to Mum he has gone up to the field so she had to do the consequences at home, which is not ideal because home's home, school's school. But she supported us in that way but half the other children on plans we haven't got that parental back up at all and so it's quite difficult to... we don't want to exclude but the other consequences don't have much impact because the parents aren't following it through and the child doesn't feel remorseful to the parent.*

*There are a few who are just, they're on child protection, so they are really quite hard to reach parents, they're so troubled themselves, they are really difficult ones and their children are more difficult to turn their behaviour around.*

*Where we've got a supportive Mum like the child from yesterday it's so much easier to create the plan to keep it in place. In fact I'm meeting Mum again tomorrow to finish off the year – 'is the plan okay?' 'Right we'll run with this from September', we scribble on it and amend it.*

**NP:** *Are all the children you have on behaviour plans at risk of exclusion?*

**Jessica:** *Maybe two thirds are at risk of exclusion, so five or six of them are at highest risk of exclusion.*

**NP:** *And of those, how many of them would you say the parents are engaged with the school?*

**Jessica:** *I'll have a look I've got the plans here. Well here's one, he's on a dual placement in a special school. He's been excluded no end of times, part time timetable, Mum for that one struggles herself, but she attends meetings. She almost doesn't feed into the plan, because she hasn't really got many strategies herself, but she will come to meetings and talk to him. She's not as supportive as the parent from yesterday but she's quite supportive.*

*I'm just going to look through the plans that we've got. Yeah, that's another one where there's no support from home. She's, 'oh I don't know what to do with him at home, he's just the same at home.' Older siblings are just the same, she's got no control of them at home. That's a really sad case that one, no support at home at all. In fact that's a really sad case that child, that's a really difficult case, because there's lots of issues there, safeguarding wise. If anything, the disengagement from the child is in school and life in fact. He sent the Head a card today, a homemade card saying, 'thank you for being by my side through everything I've been through.' You think you're nine, you shouldn't have had to have been through anything, bless him.*

**NP:** *Of the nine or ten on behaviour plans, how many are boys?*

**Jessica:** *All of them, all of them, every single one of them. They're all boys, all boys, either with a diagnosis or with a really troubled home life.*

**NP:** *and the diagnosis... what sorts of diagnosis?*

**Jessica:** *ASD [Autism Spectrum Disorder] ADHD [Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder] PDA [Pathological Demand Avoidance] or traits of and the other boys are... one is adopted and recent bereavement of his adopted mum, really sad, so he is all over the place, and the others are just really troubled, sad home lives.*

**NP:** *In terms of those with a diagnosis, did they come to the school with the diagnosis?*

**Jessica:** *No, not necessarily.*

**NP:** *So has it been challenging behaviour within the school that has led to a discussion with outside agencies, or a discussion with the parents maybe, checking this out with the GP or... ?*

**Jessica:** *Because I've not been here that long and only here 2 days to start with, so they're more recent diagnoses. It has taken a while, but with a little boy yesterday, he's only just recently been diagnosed with ASD, but I wouldn't say any of our strategies have changed since the diagnosis, because we always knew this was going to be the outcome.*

**NP:** *Were you involved in terms of that diagnosis, in terms of the information that went back to the GP?*

**Jessica:** *Yes, one of the little boys that's on a dual placement at the minute, he's been diagnosed with ADHD, but you think, oh there's more to it than that and he's still on the pathway for possible ASD as well and it just seems to be taking a while to get these diagnoses.*

*I do sometimes feel, I'm not medical at all, but sometimes when ADHD is diagnosed, and he was medicated, and it had no impact at all, and they've tweaked his medication, and they've changed his medication, and all his issues were still there. You're thinking, I'm not sure this is right, there must be something else. But I think, attachment as well, is a big issue with some of these children that are on these behaviour plans.*

**NP:** *The increased understanding of some of these issues by both school staff and parents and carers... because you can 'Google it', or you can look it up. Do you think that has an impact on how the adults seek to understand behaviours?*



**Jessica:** *Yeah, and mainly in a positive way, but I do think there is a negative side to it as well, because some of our parents, where there is a diagnosis, use that as an excuse.*

*I say to them, well OK your child's been diagnosed with ADHD, so they are more likely to do this or this or this, but they've got to work twice as hard to try and function in society. So, some of our parents would say, 'he's autistic so he's going to do that', and it's then saying, well they can sit back and say well he's autistic so that's why he's like that.*

Jessica then talked about transition into the school and onwards to secondary school and how she is beginning some work with parents and carers to "prioritise" transition for certain children. I asked her how they prioritised children and she stated that this was based on "behaviour or slow progress in learning". I was interested to find out a little more about how they worked in partnership for the transition of their children at highest risk from exclusion especially when they transitioned on to secondary education.

**NP:** *Do you do some transition for the nine or ten on the behaviour plans going on to secondary school?*

**Jessica:** *It's very different at the secondary, because the wrap around care that we give here, they just don't give... We've got one child, current Year 6 going into Year 7 who is on a behaviour plan. Unfortunately, he is a school refuser at the moment, so the plan hasn't been successful at the moment. But there's more to it than that there's environmental issues, ridiculous environmental issues, you know where the child is just not attending school, so the plan is for when the child is in school.*

**NP:** *So, do you think that there's nothing more you can do as a school?*

**Jessica:** *There's a high level EHA in place, so we've got everybody involved over this last year, and it's just unfortunate that he, well, very unfortunate that he is not attending school and is refusing to go to secondary school. Sad, really sad, but that's not to do with the failure of the plan, it's to do with a very dysfunctional home life. He just spends all day in bed. We all say we think he's depressed, we're trying to get parents to take him to the GP, but there*

*are so many issues, he is overweight, family issues are awful...*

There was a knock at the door and some children wanted to see Jessica. She said that she would come and find them later. I used the interruption as an opportunity to ask a further point of clarification around the wider staff knowledge of the diagnoses and issues at home that might impact on the understanding of challenging behaviour in the school setting.

**NP:** *You mentioned earlier that with a diagnosis of ASD, ADHD or PDA, some of your parents would say 'he's autistic so he's going to do that' and then 'sitting back' and accepting that as being outside their control. Do you think the staff do that as well?*

**Jessica:** *Um... [long pause]*

**NP:** *The reason I'm asking that is because how do the adults in school get to understand the reasons behind the behaviour in a school setting? I know it's not just in the school setting, but quite often that's where it becomes most noticeable and a problem. So, do you think that does underpin the thinking of school staff?*

**Jessica:** *Yeah, I mean definitely. The staff here have got a generally good understanding of additional needs, but there is definitely loads more work that needs to be done in terms of what needs to be put in place to support these children. One thing I have just set up is, we've got groups, we've got quite a big team of TAs, about twenty.*

*So, what I've set up is with twenty odd TAs, I've got groups of TAs. So, I've got a team of four or five of them looking at communication and interaction so that area of SEND. So, the idea being that we work together, we upskill everybody and then they filter that out across the rest of the school, because when I came here what I found was that I was literally doing everything. I'm trying to make sure that that child had what they needed in class, and then that child over there, and then when there are 460 children, I know they're not all SEN, but seventy on the register, plus, plus, plus...*

*It's so difficult to make sure that this child has got a workstation or that child a pen grip and so the idea is that I'm not going to carry on going like this permanently. I've got*

*this group for example who are going to look at ASD and within the Year groups, make sure that, so we've got the teams now... So I've got a team for SEMH [Social Emotional and Mental Health] as well. So how they got into those teams in the first place was, I said to them either it's an area you feel quite skilled at already or it's an area that you want to develop. Give me your first and second choices and I'll put you in a team and it's worked out quite well actually. I've got a spread, with cognition and learning, across the board but that's what I want to be able to say is for example 'oh TA 1 there's a new child in Year 3, they are autistic, can you make sure that they've got everything in place that they need.' She'll go in, sort it all out and I can get on with...*

**NP:** *So how does that make those individuals feel?*

**Jessica:** *Well we haven't quite started it yet. We'll start in September.*

**NP:** *Do you think that has a positive impact then on their skill levels and their sense of purpose?*

**Jessica:** *Yes, definitely, and also, they've tried and tested it, so they can say. 'well I've tried'. The majority of them opted for something that they are currently... that they currently do. For example, somebody is in the ASD team because they currently work with a child with ASD. So, they already feel, well I've tried that and I can tell someone else how to do that.*

I linked into the ideas around the social discipline window (p.82 of this thesis) - high expectations and high support and working 'with' people - to understand a little more about the culture and ethos that Jessica was referring to. I asked Jessica:

**NP:** *What is it, between the different settings that you've been in, that makes the most difference in the way in which things are done by the adults?*

**Jessica:** *There has to be a consistent approach from everybody, which is with everything, and really high expectations across the board with everything to do with school life. With the consistency, that's part of the reason why we put these behaviour plans in place, because of these 'Top 10' children. What you say to one, you can't say it to the other, or how you say it to one, you can't say it to the other. And it's making everybody understand that inclusion is not about treating everybody the same. It's getting, you know,*

*'he shouldn't speak to me like that', well actually he does, because you know what I'm trying to say? I just think it's about everything in the school, about having just that one consistent approach from everybody, so the children know exactly where they are and where they stand. If I do this with this teacher or this teacher, it is the same, if that makes sense?*

**NP:** *In terms of those high expectations, that will be different for different children. You've talked a bit about the planning with parents but, how do you communicate what those expectations are to staff, so that it's understood, that it's consistent to meet the children's needs?*

**Jessica:** *At an individual level the behaviour plans have been shared with all staff but what we have noticed this year is obviously if that child is not in your class you're less likely to read the plan because you think 'oh he's not mine, he's not even in my year group.' But it's getting the message across actually you might come across this child on break duty, you might come across this child storming into your PE lesson.*

*The Head, the Deputy and myself sit down and look at (progress) scales ready for September and who's best with who and then we map it all out.*

*I've not been here that long, but I think that the Head has lots of plans for September for tightening things. I know it sounds silly, but when I came here just watching the children walk around the school was sloppy compared to what I'd come from, where the children were picked up if they were running. Whereas here, it was almost... not ignored, the Head doesn't ignore it, but other staff would not be walking on the left, well actually they're just walking together.*

*I'm not saying my previous school was wonderful, but everybody was from the same starting point, not starting point, everybody was 'singing from the same hymn sheet' really, and it was consistent, so it bought everything up. There were certainly lots of behaviour problems, but it just felt more, there was more structure in place. So, I'm just trying to put layers in at the minute and it's starting to have a bit of an impact, but I suppose it's a long way to go.*

*We've got old lunchtime supervisors, you know, who are grumpy and moany. They are ones that have been here for years. And I know a lot of schools have gone away from employing lunchtime supervisors on their own, having TAs*

*that flow into lunchtime, don't they? But here, they're very much, they come in for their hour, and then they go home again, and they're not really part of the school, but they cause a lot of problems at lunchtime. 'what do you think you're doing', you know what I mean, and then we get escalated behaviours and it's just oh... sorting it all out when they come back in from lunch break.*

There is a knock at the door and Jessica speaks to some children who have come to talk to her. She states that she will see them later. When we then get back to talking, Jessica asks me about RP and stated that they were just about to introduce it at "the school I wasn't keen on", just as she was leaving, and they wanted it "as a whole school approach".

**NP:** *Were they introducing some training?*

**Jessica:** *No, the Head just did a staff meeting on it I think. But her staff three quarters of them left at the end of that year, which is a shame really.*

**NP:** *What did they say, if you remember, what restorative practices was?*

**Jessica:** *She printed off some little cards, in terms of questioning to the children, so the victim the perpetrator, and there was a series of questions that you would ask each child.*

I explained my background in RJ and RP and Jessica asked me some questions about it. The conversation ended at this point and I thanked her for her time and left her with contact details in case she had any questions at a later stage.

### **7.3. Summary**

In the conversations with adults experiencing school exclusion, I had used the model of RJ explained to me in 1996 by O'Connell (see chapter 3, p.85 of this thesis) as my framework for the discussions. As I applied for doctoral studies with research questions that had been highlighted by the findings from my previous research (2011 and 2013), my own 'taken for granted' ideas of what RJ meant, led to a

bias and possibly defensiveness around the core principles that I believed 'worked' in practice. I had trained and practiced this model for over twenty years and had become immersed in this community of practice. As a result, I had become unaware of the impact that this was having on my identity and practice. It was also a conscious acknowledgement of insecurities from previous postgraduate studies in the early 1990s where I had been told by a supervisor that my fieldwork did not answer by research questions and I would fail if I submitted. Ellis (1999) has acknowledged the vulnerability experienced by the autoethnographer in revealing themselves and "of not being able to take back what you've written or having any control over how readers interpret it".

Brown (2012) states that there is no courage without vulnerability. She states that her research into vulnerability and shame has identified three core concepts of vulnerability - uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure. In relation to the development of my own identity as bona fide 'researcher' this research thesis was also addressing the negative 'affect' of shame and vulnerability that I associated with the research process.

These feelings of vulnerability as a researcher influenced my approach to the 'fieldwork' that I had begun to argue would help me answer the research questions, exacerbated when my own influence appeared to impact on the participants of what was planned as a pilot study and led to the withdrawal of consent (see chapter 4 p.93). The analysis of my 'findings' has also been influenced by these emergent self-revelations, taking place as I carried out the research and engaged in writing this thesis. There is now, a conscious bias (rather than previously being unconscious) that has become visible to me in relation to the explicit framework of RJ, the restorative questions developed by O'Connell (O'Connell, 2015; 2005) and my own interpretations and motivations in relation to RJ in the school exclusion process.

Although the identification of Hanna, Sue and Jessica, as participants for this study, came about through purposive sampling (p.104) my approach to each of the conversations focused on building relationships with each of them, to engage and develop a shared understanding of their experiences. I related to my own experiences as a teacher, parent and SENCo to empathise and provide a safe environment in which all three felt comfortable and able to self-reflect and share some difficult emotions. Each of them reflected on their self-identity and the stories that lay behind their experiences of exclusion.

Relationships are at the heart of every stage of this research process. They impact on the degree to which I can claim to have addressed the research questions and my own contributions to knowledge in the field of RJ and research methodology. The latter is discussed more fully in chapter 9. The next 'conversation' with the RJ pioneer O'Connell, involves the closest personal relationship and thus has the potential for much more evocative and emotive autoethnography (Allen-Collinson and Hockey, 2008) but also the potential for greater bias or 'blind spots' (Wagner, 2010). Both parts of the conversation are revealed in more detail to make the 'self' more visible to the reader.

## **CHAPTER 8: THE STORY OF A RJ PIONEER**

### **8.1. Introduction**

The opportunity to meet and have a conversation with the RJ pioneer, Terry O'Connell for this research, arose when he visited the UK in July 2019. This conversation had been arranged in conjunction with O'Connell's visit to consult and train on RJ with a police force in the East Midlands. There were many similarities to the experience that had taken place in the late 1990's when O'Connell had been asked to visit and train the police force that I had been part of in TVP.

As with the stories of the other participants in this research, my own commentary or discussion provides the rationale behind my line of questioning and explains some of my reflections that were not discussed at the time. There is a greater emphasis on the 'auto' of autoethnography in this conversation because of the longstanding relationship with O'Connell and his model of practice and the potential for my own bias in the way in which I told my story. I sought to understand how O'Connell's thinking around the RJ framework had changed since he first introduced the ideas in the UK in the 1990s and how that influenced and impacted on my own thinking and development. These aspects of the conversation are the ones included but further examples and details of the broader conversation can be seen at Appendix 'P'

### **8.2. Déjà Vu?**

The foundations of this research thesis are built on the impact that this particular model of RJ and the pioneer who introduced it to me have influenced my own careers in policing and education and how my own reflections and the stories of others can build a greater understanding



of exclusionary practice relating to young people and how we might more effectively address the long-term harm that this can cause.

When O'Connell introduced the model to TVP, research evidence highlighted the positive outcomes that this model of practice had for both victims and offenders in police cautions (Hoyle et al, 2002) and internally to TVP when used as a model of practice for police complaints and grievances (Dobry,2001). Dobry stated that:

"The Thames Valley project has already shown us two important things. Firstly, the face-to-face meeting of complainant and officer in what we call a "conference", using a clearly structured but flexible model to work through and resolve conflict is central to its success. It deals with emotion in a way that a more formal and separate process cannot. Secondly the application of Restorative Justice to the police or indeed any complaint process, will only work to its full potential if the restorative approach is endemic to the organisation as a whole. It is not enough to superimpose a process designed for victims and offenders onto complainants and officers. The restorative approach must be integrated into the fabric of the organisation, into the management and culture of the individual police force and its officers" (p.54).

Those researching restorative cautioning in TVP (Hoyle et al, 2002) found that the model of practice produced positive outcomes across a range of measures. The authors stated in their conclusions:

"Restorative cautioning can be seen as having achieved a remarkable degree of success. Participants generally see it as fair, and believe, with good reason, that it is successful in most of its short-term aims. After the event they remain broadly positive and a substantial minority report longer term benefits. The degree of support for restorative cautioning may grow still further if our finding that restorative cautioning appears to have a significantly greater impact on re-offending than old-style cautioning enters the public consciousness" (p.66).

Clamp and Patterson (2016) highlight that what had become so successful in relation to restorative policing in TVP in the late 1990s,

"came to a somewhat of an abrupt end in the early 2000s... when targets became the dominant external factor that informed the sociocultural context of policing" (p.60).

They state that the ultimate impact was to severely curtail "restorative policing practice and police officer discretion". My own experience was that this period of time also coincided with the departure of the Chief Constable who had championed RJ in policing and the arrival of a new Chief Constable with a different set of priorities.

As this was the first time that O'Connell had returned to the UK to deliver an input to an English police force since his experiences with TVP, I began the conversation with an exploration of this and his thinking.

**NP:** *Is this visit a bit of déjà vu Terry, in terms of policing and restorative justice?*

**TO'C:** *Now what's interesting about that, is to read between the lines, and reading between the lines, is the bit that says what is it about restorative that appeals to cops? And when you see the treatment by a whole load of cops, it's that wide or it's that narrow. In other words, the constant in all of it, is the dialogue, and the dialogue is compelling, because it doesn't matter how you misconstrue it, it still draws people into a space and as a result of that the whole affectivity is the stuff that makes it worthwhile.*

*In other words, the police officer, you know, in his or her daily activity needs sustenance, which is an emotional connection to offset all the really difficult times. Otherwise you can't sustain yourself. You know it's a bit like what they're doing with this response policing, they've taken the relationship out of policing and they just struggled, they can't work it out, so the question you ask, is really central to everything we are talking about. It is to really understand what is it about this thing called restorative, that is finely attenuated to this thing called relationships.*

*That's the thing that struck me from the 'go-getter' when I was developing this stuff I realised very quickly that this was different. So, it is déjà vu, but what I've done is, I've come full circle and then realised that I actually needed to be very conscious of where I started. It was not about restorative, but it was about engaging a group of police officers to think*

*about, if we connected, to what extent do we share a common vision and belief and to what extent do we reflect that in terms of what we do?*

*You see, what's interesting is that everyone I've asked over the last week about motivation, comes from a place where they are interested in making a difference okay. Now, here's the dilemma, they then get 'cultured' into a process that blurs the line around what a 'difference' is because it's driven by a whole lot of other imperatives, outputs rather than outcomes, and the human motivation which was very explicit about wanting to make a difference gets confused or lost in the noise. And that's where the processes of policing which are not about developing critique and rigour, collegiality and collaboration, failed badly.*

*Despite the fact, that most attempt to do the best they can, the idea of being fair and respectful is crucial to that, it's dispiriting, it's discouraging, particularly when policing in this day and age has become so over engineered and data driven that it's not sustainable.*

**NP:** *Can I just make the comparisons then into schools and exclusion of young people from schools, in terms of, there is a parallel there, in that schools are very data driven now. What are the pressures on school staff, and the pressures on parents to a certain degree, working within that context of progress and achievement of certain results? Do you think that that pits the adults against each other in the school context?*

**TO'C:** *Invariably it does, it heightens their vulnerability because the imperative is built around compliance and there's such a disconnect. Now here's the difficulty. It always struck me that when I was developing this stuff and I introduced it to schools, there was immediate interest and take up on it. It struck me that what happened was, this is part of the evolution of policing and teaching and all the rest of it, what happened that caused teachers to segment and compartmentalise behaviour from a foundation on which teaching and learning is built, is relationships?*

*The issues about behaviour, you know, are a crucial part of the whole learning and yet the majority of approaches that are used to manage behaviour failed those tests and what struck me, of all of the professions that I worked with, turn to and think in terms of pedagogy rigour and explicitness, teaching would be one that actually just saw that*

*relationships were a fundamental foundation for all teaching and learning.*

*And yet, it's been drafted into a system where the preoccupation is, which has happened more generally too, is servicing systems so driven by the wrong imperatives you know. So, the issue is about connection. And to make it worse, we've introduced these arbitrary measures of literacy and numeracy, that actually tell you absolutely nothing, but are seen as the measures by which schools are seen as successful or failures.*

*So, what you end up doing is building in a whole load of constructs that generate a whole load of negative 'affects' that heighten vulnerability and that is the antithesis of what's needed in collaborative strong approaches.*

**NP:** *Can I just clarify, is that for the adults, or the whole community?*

**TO'C:** *No, the whole community. You see here's my take on this. If I look at the exemplars that I've been involved with, which is an aged care facility, which is a public school and a Youth Services organisation. My basic belief, and it became a little more rigorous, a little bit more explicit over time, as these things do, was that unless we connected collegially, at an emotional level, and unless we actually share the same belief about the primacy of relationships... unless we actually know how to operationalise those things, in relational transactions and to do it in teaching, as a way of inviting kids into a safe learning space, the things that help build and sustain relationships, that learning is the preserve of a select few.*

*Why I'm saying that is... well let me go back to the Youth Services organisation, 2010, 10 staff. It was partly to do with the fact that it was driven by systems thinking and a fundamental failure to engage young people. When I got involved with them and they asked if I would come and talk with them I said to the manager and two other staff I met with, what do you want to talk to me about? So they said, 'we understand that you know a lot about restorative justice, and we're interested in how it might help us'.*

*And I said, if that's 'restorative' [hand gesture as if holding a box], can we just park it over there [gesture as if putting the box down]. I really need to understand about where you're at, how you arrived there, what your thinking is, what drives*

*you tell me about your practice. Anyhow they looked quizzically and went 'what the hell'. They couldn't answer half the questions.*

Terry calls over one of the waiters who he says he has got to know and introduces him to me, then orders a coffee for me. The waiter goes off to get it, Terry then says,

**TO'C:** *He's a lovely young guy I get on well with all the staff here.*

**NP:** *But actually, that's the classic in terms of you, me ...*

**TO'C:** *[laughter] That's right.*

**NP:** *That's what we do, relationships are at the centre of what we do, and what we've become involved in, and that's the bit that continues to fascinate me about the questions that you ask, that I have for the last 25 years, for however long I've known you, begun to think about, and how you, and I hope I, and I hope the people that I influence and work with learn from and it's our role in the modelling of that...*

**TO'C:** *Critical, critical.*

**NP:** *So, in terms of taking restorative, whatever restorative is, forward and my struggle at the moment is in relation to Thames Valley Police the late 90s early 2000, independent evaluations, lots of interest from the Home Office. You then get funding coming in from the Home Office, you then get training organisations springing up all over the place that say we train restorative justice. You get a 'product' that's called 'restorative justice', 'restorative practices', that isn't underpinned by or isn't led and I think leadership is a very important part of it because those principles if a leader understands those principles, listens to others... so you are back 25 years later working with another police force and that was the déjà vu bit...*

**TO'C:** *In a very different headspace.*

**NP:** *But are you and I spending a life's work trying to define something that we want others to identify as restorative when it's just about... so what... can I just get your take on that? Do we need that explicit framework or do we just need to help people understand...*

**TO'C:** No, no, no. We've just got to go back to first principles and why I'm saying that is the entry point around this is not where we've been coming from. It's clearly demonstrated that, notwithstanding the fact that this is an offering that appeals intuitively and all the rest of it, it has never seriously challenged the dominant hegemony of the organizational, educational, institutional, settings.

*In other words, one of the greatest findings, and it doesn't matter how I write about it, everyone picks up 'restorative' and it becomes another tool in the toolbox. What I'm interested in, what in the hell is in your bloody toolbox, you know?*

*Well firstly, we have to think about theory and when we go and talk about theory, what are we looking for? But when we start talking about explicit practice, well what's the criteria for it to be explicit? There's no point starting to critique what everyone else says I'm not remotely interested in it. What I'm interested in hearing, is whether or not we share a common or a shared understanding about purpose, about takeaways, what are the outcomes, how we can demonstrate consistent outcomes, and how do we explain the 'why' of those outcomes?*

*Where I come from is a whole different place in terms of how you describe that. So, when we're sitting with 'cops', they have the experience not you and I. Because at the end of the day, if we can't set up a modelling around agency rather than perpetuate the control model how is policing going to improve? Because at the end of the day, what we're trying to do is to set up a modelling, that's a learned way of relating and operating, that's then given real life in terms of how they transact with community.*

**NP:** And it doesn't matter what context you are in?

**TO'C:** That matters little. I've worked out a universal sort of template that attempts to pull together the collective learning and helps explain the evolution of being much more mindful of purpose, meaning, with a central focus on connections and our respective roles regardless of whether we are teaching or policing or whatever. How do we become the agent of change that creates the conditions that allows others to begin to make sense of what matters?

*The phrase 'a conversation that matters', that's what I really want you to embrace.*

### 8.3. Telling your story - does context matter?

O'Connell then shares with me some of the changes he has made to his presentations which highlight the changes to his thinking. The full presentation can be seen at (Appendix 'Q'). This part of the conversation sought to gain a greater understanding of the rationale behind these changes to the RJ framework and why O'Connell now talks about creating an experience rather than offering 'trainings'. This related to my own experiences around 'mass' trainings from early 2000 onwards and the 'marketisation' of RJ training in the UK. This had resulted in a very competitive training market with RJ training organisations competing for funding to address key targets in criminal justice and education. O'Connell then shows me a page in his presentation around definitions of restorative and I read out loud:

**NP reading from presentation:** *Restorative justice? Intervention or way of being? How would you describe restorative justice? What does restorative justice have to offer policing? Restorative practices is a way of thinking and being focused on creating safe spaces, for real conversations, that deepen relationships, and build stronger more connected communities. This is Mark Vander Vennen's definition [Vander Vennen, 2016]... what's the main focus of this definition...*

**NP:** *Can I just ask you about that definition, because when you are asked about a definition, that's the one you now tend to refer to. Did Mark get that from you? Did Mark develop that definition from his conversations and thinking with you?*

**TO'C:** *Yeah, but it's his definition.*

**NP:** *People want definitions.*

**TO'C:** *I know they do, I know because somehow, they can't manage life unless they clearly define the parameters.*

**TO'C:** *So, when I ask people about the main focus guess what they talk about?*

**NP:** *They talk about relationships?*

**TO'C:** *So here is the interesting bit. Now it's very interesting because of the 'Socratic' bit. You know you wrote something funny about Terry O'Socrates? [I had referred to Terry using this term when discussing the restorative questions in an email – O'Connell, 2019] Why I thought it was funny is in many respects it was pointed it out to me many moons ago but I was not really conscious of it, it was just intuitive.*

*So why does this become important? Because it goes to the heart of what influences your thinking. And how did that link into the evolution of thinking, well I've always... I was known as 'Questions' in the early part – 'I'm sick of you asking fricking questions', you know, 'son you either do what's required, or piss off'. You know that's how it was.*

*In other words, I would constantly say to police colleagues 'why the hell did you do that? 'Oh here we go' and funnily enough when I was part of the police union, I was basically non-aligned politically, I was one of the few who would work with everybody rather than taking an entrenched political position based on the merits of the argument. People couldn't work that out, because we don't do that, we swear allegiance to a particular thinking and we buy into that but what they used to do I would always say I wonder whether we have thought through the full implications of that and they'd go 'oh here we go' and I'd say well let's stop for a moment and think about the 'big picture' stuff and then I would ask a whole series of simple questions. What that would do, it would profoundly influence the debate.*

**NP:** *But that's just it, isn't it, in terms of the questions? It's providing a safe place for somebody to ask the questions and to think about them and...*

**TO'C:** *When it came to facilitating processes, I had adopted the same approach which was 'you are the expert' and so it was that overriding sort of belief in individuals being the experts in their own life.*

At this point in our conversation, I wanted to try to translate some of these ideas into the context of school exclusions and understand how O'Connell's thinking related to my own thinking in the context of this research study especially in relation to the 'compass of shame' (Nathanson, 1992). I interjected with a question,



**NP:** And I'm just, I don't know if this is the right word, just translating that to an example of a child that is at risk of exclusion from school. So, their behaviour goes against the school behaviour code or they have been violent towards staff or other students. So, in terms of the exclusion process in a school you have adults involved, you have the parent who is constantly getting calls from the school to say come in and collect your child take them home. They are on a fixed term exclusion this is what they've done which induces a level of shame around their parenting...

**TO'C:** Accentuates everything?

**NP:** Yes, you have a class teacher, a member of staff within a school, Special Educational Needs Coordinator, who is not able to manage that behaviour within the school setting to allow all children in their class to be able to learn. So in terms of the expert that you just talked about in this process around relationships... in this scenario, you are the parent, you are the person who knows your child well, you are the class teacher, the SENCo, the Headteacher in the school, who knows the child in that setting. They are the 'experts' in terms of those roles and responsibilities in that setting. You are the child who finds themselves in a setting they have to attend and they have to be in. You are the expert in terms of knowing what it is that is or isn't working for you and why it's causing distress.

Bring all of those people together to find out what matters to them in terms of the outcomes they are seeking, so parent to be listened to, accepted as someone who cares about their child and wants their child to be in education and teaching, staff... care about... as you were talking about in terms of policing... cares about kids, came into this job to help children to learn, to help kids have positive outcomes. The child who has to go to school because they told to by adults who is struggling because of whatever the issues might be.

So, translating that process to those individuals, yes, it's still about the relationships, yes, it's still about creating a safe environment, so that all those individuals can come to a shared understanding. But is it still about providing the environment to allow those individuals to identify what really matters?

**TO'C:** So, if we draw on Silvan Tomkins psychology of human motivation [see Tomkins Institute, nd b] that we're hard wired, we are social beings and Brené Brown's notion of

*vulnerability [see Brown, 2012]. Silvan Tompkins' fundamental theory about relationships and individual well-being is an outcome of our capacity, because we're hard wired to modulate 'affects', to amplify and decrease, but we can't get to experience them, unless we engage in a process that allows us to increase positive affect and decrease negative affect.*

*Conversely, as Brené Brown says, the reason it did her head in, was she used the expert model rather than thinking about what it is that makes relationships work.*

*The question that comes up is, if we are dealing with highly vulnerable people and shame is the impediment that either sustains or keeps us out of relationships. The question is, what are the conditions that are needed that will allow individuals to sit with the discomfort of their vulnerability and be open to a different conversation?*

*You see no-one gets this shit and it doesn't matter who I... you know I don't go berserk about it, I just don't comment because you can't drag people to a place that they don't know exists.*

#### **8.4. They just don't get it!**

I again interjected at this point as this was something that had interested me for many years in my conversations with O'Connell and others in the RJ movement. If we are saying that people 'don't get it' then is this because of our own motivations or maybe the fact that we are not communicating it clearly? I said:

**NP:** *I guess I've heard that quite a few times from you over the years and I think that has, on some occasions, slowed up your opportunity to help people 'get it' because you have said to others, not necessarily to the people that you are in front of at a conference or... but 'they don't get it' and I think, I understand that in terms of... your vision has always been much further ahead ever since I met you, I identified that. I think I'm getting closer to understanding that, but in the early days with Thames Valley Police and when we worked with other partners, that bit induced 'shame' in people in terms of 'they don't get it' and so, and I understand that that's not necessarily something you would say to people, but I wanted to just send that back to you in terms of, is that the way that you're communicating your ideas to people then?*

**TO'C:** *Na, because again, I think that's a good observation, and when I say they 'don't get it', I'm simply saying to you, the difficulty is that they have a completely different world view to mine around this ok? And that what I've got to do is to find a way through that, that allows them to see what I see, now why I'm saying that is...*

**NP:** *But is that something that all of us, who would like to be restorative facilitators, need to do?*

**TO'C:** *Oh, we do, but what I'm saying is it's one thing saying that at that level but allowing it to play out is a whole different ball game. I have no view about what people need to 'get', they will 'get' what they will 'get'.*

*Now, I point that out because fundamentally, it's a bit like me saying that with all the best intentions in the world, the idea of sharing the restorative story was useful to the extent that it raised the profile, created some good experiences but the bit missing was my failure, even though fundamentally I knew what it looked like, of being able to articulate that entry point.*

*It was the wrong entry point and the evolution of my thinking now is that I say, how do I actually create the space, the opportunity for them to get 'it'?*

*Now see, 'it' is not what I think, 'it' is what makes sense for them.*

We then talked through some examples over the years where people did not 'get it' which will not be shared for ethical reasons as those individuals have not given permission to be included in this research. O'Connell concluded the conversation with the following general point which linked us back to the Socratic method of dialogue that he had started with in relation to the RJ questions:

*The essence of 'good collaboration' is built around storytelling, my experience, and your experience, what worked and why; what is your thinking around this; what can we learn from one another; to finally, our experience.*

*This is what I call 'Socratic' engagement. It is the only way we can move from 'sharing our view of the world' to 'having a shared view of the world'.*

*So, do you understand, when I talk about engagement, I'm talking about an endless process, a seamless process. So, it's nothing to do with RJ in that regard, it's about striking a conversation and engagement process, that positions those individuals in a space that helps them to begin to understand. So, the idea with 'making sense' and 'working out what matters' and then 'working out what needs to change' and 'how do you learn to build and sustain healthy relationships?'*

## **8.5. Working assumptions and a 'roadmap'**

O'Connell then returned to the small 'business sized' restorative question cards that he had developed in 1999 (Appendix 'R'). O'Connell explained that the main reason that the questions had been put onto these cards was because he realised that most RJ facilitators used the restorative questions in the form of a 'script' only for a full RJ conference process and "not as a seamless process of engagement (initially one on one) where the idea of a 'conference' was only one possibility".

He discussed how this related to his 'entry point' into the current police force that he was working with. I referred back the 'entry point' with TVP in 1994-6 and the process of déjà vu that we had already talked about. Terry commented:

**TO'C:** *When you guys were driving it... because look, I've revisited Thames Valley [Police] 100,000 times and realised that the entry point, it was always going to be the entry point, but the full cycle is that my entry point is at a fundamentally different point now.*

*So, we're in police HQ last week and there's some great guys. One of them says to me 'oh listen by the way this morning I've got a meeting with the looked after or the care homes'. So I said how did you become involved? He said, it's part of our remit, we get a lot of work from them. So I said, OK and I grab a fistful of these [picks up the restorative question 'business sized' cards].*

*I say, 'a little gift, say them at a critical moment, and by the way guys, you may want to think about shaping conversations around these.'*

*Anyhow he comes back 'oh by the way that went really well they were so interested I couldn't get enough cards'*

**NP:** *So, is that why you have changed the language to talk about 'we want you to have an experience today' not a training?*

**TO'C:** *Not only the language, but a lot more. I've always been Socratic, but much more intentionally now in terms of being able to frame what I know works in a way that allows others to discover it. It's about understanding the 'why' of your practice.*

Terry then talked a little about the theories that he has used to develop his explicit framework (see p.85 of this thesis).

**TO'C:** *Key to all of this, is the starting point, the foundation of which you build a way of being explicit about your own practice, about understanding and from my perspective, I'm not talking about a multiplicity of theories. I'm talking about a theoretical framework that has ticked the boxes on everything I've done. In other words, from facilitating processes it is the only thing that has consistently been able to explain the impact, the dynamics and to do it on a consistent basis.*

*My point is, that the question about the use of theory, is only helpful to the extent that you are explicit about what criteria it would need to meet. It's no good saying 'oh look there's a whole lot to think about narrative theory or narrative therapy that is very similar to the stuff that you're doing around restorative'. And the answer is, that is true, there is considerable overlap but what I'm doing is I'm explaining why we want to hitch our way into a particular theory and why that theory can help others to better understand themselves and to make sense and meaning for themselves.*

*If I'm to be true to what I believe, in terms of individuals being the experts, my pitch is that whatever is happening, there's a level of disconnect for someone who is either a 'victim' or an 'offender' in this case [talking about work in criminal justice] and the 'disconnect' is that they are struggling around themselves, to make sense of the meaning of it.*

At this point in the conversation, I reflected on my own 'why' and my own sense of purpose.

**NP:** So, I guess this is the whole, for me, bit in terms of my 'why' and your 'why'. It's that sense of purpose my practice as well as my understanding of the why has taken me on my own restorative journey from criminal justice to the IIRP working in different contexts to being a teacher to being a special educational needs coordinator to working in a University environment. So there's a lot of practical experience but it's only in I think the last year I guess as I've been developing my thinking around understanding what I do and my own 'why', that there's a sense of my own sense of purpose in terms of doing a PhD working in the higher education environment being able to reach more people to share that understanding. but also an acknowledgement, that that sense of purpose is to facilitate that in others, so to facilitate the opportunities, and that's the bit that I think works from those you speak with who have a light bulb moment or whatever you want to call it in terms of oh yeah I get that I get why I do what I do as a police officer as a teacher as a social worker as a parent whatever it might be, a lecturer in the University, I get that. But my journey, working for various organisations including a restorative practices organisation, what you've described in relation to some of those difficult conversations and some of those difficult times...

**TO'C:** Of course, that had to happen, because that's part of the evolution, and I don't say that in a negative way.

**NP:** No, and I am seeking to understand my own similar experiences in terms of policing and the fact that four years after being immersed in this, been working and sharing it with others, working around the evaluation [Hoyle et al, 2002], continuing the conversation with you and others, taking it to other organisations and individuals, and working in the UK to develop what restorative justice was in the UK and in the context in which we were working. My own journey was then, right OK, you're going to be tenured back out onto shift and there's new Chief Constable, it's all well and good but you need to be back out on operational policing. And my own journey of well no, because I think I understand this, and if I go back out as an operational police officer in an organisation that has a new leader taking a very different direction, then I'm not going to have the opportunity to share this with as many people as I would like to, and that's the whole...

**TO'C:** That's the narrative.

This linked me to thinking about my own personal stories and those that had had such an influence on me. The young man I cautioned in an RJ conference for assault who had been bullied for well over a year by the girl who was the 'victim' in this case. The seven-year-old who was diagnosed with ADHD in my first class as an NQT who trusted that adults would treat him fairly and support him if he took responsibility for his behaviour and the murder victim who needed to talk to the man who had killed her mother as he was the only person who could answer her questions and bring closure.

**NP:** *That was my narrative around both practice and my own learning and leaving the police, becoming a teacher, my engagement with Higher Education and seeking to understand what underpins all of this and the key concepts. The implications for that in terms of developing an explicit framework and developing an understanding or a definition of what restorative is, of being able to relate to a theory that underpins it... I guess it's the... what's the importance of all of that?*

*What's the importance of... is it so that you can help many more people understand the way in which they are going to be able to find their 'why', find their own sense of purpose and be able to manage difficult emotion, develop their own narratives in a positive way, find their own sense of purpose, so that they can have positive outcomes themselves in that sense of purpose whatever that might be, to be a parent, to be a police officer, to be a partner, a mother, whoever it might be. That's the big picture how can you capture it to a level it doesn't turn it into a 'tool in the toolbox' but does allow us to promote something that we call restorative and help others find their own way to develop their own stories and deal with 'shame' deal with negative affect move themselves back into the positive affect and that doesn't matter about the context. It's about the 'tool in the toolbox' to help a child that's got attachment issues, through to the 'big picture' of this is an issue in this context, it might be knife crime, it might be exclusion in schools, it might be more children being taken into care, it might be looked after children not succeeding at school, it might be the cultural/organizational piece. It doesn't matter what it is, but my sense of purpose in relation to those issues that create negative affect... It doesn't matter what it is, it all depends*

*on the people that are leading it and what's being said and what is being done.*

**TO'C:** *So, what is respect? Braithwaite suggests - unacceptable behaviours to be rejected whilst acknowledging the intrinsic worth of the person and acknowledging their contribution to their own community. I value our relationship but not your behaviour. Then we talk about relational stories, we talk about the inclusiveness.*

*What would a 'road map' or scaffold look like? I call that my working assumptions because everyone has a set of working assumptions.*

*When I mention working assumptions, people go what is he going on about? And yet when I sit with a police officer and get them to unpack what they are doing they describe their working assumptions. You see what you did [in Thames Valley Police] is you hit across the very issues that helped me actually to frame the idea of a set of working assumptions. A working assumption is based on our beliefs and values, what we know to be true, evidence and direct experience all sort of interrelated.*

*The beauty of... you know my decision in 1999 to uplift the questions from the script was a direct result of the fact that I just saw practitioners running processes that were stand-alone events and the only restorative bit was if you were 'lucky' enough to be in the actual conference process itself when in fact that was never, ever the message I wanted.*

O'Connell directs me to look at his presentation again and I read the slide that is about the development of working assumptions and a practice road map.

**NP:** *Working assumptions are shaped by our beliefs, experience and what we know to be true – evidence. The following are examples:*

*shame is the dominant negative affect of everyday life.*

*most of the problems of interpersonal life can be traced to shame-based issues.*

*creating the conditions that help others to deal honestly with their vulnerability is an important step towards building trust and more positive experience.*



*Silvan Tomkins' blueprint for individual psychological and emotional wellness prescribes the conditions needed for this to happen.*

*The restorative questions developed by O'Connell [1991] go some way to satisfying those conditions.*

I shared some personal stories of my own around experiences that have influenced my own narrative and desire to 'make a difference' in the careers that I have pursued (included in chapters 1-4).

O'Connell points back to the presentation and I read out:

**NP:** *Creating the conditions for relational outcomes.*

*The aim is to create the conditions to allow others to sit with the discomfort of their vulnerability, so they can make sense and meaning of their lives.*

*Identify what is most important in all that is happening - what matters.*

*Explore what needs to change and what their part will be in this change - process.*

**TO'C:** *Let me just qualify that what needs to change and their part in it are two different things.*

**NP [reading]:** *...and importantly learn how to build and sustain healthy relationships – engagement.*

*The restorative definition -*

*Restorative practices is a way of thinking and being focused on creating safe spaces for real conversation that deepen relationships and build stronger more connected communities:*

- *making sense of restorative practices*
- *why it works*
- *the psychology of affect*
- *Tomkin's community blueprint - affects*
- *the restorative questions make the 'what' more purposeful,*
- *respectful, fair and inclusive process*

*So, what is respect? Braithwaite suggests -unacceptable behaviours to be rejected whilst acknowledging the intrinsic worth of the person and acknowledging their contribution to their own community. I value our relationship but not your behaviour.*

**TO'C:** *Then we talk about relational stories, we talk about the inclusiveness.*

**NP:** *So now you're back to... you've filled in the blanks. So, the 'why' is beliefs, values, working assumptions and theory. The 'how' is restorative dialogue that satisfies the conditions for emotional wellness. The 'what' is Socratic engagement, respectful, fair and inclusive process. This all leads to increased relational capacity and that is your explicit practice road map.*

**TO'C:** *So, you could argue that maybe there are elements of the 'how' as opposed to the 'what'. The 'how' you go about it, is using the restorative questions, so what you're doing is providing a process that's very Socratic and therefore is inherently respectful.*

**NP:** *So, in a way if we're looking at this with a theoretical lens, these are the key concepts?*

**TO'C:** *Yes, that's it, that's it there.*

## **8.6. Summary**

We shared many more stories and examples of strengthening relational capacity. O'Connell said at one point:

*"can I tell you, you're probably the first one to ever have sat through and got to appreciate how this has evolved and the sort of rationale for it. It's been a long journey".*

The conversation concluded with O'Connell sharing a video with me (Yes Yes Marsha, 2016) in which Marsha describes "connection as the antithesis of shame". She states that we're wired to connect as human beings and that we all need to share our stories "for the future of the human race."

I returned to my practice and research feeling I had a much greater understanding of what O'Connell had spent a life's work developing.

Our existing relationship presented an immediate safe environment in which to question, challenge and be vulnerable. I also felt I had a much deeper understanding of my own motivations and interest in RJ which could be revealed through autoethnography to address the research questions.

## **CHAPTER 9: DISCUSSION**

### **9.1. Introduction**

This research began with the identification of a problem around increasing rates of school exclusion in the education system in England. My own experience of a model of practice called restorative justice indicated that the 'framework' I used in my own practice as a police officer, teacher and SENCo, could have consistently positive outcomes in the criminal justice context and the education context for all those involved. My own stories supported by the literature highlighted that a disproportionate number of young people who have special educational needs are excluded from school settings and end up in the criminal justice system. This was supported by my own research and practice in the criminal justice system and as a teacher and SENCo in schools in England. These young people are also more likely to experience poor outcomes across the life-course and thus research in this area around effective approaches to reduce these negative outcomes was considered timely and justified. There was, however, no consensus in the literature about the underlying principles or theories that linked to interpretations of 'restorative' in practice or how these principles applied consistently in different contexts.

My careers in policing and teaching span influential periods in Government policy from the 'post Thatcherite' policies of the Conservative Government from 1990 – 1997 and the 'New Labour' era from 1997 – 2010. The rise of neoliberalism and quasi-markets throughout this political period in England affected both the criminal justice and education sectors (Scott, 2009; Hill, 1999). This also had a profound influence of my practice and my thinking and contributed to my development as a practitioner and researcher.

This research therefore developed to gain a greater understanding of the concepts and theoretical principles that linked to the 'framework'

of RJ developed by one RJ pioneer. I had been trained to use this 'framework' when it was introduced, by him, to the UK in 1996 to an English police force. Twenty-five years later I continue to be part of the 'RJ movement' as a practitioner and researcher in the field of inclusion and have maintained a friendship and professional relationship with this pioneer throughout.

Experiences as a teacher and SENCo, as well as a lecturer in inclusion and special educational needs led to the 'problematism' of exclusion in education and the implications that this has for life-long learning and outcomes for CYP. The research questions sought to increase our understanding of how this problem might be addressed by gathering the accounts of the pioneer of the framework of practice I have used since 1996 and accounts from the adults most directly involved in the school exclusion process.

The literature discussed in chapter 3 (p.51) had highlighted the tensions that continue to exist within the RJ movement around definitions and models of practice. This confusion and associated tensions are compounded by the representation of RJ in the media that creates understandings among the public that are profoundly different from how many RJ advocates perceive it (Gavrielides, 2008; Vaandering and Reimer, 2019).

As this research developed, my own understanding and interpretation of 'restorative' began to impact on the research process and the methodology changed to autoethnography to reflect this. My own bias towards a model and framework of RJ has been revealed and shared. Initially this was done to add meaning to the accounts of others and provide a greater understanding of RJ in the context of school exclusion. The outcomes have led to wider understanding of methodology and self-identity.

This chapter provides reflections on the use of what is considered an innovative but still somewhat 'risky' methodology (Wall, 2008;

Sparkes, 2007; Cremin, 2018) and to what degree this approach has helped to address the research questions and contribute to knowledge. In chapters 1 and 4 (see p.20 & p.100) of this thesis, I highlighted my rationale for writing in a way that might be considered to challenge the “normativities of practice that have come to sanction what is recognizable as academic writing and examinable as thesis text.” (Honan and Bright, 2016). I have become particularly aware of this as I have moved from more traditional literature review and methodology chapters into the presentation and discussion of my ‘findings’. I have argued a rationale for the presentation of the accounts in this thesis through the use of processes described in autoethnography as assemblage and ‘sensemaking’ (p.127 in this thesis). These processes have also become restrictive in places as the relationship to the participants becomes closer. Thus, with O’Connell, the findings are presented in a way that aligns more closely with an evocative or emotive autoethnographic approach (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Anderson 2006) although still with the intention of making sense and meaning from the accounts that have been shared with me as a complete member researcher.

In the telling of other’s stories, I have linked back to personal experience as well as key concepts from the literature on RJ. This has been particularly relevant in relation to the thinking of the RJ pioneer, O’Connell, and his current interpretation of ‘restorative’. His role as mentor and friend over the last twenty-five years has helped me to reflect on the accounts of others in this research as well as my own self-identity as a restorative practitioner and researcher.

My own ‘relationships’ with all the participants in this research have given an additional dimension to the research by highlighting questions of validity and reliability in research especially when you are an ‘insider’ researcher (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) working so closely within the ‘field’ that you have been a part of for so long.

In the sections that follow, I relate to each of the research questions and what this research study has found.

## **9.2. The research questions re-visited**

This research thesis began by highlighting three research questions to be addressed:

1. What does 'restorative justice' mean to practitioners in the school exclusion process?
2. How do the adults in school exclusion processes account for their experiences of these processes?
3. How does a restorative justice pioneer account for the development of restorative justice processes and concepts?

Each question will be discussed in turn.

### **9.2.1. What does 'restorative justice' mean to practitioners in the school exclusion process?**

Accounts of RJ in the education setting were gathered by way of questionnaire from sixteen educationalists working in or with schools and linked to organisations that were members of the RJC. This questionnaire linked their understanding of RJ to behaviour management and the school exclusion process.

Although this was a small sample, the respondents represented a range of schools and staff working mainly in the English school jurisdiction and thus represented the area of focus for this research into school exclusion in England. The responses identified that all those who had received training in 'restorative justice' practices used a set of questions that differed very little from those developed by O'Connell in 1991 in his police cautioning project in Wagga Wagga (O'Connell, 1998).

The questions used by the respondents, although not identical in wording, all began with a question about 'what happened'. This

supported the evidence from the literature (particularly Braithwaite, 1989 on re-integrative shaming) that the process was most effective when it began from a position of seeking to understand rather than laying blame. The questions then moved chronologically to explore thoughts and feelings at the time of the 'incident' and since the 'incident'. A range of words were used such as who has been affected/impacted/harmed/ and some used the term 'feeling' – how do you feel/how do you think they feel. If 'thinking' questions were used, they often would illicit 'feeling' responses and respondents talked about the validation of emotions and building mutual respect as being important aspects of the dialogue. The final questions sought to repair the harm/make the situation better/find solutions/do things differently in the future.

All questions were asked of all participants whether they had caused the 'harm' or been 'harmed' and there was a strong emphasis that everyone should be involved in seeking solutions and repairing the damaged relationships. The questions paralleled those in O'Connell's (1998) framework.

The respondents were asked whether there were core concepts that underpinned the process and the questions. These responses were grouped (by me) under the following headings:

- Core inter/intrapersonal values and emotions
- Responsibility and accountability
- Non-judgmental/unbiased/inclusive approach
- Building relationships
- Repairing harm and making things better
- Participant voice and communication
- Neuroscience and social and emotional learning

This was a stage in the research process where I reflected on my own bias in relation to possibly only 'seeing' the responses that fitted my own interpretation of RJ. The full set of responses have been provided



in the appendices (J, K & L) so that the reader can make their own assessment of the groupings assigned. Although not generalisable, they did fit with the literature and also the conceptual framework that I explored with O'Connell particularly the use of the restorative questions (see section 9.2.3 p.244 for a further discussion of this).

Visser (2011) highlights, in the context of CYP with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, that a set of core concepts may "halt the cycle of wheel reinvention" as well as halt the categorisation of pupils. He also describes a set of 'eternal verities' (Visser, 2011) which are shown in Figure 5 below.

**Figure 5 - Eternal verities**

**The Eternal Verities**

- Behaviour can change: emotional needs can be met.
- Intervention is second to prevention.
- Instructional reactions.
- Transparency in communications.
- Empathy and equity.
- Boundaries and challenge.
- Building positive relationships.
- Humour.

(Visser, 2011, p.186)

The list is not presented as definitive and, much as this research has discovered in relation to RJ, they are derived from a combination of the literature and the author's extensive experience as a pedagogue, researcher, parent and foster parent. Visser (2011) states that:

"Verities are truths that are apparent in the web and weave of approaches. They are eternal in as much as they are necessary to the proficiency of all approaches regardless of the time frame in which the approaches are being developed and applied. They are the strongest links between different approaches and the achievement of successful outcomes" (p.185).

He also states that they are rarely made explicit and that quantification is seldom helpful.

As O'Connell stated in this thesis, in relation to his communication of the framework of RJ that he had developed:

*"the point I'm making is, the best part of the journey, is the fact that so many others didn't 'get it' and the reason that I'm saying that is because without that I simply wouldn't have landed in the space that I have.*

*How to articulate that in practice is of course a different beast. You see 'getting it' is getting their meaning of what is important, what matters for them, whatever that looks like" (p.225 of this thesis).*

The 'need' for an explicit framework has come from the desire (from others) to have what O'Connell describes as a 'roadmap' to guide process and to do that consistently. This has led to a proliferation of organisations (world-wide) that offer 'restorative justice training' and a need within the RJ movement to define 'restorative'.

Over the last two decades, there has been considerable energy and innovation around attempts to define a restorative philosophy but as Strang and Braithwaite (2001) identify, there is a,

*"distinctive history of philosophy being shaped by practices that ordinary citizens find remarkably appealing". As a consequence, the philosophy now struggles to keep up with the pace of bottom-up innovation" (p.xv).*

This small-scale questionnaire captures this bottom-up innovation from practitioners seeking to make sense of the behaviours that occur in the school setting. These behaviours defined as putting a child 'at

risk of exclusion' are what Quinn and Lynch (2016) describe as "the most annoying and problematic for adults to control".

The pressures on adults in the school setting will be influenced by a whole range of Governmental, institutional and personal factors. The concepts or 'eternal verities' described by these practitioners around RJ reflect a framework for relationships that recognises the power and responsibility they hold as decision-making adults in the school setting. They all identified that RJ practice reduced exclusions when it was introduced to their setting and this outcome provided the 'evidence' to rationalise their own continued use of the approach.

### **9.2.2. How do the adults in school exclusion processes account for their experiences of these processes?**

The stories shared by the parent, Headteacher and SENCo in this research study highlighted what has worked or has not worked for them in relation to their experiences of school exclusion. Each one identified specific examples of where the dialogue and relationships had broken down and the implications that this breakdown in communication had for young people exhibiting challenging behaviours. Sometimes it was about understanding their own motivations and experiences of the shame affect.

In each case Hanna, Sue and Jessica had experiences that had caused negative 'affect' that had not been addressed at the time and influenced the way in which they responded to other adults in relation to school exclusion.

Hanna (the parent) compared experiences at her younger son's school where she didn't feel listened to with her older son's school that she said, *"wouldn't judge you and they're there and it's just a completely different world my son's come on heaps and bounds"* (p.167 of this

*thesis*). Her younger son had been excluded on several occasions and was at serious risk of being permanently excluded.

Sue (the Headteacher) shared an emotive story of a child that she felt she had “let down” when she was the Deputy Head. She stated that:

*“it is also a natural feeling that I was not doing my job properly. If I was excluding children, especially vulnerable children, especially children with special educational needs and well-being and family problems, how could I continue?” (p.180 of this thesis).*

Jessica (the SENCo) talking about a previous school she had worked in where she did not feel she had a voice. She stated:

*“I very much felt an outsider, coming in with a different viewpoint to what was going on at the school. I felt my views on how behaviour management should be, was not shared by the behaviour mentor and the Head and Deputy, so you know, I just thought, you know, it's easier if I just go” (p.194 of this thesis).*

As a result of the ‘pilot study experience’ in this research, I was very conscious of my relationships with these participants and my own use of the restorative framework to guide the conversations was a very conscious process.

For each of these participants, there were some uncomfortable experiences that had clearly influenced their own stories and narratives and one of the key findings for me was how my conscious recognition of how I facilitated the accounts was not different to any other more ‘formal’ restorative process that I have facilitated over the years.

It was about the creation of a safe environment in which to share difficult emotions and provide an equally safe opportunity to make sense of these experiences and allow these participants to identify what might need to happen to improve important relationships in their lives or bring meaning to their own actions. As Sue the Headteacher said to me:

*"It's quite fascinating, isn't it, how just talking with you today, I was aware of all these things but actually now seeing it as plain as the nose on my face, there's that jigsaw, there's that jigsaw piece and they all fit together to make the culture. It's the culture jigsaw piece and without one aspect of it, it's not the same thing anymore, it needs all of those aspects. I could talk about it forever" (p.189 of this thesis).*

Making sense of our own stories and narratives is an important and healthy human need (Storr, 2019). I was reminded of one of my own experiences as a RJ facilitator in a case of murder. I met with the daughter of the murder victim, who wanted to meet with the man who had killed her mother, in an alleged jealous rage. There were questions that only he could answer. They had all been living in the same house at the time of the murder, including the murder victim's granddaughter, and the situation was complicated. The mother (murder victim) had been an alcoholic and in the opinion of the daughter, the partner had been a good influence on her mother but was very jealous of any friendships she had. Mother and partner had regular arguments and on the night of the murder there had been another argument. He came downstairs and said to the daughter that he had had enough and was leaving. The daughter persuaded him to stay and said she would order a pizza and then he could go back upstairs when things had calmed down. They ate the pizza; he went back upstairs, and it was that night that she was killed.

The daughter felt a sense of guilt at having persuaded him to stay and wanted to talk to him about that night to find out if things might have been different if she had let him go. The 'offender's' prison probation officer informed both the daughter and the RJ service that I was working for that they did not think he was ready to talk to the daughter and denied access. This decision caused even greater 'harm' to the daughter who was angry that someone else was telling her what was best for her.

This experience highlighted to me the way in which well-intentioned practitioners, through their desire to avoid conflict, may sometimes deny people the opportunity to take back control of their own lives and stories.

As adults in the school exclusion process, who are responsible for the children in their care, this can become even more complex. An opportunity for learning for young people about ways to deal with negative affect in a healthy and positive way can be denied if the adults seek to avoid the conflict. Excluding can sometimes be an easier way to avoid the conflict.

### **9.2.3. How does a restorative justice pioneer account for the development of restorative justice?**

This research question has been a key part of the research and addressed from the beginning of the thesis in the review of the literature and outlining of O'Connell's explicit framework (p.85 of this thesis). The influence of O'Connell's ideas on international as well as my own practice and thinking about what restorative means and looks like in practice form a thread throughout the thesis including the impact that the 'relationship' had on the methodological choices.

The conversation with O'Connell began with a discussion around whether, in 2019 and being back in the UK with a police service, O'Connell felt that there were still tensions in the field of RJ around definitions. Did he think we were in danger as a movement of 're-inventing the wheel'? In the conversation with O'Connell, I covered this by talking about whether there were 'feelings of *déjà vu*', as he returned to visit this UK police force, twenty-five years after coming to 'train' myself and others in TVP.

O'Connell highlighted that he was back but in a "*very different headspace*". He highlighted that the 'entry point' had changed

dramatically. He stated that even though this was “an offering that appeals intuitively, it has never seriously challenged the dominant hegemony of the organizational, educational, or institutional, settings”. O’Connell doesn’t offer ‘trainings’ now, he provides an ‘experience’ in which others can tell their stories and the constant in all of it, is the dialogue.

He highlights the fact that “*the dialogue is compelling, because it draws people into a space and as a result of that the whole affectivity is the stuff that makes it worthwhile*” (p.216 of this thesis). Therefore, if pressed for a definition, O’Connell favours the Vander Vennen (2016) definition that states that restorative practice is:

“a way of thinking and being, focused on creating safe spaces for real conversations that deepen relationship and create stronger, more connected communities” (p.127).

O’Connell agrees that “*the idea of embracing practice that works, without clearly understanding why it works, limits the real potential of that practice*”. For those who wish to share RJ and its full potential, then understanding ‘why it works’ and ‘getting it’ are important.

This will allow the ‘facilitators’ of the process to fully engage participants and help them to navigate their *own* way to positive affect and outcomes. For the participants, they just want to ‘feel better’ about themselves and what happened. If the intervention of someone who asks a series of questions and listens to their story helps, then they do not need to know underpinning theoretical assumptions about why it is working.

O’Connell’s move in 1999 to transfer the restorative questions on to small business cards and have them available to hand out to people freely, along with a laminated copy of the compass of shame, provided that distinction. In the visit to the police force in 2019 when I met him for a conversation, he stated that when chatting with a group of the participants, one was going out to visit a care home. O’Connell stated:

*"I grab a fistful of those restorative question cards, 'hey, a little gift, say them at a critical moment, by the way guys you may think about shaping conversations around these'. Anyhow he comes back 'Oh by the way that went really well, they were so interested, I couldn't get enough cards'" (p.226 of this thesis)*

As O'Connell says:

*"The aim is to create the conditions to allow others to sit with the discomfort of their vulnerability, so they can make sense and meaning of their lives, identify what is most important in all that is happening - what matters;*

*explore what needs to change and what their part will be in this change process and importantly learn how to build and sustain healthy relationships – engagement."* (p.224 of this thesis)

When he engages with practitioners he has moved away from 'training' to providing a way in which they can come to gain their own understanding of what works and why it works. This takes time and is certainly not achieved by mass one to five-day trainings. The process begins with an opportunity to think about their own 'story' and O'Connell quotes Michael Junior who says, "when you know your why, you're what becomes more impactful, because you're walking towards or in your purpose" (Junior, 2017).

O'Connell does not mention the word 'restorative' until he has explored these stories with participants. He says:

*"My starting point is, therefore, what is keeping them out of relationships. So, when you draw on the whole theoretical basis it says to me, if I were to draw a road map, scaffold, that sets the parameters on what my thinking is about, what I believe and what I have drawn on to inform my practice, what would that road map look like? I call that my working assumptions because everyone has a set of working assumptions" (p.364 of this thesis).*

The set of working assumptions underpin the restorative questions and result in a 'roadmap' that O'Connell has found consistently helps to build and maintain healthy relationships.



As O'Connell says:

*"The outcome is to strengthen relational capacity and using the explicit road map, you help people with 'the why', 'the how', and 'the what'. In other words, whatever else, what we know with absolute certainty, is that strengthened relationships are the greatest predictor of healthy behaviours. The aggregate of all of this provides capacity for individuals, or the individual, to be able to navigate things through dialogue" (p.366 of this thesis).*

Along the road, there needs to be the creation of a safe space that allows people to sit with the discomfort of their 'issue', engage in dialogue, gain a shared understanding around what has happened, how that has impacted on people and what needs to be done to repair or restore the relationship(s). This does not necessarily require professional intervention or 'facilitation' but it does provide a 'road map' that can be modelled and taught to young people so that they are equipped as early as possible with the skills to manage their own relationships in a healthy way. This will not be successful if the adult's own behaviour and actions conflict with these principles. This correlates with my own experiences and the interim feedback from Hoyle et al (2002) when carrying out their evaluation of restorative cautioning in TVP. Hoyle and Young discussed with me, when the interim recommendations were being implemented into practice, that there was a consistent theme that linked positive outcomes for participants when they couldn't remember the facilitator after the RJ conference. Hoyle and Young suggested that this signified that the participants felt they had taken back ownership of their conflict and 'sorted' it themselves. The role of the 'RJ facilitator' as gatekeeper to the process is one that has arisen in my own RJ practice often and as in the murder case that I worked on (see p.243) has the potential to cause more harm rather than repair it.

### **9.3. Complexity and shared meaning**

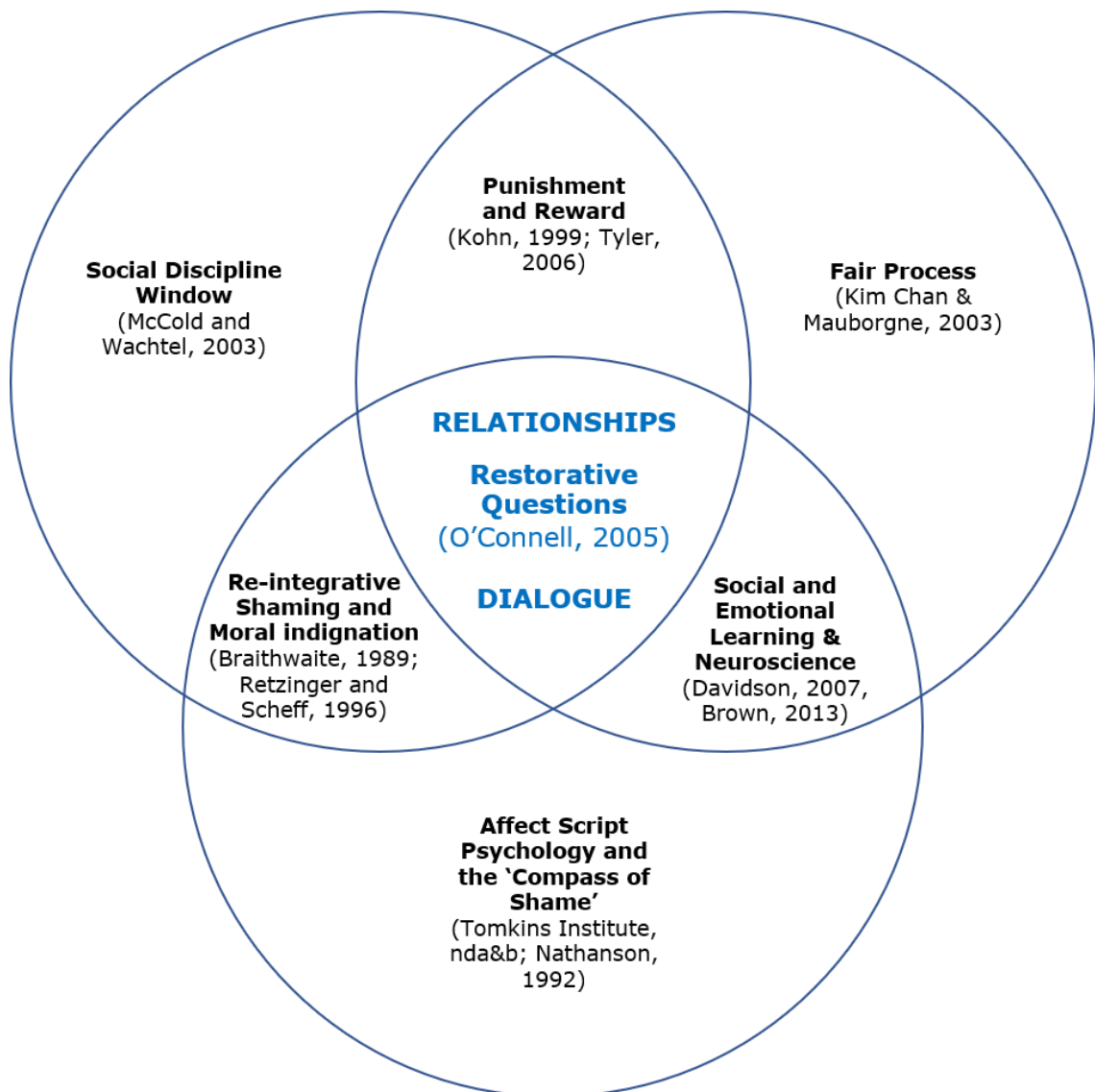
#### **What comes from drawing the findings together?**

From the O'Connell's framework, the literature and the accounts shared for this research study, I have used my own self-reflections and experiences to develop a visual representation (Figure 6 p.249) of these RJ working assumptions. This is not a 'model' but a representation drawing together O'Connell's working assumptions and some key theories or principles that the literature, personal experience and these research stories suggest need to be present to produce consistently positive outcomes.

It provides a picture of what this research has suggested works to build, maintain and repair relationships and also helps the reader to understand why it works and what might be missing if the approach is 'not working'.

It provides additional contribution to the understanding of the term restorative and how it can be used in practice across a variety of contexts wherever relationships need to be built, maintained or repaired. As with Nathanson's compass of shame (Nathanson, 1992) and Tomkin's affect theory (Tomkins Institute, nd a) the model helps to shine a light on what the individual may need to focus on to navigate their way through difficult situations or dialogue.

**Figure 6. Circles of Relational Understanding (Preston, 2020)**



This is a working and dynamic 'representation' of RJ. We are gaining new evidence through neuroscientific enquiry that adds to our understanding of the brain and human behaviour at a dramatic rate especially around communication and social and emotional learning. This is discussed in chapter 10 as a future area of research (p.266).

Each outer circle represents a key concept that underpins the restorative questions and gives examples of theories and theorists who have developed theoretical constructs to help us understand how this concept contributes to the overall process and desired outcomes.

At each intersection of the circles, there is further evidence of theory and theorists that link to the main concepts and theories in the outer sections of each circle. Together the concepts underpinning each theory provide the rationale for each of the restorative questions and what those questions aim to achieve. They underpin O'Connell's roadmap. They build on the initial literature review in this research combined with my own reflections and the accounts of participants in this research. They build to provide a greater understanding of a RJ framework that supports participants to build, maintain and where necessary repair relationships.

The core elements of the social discipline window, fair process and the theory of affect that underpin the restorative questions in O'Connell's explicit framework (O'Connell, 2015) have been discussed and shared in the literature review (see p.54 and p.81 of this thesis). They will only be re-visited in this discussion to highlight the key elements and explain the linkages in Figure 6 (p.249) that has been developed in this research thesis and link to what other participants have said.

The principles that underpin the social discipline window (McCold and Wachtel, 2003) state that we are more likely to have positive outcomes when we work 'with' people rather than doing things 'for' them or 'to' them. The model uses a punitive-permissive continuum to help define 'to', 'for', 'not' and 'with' that combines varying levels of 'control' (discipline/expectations) with 'support' (nurture/love). 'Restorative' is suggested to sit in the 'with' box that is high on support and high on control.

The research carried out by Kim Chan and Mauborgne (2003) across a range of multi-national corporations discovered that whatever their role in an organisation, people want to be "valued as human beings and not as personnel or human assets". They identified three "bedrock principles" of fair process that consistently emerged and were mutually reinforcing – engagement, explanation, and expectation clarity.

Hanna (the parent), Sue (the Headteacher) and Jessica (the SENCo) all highlighted the importance of fair process and gave examples of when this was missing in their relationships with other adults in the school exclusion process. Hanna highlighted the lack of engagement and explanation as the key factors in the breakdown of her relationships with the school.

Research by Tyler (2006) into why people obey the law identified that:

“people’s motivation to co-operate with others, is rooted in social relationships and ethical judgements and does not primarily flow from the desire to avoid punishments or gain rewards” (p.270).

The work of Alfie Kohn (1999; also see p.41 of this thesis) supports the work of Tyler in that punishments do not act as deterrents. The competition that rewards and punishments establish amongst young people rather than change behaviours can rupture relations and undermine motivation. They only impact extrinsically on motivation to change behaviours. ‘Fair process’ and working ‘with’ people build a greater shared understanding as to why behaviours may be considered unacceptable and how adults can work with CYP to develop the intrinsic motivation to change. These links are made in Figure 6 between the punitive permissive continuum of the social discipline window and the motivational aspects experienced when people receive a fair process.

In relation to this research around challenging behaviour and school exclusion then these principles are key to bringing about sustainable change and motivation for adults as well as young people to ‘do the right thing’. The teaching assistant in Jessica’s story, who missed break duty which led to the child she was supporting hurting a teacher, might feel more able to take responsibility for her own actions if she worked within an organisation that demonstrated these principles.

Tomkins theory of affect (1962, 1963, 1991 and 1992) and Nathanson’s ‘compass of shame’ (1992) (see also p.70 of this thesis)

identify innate affects that as we develop become 'neural scripts' influenced by our experiences, upbringing and culture. We are hard wired to increase positive affect and decrease negative affect to lead healthy lives. Shame is the 'affect' triggered by an interruption in positive affect and if dealt with positively can be an opportunity for growth and learning. If dealt with negatively then Nathanson suggested that the responses could be defined by the four points on his 'compass of shame' – withdrawal, attack self, attack other or avoidance. Recognition of shame in oneself and others can help us understand our responses and reactions and move through the 'shame' and back to experiencing positive affect. The focus is initially on 'self' which helps us understand what might be going on in our own life that leads us to respond differently to the same situation or set of circumstances on different days.

Braithwaite (1989) in his theory of re-integrative shaming (see also p.62 of this thesis) identified that individuals are interdependent and seek validation and approval from the significant people in their life. When they experience shame, the healthiest way to ensure that they respond positively and use the experience for growth and learning is to separate the 'act from the actor' or the behaviour from the person's identity and offer an opportunity for reintegration into their community of care. This links to the high expectations of significant others (maybe a teacher, maybe a football coach, maybe a family member) and the support they can offer to help the individual achieve the expectations or changes in behaviour. With CYP displaying challenging behaviour, they are more likely to learn from those they respect and have a positive relationship with.

Retzinger and Scheff (2000; also p.64 of this thesis) identify shame as a 'master emotion' and "sign of a severed social bond". Their research into RJ conferences identified that the process of revealing 'shame' and

suffering, rather than masking it, led to an opportunity for empathy and re-acceptance.

Developments in neuroscience over the last two decades have identified that social and emotional learning physically changes the brain and that these changes continue across the life-course (Davidson, 2007). Just one strong adult relationship can provide resilience and provides a positive, adaptive response in the face of significant adversity. (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2015). There is much in our developing understanding of the brain, mirror neurons and neural scripts that is worthy of future research that has not been covered within this research thesis.

The work of Brené Brown on shame, empathy, and vulnerability (Brown, 2012; 2013; 2019) defines vulnerability as uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure. She makes a 'call to courage' that says we are hard-wired to connect and need to build cultures where we talk 'to' people rather than 'about' people. She states that to not have a conversation because it makes you feel uncomfortable is the definition of privilege (Brown, 2019). RJ provides that safe environment and process for having those difficult conversations as well as teaching the skills to CYP.

These are core concepts around shame and empathy that link affect script psychology to fair process and to working 'with' people. They are concepts that help to provide a framework for greater understanding of what happens when relationships are damaged.

These 'Circles of Relational Understanding' shown in Figure 6 (p.249) are not prescriptive and I recognise the extensive work that has been contributed to develop an understanding of RJ over the last three decades by many other researchers and practitioners. There is certainly no claim that this research has helped to define RJ or that to be restorative you must combine all the elements in Figure 6. They are

a reflection and overview of the research findings from this limited study.

#### **9.4. Analytic autoethnography: reflections and some limitations**

As a researcher in RJ and relationships, autoethnography provides a research methodology that considers principles that are consistent with my own values and those proposed by the RJ movement (RJC, 2011).

This has been highlighted before when practice in the UK was still in its infancy (Zehr, 1998, Toews & Zehr, 2003). Toews and Zehr (2003) proposed a new form of “transformative inquiry” that,

“serves a purpose greater than the quest for knowledge. It values the transformative benefits of the process itself to the individuals involved in it. These benefits include building community, promoting dialogue, reducing social distance, challenging ‘comforting myths’ of who people are, empowering individuals and communities to solve their problems, giving voice to marginalized people, and promoting justice” (p.266).

An autoethnographic approach in this research has allowed me to reflect on consistency between my own practice and develop and share a greater understanding of restorative values and the achievement of research goals. Toews and Zehr (2003) highlight key principles of transformative inquiry including the following which resonate with my practice and experience in RJ. They state that transformative inquiry:

- “Defines the researcher’s role as facilitator, collaborator, learner more than neutral expert,
- Values process as much as product,
- Acknowledges others’ realities personally by this interaction. and is open to being affected,
- Is attuned to the potential harms and unintended consequences for subjects and others” (p.270).

Cremin (2018) highlights the idea of a member of a ‘movement’ (in her case peace education) imagining opportunities to transform



schools. This, she argues, ignores the “materiality of schools” and their “embeddedness within multiple spatial dimensions”. This equates to the ideas of Anderson (2006) about the importance of ‘complete member researcher’ status as a key role of the autoethnographer in order to document and analyse action but also to be purposively involved.

Those being trained or even providing the training in RJ may very well act restoratively on one day but on another if they are under stress, have had an argument, or just because it’s easier to do, may not follow those principles. The implications for a child ‘at risk’ from exclusion on a ‘bad day’ with that adult are clear. Recognition of this within an organisation/ school community allows the adults to support each other and provide consistency and fair process for the child or young person. This also presents opportunities for positive role modelling for young people about recognising one’s own feelings and asking for support and help. One day trainings in RJ will not achieve this.

Cremin (2018) reflects autoethnographically on her experiences in peace education and her desire to create “spaces where normative power relations are disrupted”. She recognises that the teachers she ‘trained’ may fail to act restoratively and peacefully on one day for any number of reasons because “time, space and emotion affect behaviour in ways that are impossible to predict or control”. Change is not seen as a linear process. ‘Circles’ in education are seen as spaces to,

“enable stressed and pressurised professionals to rediscover affect, embodiment, laughter, connection and dynamism, and signal what is possible when people get together in the name of peace and education. They point towards different classroom spaces” (Cremin, 2018, p.7).

Autoethnography has allowed for the development of a ‘way of knowing’ that values connectedness over separation and acknowledges the ‘affective’ and subjective nature of knowledge that is inter-relational. It has helped me towards a greater understanding of the

role of 'expert' in relationships and the need as a practitioner to provide opportunities where that 'ownership' of story can be handed back

The adherence to a framework of analytical autoethnography has proved more challenging but an important learning process in its own right. Anderson (2006) states that:

"it is not particularly damning to acknowledge that analytic autoethnography has limitations. All methodological approaches have their limitations. And all competent researchers must acquire not only the ability to use various research skills but also the acumen to judge when some kinds of research are likely to prove more productive than others" (p.390).

Although this autoethnography has developed along with my own development, the self-reflection throughout the thesis is intended to highlight these limitations at each stage. As O'Connell stated in his conversation with me about theories in RJ:

*"What would happen if you established criteria that would be open to discussion, that would clearly delineate theory? What would you expect? What it would have to be able to deliver on? Okay, and then you did the same thing in terms of your practice" (see p.366 of this thesis).*

This approach was 'chosen' because it "accommodates subjectivity, emotionality and the researcher's influence" (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011). It has been a way to tell stories and use a form of writing to enhance the meaning that can be taken from the writing. As a human activity, research is inextricably linked to language because this is how we make meaning. This goes to the heart of this research study in relation to how to help others make meaning of their own stories and take back the ownership of their own stories and identities.

## **9.5. Relational ethics in autoethnography**

The interpersonal ties and responsibilities, to the participants and the researcher, take on a different focus in an autoethnography. Tolich (2010) developed ten ethical guidelines for auto-ethnographic

research which were discussed in chapter 4 (p.109). Care has been taken throughout to protect the participants identity with the use of randomly generated pseudonyms. This is still an area for future research especially around issues of power and influence and links very much to key 'restorative' principles and values.

"Autoethnography poses unique problems for informed consent and anonymity" (Anonymous & Emmerich, 2019). The issues in autoethnography arise with the risk of self-harm and the representation of others linked to my own and O'Connell's stories; those who as a researcher, I remain in personal and professional contact with.

Pranis (2016) when looking at the empowerment of marginalised individuals in RJ states "you can tell how much power a person has by how many people listen to their stories" (p.297). She suggests that by the simple fact of listening to their stories, we give them power. The implications for this in relation to this research and autoethnography are important areas for future research in both restorative and educational contexts. Denshire (2014) talks of a series of ethical standards for auto-ethnography that are predicated on 'pedagogy of hope' and 'ethics of care'. There is certainly further work to be done to balance power in relationships and story-telling that acknowledge the relational, reciprocal, and social practices of an autoethnographic study.

## **9.6. Summary**

The reflexive nature of the research process has clarified my own thinking and understanding around how this set of explicit working assumptions can more consistently lead to improved relational outcomes. My own 'blind spot' as a researcher (Wagner, 2010), discussed in chapter four (p.99 of this thesis), has been highlighted as

my own defensiveness around the term 'restorative justice' and my own need to justify and defend it. The detailed conversations with the RJ pioneer and adults experiencing school exclusion (none of whom had RJ experience) helped me to reflect on the real 'focus' of repairing the harm to relationships. I was also able to highlight how I implicitly used the key concepts to develop my own relationships specifically as a researcher seeking to provide the safe space in which my research participants could share their stories.

In this research, the initial 'lens' focused on the harm caused by school exclusion. This built on my own experience especially with those at greater risk of exclusion including boys and young people with special educational needs (Preston, 2013). The findings highlighted in relation to each of the research questions combine and resonate with my own experience in a range of different contexts and settings. The term 'restorative justice' is used interchangeably so it might mean restorative cautioning to a Thames Valley police officer (Hoyle et al, 2002), restorative pedagogy to an educationalist (Hopkins, 2016) or a completely new paradigm for justice or ethics (Braithwaite and Pettit, 1990). This tension has led to conflict within the very movement that seeks to address such issues. As Gavrielides (2008) identifies there are a "series of conceptual fault-lines within the restorative movement". He states that the bulk of the extant literature either adds a new dimension to this tension or disregards its existence all together.

One of the most challenging areas for the RJ movement has been the desire across a range of stakeholders for definition and a theoretical basis. Inherent in the task of theorising is the susceptibility for those features described as 'intrinsic' becoming susceptible to misinterpretation and abuse at individual, organisational and political level. In an approach that claims to repair harm and conflict, and build, maintain and repair relationships, the use of one-dimensional

definitions is likely to lead to increased misinterpretation and ambiguity.

## **CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSIONS**

### **10.1. Introduction**

In this concluding chapter, I discuss how the research contributes to a greater understanding of RJ in the school exclusion context. I then discuss the methodology used and how that has contributed to knowledge around methodologies that aligns with more relational practice. Autoethnography is discussed in the context of social research methodologies and how it can contribute to a greater understanding of the complexities of studying human relationships, including my own reflexive contributions as researcher. This chapter ends with some concluding thoughts on areas for future research and how the principles of RJ can be applied to the way in which that research is carried out.

In this study I outlined a rationale for a focus on RJ in the school exclusion context. I brought to this autoethnography my own professional experience as a police officer, teacher, SENCo and researcher having used RJ and trained in a whole range of contexts. I also brought to the research my own personal values and experience to develop greater understanding of how we might more consistently create healthy and positive relationships.

Howard Zehr, considered within the movement as the 'grandfather' of the RJ movement states that RJ should be,

"built from the bottom up, by communities, in dialogue assessing their needs and resources and applying the principles to their own situations" (Zehr, 2002, p.10).

He states that RJ is not a blueprint, but the principles can be seen as a compass, pointing the direction towards dialogue and exploration. His three central concepts or "pillars" are 'harms and needs', 'obligations' and 'engagement'.

These central tenets or concepts have served the movement well since Zehr introduced his seminal work 'Changing Lenses' in 1990 and O'Connell began his work in Wagga Wagga in 1991. In the intervening years, a world-wide RJ movement has developed that, as discussed in the literature review of this thesis (see p.46 & p.48) and by Daly (2016), has led to the need for a definition of RJ that can be applied and assessed empirically. She states that, as a concept,

"RJ has become too capacious and imprecise. If it cannot be defined, it cannot be subject to empirical and theoretical study" (p.22).

She states that without this, RJ is "bobbling along on a raft in a sea of hopes and dreams".

The questionnaire responses and the conversations with adults around the school exclusion process identified that the restorative questions, developed by O'Connell in 1991, provide a structure and framework that allows those experiencing negative affect (and particularly shame) to navigate through the challenges presented by CYP at risk of being excluded from the school setting. My own extensive experience of the use of this model as a practitioner and researcher, across contexts, supports the findings from this study. This experience also suggests that the context is not as relevant as the motivations of those defining something as 'restorative'. These motivations are of much greater importance to the RJ movement and the future of RJ practice. The prevailing neoliberal approaches in policing and education that coincided with my exposure to RJ approaches in both contexts increased the pressures on practitioners and leaders to focus on short term performance targets rather than outcomes that took into account the time needed for building strong and healthy relationships.

The focus on adults in this study linked to my own experiences and research in education (Preston, 2013) which had identified issues around power, responsibility and authority in behaviour management

in schools. These issues are not specific to the school setting and had been identified through my experiences in policing with the adults who engaged in the many RJ 'conferences' that I facilitated for young people as part of the TVP restorative cautioning initiative (Hoyle et al, 2002). This cross disciplinary research suggests that the benefits of the RJ approach are not so much dependent on the context and the way in which it is used (Sellman et al, 2014; Cremin et al, 2012) but on the motivations of the leaders, trainers and practitioners implementing them.

As the author of this research thesis, it became apparent at an early stage that, although I may have many interesting stories about RJ and school exclusion, these by themselves do not constitute good scholarship. They needed to be connected explicitly to relevant theory and legitimate method (Wall, 2008). The difficulties that I had with philosophical assumptions and methodologies were brought into the spotlight as I struggled to define research questions for this study and go out into the 'field' to find some 'answers'. My own career path from the introduction of one RJ approach to the UK and the links to particular neoliberal policies of Governments from the 1990s onwards highlighted the relevance and rationale for including myself in this study and enriched the contributions that could be made to build an understanding of approaches to exclusion.

My own 'closeness' to the study impacted on the engagement of participants, as discussed in chapter 4 (see p.93 in this thesis). The term 'observer effect' (Frey, 2018) is most commonly used in the physical sciences referring to the act of the observer impacting on the properties of what is observed. It became apparent during the early stages of this research, when I began to identify participants to help gather evidence to address the research questions, that observer effects in educational research "can be a threat to validity" and steps should be taken to limit them.



## **10.2. Key findings and original contributions**

### **10.2.1. Autoethnography**

Thirty years of practice and research that has focused on developing dialogue to repair harm and develop positive healthy relationships, led to my search for a methodology that could incorporate my own stories, experience and research to support the accounts and 'stories' of others. Hughes and Pennington (2017) say that autoethnographers,

"exist somewhere along a continuum that ranges from leaning toward thinking *about* stories to leaning toward thinking *with* stories" (p.26, my italics).

The identification of this methodological approach provided me with the opportunity to reflect on my own story and research and use these experiences to support the literature and work '*with*' the stories of others. This search of the literature for methodological approaches that sat comfortably with my own philosophical approach to research highlighted potential issues of authenticity and validity for this piece of scholarly research. As discussed earlier in this thesis (p.102) autoethnography is considered a "relational pursuit" (Turner, 2013) so this fitted with both my own underlying assumptions about practice as well as the 'subject matter' linked to RJ.

The methodological approach has invited personal connection between the reader and the researcher. This weaves into the aim of the research to build our understanding of an approach to repair the harm caused by school exclusion, promote dialogue within the RJ movement and bridge the gap between the development of RJ in English education and criminal justice disciplines.

This has not been a linear process. The literature and 'findings' from this research have been re-visited throughout the writing up and self-reflection will continue way beyond the last full stop in this thesis.

As Rodriguez et al (2017) state:

“Once a phenomenon of interest is identified and/or the researcher is placed within the phenomenon of interest or the phenomenon of interest surrounds the researcher, an autoethnography can live continuously in the fieldwork, past and present and this adds a unique layer to traditional discussions of analysis” (p.68).

The process of making my own assumptions visible has helped to develop my own self-identity as a practitioner and researcher. The intention behind this process is to enhance the credibility of the research as well as my own credibility to have my ongoing critical research accepted in the field.

A significant contribution has been made to qualitative research and the role of the ‘insider’ or ‘complete member researcher’ (Anderson 2006; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) through the exposure of my own development as a ‘researcher’ and ‘self-identity’ across professional contexts. The outcomes and reflections on how this methodology has influenced the development of my researcher identity will be discussed.

### **10.2.2. Restorative Justice, relationships and self-identity**

This research has argued the importance of approaches in education that help and support young people at crucial stages in their development. The outcomes seek to help them develop healthy strategies to build and maintain relationships and manage those relationships when there is conflict or harm. The focus of this study has been on the adults who can role model and teach those strategies, particularly in the school setting. My own experiences reflections and critique of my roles as a practitioner and researcher in criminal justice and education has added a unique dimension to the findings and contribution that this research makes to understanding RJ and relationships.

Authors such as Packer and Goicoechea, (2000) see schools as “a site for the production of persons”. More broadly, they argue that:

“Human beings are formed and transformed in relationship with others, in the desire for recognition, in the practices of a particular community, and in a manner, that will split and initiate a struggle for identity.

A community of practice transforms nature into culture; it posits circumscribed practices for its members, possible ways of being human, possible ways to grasp the world—apprehended first with the body, then with tools and symbols—through participation in social practices and in relationship with other people” (p.234).

In this research, the development of identity has been central to the researched as well as to me as an early career researcher. Autoethnography has provided a rationale and methodological framework in which to do that. The inward gaze and self-reflections on my own career path and passion to develop more inclusive practice have been shared to question and expose the motivations and rationale behind my own use of an approach called restorative justice. I have explored the RJ ‘community of culture’ of which I have been a part since the ideas were introduced to the UK in 1994 on Terry O’Connell’s first visit to TVP.

I have explored the education ‘community of culture’ of which I have been a ‘practitioner member’ since 2008. The focus on school exclusion and the role of adults in dealing with young people at risk of exclusion linked to much broader issues of inclusion, behaviour management and breaking the so called ‘school to prison pipeline’ (see p.37 of this thesis).

The model of RJ introduced to me when I was a serving police officer working with the cautioning of young offenders was explored in relation to school exclusion and positive ways to support the skill development of young people in these situations which also followed my own career into teaching and special educational needs and inclusion.

Packer and Goicoechea, (2000) identify schools as places with “relational and cultural character, without which problem solving, skill acquisition, and intellectual inquiry would not occur”. They suggest that this makes schools a site for the “search, sometimes a struggle, for identity”.

I have also explored through this autoethnography the research ‘community of culture’. The sharing of personal stories around research and the reflections on the research process for this study have included the story of how I am negotiating my own researcher identity. As the author I have shared internal struggles throughout this research investigation. The RJ working assumptions outlined by O’Connell in this study have guided my own self-reflections on my own development as a researcher. The cyclical process of writing, reflecting, and revisiting my own thinking is intended to enhance this research study and contribute to practice in these three ‘communities of culture’.

Writing is the language to “make available one’s thinking to oneself and to others”. Writing requires attention to the ontological fit between the researcher’s worldview and way of being, and between thinking, research, and narrative. (Piantanida and Garman, 2010). This form of academic writing is interwoven with identity formation making the process of learning not only cognitive (an epistemological process), but more fundamentally an ontological process of identity formation.

### **10.3. Areas of future research**

#### **10.3.1. Inter-disciplinary approaches, communication difficulties and relationships**

This research thesis has highlighted the use of RJ across my own inter-disciplinary career path from police officer, when RJ was first introduced to an English police force, through to my role as teacher and SENCo in the education of 4–11-year-olds.

Cremin et al (2012) highlight the importance of language, values, and assumptions in RJ especially when translated into practice in different disciplines. They state that:

“when a concept is taken from one context or discipline and applied to another it is important to translate core ideas in ways that maximise opportunities for synergy and growth and avoid the appropriation of language and processes that do not fit” (p.434).

Although not generalisable, this research has supported the literature and my earlier findings (Preston, 2013), that boys and young people with SEN continue to be at highest risk from school exclusion processes. This is the same population of young people who are at much higher risk of entering the criminal justice system and who are known to have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) (RCSLT, 2017). Research by the RCSLT has shown that once in the criminal justice system, 40% of these young people find it difficult to access verbally mediated interventions and those with SLCN “rarely indicated that they had not understood or needed help; instead, they gave up” (RCSLT, 2017).

Language plays a key role in building relationships and further research into the range of strategies that can be used to support those young people with SLCN to access restorative processes and learn to build healthy relationships, is needed to ensure that we do not perpetuate their disadvantage and increase their experiences of negative shame (Snow & Powell, 2012). Waiting until they are in the criminal justice system is not acceptable. As Cremin et al (2012) state, it is “important to avoid pathologising and criminalising young people, particularly the disadvantaged”.

My own experience with pictures, social stories, role-play, and games suggests that the principles and values of RJ are accessible to the youngest of children and all those experiencing additional SLCN. This viewpoint is supported by a growing body of neuroscientific evidence

to back this up (Blakemore, 2018; Davidson and Begley, 2018) suggesting that there is much we can learn about areas of the brain that will help us more effectively support those CYP with SLCN and SEMH difficulties. This includes new and encouraging ideas on the use of games in restorative approaches to engage and include young people and adults (Pointer, McGoey and Farrar, 2020) and develop their relationship building skills.

### **10.3.2. Developing 'Circles of Relational Understanding'**

The working assumptions identified through this research and developed from O'Connell's 'road-map' demonstrate consistent and positive outcomes, in a range of contexts, because the focus is on improving relationships and developing a clearer understanding of 'self'.

As O'Connell stated in his conversation about his return to work with another police force in the UK some twenty-five years after introducing his ideas to TVP, he is "in a very different headspace now".

In a recent post on a social media platform, a teacher stated that,

"my small dive into the RJ world today has taught me that not one of the 149 schools achieving the most progress for disadvantaged students, has RJ as the backbone to their behaviour policy. This made me think about a few things" (Teacher, 2020).

It made me think too, and rather than resort to the compass of shame and 'attack other' in my defensiveness, I reflected that the problems of definition relating to RJ will continue and this is OK.

Being clear about the outcomes that you are looking for – this is what is important. Defensiveness within the RJ movement around definitions and theories will not help achieve those outcomes. Self-reflection and understanding our own motivations are much more important. If you

need to state that you are a restorative school/organisation/trainer or indeed apply any label to your organisation – ‘inclusive’, ‘trauma-informed’, ‘healthy’ – then if the practices are not role modelled by the individual, they will not be perceived as authentic by others and are much less likely to produce positive outcomes. This is particularly relevant to adults.

Through autoethnographic research, the findings from this study have supported the existing evidence from the literature, experience and practice (my own and others), that the principles highlighted in ‘Circles of Relational Understanding’ (Figure 6, p.249) can be used at the individual, community or organisational level. Context may play a part, but this is only because of the culture, the motivations, or the sense of purpose of the individuals within that context.

This study began with a personal motivation to improve outcomes for those young people excluded or ‘at risk’ of being excluded from the school setting. This linked to my own ideals of ‘justice’ in its broadest sense and was predicated by thirty years of practitioner experience as a police officer, teacher and SENCo and the continuous use of a model of practice called RJ for twenty five of those thirty years of practice.

The current Higher Education setting in which I work, has focused my thinking and practice on ‘inclusion’ and working with others who have chosen to pursue their studies and professional practice in the field of inclusion and special educational needs. As previously discussed, this led to my focus for this PhD on young people and exclusion and my desire to understand and evidence what is needed to improve outcomes for these young people.

My experience of the ‘exclusion’ of young people in the criminal justice sector as well as the education context and my involvement in the use and development of RJ in those contexts led to a literature review that covered ‘social justice’, ‘exclusion/inclusion’ and ‘restorative justice’ as key themes. I linked these areas of the literature to my own

experiences as a practitioner and researcher in my own journey to develop the 'ethnographic I' (Ellis, 1999). They became part of the cycle of analysis and writing and have allowed me to continue to live in the worlds in which I practice and maintain and develop the relationships there.

Ashurst and Venn (2014) suggest that school exclusion processes are indicative of more fundamental issues related to poverty and inequality. Thus, CYP framed as 'delinquent' in the school setting alongside negative perceptions that surround communities suffering deprivation support a neoliberal rationalisation of increasingly punitive disciplinary policies and reforms. My own experiences of these policies in policing and teaching highlight the need for further work in this area to break the cycles of exclusion that affect certain populations of young people unequally. My own experiences especially with the exclusion and criminalisation of boys and those with special educational needs, continue to support the evidence that punitive approaches to children in trouble are rarely effective. There is a need to move beyond just one institution such as schools as the frame of reference and a greater connection of Government macro level approaches to social and educational reform.

### **10.3.3. Autoethnography as a relational methodology**

Autoethnography, as a methodology, has been called a post-modern form of ethnography (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011), an alternative method and form of writing (Denshire, 2014), a relational pursuit (Turner, 2013), process and product (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011). In this research it has been adopted to build on the role of the insider researcher and add additional dimensions to develop greater understanding in my own interdisciplinary communities of culture. It has proved to be an interesting and promising qualitative method that



has allowed me to add my personal voice and experience to the research. These early stages of my own researcher development, although still tinged with anxiety, are now much more optimistic about progressing further into academia.

Brené Brown (2019) states that there can be no creativity without courage and vulnerability. A key component of vulnerability from her research data is emotional exposure. Autoethnography as a developing methodology provides the opportunity for creativity through the emotional exposure of the researcher which is certainly worthy of further exploration and debate. This aspect of the development of my own research identity has been an emotive and at times cathartic part of the process. It has been shared not for self-indulgence but to generate discussion around epistemological and ontological aspects of human change and learning. Packer and Goicoechea, (2000) state that:

“acquiring knowledge and expertise always entails participation in relationship and community and transformation both of the person and of the social world” (p.239).

The autoethnographic approach has revealed (to me) much more about the role that this methodology can contribute to research and practice as well as the self-identity of the researcher and practitioner. As an autoethnographer, this constant dialogue with myself has been found to be necessary to ensure that this research thesis serves as a pedagogical encounter (Warren and Hytten, 2004; Hughes and Pennington, 2017). Some say that autoethnography can be an emancipatory process for those on the margins between academia and practice (Rodriguez et al, 2017, p.74). I have certainly found that to be the case, but it can also be messy and sometimes uncomfortable (Muncey 2010; Law, 2003) as the methodology has also challenged my self-identity as practitioner and researcher. Have I followed Law’s (2003) guidance and ‘done my methods properly’, ‘eaten my

epistemological greens' and produced 'warrantable findings with a good shelf life'?

Autoethnography provides valuable opportunities for application in professional development in a variety of contexts that would benefit from connection between self-understanding and broader socialisation processes. These links have been identified in my own practitioner roles as police officer and educator and offer opportunity for future research.

I have had an abstract accepted for a chapter in a book on restorative methodologies. I will build on the findings from this thesis to develop a greater understanding of the relational aspects of autoethnography and their relevance as a methodology to RJ that seeks to deepen understandings through collaborative storytelling and the creation of shared meanings.

#### **10.4. Summary**

Although the initial focus of my lens highlighted school exclusion and the role of the adults in that process, the findings of this study have implications that extend much further. The research has contributed to a greater understanding of RJ and what motivates others to use and promote the practice in what is claimed to now be, an emerging social science (IIRP, nd). The research has also highlighted the relevance of autoethnography as a relational research methodology consistent with restorative values. The aim of these studies is to strengthen relationships between individuals as well as social connections within communities. As Luther King Jr (1963) states:

"In a real sense all life is inter-related. All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be... this is the inter-related structure of reality" (p.1).

People who experience the harm of conflict or damaged relationships need to be able to regain the 'authorship' of their own stories.

Storytelling and a greater understanding of the human need to tell stories (Gottschall, 2012) draws on research in neuroscience, psychology, and evolutionary biology. Gottschall argues that stories make us human, they shape us and help us to navigate life's complex social problems. This an exciting area for future research.

Sometimes others especially CYP need some help doing that, but not where the adult takes control. I return to the words of the criminologist Nils Christie (discussed in chapter 3, p.50).

"Let us have as few behaviour experts as we dare to....let us try to get them to perceive themselves as resource persons, answering when asked, but not domineering, not in the centre" (Christie, 1977, p.12).

As O'Connell stated in this research, "there is often this sort of instrumental view of restorative, that it was a great stand-alone process, when in fact it was always a relational framework."

As this thesis is being written, in a year that will be remembered for a world-wide pandemic, the term social distance has taken on a very different meaning. Pranis (2016), who had such an influence on O'Connell when he visited her in 1994 on his Winston Churchill Fellowship tour, wrote that social distance is the enemy of social justice. She states that:

"social distance is the degree to which people do not identify with other community members or do not feel connected by common interests or a common sense of fate. The greater the social distance between individuals or groups, the less investment people have in one another's well-being." (p.297)

RJ involves the telling of stories and the listening to stories. Labels, stereotypes, and judgement are much more difficult to apply to others when sitting in conversation with them. The purpose is to gain a shared understanding of what has happened and seek ways to find meaning

and draw out human dignity in a respectful encounter. Social justice seems more likely when there is commitment to a common good. I will continue to engage and share self-reflexive practice and research in pursuit of those outcomes.

## APPENDICES

Appendix 'A' The restorative conferencing 'script'

Appendix 'B' Key dates and biographical 'moments' – Preston and O'Connell

Appendix 'C' Research information leaflet shared by Local Authority team

Appendix 'D' Email from pilot study school

Appendix 'E' Extract from fieldwork diary

Appendix 'F' Educating Northants Conference flyer

Appendix 'G' Copy of online questionnaire

Appendix 'H' Ethical approval

Appendix 'I' Consent Form

Appendix 'J' Restorative Justice Council information on research

Appendix 'K' Range of restorative questions used in practice

Appendix 'L' Core principles underpinning the restorative questions

Appendix 'M' Key elements of a restorative process

Appendix 'N' What might need to happen to eliminate the need for school exclusion

Appendix 'O' The behaviour blueprint

Appendix 'P' Full conversation with O'Connell

Appendix 'Q' O'Connell presentation outline

Appendix 'R' Business sized restorative question cards

## Appendix 'A' The restorative conferencing 'script'

RESTORATIVE PRACTICE FACILITATOR GUIDE		Acknowledged Harm /Accepted Responsibility
<b>Step 1</b>	<b>Welcome and introduction:</b> <small>(N.B.—Italics and / are options and when in (brackets) are explanation)</small>	
	<p>"Welcome, as you know my name is ..... and I have been asked to facilitate this meeting. <i>(Introduce participants if this is necessary).</i>"</p> <p>"I have spoken to all of you about the incident <i>(briefly describe what happened).</i>"</p> <p>".....<i>(wrongdoer/s name/s)</i> has/have admitted his/her/their part. I remind you that you are here to discuss what has happened, not the character of anyone involved. I will invite you all to talk about how you and others may have been affected / harmed / hurt by what happened. This will help everyone understand what needs to be done to help repair the harm caused / make things right."</p>	
<b>Step 2</b>	<b>Start with wrongdoer/s:</b>	
	<p>"I would like to start with ....."</p> <p>"Could you tell us what happened?"</p> <p>"What happened then?" <i>(repeating as necessary to fully unfold their story)</i></p> <p>"What were you thinking about <u>at the time</u>?"</p> <p>"What have your thoughts been <u>since</u>?"</p> <p>"Who has been affected / harmed / hurt by what you did?"</p> <p>"In what way have they been affected / harmed / hurt?"</p>	
<b>Step 3</b>	<b>In turn, invite (i) person/s harmed <i>(theme in views when not present)</i> (ii) their family/support people (iii) the wrongdoer/s family/support people to speak:</b>	
	<p>"..... <i>(person/s harmed name)</i> what did you think when you realised what ..... <i>(wrongdoer/s name)</i> had done?"</p> <p>"What have your thoughts been <u>since</u>?"</p> <p>"How has this incident affected you and others?"</p> <p>"What has been the <i>hardest / worst</i> thing for you?"</p>	
<b>Step 4</b>	<b>Go back to wrongdoer/s:</b>	
	<p>"You have just heard how ..... <i>(person/s harmed name/s)</i> and others have been affected / harmed / hurt by what you did."</p> <p>"Is there anything you want to say at this time?"</p> <p>"Do you see that harm has been caused?"</p> <p>"Do you think something needs to be done to repair the harm done?"</p>	
<b>Step 5</b>	<b>Return to person/s harmed <i>(theme in views when not present)</i>:</b>	
<b>Step 6</b>	<b>Return to wrongdoer/s:</b>	
<b>Step 7</b>	<b>Return to the person/s harmed and then other supporters:</b>	
<b>Step 8</b>	<b>Return to wrongdoer/s <i>(if appropriate, record any agreement made)</i>:</b>	
<b>Step 9</b>	<b>Final invitations to speak:</b>	
<b>Step 10</b>	<b>Closing the meeting:</b>	

**REAL JUSTICE** www.realjustice.org **SaferSanerSchools**

This facilitator script and guide is copyrighted to O'Connell and RealJustice.org and shared with consent

## **Appendix 'B'      Biographical 'moments' – Preston and O'Connell**

### **Nicola Preston**

<b>1981 – 1985</b>	BA (Hons) Psychology (University of Reading)
<b>1985</b>	Joined Thames Valley Police (TVP)
<b>1992 - 1994</b>	Returned from maternity leave to Milton Keynes Police Area Performance Management Unit
<b>1993 - 1997</b>	Unfinished MPhil postgraduate studies
<b>1994 – 1996</b>	Headquarters Review Team
<b>1996</b>	Returned from maternity leave to TVP Headquarters Community Safety Department.
<b>1996 – 1999</b>	TVP Headquarters Restorative Justice Consultancy
<b>1999 – 2003</b>	Training Co-ordinator for the Restorative Practices Training Association (a partnership between Thames Valley Police and Real Justice)
<b>1999 – 2002</b>	Research Associate Thames Valley Partnership (Crime Prevention and Community Safety Charity)
<b>2003 – 2007</b>	Assistant Director (Training) International Institute for Restorative Practices (UK)
<b>2008 – 2009</b>	Graduate Teacher Training Programme
<b>2009</b>	Newly Qualified Teaching year in school in area of high deprivation
<b>2009 – 2013</b>	Teacher in various primary (4-11yrs) schools
<b>2011</b>	National Award in SEN Co-ordination (PGCert)
<b>2011 – 2013</b>	Various roles as SENCo and Safeguarding lead in schools

- 2014 – present** Adjunct Faculty International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP)
- 2014** MA in Education (University of Northampton)
- 2015 – present** Editorial Committee European Forum for Restorative Justice
- 2016** Accepted to begin PhD (University of Northampton)
- 2016 – 2019** Community of Restorative Researchers Advisory Board
- 2017 – present** Senior Lecturer SEN and Inclusion (University of Northampton)

### **Terry O'Connell**

- Age 15** As an electrical apprentice sat with a group of electrician colleagues who had just fought and got them to talk about it
- 1971** Joined Police Service (New South Wales, Australia)
- 1973** Attended fight outside a community hall where he was assaulted by a young man on a 'good behaviour bond'. Chose to resolve the incident by sitting down and talking with the young man and mother rather than arresting him.
- 1991** Became Community Beat Police Sergeant in the community of Wagga Wagga, New South Wales following the introduction of Community Beat Policing in 1987 in New South Wales
- 1991** Introduced what became known as the 'Wagga Wagga model' of restorative justice conferencing



- 1994** 'Wagga Wagga model' evaluated by researchers from Charles Sturt University including a grant from the Australian Criminology Research Council (Moore, 1994)
- 1994** Introduction to criminologist John Braithwaite through the research and made aware of re-integrative shaming theory (Braithwaite, 1989) and other theories relating to the emotion of shame (Tomkins, 1991; Nathanson, 1992; Retzinger and Scheff, 1996)
- 1994** Awarded a Winston Churchill Fellowship which resulted in a 13-week study tour to North America and the UK. Met the Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police (Charles Pollard), Donald Nathanson and Ted and Susan Wachtel (Ted went on to set up Real Justice and the IIRP).
- 1994 onwards** Established 'Real Justice' organisation and worked as part of the international movement to develop restorative justice and restorative approaches world-wide
- 1996** Returned to the UK to train and support the introduction of restorative justice conferencing in Thames Valley Police
- 1998 -2001** Independent evaluation of TVP restorative justice cautioning by the Oxford Centre for Criminological Research supported by funding from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Hoyle et al, 2002)
- 1996 – 2003** Work with Wachtel and McCold (2003) introduced the ideas of the social discipline window and fair

process to O'Connell's ideas of an explicit restorative justice framework

**2000**

Australian Logie Award for Most Outstanding Factual or Documentary Program for 'Facing the Demons' a documentary about a restorative conference facilitated by O'Connell to deal with the aftermath of a murder.

**2008**

Honorary Doctorate (Australian Catholic University)

## **Appendix 'C'      Leaflet shared by Local Authority team**



Faculty of Education and Humanities  
University of Northampton  
University Drive  
NN1, 5PH

### RESTORATIVE PRACTICES AND EXCLUSIONS

#### OPPORTUNITY TO BE INVOLVED IN RESEARCH TO HELP REDUCE EXCLUSIONS

Dear Participant

I am a senior lecturer in Special Educational Needs and Inclusion at the University of Northampton and I am also pursuing studies towards a PhD.

I am researching the use of a framework called restorative practices to help school staff and parents/carers in primary schools to gain a better understanding of the reasons behind the behaviours that put children and young people at risk of exclusion. I hope that this research will contribute towards increase in our knowledge around evidence-based approaches to reduce school exclusions.

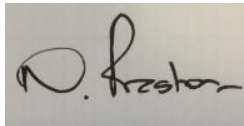
Restorative practices involve the use of a set of structured questions to help understand the way in which people have been affected by issues and to seek ways to gain a shared understanding of how to find positive outcomes.

Involvement in this research is voluntary and participants can withdraw at any time. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout and the identity of all participants and the school will remain anonymous with pseudonyms assigned in all written reports. The information you share will not be shared with others without your permission.

I am available via email to answer any questions that participants may have at any stage of the research.

All information collected will be stored securely on encrypted computers that will be password protected. The research has also been considered and approved by the University of Northampton Research Ethics Committee and follows the British Educational Research Association Ethical guidelines (BERA, 2018). If you agree to participate in this research then please complete and sign the attached permission slip and return it to the school for collection by myself.

Thank you in advance for what I hope will be useful research and make a difference to the lives of young people in Northamptonshire.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Preston', on a light-colored background.

Nicola Preston

PhD Researcher, University of Northampton

[nicola.preston2@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:nicola.preston2@northampton.ac.uk)

## **Appendix 'D'      Email from pilot study school**

**From:** SENCo PS

**Sent:** 09 January 2019 13:13

**To:** Nicola Preston

**Subject:** PhD

Hi Nicola

Thank you for coming to the meeting yesterday. After the meeting I received an email from mum stating that she no longer wants to take part in the research.

Many Thanks

SEnCo PS

## **Appendix 'E'      Extract from PhD Fieldwork diary**

**14<sup>th</sup> August 2018** - Identification of Pilot School as a potential 'pilot' site. Contact made through Inclusion Officer (IO) who is involved in restorative justice contact with the team (meeting originally set up with EP service). IO highlighted that this school is not one of the highest 'excluders' but they are having particular difficulty with a boy with ADHD who is at high risk of permanent exclusion and they are keen to involve me to be sure they are doing what they can to prevent exclusion. (Email from IO 18/8/18). The school are keen to be seen to be doing everything they can to prevent exclusion and IO has suggested this process of involvement in the research might help.

**5<sup>th</sup> October 2018** – met with Headteacher and SENCo at Pilot School. Keen to be involved and think that the parent of the child they are having difficulties with will also give consent to be involved. They will discuss the research initially with parent(s) and get back to me about consent.

**18<sup>th</sup> December** – Visited 'Pilot School' to collect consent form and chat with SENCo PS. Invited to TAF meeting on Jan 8<sup>th</sup> to meet parent(s) and Nurture Unit.

**8<sup>th</sup> Jan 2019** – Arrived at Pilot School to attend TAF meeting and introduce myself to the participants including parent (s).

Mum and Nurture Unit teacher sitting with me in reception.

NU teacher: "How was Christmas"

Mum: "Great, I didn't need to give him his medication at all, he has only had it to come back to school. There was only one meltdown on Christmas Day and that's not a surprise, we were all tired".

Asked by SENCo PS when she took us into the meeting room (in front of others): "Where is IO, is he coming to the meeting?"

Me: I don't know

SENCo PS: Oh sorry, I thought because he was a friend, you knew him, and you'd know.

Explained my research to the group including Mum who has already signed consent. Nurture Unit teacher said that she would like to be involved and took a consent form. Checked that all participants knew how to contact me and SENCo PS said she would get in touch after the meeting. Made sure everyone knew it was a voluntary process.

**9<sup>th</sup> Jan 2019** – Email received from SENCo PS:

Hi Nicola

Thank you for coming to the meeting yesterday. After the meeting I received an email from mum stating that she no longer wants to take part in the research.

Many Thanks

SENCo PS

I responded:

Hi SENCo PS

Thank you for letting me know. That is a pity, but I guess better now than after I had done the interview.

Does this also mean that you no longer wish to proceed with involvement? I understand that your focus was on this particular child and ensuring that you were doing everything possible to meet his needs so understand that now such great progress is being made things will have changed.

Kind Regards

Nicola

**9<sup>th</sup> Jan 2019** - Reflected on the learning from this and how it can be included in the research. In hindsight, the initial introduction by the IO

set up a relationship that may well have influenced the email from SENCo PS on 9<sup>th</sup> Jan following TAF meeting with parent that was not attended by IO.

Booked to meet with IO and discuss.

**15<sup>th</sup> Jan 2019** - Meeting with IO to discuss the withdrawal of parent from research – might well be worth interview to discuss the pilot and his views on what happened. Could use the RP questions. Need to get consent forms signed. What happened? What were you thinking at the time when you suggested this school/child? what are your thoughts now? See if SENCo PS will do the same.

**19<sup>th</sup> Jan 2019** - Thinking about starting the methodology chapter – linking back to the development of the research questions.

How effective are the restorative questions as an early assessment tool for understanding the challenges of children with ADHD tendencies in the school setting?

Can the restorative questions act as an (a consistent) assessment process/methodology to use with adults in the early stages of ADHD assessment in the school setting.

**19<sup>th</sup> Feb 2010** - Supervision

See notes on methodology writing returned to me with comments

Broaden out to reducing exclusion. Look to Educating Northants Conference for recruiting a sample

Look at primary schools with high rates of exclusion with a new Head looking for ways to make a difference. Link to behaviour policy and exclusion policy (if they have one).

**28<sup>th</sup> Mar 2019** - Asked to be on inclusion /exclusion panel at Educating Northants





## **EXCLUSIONS:**

### **VIEWED THROUGH A RESTORATIVE LENS**



#### **UNIVERSITY OF NORTHAMPTON PhD RESEARCH TO HELP UNDERSTAND AND REDUCE EXCLUSIONS IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

**I am looking for schools in Northamptonshire willing to participate in research into one of Education's current big issues.**

**If you are willing to participate in this research, then to find out more please visit the following link**

**<https://northampton.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/restorative-practices-to-reduce-exclusion>**

**There will be details about the research and how to participate. The research has full University of Northampton ethical approval and all participants will remain anonymous and can withdraw at any time. Any questions, please email me at the email below.**

**THANK YOU**

**NICOLA PRESTON**

**MA, MBPsS, FHEA**

**[nicola.preston@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:nicola.preston@northampton.ac.uk)**

## **Appendix 'G'      Copy of online questionnaire**

The codes for the sixteen respondents to the questionnaire have been converted from the twenty figure reference numbers in the survey to respondents R1 – R16 in the analysis

<b>Respondent Reference Number</b>	<b>Last 8 digits on questionnaire reference numbers</b>
R1	48146293
R2	48155599
R3	48217652
R4	48405283
R5	51624732
R6	51628344
R7	51667854
R8	51699762
R9	51845244
R10	52241913
R11	52241252
R12	52289937
R13	52289908
R14	52376134
R15	52984794
R16	51626605

# Reducing School Exclusions: Adopting a Restorative Approach

Showing 16 of 16 responses

With **2 responses excluded**

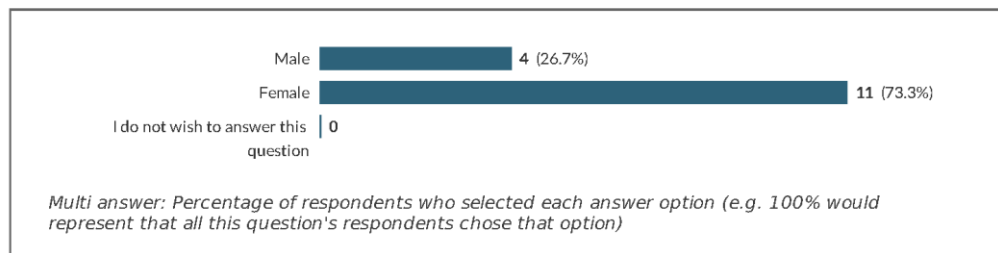
Showing **all** questions

Response rate: 16%

- 1** Please indicate the country or part of the country (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland) of the school that will be the focus for your answers in relation to this questionnaire on restorative practices and school exclusion (this may be different to where you currently live and work).

Showing all 16 responses	
England	<a href="#">443918-443909-48146293</a>
North London	<a href="#">443918-443909-48155599</a>
London , England	<a href="#">443918-443909-48217652</a>
England	<a href="#">443918-443909-48405283</a>
England	<a href="#">443918-443909-51624732</a>
Wales	<a href="#">443918-443909-51626605</a>
England	<a href="#">443918-443909-51628344</a>
Greater London Uk	<a href="#">443918-443909-51667854</a>
England	<a href="#">443918-443909-51699762</a>
England	<a href="#">443918-443909-51845244</a>
Gloucestershire, England	<a href="#">443918-443909-52241913</a>
England	<a href="#">443918-443909-52241252</a>
South West	<a href="#">443918-443909-52289937</a>
Gloucestershire	<a href="#">443918-443909-52289908</a>
Gloucestershire	<a href="#">443918-443909-52376134</a>
North East England	<a href="#">443918-443909-52984794</a>

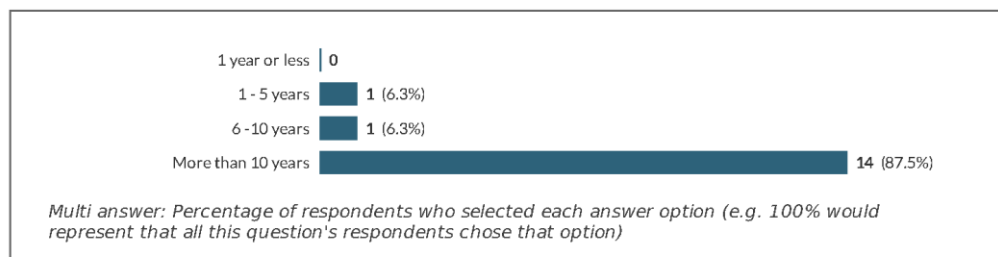
- 2** Please indicate the gender with which you wish to be identified



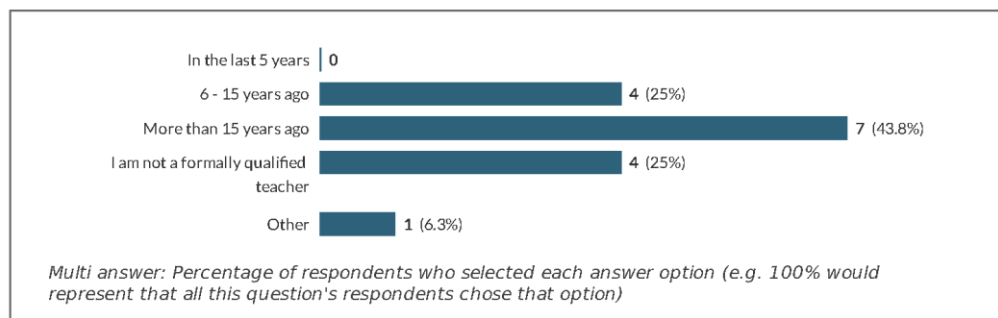
2.a If you selected Other, please specify:

No responses

3 How long have you worked as a practitioner in the education context (total number of years working in the sector, even if you have had time out and come back to education)?



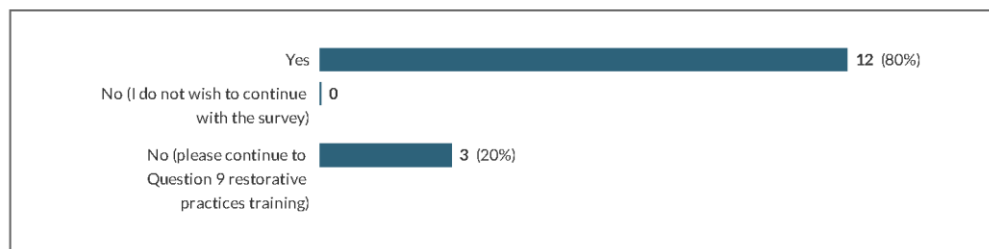
4 When did you qualify to become a teacher?



4.a If you selected Other, please specify:

Showing 1 response	
Psychologist /RP practitioner	443918-443909-51628344

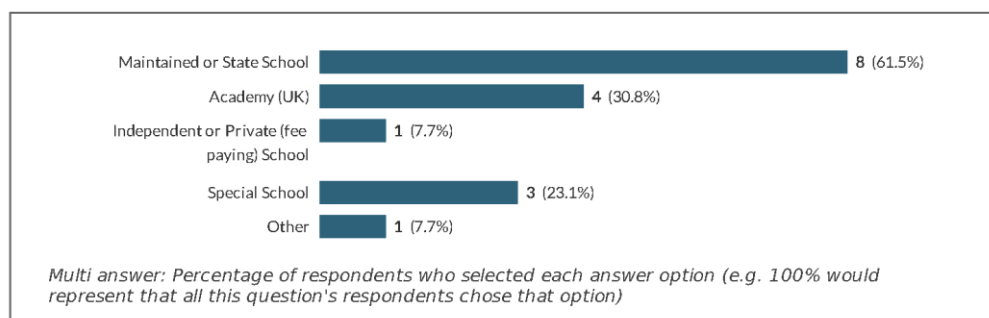
5 Are you currently working in the school setting (teaching staff)?



5.a If you selected Other, please specify:

Showing 1 response	
I work in a school setting and in the community	443918-443909-51628344

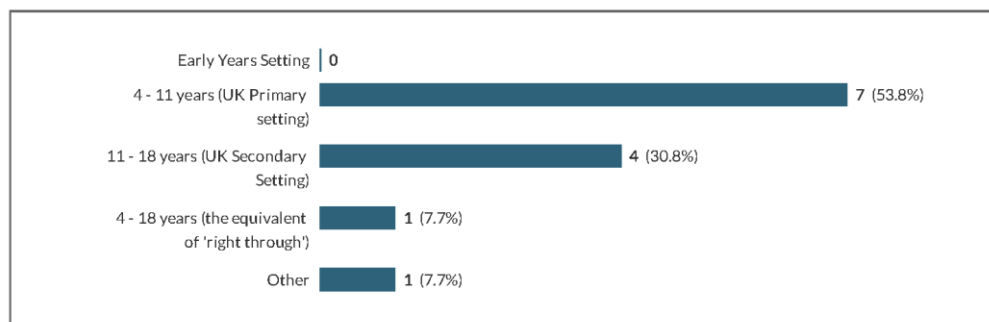
6 What type of school do you currently work in (tick all that apply)?



6.a If you selected Other, please specify:

Showing 1 response	
Pupil Referral Unit	443918-443909-51699762

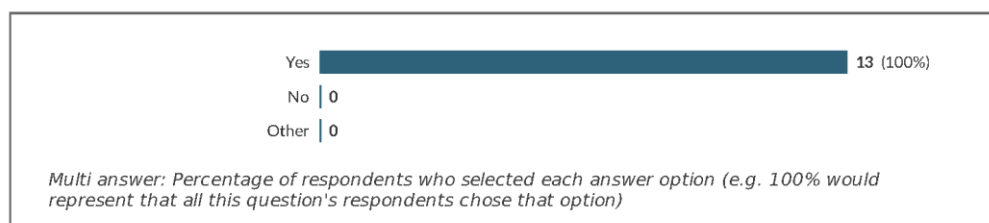
6.b What is the age range for the school you currently work in?



6.b.i If you selected Other, please specify:

Showing 1 response	
11-16	443918-443909-52984794

6.c Does the school you currently work in have a behaviour policy?



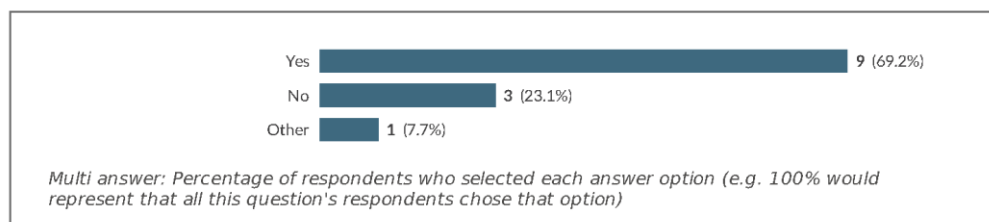
6.c.i If you selected Other, please specify:

No responses

6.c.ii If yes, does this policy refer to restorative practices?

Showing all 11 responses	
Yes.	443918-443909-48146293
yes	443918-443909-48155599
Yes, it is largely based around restorative practices.	443918-443909-48217652
Yes	443918-443909-51628344
yes, it is largely based on restorative practices.	443918-443909-51667854
No	443918-443909-51845244
Not yet but in process of doing so. we are currently in a transition phase.	443918-443909-52241913
We are working on a 'red card' and 'going for green' system but are taking part in research that involves us changing to Restorative Practice in January 2020 when it will be rewritten.	443918-443909-52241252
Our policy is titled;  A Restorative School Our Behaviour Policy and Guidance for Enhancing Community Relationships and Learning.	443918-443909-52289908
Yes (recently updated)	443918-443909-52376134
Yes	443918-443909-52984794

6.d Does the school you currently work in have a policy for exclusions?



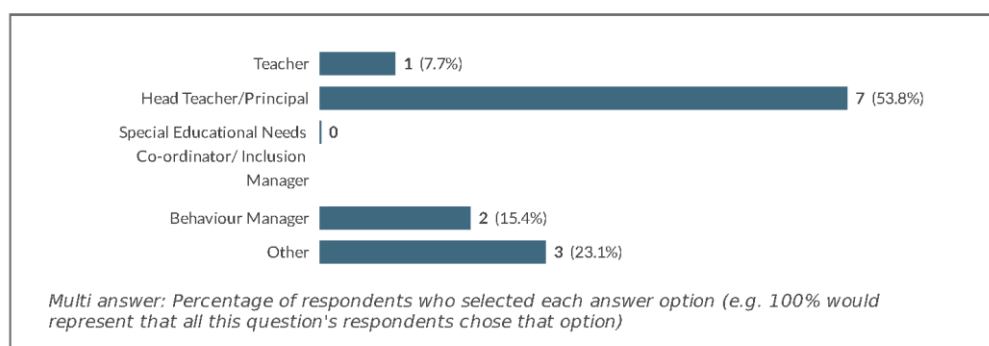
6.d.i If you selected Other, please specify:

Showing 1 response	
excusions are referred to in our behaviour policy.	443918-443909-51667854

6.d.ii If yes, does this policy refer to restorative practices?

Showing all 9 responses	
No.	443918-443909-48146293
Yes	443918-443909-51628344
yes	443918-443909-51699762
No	443918-443909-51845244
Not at the moment - we rarely exclude though as have worked restoratively for a while at SLT level.	443918-443909-52241913
YES	443918-443909-52289937
Yes - fully	443918-443909-52289908
It's referred to in the Behaviour and Restorative Practices policy.	443918-443909-52376134
Yes	443918-443909-52984794

**7** What is your primary role in the school?



**7.a** If you selected Other, please specify:

Showing all 4 responses	
RP facilitator and crisis intervention	443918-443909-51628344
Head of student Pastoral support	443918-443909-51667854
Pastoral	443918-443909-51699762
Peer Mediation trainer	443918-443909-51845244

**7.b** How long have you been in that current role?





Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)

#### 8 Does your current school use restorative practices?



Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)

#### 8.a If you selected Other, please specify:

##### Showing 1 response

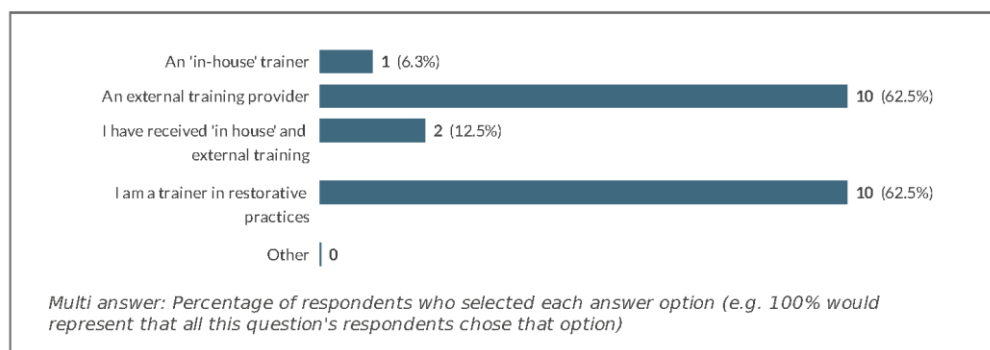
We have visited another school that does and have had some input from [redacted] We have also read Paul Dix's book 'When the Adults Change, Everything Changes'. We have started using restorative practices and are rolling it out to all staff from January 2020 through [redacted] Inset and CPD.

[443918-443909-52241252](#)

#### 9 Have you personally received training in restorative practices?



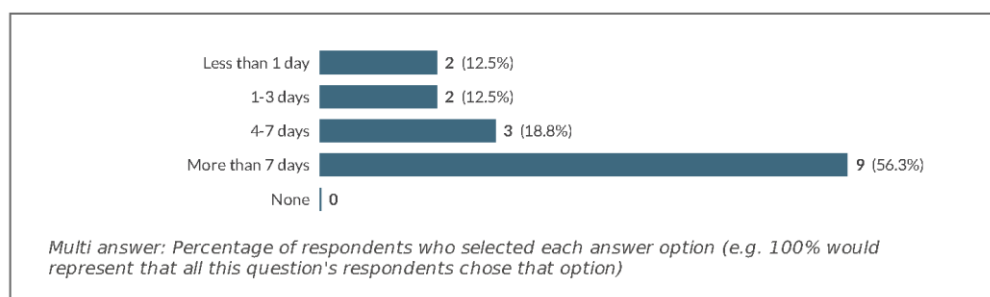
#### 10 Who provided this training? Tick as many boxes as apply to you personally.



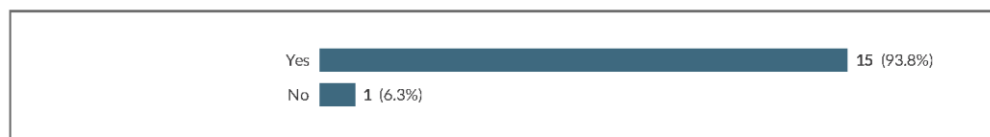
10.a If you selected Other, please specify:

No responses

11 How much formal training have you received in restorative practices? Please estimate the total in days.



12 Do you use a series of restorative questions in your practice?



12.a If you answered yes, please list these questions.

Showing all 13 responses	
What happened?	443918-443909-48155599

<p>Before/after?</p> <p>What were you thinking?</p> <p>How were you feeling?</p> <p>Who has been affected by your behaviour?</p> <p>What do you need now so you can move on?</p> <p>How can we address everyone's needs together?</p> <p>How are you feeling now?</p>	
<p>what happened? How did you feel? who has been affected? How do you think they might be feeling? What else could you have done differently? What would you do next time? what needs to happen now?</p>	443918-443909-48217652
<p>What happened?</p> <p>What were you thinking ? (then and now)</p> <p>What were you feeling? (then and now)</p> <p>Who else has been affected?</p> <p>How?</p> <p>What has been the hardest thing?</p> <p>What strengths do you have for this?</p> <p>What needs to happen next?</p> <p>How shall we move forward ?</p> <p>and various other age appropriate variations for younger children/ additional needs</p>	443918-443909-48405283
<p>What happened?</p> <p>Who has been affected? and how? Who else?</p> <p>What were your thoughts/feelings at the time.....and now?</p> <p>What would you like to see happen now?</p> <p>What was the hardest thing for you?</p> <p>What can you do to help put things right?</p>	443918-443909-51624732
<p>what has happened .</p> <p>what were you thinking feeling.</p> <p>What do you think / feel now.</p> <p>who has been affected.</p> <p>How have they been affected.</p> <p>what do we need to happen to put things right.</p> <p>What could we do differently next time.</p>	443918-443909-51626605
<p>I use all the RP Questions</p>	443918-443909-51628344
<p>Depends on the circumstances but broadly, How are you feeling?</p> <p>do you want to tell me what happened/or what is happening?</p> <p>Who is affected ?</p> <p>how do you think they might be feeling?</p> <p>could you have done anything differently?or what could you do differently next time?</p> <p>How/what are you feeling now?</p> <p>How would you like things to be?</p> <p>What could you do next to make things better?</p> <p>Can we talk again to see how things are now?</p>	443918-443909-51667854
<p>What happened</p> <p>What id the right and fair thing to do</p> <p>What harm have you caused</p>	443918-443909-51699762
<p>what happened?</p> <p>what were you feeling at the time?</p>	443918-443909-52241913

what do you feel about it now? who's been affected? what's needed to make things right? what have we learned from this?	
Validate emotions... What has happened? What do you think/feel about it now? Who's been affected? What is needed to make things right? how can we make amends? What have we learnt from this?	443918-443909-52289937
<input type="checkbox"/> What happened? <input type="checkbox"/> What were you thinking about at the time? <input type="checkbox"/> What have your thoughts been since? <input type="checkbox"/> Who else has been affected by what you did? <input type="checkbox"/> What do you think needs to happen to make things right?  <input type="checkbox"/> What did you think when you realised what had happened? <input type="checkbox"/> What have your thoughts been since? <input type="checkbox"/> How has this affected you and others? <input type="checkbox"/> What has been the hardest thing for you? <input type="checkbox"/> What do you think needs to happen to make things right?	443918-443909-52289908
What/now what/so what... When you/I feel... (because) / I need...	443918-443909-52376134
What happened from your perspective? Who might have been impacted by your actions? How do you think they felt and how did you feel? What do you think you could do differently now?	443918-443909-52984794

12.b If you answered 'no', please explain the process used.

Showing 1 response	
Not yet consistent but we have started.	443918-443909-52241252

12.c If you use a series of questions, what core principles underpin the questions to make them 'restorative' in your opinion?

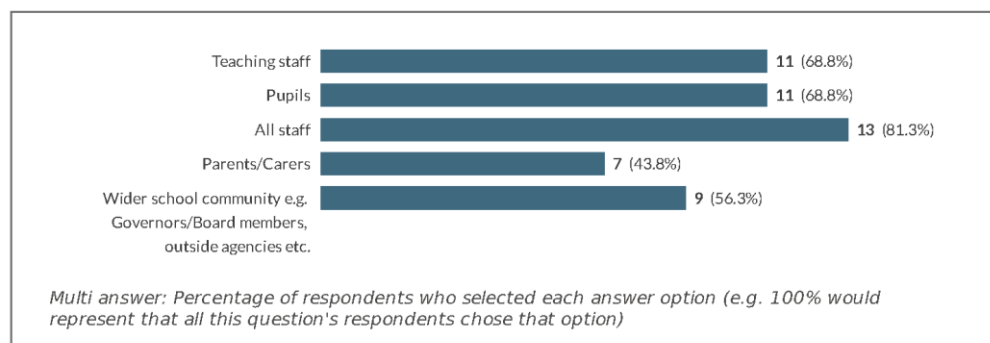
Showing all 13 responses	
Core principles Behaviour is communication and we need to know what is being communicated and teach children appropriate ways to communicate well and express emotion - this is a journey. Children need to know conflict happens and learn to resolve it well Core values worth (each person has equal worth) kindness	443918-443909-48155599

10 / 24

Korinna compassion empathy forgiveness	
No Blame, developing empathy, moving forward, sharing responsibility, finding solutions, understanding barriers.	443918-443909-48217652
The building of mutual respect The sharing of responsibility The development of relationship	443918-443909-48405283
Apply to both harmed and harmer Non - judgemental Open as against closed, allowing for individual opinion Increasing responsibility and accountability	443918-443909-51624732
Inclusive, equal, unbiased, non judgemental and open.	443918-443909-51626605
Allowing those involved to articulate what happened and it's impact to themselves and others involved	443918-443909-51628344
responsibility, awareness of feelings and emotions of self and others, developing empathy consideration of what actions need to be taken to make the situation better. No blame, no focus on sanctions.	443918-443909-51667854
Repair the harm	443918-443909-51699762
We train the children in mediation skills which we think reflect restorative practices	443918-443909-51845244
all involved are harmed in some way we can make things right	443918-443909-52241913
The questions are sequentially promoting left /right brain balance. emotional then logical. The questions give the person a voice - have there say. it allows them to explore the feeling of themselves and other - reflective. Through attending to the questions they are managing their own behaviour and how this may be in the future. They are focused on repairing and building relationships. There is an air of peaceful problem solving. The participant must be in the right state of mind to attend to the questions. The environment must be right. The facilitator must be trained and practice attunement.	443918-443909-52289937
The emphasis is not managing behaviour but focusing on building, nurturing and repairing relationships.	443918-443909-52289908
Taking time to establish what has happened, who has been impacted, what needs to happen to put it right/move on...	443918-443909-52376134

- 13 From the following list tick the people who are involved/are given the opportunity to be involved in restorative processes at your current school. Tick all those that apply and add any additional

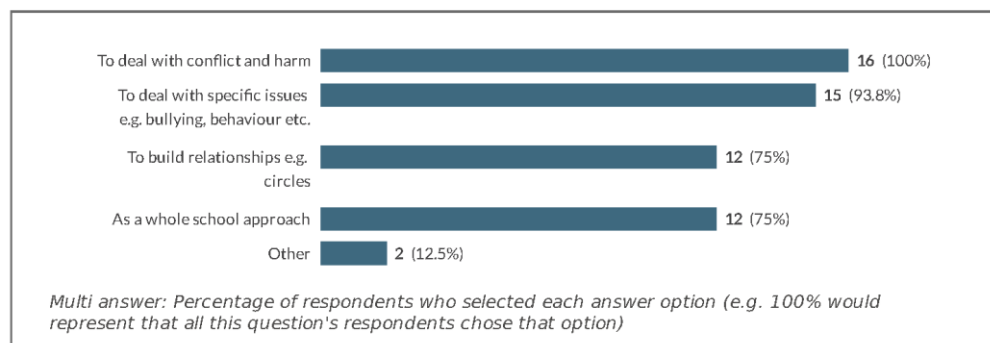
categories in 'other'



13.a If you selected Other, please specify:

Showing all 4 responses	
Governors LA local church	443918-443909-48155599
other isn't a category offered?	443918-443909-51667854
This will be true from January. At the moment it is mostly some teachers as we have not had whole school training yet.	443918-443909-52241252
In the process of the above. These will all be involved, currently teaching staff and some TA's have attended training. Another date to be arranged.	443918-443909-52376134

14 From your own experience, how have restorative practices been used in the school setting? Tick all that apply



14.a If you selected Other, please specify:

Showing all 2 responses	
To teach conflict resolution skills	443918-443909-48155599
To develop empathy and understanding of and for students that are finding 'things' challenging	443918-443909-51667854

15 Please explain how you believe that restorative practices should be used in the school setting?

Showing all 15 responses	
By well trained staff who understand that behaviour is communication	443918-443909-48155599
All the above and to develop empathy, and to find solutions to relationship issues, to understand feelings and develop caring and nurturing. to move away from a punitive approach.	443918-443909-48217652
All of the above and to create a culture of wellbeing for individuals and the school community	443918-443909-48405283
Underpinning relationships between all members of the community, including the broader groups of parents, carers, governors	443918-443909-51624732
As a starting point, school should endeavour to put the restorative approach at the very core of its values, school plan and all students and parents should be informed that this process is a set of values that the school will put in place and that is how all incidents will be dealt with.	443918-443909-51626605
Using the restorative narrative as opposed to a blame culture at all times is the first step to changing the community	443918-443909-51628344
To encourage understanding and support for all the community, to help students acquire the skills to use these practices in the wider community and into their adult lives. To create a safe and supportive environment with high levels of respect and accountability.	443918-443909-51667854
To deal with conflict To deal with post exclusion meetings Language used in the school	443918-443909-51699762
Restorative questions instead of a blame culture. A chance for everyone to have their say	443918-443909-51845244
to build strong relationships and then use this to resolve conflict when it happens	443918-443909-52241913
I think that they should be used across the whole school consistently to deal with all situations involving conflict so that everyone's voice can be heard.	443918-443909-52241252
Restorative Approaches are a way of being, they must be adopted as a whole school approach and philosophy. They must underpin and compliment the school's vision values and aims.	443918-443909-52289937

13 / 24

<p>At [REDACTED] we have high expectations of our pupils. We encourage all children to try their best to achieve their goals. They should understand that it is the responsibility of staff and pupils to uphold and maintain our school code. For occasions when this is proving not to be the case, we use restorative approaches to help pupils understand the impact of their actions and how to put it right. We believe that by using this Restorative Approach we are giving pupils the skills to independently make better and more informed choices in the future.</p> <p>Restorative approaches encourage pupils to think about how their behaviour affects others, both pupils and staff. It helps children to develop respect, responsibility and truth telling.</p> <p>If a pupil in our school has been negatively affected by someone's behaviour, we will try our very best to make sure they feel that it has been put right for them and that it will not happen again.</p> <p>If a child has done something wrong they will be asked to put things right and change their behaviour so it does not happen again. All children are supported in a constructive way to face up to consequences which will be put in place as a result of the behaviours which have taken place. By using the Restorative Approach it allows ALL parties to have their say AND be listened to.</p>	443918-443909-52289908
To support an ethos of inclusion, support and understanding, and so that children can take responsibility for their own choices, and the impact of this on others.	443918-443909-52376134
To avoid exclusion and help the children understand the impact of their actions and feel a sense of empathy by putting it right.	443918-443909-52984794

- 16 Do you believe there are key elements to the restorative process that make it an effective approach to use in schools? If yes, please explain what you think these are and why they make a difference.



Showing all 13 responses	
Staff must not judge, must listen well, must not problem solve for the children, culture needs to come from the leadership team and be modeled all the time	443918-443909-48155599
In terms of relationship building and solution focussed work it is key in character development, citizenship, critical thinking and building a community.	443918-443909-48217652
the focus on relationships the contribution to social & emotional learning the development of shared accessible everyday ethics	443918-443909-48405283
Increasing accountability and responsibility for all in relationships, behaviours. Bringing the community together, its a shared space , for all to recognise they contribute to providing, supporting a positive, constructive , rich environment, that recognises conflict happens and the necessity to find ways forward for all involved.	443918-443909-51624732
the whole school approach. All staff even down to the care takers Inclusive of students and their parents. If there is a clear expectation of behaviour and interaction that is equal fair and inclusive i feel all will engage fully. (i have seen this approach work given time)	443918-443909-51626605
See above as creates a better community and allows students to understand how their behaviour impacts learning and potential self esteem	443918-443909-51628344
All the above.	443918-443909-51667854
All staff to be trained Restorative language to be used	443918-443909-51699762
Fairness, listening, positive communication	443918-443909-51845244
Yes. Listening. Also, having clear consequences that are shared, consistent and driven by the people involved in the incident.	443918-443909-52241252
Relationships, Relationships, Relationships! It strengthens the relationships in the school and the school community.	443918-443909-52289937
Talking about what has happened; understanding impact of behaviour and choices on others; chance to put it right; supports fairness and responsibility.	443918-443909-52376134
The fact it is centred on the relationship with the person leading on it - if this is effective, the RJ will normally be effective.	443918-443909-52984794

- 17 Are there any circumstances where restorative practices should not be used in the school setting. Please explain your answer.

Showing all 14 responses	
When a child is experiencing/ recently experienced major trauma and cannot regulate at this point in time and cannot accept responsibility for their actions or make changes at this point in time	443918-443909-48155599
If the school follows a punitive approach and doesn't subscribe to restorative ethos it shouldn't say it does. otherwise, I can see no reason not to use it I think it is most effective where it is whole school, this requires time, training, commitment, buy-in and recognising there will always be doubters.	443918-443909-48217652
RP must be voluntary and adults have a responsibility to ensure processes are safe. If these two preconditions are not achieved the process should be paused. There are ways of managing risk eg indirect communication and participants must make informed choices facilitated by adults	443918-443909-48405283
RP is in many forms, and not necessarily delivered in set ways. Essential to remember that RP is not an investigation, although there will be increased understanding of what led to behaviours,etc. There has to be an acceptance of wrongdoing, harm being caused, and an interest in trying to put things right.	443918-443909-51624732
No.	443918-443909-51626605
yes when students/staff /parents do not want or cannot to work with the process and and a result could make matters worse	443918-443909-51628344
Where the students aren't ready, where bringing people together makes the situation worse. If there is risk fear or danger to the safety of any party involved.	443918-443909-51667854
Domestic Abuse situations	443918-443909-51699762
bullying	443918-443909-51845244
can always be used in the end but sometimes we need to wait until the time is right for all	443918-443909-52241913
Not as far as I know	443918-443909-52241252
where the participant does not want to engage in the restorative enquiry - it must be voluntary.	443918-443909-52289937
When a child deliberately hurts another either physically or verbally, but we still use the processes to help them understand the impact of this choice.	443918-443909-52376134
At a heightened time of crisis - this will not work in the heat of the moment and time has to pass for able reflection.	443918-443909-52984794

- 18 Does your school exclude children permanently? Please describe the reality of this (even if it is a last resort) and explain the process that would be followed.

Showing all 14 responses	
Yes, but not often, after we have exhausted every once of help from within the school and outside the school - usually when the family is unable to see things in the same way as the school/ LA and so will not engage	443918-443909-48155599
Almost never, we would look to move someone on if there is absolutely no alternative ie where a student injures others and shows no way to moderating their behaviour and we have tried every possible intervention and are left with no alternative. If it is a serious safeguarding issue and the safety of students (or staff )is put at risk by a student presence at the school, but again we would look to move them on ie managed move rather than exclude.	443918-443909-48217652
Yes, after repeated infringements, and a range of approaches to change things, including RP	443918-443909-51624732
Not working in school, however involved when requested.	443918-443909-51626605
Yes it is a long process with a multitude of interventions and only when all else has failed	443918-443909-51628344
If it is an absolute last resort, we would always try to create a better scenario, ie a managed move. But when the presence of a student presents as a serious risk to self others and safety cannot be ensured we would need to consider the placement suitability.	443918-443909-51667854
no	443918-443909-51699762
No	443918-443909-51845244
No, we have had 2 x1 day exclusions in last 5 years. We don't see exclusion as an answer.	443918-443909-52241913
It is in our behaviour policy that we can but we haven't excluded anyone for several years.	443918-443909-52241252
We haven't in the last 5 years. but it may be necessary.	443918-443909-52289937
Since I have been Headteacher there have been no permanent exclusions. We would only permanently exclude a child in extreme situations when adults or other children were at risk.	443918-443909-52289908
We would do if we felt an alternative provision would be more suited to a child's needs. One child has been permanently excluded since I joined the school. If opportunity to move a child to a more suitable educational provision was available (or to have a nurture group provided in our school full time) this would have better met his needs. A managed move rather than a permanent exclusion would have been much more appropriate to meet this child's needs. Early Years identification of children will needs that are hard to meet in a mainstream school provision also need to improve alongside family support to deal with challenging behavior and develop emotional literacy.	443918-443909-52376134
As an absolute last resort where every other possibility has been explored.	443918-443909-52984794

- 19 Does your school exclude children for a fixed term? Please describe the reality of this (even if it is a last resort) and explain the process that would be followed.

Showing all 14 responses	
Yes, enables us to access support that is only available from outside agencies or when parents will not engage - forces engagement with support from LA sometimes exclude for half a day - we never send home - only legally exclude	443918-443909-48155599
As above but as a last resort if a student continues to cause major disruption hurt others physically, is offensive repeatedly and refuses to adapt, fixed-term exclusions are rarely used.	443918-443909-48217652
Yes, to have immediate effect.	443918-443909-51624732
as above	443918-443909-51626605
Yes when the incident is of a particular seriousness or many repeated incidents	443918-443909-51628344
We do on rare occasions for extreme and dangerous behaviour to give ourselves time to consider a different plan or risk assessment and to give them a chance for reflection. not as a punishment.	443918-443909-51667854
no	443918-443909-51699762
Yes. The first step would be detention followed by isolation followed by exclusion if the situation doesn't improve	443918-443909-51845244
yes, above.	443918-443909-52241913
It is in our behaviour policy that we can, but we haven't excluded anyone for several years.	443918-443909-52241252
Yes - in the last year we have. to be honest the fixed term exclusion ensured the local authority accept you are at crisis point and have exhausted all your expertise within the school, then things can start happening for child that will help reduce the risk of PEX. We hold a TAC meeting with a multi-agency approach, a plan is developed. It is reviewed to ensure success.	443918-443909-52289937
We have reduced fixed term exclusions with the introduction of RP from 49 before RP started to 10 in year 1 to 3 in year 2, now we are in our third year with 1 half day so far. Children only require a fixed term exclusion when they are unsafe or deliberately hurt a member of staff.	443918-443909-52289908
Yes if appropriate to policy, but this is rare. It would always be for deliberate physical or verbal harm to another.	443918-443909-52376134
Yes - the child will have a reintegration meeting with parents and cares as well as the child where the RJ is planned out and a reintegration plan with targets is set up with the child.	443918-443909-52984794

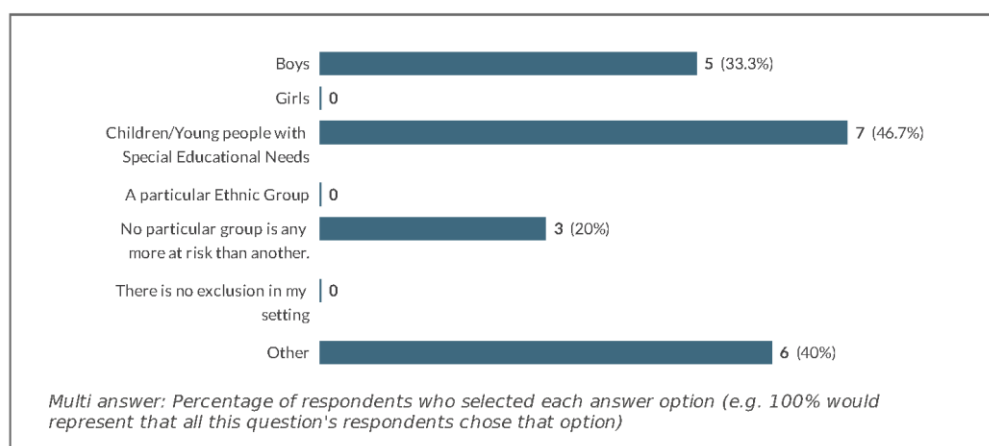
20 Do you use restorative practices in relation to the exclusion process? Please explain your answer.

Showing all 14 responses	
Yes in the re-integration meeting following the exclusion	443918-443909-48155599
We use a restorative re-entry meeting, which features moving forward rather than being about blame, we focus on responsibility to self and others.	443918-443909-48217652
Yes, sometimes before , but always after exclusion	443918-443909-51624732
Yes, if asked to facilitate, i will explore all avenues to deter an exclusion.	443918-443909-51626605
Yes on reintegration meeting and any follow Restorative actions that might be needed such as apologies or meetings	443918-443909-51628344
We use a restorative conversation to create a safe return to the school, including parents/carers and relevant staff and the student concerned.	443918-443909-51667854
yes to avoid exclusion and after exclusions	443918-443909-51699762
I am usually called in to mediate after the student is back from exclusion	443918-443909-51845244
yes, to prevent and then reintegrate	443918-443909-52241913
Yes. We do internal exclusions where there are restorative conversations as part of the half/day's learning.	443918-443909-52241252
In meeting we use a restorative circle approach.	443918-443909-52289937
For the child we use our restorative approach.	
Yes	443918-443909-52289908
Not yet appropriate to our school, as we have only just undertaken training, but yes we would.	443918-443909-52376134
Yes - see above	443918-443909-52984794

21 From your own experience are you aware of whether rates of exclusion have changed when restorative practices have been introduced? If yes, please explain how they have changed and what you think has led to this change.

Showing all 14 responses	
Yes, drastically dropped as we changed the approach and asked ourselves what the underlying causes of the behaviour were and listened to the children and made changes to what we were doing or the provision for the child - also safeguarding referrals went right up	443918-443909-48155599
While they have always been low the rates may have decreased further with staff training around deescalation and restorative practices.	443918-443909-48217652
Rates have reduced , but not disappeared. Sometimes it means management give pupil another chance through a RP approach, most valuable if you involve significant others	443918-443909-51624732
Uncertain	443918-443909-51626605
I feel if used early enough a RA can pre emp escalation of incidents	443918-443909-51628344
Rates of exclusion have always been very low, in the last few years we have introduced a relationship and behaviour policy based on restorative practices and also changed the curriculum to a project-based programme which has resulted in greater student engagement we have increased cpd for staff so they are better equipped for meeting students needs all this has had the desired effect perhaps combined rather than one aspect more than another.	443918-443909-51667854
reduced exclusion and bullying	443918-443909-51699762
The number of serious conflict is reduced on the playground because the silly arguments are sorted out before they have a chance to escalate	443918-443909-51845244
in our county, yes.	443918-443909-52241913
I'm hoping that it will reduce the internal exclusions and further support us in ensuring that we don't have to do any external exclusions in the future.	443918-443909-52241252
to early to say.	443918-443909-52289937
See previous answer	443918-443909-52289908
N/A	443918-443909-52376134
I know that since looking at our reintegration and Rj processes exclusions on the whole have reduced - however they maintain for some key and repeat offenders. I think we would need more specialist input here.	443918-443909-52984794

- 22 From the following list, please select two groups that are most at risk from the exclusion process in your setting.



22.a If you selected Other, please specify:

Showing all 6 responses	
children who parents will not engage with us and agencies to make changes or enforce boundaries and expectations	443918-443909-48155599
SEMH and students that don't think they have been placed in and appropriate setting so they want to get excluded.	443918-443909-48217652
Most of the exclusions seem to involve boys who appear to have problems which have not been diagnosed early enough if at all leading to disaffection and lack of respect for the school setting	443918-443909-51628344
Students that are placed at the school that don't think they should be at the school and want to be excluded. Students whose Mental health is such that they cannot regulate their own behaviour.	443918-443909-51667854
young people affected by domestic abuse	443918-443909-51699762
Children who have experienced ACES and trauma.	443918-443909-52289937

- 23 Do the adults involved with the child at risk of being excluded (staff and parents/carers) have a chance to discuss their thoughts and feelings about the underlying causes of the challenging behaviour? Please explain the processes you currently use to engage with the adults involved with the child/young person.

Showing all 14 responses	
Yes, stepped approach, starts with the child/ teacher then a senior leader/ child then parent/child and teacher then senior leader too, behaviour passport will be written with all parties present identifying triggers and with strategies, perhaps school therapist or learning mentor, daily check ins and rewards, then if still no change local Inclusion Team who have a team of professionals. Usually successful	443918-443909-48155599
Yes, we have regular meeting supporting any student at risk with staff internally and externally. We create risk assessments support plans, Individualized timetables. Positive support plans.	443918-443909-48217652
Informal meetings, developing trust between school and family, trying to work WITH then	443918-443909-51624732
If i am invited to ork with a case i will involve everyone who has a part in the restorative process.	443918-443909-51626605
Yes parents are asked in for meeting tutors heads of year and pastoral workers Armand outside agencies if appropriate	443918-443909-51628344
Yes, always we do everything to avoid the stigma of exclusion our focus is always child-centered. we will involve whoever can help bring about the best possible outcome for the student.	443918-443909-51667854
restorative meetings reflection process pastoral support meetings with parents	443918-443909-51699762
Meeting with the parents	443918-443909-51845244
yes, through TAF meetings.	443918-443909-52241913
Yes. If they are displaying worrying behaviours, we support with our FSW who is a qualified counsellor. We are part of the Trailblazers initiative so they can have support from there too. We also refer to CYPS and Teens in Crisis. We also put pupils on the SEN register for SEMH and/or do behaviour plans. If pupils are on My Plans or My Plan Pluses, there are short-termly meetings where adults and pupils have a chance to discuss how things are going. We also work closely with social care.	443918-443909-52241252
A great amount of training has happened before we started RP. Trauma informed, Growth Mindset, Brain behind the behaviour, punished by rewards.	443918-443909-52289937
The same restorative practice is used with families.	443918-443909-52289908
Yes, always. We work very well as a staff team, and with families to try to understand and support a child.	443918-443909-52376134
Yes - see above re reintegration process.	443918-443909-52984794

24 Please give your opinions on what you believe would need to happen in an ideal world to eliminate the need for school exclusions.



Showing all 15 responses	
need to break down the barriers further between disaffected parents and school/ agencies	443918-443909-48155599
Staff would need to have additional training. government, Ofsted, and schools ethos would need changing to focus on individual need rather than academic results. sufficient funding would need to be made available that adequately support schools to have the staffing ratios to enable individualized support.	443918-443909-48217652
Restorative Practice could make a far greater contribution if understood and adopted	443918-443909-48405283
Believe there should always be a place for exclusions, although far less than at present. School needs to be able/have authority to make a stand, in the interests of the individual, the school community, the wider public. School should/needs to be a safe place for everybody	443918-443909-51624732
I feel that the use of exclusion can never be totally taken away, we have to consider all behaviours, however there should be an opportunity to change behaviours. Parents need to play a greater role in the way families and schools work, to much them and us somewhere in the middle is an opportunity to fix, learn and move on.	443918-443909-51626605
Highlighting vulnerable students leading to much Earlier interventions	443918-443909-51628344
██████████ would need to be more child development focussed, adequately funded, trained and skilled to support the full range of needs and behaviours including trauma less about exam results and league tables. Control and punishments.	443918-443909-51667854
more restorative sometimes exclusion is necessary in terms of violent situations	443918-443909-51699762
Staff available to support students who have problems leading to bad behaviour. A better understanding by staff on the effect of ACEs and trauma on a student	443918-443909-51845244
all of the above.	443918-443909-52241913
A better pathway for SEND pupils whose needs, it emerges, cannot be met in primary schools.	443918-443909-52241252
Fair funding for schools An educational inspectorate that ensured school improvement, not just judgement. league tables, high stakes accountability. If education was run by an independent body and was not political. Get rid of academies. Early intervention Well funded therapeutic services for young children. RP for everyone - all services.	443918-443909-52289937
Everyone responds to the needs of the child. Relationships need to be strong and at the heart of all practice.	443918-443909-52289908
See above.	443918-443909-52376134

Increased therapeutic intervention for children, outside therapeutic intervention, smother processes and more accessible routes for assessing the need for EHCP, behaviour experts in schools, increased links with police, YOT.

[443918-443909-52984794](#)

## Appendix H Ethical approval

### Application for Ethics in Principle

#### Section A

Must be completed for **all research** projects.

Name of researcher: **Nicola Preston**

Title of proposed research: **Can restorative practices act as a relational framework to understand and improve outcomes for boys with a diagnosis of ADHD in their engagement in learning in the school setting?**

Type of project: **PhD**

Please provide a **short biography** (up to 300 words) to describe your experience, training and qualifications in relation to the proposed project:

**The researcher has 20 years of experience as a restorative practitioner, trainer and researcher and was involved in the introduction of the practice to the UK. The researcher was a member of the Standards and Accreditation Team for the Restorative Justice Council and helped to develop quality practice standards for practitioners and trainers. She teaches postgraduate courses for the International Institute for Restorative Practices Graduate School.**

**The researcher is a qualified primary school teacher and special educational needs co-ordinator with the National Award in SEN Co-ordination and has a good understanding of special educational needs and the associated SEN code of practice. The researcher spent several years as the designated safeguarding lead in primary schools and has a good understanding of trauma and safeguarding issues. The researcher's Masters studies involved 6 and 7-year-old boys with social, emotional and behavioural issues. The researcher has enhanced DBS clearance.**

Please provide a concise **outline of the proposed project** (up to 1,000 words), summarising: **See Appendix to this ethical approval**

#### Health and Safety Risk Assessment

- Please confirm that a health and safety risk assessment has been carried out and approved by the supervisory team, and recorded as per current Faculty processes:
- **YES/NO**
  - An assessment of risk to self and participants will be carried out in relation to:
    - The premises where the research will take place
    - The health and safety of the researcher in relation to possible behaviour of the young people involved in the research
    - The health, safety and well-being of all participants in relation to any psychological or otherwise distressing effects that engagement in the research might have.

#### Research ethics training

- Have you completed the compulsory online module "Research Ethics: Good research Practice"? **YES/NO**
- Have you completed the optional online module "Research with Human Subjects"? **YES/NO**

### Ethical guidance and approvals

- Please confirm that you are familiar with the University of Northampton's current *Ethics Code and Procedures* YES/NO
  - Please indicate any relevant professional or disciplinary guidelines/codes/regulations for research ethics that have been used in developing this application:  
The British Educational Research Association (2011) *Ethical guidelines for educational research*. Available at: <https://www.bera.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/BERA-Ethical-Guidelines-2011.pdf?noredirect=1>
- Does the project require ethics approval from any other institution(s), committee(s) or organisations(s)? YES/NO
  - If YES, give details and indicate the current status of the application:

### Funding

- Please give details of any funding received in relation to the project.

#### No outside agency funding received.

#### Faculty of Education and Humanities staff member – funding of fees approved by Deputy Dean

- Does this funding present any potential conflicts of interest or ethical considerations? YES/NO
  - If YES, please provide a clear summary of how these will be mitigated.

### Ethical risk: self-assessment

Does the project involve consultation or engagement with people?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Does the project involve use of data, images, texts or other materials in which individual people (currently alive, or living in the last 100 years) are identifiable?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Does the project involve or relate to a biomedical or clinical intervention?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the project necessitate physical contact with participants, administering substances, or an invasive procedure (e.g. blood sample)	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the project involve NHS staff, patients, service users or volunteers, or use data, records, samples or resources under the responsibility of an NHS organisation?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the project involve prison or probation staff, clients, premises or records, or datasets?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the project involve staff, service users, volunteers or data under the responsibility of a social care organisation?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> Maybe	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Does the project involve any deceptive or covert research practices (e.g. research which takes place without the knowledge of participants)?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the project involve any work with animals or micro-organisms?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the project involve any work with genetically-modified organisms or materials?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Is there a realistic risk that the project will cause physical or psychological distress or discomfort to others?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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If NO was ticked for all of the above, the project may pose a very low ethical risk. If you believe your project falls into this category, please explain:

## Section B

Must be completed for all research projects, except those which are deemed to pose a very low ethical risk

### Vulnerable participants

Will the project involve work with anyone under 18 years of age?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Will the project involve work with anyone with learning disabilities, communication difficulties or any other condition which may affect their capacity to consent?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Will the project involve work with anyone with anyone engaged in illegal activities?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Will the project involve work with participants in an institutional context (e.g. school, healthcare or custodial settings) or organisational setting (e.g. business, workplace)?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Will the project involve work with participants in an organisation or setting in which you have a past/current role or position of authority?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

If YES to any these questions, or if research will involve work with any other vulnerable group, please give details below of enhanced ethical procedures to safeguard these participants.

### Key ethical considerations

Please provide clear references to supporting documentation in section 3

How will you gain access to the research setting and research participants? Give details of 'gatekeepers' and any permissions and/or paperwork required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The researcher is a member of the Restorative Justice Council (RJC) which is an independent third sector organisation promoting and advocating for "quality restorative practice for everyone" (Restorative Justice Council, nd). The RJC sets standards and accreditation for training and practice in the field and holds lists of accredited trainers, practitioners and services. The researcher will initially seek participants through the Restorative Justice Council to identify schools that are willing to participate in the research. All participants will then be</li> </ul>
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	<p>approached to take part in the research through the school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permission will be sought from the Headteacher of the schools to outline the detail, nature and purpose of the research and what the research is hoping to achieve. This will include an explanation of the proposed value of the research which is to improve educational outcomes for this population of learners through the use of restorative justice practices as a behavioural and relational approach to their difficulties.</li> </ul>
<p>How will you sample and recruit participants? How will you inform them about the research aims and methods? Information sheets / invitation letters must be attached in Section 3.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An information sheet will be sent to all participants including parents/carers of children and they will be given at least 48 hours to ask any questions and consider their decision before being asked to complete a consent form. Researcher contact details will be on this form.</li> <li>• Information for children and young people will be conveyed to them in a way that they understand and they will be given the opportunity to engage in a way that maximises informed and voluntary consent and involvement.</li> <li>• Copies of information sheets and details of how children will be informed about the research will be sent to the research ethics committee in advance of fieldwork.</li> </ul>
<p>How will you ensure that all participants give informed and ongoing consent to participate in the research? If relevant, please comment on measures taken to work with participants with diverse capacities to consent Consent forms must be attached in Section 3.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The researcher will take the steps necessary to ensure that all participants in the research understand the process in which they are to be engaged, including why their participation is necessary, how it will be used and how and to whom it will be reported.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There will be no element of deception in this research</li> <li>• The researcher will adhere to BERA guidance on children, vulnerable young people and vulnerable adults to ensure that all actions are in the best interests of the participants and will use knowledge as a special educational needs co-ordinator and safeguarding lead to enable the participants to “make authentic responses”.(BERA, 2011)</li> <li>• I will work in collaboration with parents/carers and “responsible others” e.g. school staff to minimise any emotional distress and ensure ongoing consent.</li> <li>• A process for withdrawing from the research will be communicated in the initial consent forms and the researcher will ensure that this is understood by participants at each stage of the research through appropriate use of language and collaboration with parents/carers and school staff in the case of young people.</li> <li>• Appropriate language and communication style will be used to ensure that all participants understand the questions and language used during the research</li> </ul>
How will you ensure that research is confidential, and participants’ rights to anonymity are respected?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I will inform participants and the parents/carers of young people of their entitlement to confidentiality and anonymity in the initial information sheet and then when I seek permission for their involvement.</li> <li>• I will inform the participants of the coding system that will be used to anonymise their contributions e.g. teacher ‘A’</li> </ul>
How will data be recorded, stored, managed and archived?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All collection of personal data will comply with the UK Data Protection Act (1998) and the forthcoming EU General Data Protection Regulation 2018.</li> <li>• Special care will be taken with sensitive personal data around special educational needs.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electronic/digitised data will be stored via the University of Northampton's recommended platform for secure data storage. Anonymised research data will be preserved for at least 10 years after collection.</li> <li>• Participants will be informed in the initial information leaflet, consent forms and verbally at the time of data collection about how research and personal data will be used, stored, preserved and disseminated.</li> <li>• Personal data will be stored separately from research data and anonymised in both stored and disseminated formats.</li> </ul>
<p>What measures will you take to avoid causing distress, emotional/psychological harm or physical harm during your research? Comment in particular on research topics that may be sensitive or controversial.</p> <p>Interview/survey questions or equivalent research materials must be attached in Section 3.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The impact of ADHD on all participants in this research may cause distress and have an emotional impact.</li> <li>• It is not envisaged that the interview questions or process will cause distress as the process seeks to understand challenges that are already in existence and being addressed.</li> <li>• All questions asked will relate to the aim of the research and be focused on helping to answer the research question.</li> <li>• The researcher will identify existing processes in school in consultation with the Headteacher to support young people if they become distressed by the process or issues covered in the research. Any adults who become distressed when discussing the issues will be supported during the interview process by the researcher and signposted to their GP or internal occupational health services if felt necessary.</li> </ul>
<p>What is your strategy in the event of issues of concern, or evidence of past, present or probable harm or malpractice arising during the research?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any issues of a safeguarding nature would be taken to the school safeguarding lead or appropriate authority immediately.</li> <li>• Any issues of malpractice or of a criminal nature that come to light</li> </ul>



	<p>would be reported to the appropriate body – Headteacher, Restorative Justice Council, Governing Body or Police as appropriate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk assessments will be prepared in advance and discussed with supervisor.</li> </ul>
How will you feed-back findings to research participants?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All participants will be able to go through a transcription of interviews to check that they are an accurate representation of their narrative. Vulnerable young people will be supported through appropriate communication and interaction strategies to ensure that transcriptions are an accurate reflection of their narrative.</li> <li>• All participants will be offered the opportunity to receive a summary of the research and will have the contact details of the researcher in case any questions or issues arise after completion of the research.</li> </ul>
What training or preparation is required prior to research commencing, to ensure ethical research practice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All ethical training has been completed to the required standard</li> </ul>
Please describe any other ethical issues particular to this project. Give details of how you will deal with them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No additional issues expected</li> </ul>

### Data sharing

Will the project involve the transfer of data between individuals or organisations	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES please confirm that data sharing agreements or similar are in place, and outline strategies for protecting data during data sharing		

### Intellectual property and commercial/operational sensitivity

Is the project likely to pose any challenges in relation to intellectual property rights, or be sensitive in terms of commercial/operational activities of partner organisations?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, please outline any strategies to mitigate these concerns		

### Incentives

Will the project involve the use of incentives?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, please describe the incentives		
If YES, please outline any strategies to mitigate ethical issues relating to the use of incentives		

### Transcription/translation

Will transcribers or translators be employed in the research?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Will carers, parents, teachers or other parties be present during the research?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
If YES to either question please outline how the confidentiality of participants will be upheld.		
This will be discussed with the young people and their parents/carers in advance when seeking consent and the coding used to anonymise the individual will not be known by any other party.		

### Researcher safety and wellbeing

Please describe any measures to ensure your safety as a researcher during this project. If applicable, please outline your strategies for keeping safe when working alone and/or your strategies for ensuring your wellbeing in the event of your research becoming distressing or stressful.
The researcher will aim to carry out all research within the school setting where she will be covered by the school's health and safety policies. If home interviews are carried out, a risk assessment will be carried out in advance and the researcher will inform a colleague as to the times and location of the interviews and a contact telephone number whilst on these premises. The researcher has the support of a supervisory team and is involved with the SuCCEED@8 PhD support network for peer support.

### Withdrawing from the project

Please describe any measures to enable research participants to withdraw from the research project during data collection
All participants will be informed in the initial information leaflet and also when initially giving consent of their right to withdraw this consent as well as the right to refuse to answer certain questions during data collection. Participants will be informed that once the data has been anonymised and amalgamated it will not be possible to withdraw from the research.
Please describe any measures to enable research participants to withdraw data they contribute to the project.
Similarly participants will be informed that once data has been collected, anonymised and amalgamated, it will not be possible to withdraw consent or ask for data destruction

**Section C: supporting documents**

Please provide supporting documents for approval. This would ordinarily include participant information sheets, consent forms, draft questionnaires, interview schedules, etc, and any other relevant supporting documentation. If applicable, evidence of communication with, consent from, participating organisations should also be included here.

**This application is for ethics approval in principle in order to proceed with the University of Northampton Transfer process. Full supporting documentation will be presented to the Research Ethics Committee in advance of the data collection phase.**

**Declarations**

Applicant: I confirm that the information provided here is correct and current and will inform REC of any changes to the proposed research.

**Applicant: Nicola Preston**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'N. Preston', is written on a light blue background.

If the application relates to a research degree student, the supervisory team should also confirm that they approve the application and will continue to review ethical issues through the project.

**Supervisor**

## **Appendix to this ethical approval**

### **Research aims and objectives**

Restorative Justice (RJ) incorporates a variety of principles and practices that seek to repair harm and rebuild relationships (Wachtel 2016). In the United Kingdom, RJ was originally introduced into the criminal justice context to repair the harm caused by crime. Over the last couple of decades, the principles have been developed to support behaviourist approaches to school discipline and culture (Morrison and Vaandering, 2012). The RJ approach supports the development of relational school cultures where behaviour is understood in a social context rather than being addressed through a punitive regulatory approach. The growth of restorative justice in education has been accompanied by an expansion of the principles of RJ leading to a broad range of restorative 'practices' (RP) that place an emphasis on social engagement and social and emotional learning embedded in a relational paradigm.

A review of the literature has identified that there is little research evidence relating to the use or effectiveness of restorative practices as an approach to identifying and addressing the needs of children experiencing difficulties with their learning in the education system and being identified as having a special educational need or disability (SEND). The identification of a special educational need is the responsibility of all staff within the school but the co-ordination of this process in schools is carried out by the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) in close collaboration with parents/carers and school staff. The process is guided by the SEN Code of Practice (Department for Education, 2015) using an 'assess, plan, do, review' process to identify learning difficulties. A child or young person has a learning difficulty if the young person "has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age or has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post-16 institutions." (Department for Education, 2015, p.16). Learning difficulties are categorised in relation to four broad areas of need:

- Communication and interaction
- Cognition and learning
- Social, emotional and mental health difficulties and
- Sensory and/or physical needs

(Department for Education, 2015, pp.97-98)

This early assessment and identification of need is a complex process and the primary SEN broad area of need can often be masked by behaviour issues (Preston, 2013, p.78). The Department for Education in their review of pupil behaviour in schools in England refer to these complexities of identification of need and reference research that suggests "the link between behaviour problems and learning difficulties is often reciprocal." (Department for Education, 2012, p.29). The role of the SENCo to identify the primary need of a child with learning

difficulties can thus be complicated by challenging behaviour which often has such a disruptive impact on teaching and learning in the classroom for staff and children that it can put pressure on schools and parents/carers to seek an early diagnosis and additional resources to support the child. In relation to 'conditions' that are characterised by challenging behaviour such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) this pressure to seek diagnosis can become even greater and at the early assessment stage relies on feedback from significant adults in the young person's life on the presence of six or more symptoms of inattentiveness, or six or more symptoms of hyperactivity and impulsiveness. symptoms checklist.

Timimi (2017) in his research of ADHD highlights the increase in the number of children and young people being diagnosed with the condition and being prescribed stimulants despite the fact that in his opinion, the concept and definition of ADHD is "replete with problems around reliability and validity" (Timimi, 2017, p.2). In the USA, it is estimated that 11% of children aged between 4 and 17 have been diagnosed with ADHD and up to 50% of them are then prescribed stimulants (the most commonly prescribed class of medication for ADHD). In the UK, the prescribing of stimulants has risen 17,000% in two decades (Timimi, 2017, p.1). Timimi argues that ADHD is a "culturally constructed diagnosis" and therefore "we have no empirical method for defining "caseness". The definition of what qualifies as a case is thus arbitrary and depends on the standards employed by the diagnoser, influenced by whatever the prevailing ideology concerning diagnosis they have been exposed to." (Timimi, 2017, p.2)

There is little evidence to suggest that diagnostic based approaches for young children accompanied by medication improve outcomes and in relation to ADHD there is virtually no clinically significant impact on outcomes (Miller, S. Wampold, B. & Varhely, K., 2008). A focus on medical treatment to control behaviours often ignores an understanding of the child at an emotional level and does not focus on their relationships with others or their strengths whereas restorative justice practices provides an explicit framework to address the 'symptoms' of ADHD at the emotional and relationship level. These practices engage the young person and their 'community of care' (family, school staff, professionals involved with the child) to address the behaviours that are considered unacceptable in the school setting.

This research will investigate the use of restorative practices as a relational framework to help understand the problems that are presented by a diagnosis of ADHD in the primary school setting. The explicit restorative framework developed by the International Institute for Restorative Practices (Wachtel, 2016) will be used to understand and address the problems from the perspective of the parent, child and school. Research evidence indicates that teachers in primary education (4-11 years) rate boys as having lower levels of positive social-behavioural outcomes and higher negative outcomes than girls. The teachers rated four aspects of behaviour: hyperactivity (reduced self-control, impulsiveness etc.); anti-social behaviour (verbal abuse, aggression etc.); prosocial behaviour (peer empathy, co-operation, altruism); and self-regulation (problem-solving,

motivation, self-confidence). At the end of Year 6, “boys displayed more hyperactivity and anti-social behaviour than girls did”. (Department for Education, 2012, p.28).

Additional literature relating to the slower emotional development and higher incidence of behavioural difficulties/diagnosis of ADHD in boys - 10 boys to every 1 girl (Schoe, 2017, Pollack, 1999, Golding and Fitzgerald, 2016), has informed the focus of the research on 4-8-year-old boys in primary education. This research will seek to address the following question:

**Can restorative practices act as a relational framework to understand and improve outcomes for boys with a diagnosis of ADHD in their engagement in learning in the school setting?**

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## **Appendix 'I'      Consent Form**

See next page...





## Participation in Restorative Practices Research – Consent Form

Please complete this form after you have listened to an explanation about the research.

Project Title: **Using Restorative Practices to gain an understanding of the how challenging behaviour puts children at risk from exclusion**

Researcher: **Nicola Preston**

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this research. Before you agree to take part, the person organising the research must explain the project to you.

If you have any questions arising from the explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you to decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.

### Participant's Statement

I agree that:

- I understand what the study involves and the research has been explained to me.
- I understand that if I decide at any time that I no longer wish to take part in this project, I can notify the researcher involved and withdraw immediately.
- I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study.
- I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR, 2018).
- I agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in this study.
- I understand that the information I have submitted will be published in a PhD thesis. I can ask to see a copy or summary of the findings. Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained and it will not be possible to identify me from any publications or presentations unless I have given consent for this to happen.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

If I require further information or have any questions at any time, I can contact the researcher by emailing: [nicola.preston2@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:nicola.preston2@northampton.ac.uk)

## Appendix 'J' RJC information on research

**From:** Restorative Justice Council

**Sent:** 04 November 2019 17:24

**Subject:** Support with PhD research into the use of restorative practices to reduce school exclusion Online Questionnaire

Dear ,


We are delighted to be supporting RJC member, Nicola Preston, with her PhD which is focusing on the use of restorative practices to reduce school exclusions. Please see below for an introduction from Nicola as to how you can participate in her research.

Thank you for your support.






Jim Simon

Chief Executive Officer

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Promoting quality restorative practice for everyone



**RJC Members' Bulletin**

20 June 2019

**Dear ,**

Welcome to the June edition of the RJC's monthly membership bulletin.

**Restorative practice research seeks input from educators**

The University of Northampton is seeking educators to share their experiences and views around the use of restorative practice in schools as part of new research.

The research looks at how restorative practice can help school staff and parents/carers in primary schools to gain a better understanding of the reasons behind the behaviours that put children and young people at risk of exclusions. Please contact [nicola.preston2@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:nicola.preston2@northampton.ac.uk) if you have any questions about the research.

[Complete the survey](#)

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## Appendix 'K'      Range of restorative questions used in practice

<p>What happened?</p> <p>Before/after?</p> <p>What were you thinking?</p> <p>How were you feeling?</p> <p>Who has been affected by your behaviour?</p> <p>What do you need now so you can move on?</p> <p>How can we address everyone's needs together?</p> <p>How are you feeling now?</p>	R.2
<p>what happened? How did you feel? who has been affected? How do you think they might be feeling? What else could you have done differently?</p> <p>What would you do next time? what needs to happen now?</p>	R.3
<p>What happened?</p> <p>What were you thinking ? (then and now)</p> <p>What were you feeling? (then and now)</p> <p>Who else has been affected?</p> <p>How?</p> <p>What has been the hardest thing?</p> <p>What strengths do you have for this?</p> <p>What needs to happen next?</p> <p>How shall we move forward ?</p> <p>and various other age appropriate variations for younger children/ additional needs</p>	R.4
<p>What happened?</p> <p>Who has been affected? and how? Who else?</p> <p>What were your thoughts/feelings at the time...and now?</p> <p>What would you like to see happen now?</p> <p>What was the hardest thing for you?</p> <p>What can you do to help put things right?</p>	R.5
<p>what has happened .</p> <p>what were you thinking feeling?</p> <p>What do you think / feel now?</p> <p>who has been affected?</p>	R.16

How have they been affected. what do we need to happen to put things right? What could we do differently next time?	
I use all the RP Questions	R.6
Depends on the circumstances but broadly, how are you feeling? do you want to tell me what happened/or what is happening? Who is affected ? how do you think they might be feeling? could you have done anything differently? Or what could you do differently next time? How/what are you feeling now? How would you like things to be? What could you do next to make things better? Can we talk again to see how things are now?	R.7
What happened What is the right and fair thing to do? What harm have you caused	R.8
what happened? what were you feeling at the time? what do you feel about it now? who's been affected? what's needed to make things, right? what have we learned from this?	R.10
Validate emotions... What has happened? What do you think/feel about it now? Who's been affected? What is needed to make things right? how can we make amends? What have we learnt from this?	R.12
<input type="checkbox"/> What happened? <input type="checkbox"/> What were you thinking about at the time? <input type="checkbox"/> What have your thoughts been since?	R.13

<input type="checkbox"/> Who else has been affected by what you did? <input type="checkbox"/> What do you think needs to happen to make things right? <input type="checkbox"/> What did you think when you realised what had happened? <input type="checkbox"/> What have your thoughts been since? <input type="checkbox"/> How has this affected you and others? <input type="checkbox"/> What has been the hardest thing for you? <input type="checkbox"/> What do you think needs to happen to make things right?	
What/now what/so what... When you/I feel... (because) / I need...	R.14
What happened from your perspective? Who might have been impacted by your actions? How do you think they felt and how did you feel? What do you think you could do differently now?	R.15

## Appendix 'L'      Core principles of the restorative questions

<p>Core principles</p> <p>Behaviour is communication and we need to know what is being communicated and teach children appropriate ways to communicate well and express emotion - this is a journey. Children need to know conflict happens and learn to resolve it well</p> <p>Core values</p> <p>worth (each person has equal worth)</p> <p>koinonia</p> <p>compassion</p> <p>empathy</p> <p>forgiveness</p>	R.2
<p>No Blame, developing empathy, moving forward, sharing responsibility, finding solutions, understanding barriers.</p>	R.3
<p>The building of mutual respect</p> <p>The sharing of responsibility</p> <p>The development of relationship</p>	R. 4
<p>Apply to both harmed and harmer</p> <p>Non - judgemental</p> <p>Open as against closed, allowing for individual opinion</p> <p>Increasing responsibility and accountability</p>	R. 5
<p>Inclusive, equal, unbiased, non-judgemental and open.</p>	R.16
<p>Allowing those involved to articulate what happened and its impact to themselves and others involved</p>	R.6
<p>responsibility,</p> <p>awareness of feelings and emotions of self and others, developing empathy</p> <p>consideration of what actions need to be taken to make the situation better.</p> <p>No blame, no focus on sanctions.</p>	R.7
<p>Repair the harm</p>	R. 8
<p>We train the children in mediation skills which we think reflect restorative practices</p>	R. 9
<p>all involved are harmed in some way</p>	R.10

we can make things right	
<p>The questions are sequentially promoting left /right brain balance.</p> <p>emotional then logical.</p> <p>The questions give the person a voice - have their say.</p> <p>it allows them to explore the feeling of themselves and other - reflective.</p> <p>Through attending to the questions they are managing their own behaviour and how this may be in the future.</p> <p>They are focused on repairing and building relationships.</p> <p>There is an air of peaceful problem solving.</p> <p>The participant must be in the right state of mind to attend to the questions.</p> <p>The environment must be right.</p> <p>The facilitator must be trained and practice attunement.</p>	R.12
<p>The emphasis is not managing behaviour but focusing on building, nurturing and repairing relationships.</p>	R. 13
<p>Taking time to establish what has happened, who has been impacted, what needs to happen to put it right/move on...</p>	R.14



## Appendix 'M'      Key elements of a restorative process

Staff must not judge, must listen well, must not problem solve for the children, culture needs to come from the leadership team and be modelled all the time	R.2
In terms of relationship building and solution focussed work it is key in character development, citizenship, critical thinking and building a community.	R.3
the focus on relationships the contribution to social & emotional learning the development of shared accessible everyday ethics	R. 4
Increasing accountability and responsibility for all in relationships, behaviours.  Bringing the community together, it's a shared space , for all to recognise they contribute to providing, supporting a positive, constructive , rich environment, that recognises conflict happens and the necessity to find ways forward for all involved.	R.5
the whole school approach. All staff even down to the care takers Inclusive of students and their parents. If there is a clear expectation of behaviour and interaction that is equal fair and inclusive, I feel all will engage fully. (I have seen this approach work given time)	R.16
See above as creates a better community and allows students to understand how their behaviour impacts learning and potential self esteem	R.6
All the above (answer to Q15).	R.7
All staff to be trained Restorative language to be used	R. 8
Fairness, listening, positive communication	R. 9
Yes. Listening.  Also, having clear consequences that are shared, consistent and driven by the people involved in the incident.	R.11
Relationships, Relationships, Relationships!  It strengthens the relationships in the school and the school community.	R.12

Talking about what has happened; understanding impact of behaviour and choices on others; chance to put it right; supports fairness and responsibility.	R.14
The fact it is centred on the relationship with the person leading on it – if this is effective, the RJ will normally be effective	R.15

## Appendix 'N'      Eliminating the need for school exclusions

Need to break down the barriers further between disaffected parents and school/agencies	R.2
Staff would need to have additional training. government, Ofsted, and schools ethos would need changing to focus on individual need rather than academic results. sufficient funding would need to be made available that adequately support schools to have the staffing ratios to enable individualized support.	R.3
Restorative Practice could make a far greater contribution if understood and adopted	R.4
Believe there should always be a place for exclusions, although far less than at present. School needs to be able/have authority to make a stand, in the interests of the individual, the school community, the wider public. School should/needs to be a safe place for everybody	R.5
I feel that the use of exclusion can never be totally taken away, we have to consider all behaviours, however there should be an opportunity to  change behaviours. Parents need to play a greater role in the way families and schools work, too much them and us somewhere in the middle is an opportunity to fix, learn and move on.	R.16
Highlighting vulnerable students leading to much earlier interventions	R.6
(We) would need to be more child development focussed, adequately funded, trained and skilled to support the full range of needs and behaviours including trauma less about exam results and league tables. Control and punishments.	R.7
more restorative  sometimes exclusion is necessary in terms of violent situations	R.8
Staff available to support students who have problems leading to bad behaviour.  A better understanding by staff on the effect of ACEs and trauma on a student	R.9
A better pathway for SEND pupils whose needs, it emerges, cannot be met in primary schools.	R.11

<p>Fair funding for schools</p> <p>An educational inspectorate that ensured school improvement, not just judgement.</p> <p>league tables, high stakes accountability.</p> <p>If education was run by an independent body and was not political.</p> <p>Get rid of academies.</p> <p>Early intervention</p> <p>Well-funded therapeutic services for young children.</p> <p>RP for everyone - all services.</p>	R.12
<p>Everyone responds to the needs of the child. Relationships need to be strong and at the heart of all practice.</p>	R.13
<p>Increased therapeutic intervention for children, outside therapeutic intervention, smother processes and more accessible routes for assessing the need for EHCP, behaviour experts in schools, increased links with police, YOT.</p>	R.15

## Appendix 'O'      The behaviour blueprint



## Appendix 'P'      Full conversation with O'Connell

**NP:** *Is this visit a bit of déjà vu Terry, in terms of policing and restorative justice?*

**TO'C:** *Now what's interesting about that, is to read between the lines, and reading between the lines, is the bit that says what is it about restorative that appeals to cops? And when you see the treatment by a whole load of cops, it's that wide or it's that narrow. In other words, the constant in all of it, is the dialogue, and the dialogue is compelling, because it doesn't matter how you misconstrue it, it still draws people into a space and as a result of that the whole affectivity is the stuff that makes it worthwhile.*

*In other words, the police officer, you know, in his or her daily activity needs sustenance, which is an emotional connection to offset all the really difficult times. Otherwise you can't sustain yourself. You know it's a bit like what they're doing with this response policing, they've taken the relationship out of policing and they just struggled, they can't work it out, so the question you ask, is really central to everything we are talking about. It is to really understand what is it about this thing called restorative, that is finely attenuated to this thing called relationships.*

*That's the thing that struck me from the 'go-getter' when I was developing this stuff I realised very quickly that this was different. So, it is déjà vu, but what I've done is, I've come full circle and then realised that I actually needed to be very conscious of where I started. It was not about restorative, but it was about engaging a group of police officers to think about, if we connected, to what extent do we share a common vision and belief and to what extent do we reflect that in terms of what we do?*

*You see, what's interesting is that, everyone I've asked over the last week about motivation, comes from a place where they are interested in making a difference okay. Now, here's the dilemma, they then get 'culturated' into a process that blurs the line around what a 'difference' is because it's driven by a whole lot of other imperatives, outputs rather than outcomes, and the human motivation which was very explicit about wanting to make a difference gets confused or lost in the noise. And that's where the processes of policing which are not about developing critique and rigour, collegiality and collaboration, failed badly.*

*Despite the fact, that most attempt to do the best they can, the idea of being fair and respectful is crucial to that, it's dispiriting, it's discouraging, particularly when policing in this day and age has become so over engineered and data driven that it's not sustainable.*

**NP:** *Can I just make the comparisons then into schools and exclusion of young people from schools, in terms of, there is a parallel there, in that schools are very data driven now. What are the pressures on school staff, and the pressures on parents to a certain degree, working within that context of progress and achievement of certain results? Do you think that that pits the adults against each other in the school context?*

**TO'C:** *Invariably it does, it heightens their vulnerability because the imperative is built around compliance and there's a such a disconnect. Now here's the difficulty. It always struck me that when I was developing this stuff and I introduced it to schools, there was immediate interest and take up on it. It struck me that what happened was, this is part of the evolution of policing and teaching and all the rest of it, what happened that caused teachers to segment and compartmentalise behaviour from a foundation on which teaching and learning is built, is relationships?*

*The issues about behaviour, you know, are a crucial part of the whole learning and yet the majority of approaches that are used to manage behaviour failed those tests and what struck me, of all of the professions that I worked with, turn to and think in terms of pedagogy rigour and explicitness, teaching would be one that actually just saw that relationships were a fundamental foundation for all teaching and learning.*

*And yet, it's been drafted into a system where the preoccupation is, which has happened more generally too, is servicing systems so driven by the wrong imperatives you know. So, the issue is about connection. And to make it worse, we've introduced these arbitrary measures of literacy and numeracy, that actually tell you absolutely nothing, but are seen as the measures by which schools are seen as successful or failures.*

*So, what you end up doing is building in a whole load of constructs that generate a whole load of negative 'affects' that heighten vulnerability and that is the antithesis of what's needed in collaborative strong approaches.*

**NP:** *Can I just clarify, is that for the adults, or the whole community?*

**TO'C:** *No, the whole community. You see here's my take on this. If I look at the exemplars that I've been involved with, which is an aged care facility, which is a public school and a Youth Services organisation. My basic belief, and it became a little more rigorous, a little bit more explicit over time, as these things do, was that unless we connected collegially, at an emotional level, and unless we actually share the same belief about the primacy of relationships... unless we actually know how to operationalise those things, in relational transactions and to do it in teaching, as a way of inviting kids into a safe learning space, the things that help build and sustain relationships, that learning is the preserve of a select few.*

*Why I'm saying that is... well let me go back to the Youth Services organisation, 2010, 10 staff. The youth organisation started by a woman by the name of Angie [randomly assigned pseudonym]. Angie had worked in the youth sector for many years both in youth detention with at risk kids, drug and alcohol and all the rest of it and was strongly of the belief that what she saw happening wasn't working.*

*It was partly to do with the fact that it was driven by systems thinking and a fundamental failure to engage young people. When I got involved with them and they asked if I would come and talk with them I said to Angie and two other staff I met with, what do you want to talk to me about? So she said, 'we understand that you know a lot about restorative justice, and we're interested in how it might help us'.*

*And I said, if that's 'restorative' [hand gesture as if holding a box], can we just park it over there [gesture as if putting the box down]. I really need to understand about where you're at, how you arrived there, what your thinking is, what drives you tell me about your practice. Anyhow they looked quizzically and went 'what the hell'. They couldn't answer half the questions.*

Terry calls over one of the waiters who he says he has got to know and introduces him to me, then orders a coffee for me. The waiter goes off to get it, Terry then says,

**TO'C:** *He's a lovely young guy I get on well with all the staff here.*



**NP:** *But actually, that's the classic in terms of you, me ...*

**TO'C:** *[laughter] That's right.*

**NP:** *That's what we do, relationships are at the centre of what we do, and what we've become involved in, and that's the bit that continues to fascinate me about the questions that you ask, that I have for the last 25 years, for however long I've known you, begun to think about, and how you, and I hope I, and I hope the people that I influence and work with learn from and it's our role in the modelling of that...*

**TO'C:** *Critical, critical.*

**NP:** *So, in terms of taking restorative whatever restorative is forward and my struggle at the moment is in relation to Thames Valley Police the late 90s early 2000, independent evaluations, lots of interest from the Home Office. You then get funding coming in from the Home Office, you then get training organisations springing up all over the place that say we train restorative justice. You get a product that's called 'restorative justice', 'restorative practices', that isn't underpinned by or isn't led and I think leadership is a very important part of it because those principles if a leader understands those principles, listens to others... so you are back 25 years later working with another police force and that was the déjà vu bit...*

**TO'C:** *In a very different headspace.*

**NP:** *But are you and I spending a life's work trying to define something that we want others to identify as restorative when it's just about... so what... can I just get your take on that? Do we need that explicit framework or do we just need to help people understand...*

**TO'C:** *No, no, no. We've just got to go back to first principles and why I'm saying that is the entry point around this is not where we've been coming from. It's clearly demonstrated that, notwithstanding the fact that this is an offering that appeals intuitively and all the rest of it, it has never seriously challenged the dominant hegemony of the organizational, educational, institutional, settings.*

*If I go back to finish the Youth Services story, which is simply that what they discovered as a result of the conversation was they had a lot of ideals and beliefs that resonated, but what they couldn't do, was to operationalize those. Now, why I'm saying that, is because the first training I did with them, the*

*first thing I wanted to know was, 'someone model how you engage a young person'.*

*I was the young person, so we sat around, and this young guy went through, and he was great, except about seven minutes into it, I stopped him and said, I think I confused you.*

*I asked you to engage me, not to involve me. I said look, let me just do a quick critique here, you tell me all about you and the agency you've told me about a variety of programs which are about skill enhancement. I'm sitting here thinking you know nothing about me, you don't even know where I'm at.*

*I'm struggling to make sense of it, now you're telling me that based on your experience, the fundamental problem I've got is about skills, when it's about connection. Well it completely threw them. And I said, look let me show you how I model this process. And they all went 'holy shit' and that was the beginning for them in terms of some fundamental rethink.*

*Now why I'm saying that is I'll show you the most recent version of a reasonable engagement process that I use, because it's a template that addresses that issue. You see, the issue is not to do with restorative and how we articulate it and all the rest of it, it's to do with where we are at and how we got there and whether or not restorative has any utility with that.*

*In other words, one of the greatest findings, and it doesn't matter how I write about it, everyone picks up 'restorative' and it becomes another tool in the toolbox. What I'm interested in, what in the hell is in your bloody toolbox, you know?*

*If I invited you to come and build a house, as a craftsman or a tradesman, I'd expect you to be able to articulate exactly what it is you've got in your toolbox. You don't throw the tools in there that you think look like a good idea. Unless you are very clear about where they fit and what they contribute... now why I'm saying that is, it's a bit like the conversation I was having with someone who wants to write a book with me. I said, we haven't even had an experience yet! I'm not going to contribute to something because it's a 'good feel' thing and it's another bloody academic book sitting on the shelf. Whatever I contribute, has to be meaningful, relevant,*

*you know practical, all the rest of it. What do you benchmark the theories against?*

*Well firstly, we have to think about theory and when we go and talk about theory, what are we looking for? But when we start talking about explicit practice, well what's the criteria for it to be explicit? There's no point starting to critique what everyone else says I'm not remotely interested in it. What I'm interested in hearing, is whether or not we share a common or a shared understanding about purpose, about takeaways, what are the outcomes, how we can demonstrate consistent outcomes, and how do we explain the 'why' of those outcomes?*

*Where I come from is a whole different place in terms of how you describe that. So, when we're sitting with 'cops', they have the experience not you and I. Because at the end of the day, if we can't set up a modelling around agency rather than perpetuate the control model how is policing going to improve? Because at the end of the day, what we're trying to do is to set up a modelling, that's a learned way of relating and operating, that's then given real life in terms of how they transact with community.*

*I was told, you need to be able to describe it in a way so that the Chief Superintendent is satisfied. You don't get it, you don't get it, this is an uneven playing field. I've got to demonstrate that I've got all the evidence and all the answers when in fact they don't have to buy into a conversation to talk about what they're doing and whether or not it's working?*

*I said do you know, this isn't a contest this is a collaborative process that raises question marks. How do we make sense of what we're doing? What's needed is strong collegiate processes that focus on rigorous conversations around what matters and what works.*

**NP:** *And it doesn't matter what context you are in?*

**TO'C:** *That matters little. I've worked out a universal sort of template that attempts to pull together the collective learning and helps explain the evolution of being much more mindful of purpose, meaning, with a central focus on connections and our respective roles regardless of whether we are teaching or policing or whatever. How do we become the agent of change that creates the conditions that allows others to begin to make sense of what matters?*

*The phrase 'a conversation that matters', that's what I really want you to embrace.*

**TO'C:** *What happened is, the main perpetrator came in, absolutely adamant and denying it and I just stuck with the questions and got him to a point where he was absolutely in tears, and he said, you know, 'I had no intention of admitting this'... 'now I realise'... etcetera, etcetera and she goes 'wow'. And I said, look there's something interesting about emotions. If you create the space where people can authentically begin to deal with them in a way where, as difficult as it is, they'll find their own truth around it.*

**NP:** *[reading from presentation]: Today we want you to have an experience rather than a training. What can you expect?*

**NP:** *Do you open that up around what they can expect?*

**TO'C:** *Everything is built around questions. I offer very little, it's their story you see. So, what can you expect, and it's very interesting, the first thing is there's a 'surprise/startle' element which is this is different experience. If we have an experience, it's probably going to involve a conversation about what we do. And I say, what can we learn from you, and what can we learn from one another.*

**NP: reading:** *We recognise you as the expert. What does this mean? Our role today is to ask open ended questions that will help you to make better sense and meaning of your policing practice, identify what you feel makes the greatest difference and importantly to understand: what matters, work out what needs to change in policing practice, and what your part will be in that change process.*

*We will learn how to make policing practice more explicit, intentional and consistent. Explicit practice means you can confidently describe what you do, why you do that, why doing that works and how you know whether you're making a difference.*

**TO'C:** *What could you expect if police had a strong culture of debate, critique or discussion, practice was explicit, easily explained, and included outcomes around what matters as a measure of accountability? What if it operated in an authoritative culture, with a strong emphasis on collaboration, agency?*

*Our hypothesis, our belief, we argue, that meaningful change in policing is possible with: visionary leadership that knows*

*how to develop and facilitate collaborative processes, that build strong collegiality, recognise the importance of explicit practice, encourages conversations about what matters, uses restorative processes as a relational foundation to inform policing.*

*So that's the first time it's been mentioned [restorative], and then they'll say so you're here about RJ tell me about that and then I'll say to them,*

*Restorative justice? Intervention or way of being? How would you describe restorative justice? What does restorative justice have to offer policing? Restorative practices is a way of thinking and being focused on creating safe spaces, for real conversations, that deepen relationships, and build stronger more connected communities. This is Mark Vander Vennen's definition [Vander Vennen, 2016]... what's the main focus of this definition...*

**NP:** *Can I just stop you at that point, and ask you about that definition, because when you are asked about a definition, that's the one you now tend to refer to. Did Mark get that from you? Did Mark develop that definition from his conversations and thinking with you?*

**TO'C:** *Yeah, but it's his definition.*

**NP:** *People want definitions.*

**TO'C:** *I know they do, I know because somehow, they can't manage life unless they clearly define the parameters. And the difficulty of that is... you see here's my take.*

*The movement itself has spent decades navel gazing, and there have been some clever-dicks who do this sort of academic stuff and are rigorous in a way, but frankly 'off with the fairies' in terms of practice and this is a fundamental problem with the divide.*

*There's a lot of things been happening at a theoretical level. Happens it's not particularly this movement, this is what happens and people are fixated about definitions. What I'm saying yeah I could accept that because if I were to step back, I would say a mantra that would describe this, and what you're attempting, and what you're on about, reasons why, fall loosely into what we call a definition.*

*I've written lots about this stuff and he put it together that way. It doesn't invalidate what you're saying, I know what*

*you're saying, but I'm just saying, I'm wanting to find the best way that can describe this stuff in a way that complements everything that I know to be true around this stuff.*

**TO'C:** *So when I ask people about the main focus guess what they talk about?*

**NP:** *They talk about relationships?*

**TO'C:** *So here is the interesting bit. Now it's very interesting because of the 'Socratic' bit. You know you wrote something funny about Terry O'Socrates? [I had referred to Terry using this term when discussing the restorative questions in an email – O'Connell, 2019] Why I thought it was funny is in many respects it was pointed it out to me many moons ago but I was not really conscious of it, it was just intuitive.*

*So why does this become important? Because it goes to the heart of what influences your thinking. And how did that link into the evolution of thinking, well I've always... I was known as 'Questions' in the early part – 'I'm sick of you asking fricking questions', you know, 'son you either do what's required, or piss off'. You know that's how it was.*

*In other words, I would constantly say to police colleagues 'why the hell did you do that? 'Oh here we go' and funnily enough when I was part of the police union, I was basically non-aligned politically, I was one of the few who would work with everybody rather than taking an entrenched political position based on the merits of the argument. People couldn't work that out, because we don't do that, we swear allegiance to a particular thinking and we buy into that but what they used to do I would always say I wonder whether we have thought through the full implications of that and they'd go 'oh here we go' and I'd say well let's stop for a moment and think about the 'big picture' stuff and then I would ask a whole series of simple questions. What that would do, it would profoundly influence the debate.*

**NP:** *But that's just it, isn't it, in terms of the questions? It's providing a safe place for somebody to ask the questions and to think about them and...*

**TO'C:** *But there's another bit that ties into this question of agency rather than control. See if I go back to 1973 and you were then to look at my policing style, it was inherently respectful, it was always built around questions. I can count*

*5 occasions when I was assaulted, but never chose to prosecute or charge and everything had a really good ending.*

*So when it came to the Wagga stuff, the insight around my style was not around when I developed the questions, the restorative questions, it was to do with how engaged the fifteen staff were, who didn't really want to be there. It was one of those sort of organisational 'we need a much more proactive, community-based approach'.*

*What I basically did is, what I'm doing here now. I sat with these cops and my argument was unless we're connected emotionally, unless we share a common purpose, unless we are very clear about what we do and whether it ultimately makes a difference... I was no different, everyone joined the job because they wanted to make a difference. So, the logical progression of that was, when we're dealing with young people, the notion of authority and control was never part of my DNA, it was always about agency.*

*You know, people said I borrowed everything from New Zealand. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. What New Zealand did was just gave me the permission to actually develop... and by the way we had spent 12 months prior to [researchers] coming and raising the issue about that New Zealand stuff on looking at better ways of dealing with young people. So we did a whole lot of research but none of this is actually understood.*

*When it came to facilitating processes, I had adopted the same approach which was 'you are the expert' and so it was that overriding sort of belief in individuals being the experts in their own life. So cops said to me 'how are we experts?' And I said that's a fair question. Who knows more about what you do, about who you are and where you're coming from and what you're attempting than you? Well, if you've got a bit of an exclusive knowledge what does that make you?*

*I said it's not a term of endearment, it's just a recognition, that what you do... you know, I'm a supervisor. I'm desperately interested to understand how I can make what you do much more impactful. How can I best support you? But I can't work it out if I think I'm the expert.*

*So do you want me to tell you what to do or to help you make sense of what it is you know you need to do, and to do that in a way where you feel that you matter to me and I'm going*

to support you around that? [See also O'Connell and McCold, 2004, on avoiding the expert model].

**NP:** And I'm just, I don't know if this is the right word, just translating that to an example of a child that is at risk of exclusion from school. So, their behaviour goes against the school behaviour code or they have been violent towards staff or other students. So, in terms of the exclusion process in a school you have adults involved, you have the parent who is constantly getting calls from the school to say come in and collect your child take them home. They are on a fixed term exclusion this is what they've done which induces a level of shame around their parenting...

**TO'C:** Accentuates everything?

**NP:** Yes, you have a class teacher, a member of staff within a school, Special Educational Needs Coordinator, who is not able to manage that behaviour within the school setting to allow all children in their class to be able to learn. So in terms of the expert that you just talked about in this process around relationships... in this scenario, you are the parent, you are the person who knows your child well, you are the class teacher, the SENCo, the Headteacher in the school, who knows the child in that setting. They are the 'experts' in terms of those roles and responsibilities in that setting. You are the child who finds themselves in a setting they have to attend and they have to be in. You are the expert in terms of knowing what it is that is or isn't working for you and why it's causing distress.

Bring all of those people together to find out what matters to them in terms of the outcomes they are seeking, so parent to be listened to, accepted as someone who cares about their child and wants their child to be in education and teaching, staff... care about... as you were talking about in terms of policing... cares about kids, came into this job to help children to learn, to help kids have positive outcomes. The child who has to go to school because they told to by adults who is struggling because of whatever the issues might be.

So, translating that process to those individuals, yes, it's still about the relationships, yes, it's still about creating a safe environment, so that all those individuals can come to a shared understanding. But is it still about providing the environment to allow those individuals to identify what really matters?



**TO'C:** *You see what you've just done is provided the scaffold and it helps me understand where you've landed. What I'd like to do now is fill in the gaps around that locate what's happening in a much more meaningful context and therefore it allows you to engage in a much more explicit way.*

*So the notion of you are the expert, isn't a cliché, it's not one of those terms like I want to empower you, whatever that looks like.*

*So, it goes back to, this is fascinating, goes back to the kid who assaulted me in 1973. I chose in spite of the protestations from my senior colleagues saying, 'he's a little shit' and 'he's been charged previously with assault', I chose to bring the kid into the small police station and to sit with his Mum. And I will never forget what I said I said to his Mum 'who is this kid, I'm trying to work out what's going on?'*

*So I'm the recipient of a punch that hit me in the right eye and swelling and all the rest of it and here I was desperate to understand the 'why', and you see so what I've realised is that our whole preoccupation is on the 'what' without understanding the 'why'.*

*I'm not talking about just me understanding the 'why', I'm talking about the mother, I'm talking about the kid and I'm talking about where I was coming from, I was talking about more generally how I policed. So the why is multi layered, it's understanding the triggers, it's understanding why this kid has continued to behave in the way that he has. What are the factors that have influenced that?*

*What I got to discover with this kid was that, when I asked him to help me understand what was going on through that conversation, the Mum discloses that the only thing that she could put it down to was, that fourteen months earlier, her husband, the kids father, had been killed. At which point this kid broke into tears and so history says, fifteen years later I run into him in the same Hall and life is good.*

*Now I just want you to park the scaffold that you've just described. And I want you to take it back to some of the basic building blocks that need to be articulated so you understand what's really behind my thinking and the way I go about things.*

**TO'C:** *So, if we draw on Silvan Tomkins psychology of human motivation [see Tomkins Institute, nd b] that we're hard wired, we are social beings and Brené Brown's notion of*

*vulnerability [see Brown, 2012]. Silvan Tompkins' fundamental theory about relationships and individual well-being is an outcome of our capacity, because we're hard wired to modulate 'affects', to amplify and decrease, but we can't get to experience them, unless we engage in a process that allows us to increase positive affect and decrease negative affect.*

*What Kelly [see Kelly, 2012] identifies so does Nathanson [see Nathanson, 1992] in terms of their work on shame and if you think of Brené Brown, her focus is about differentiating between those who seemed to manage vulnerability and those who struggle with it. She realised that... she called those who can manage it, wholehearted people. In other words, had a solid sense of self. A solid sense of self comes out of connections.*

*You see it's a bit like, I hear this about developing resilience, as though it's this internal stand-alone activity. Resilience comes from a related experience. It can't develop a capacity to manage unless it comes out of key relationships. So shame is seen as a dominant 'affect' of everyday life.*

*So, we're going through this conversation last week with police officers you hear regular mention of 'we're dealing with vulnerable people', everyday occurrences about people who are experiencing varying degrees of vulnerability.*

*Then I say to the cops, well how do you manage that? The experienced ones... you see my if I'm not telling I'm asking and I'm drawing on the experiences that allow me to get the 'expert', being a police officer, what it is they do and why doing that works. So, there's no trickery with it, it's just drawing on their learned experience.*

*So, I have to have a very clear understanding of the importance of relationships, of human motivation, then I want to narrow its focus to saying that fundamentally, we ask the question, what keeps us out of relationships?*

*Conversely, as Brené Brown says, the reason it did her head in, was she used the expert model rather than thinking about what it is that makes relationships work.*

*The question that comes up is, if we are dealing with highly vulnerable people and shame is the impediment that either sustains or keeps us out of relationships. The question is, what are the conditions that are needed that will allow*

*individuals to sit with the discomfort of their vulnerability and be open to a different conversation?*

*So, if you think about the evidence, for example Tom Tyler's 'why people obey the law' [see Tyler, 2006], and then you look at Kim Chan and Mauborgne's article on fair process and you look at Brené Brown's scaffold which is the three characteristics of this group that manage vulnerability because they were worthy of loving and belonging they realise they're imperfect but manage vulnerability.*

*The three characteristics were courage, but as you know courage taps into the description you were giving of the methodology that you're using for your PhD, which was about storytelling. But there's a big difference, storytelling with your whole heart, warts and all.*

*Now one of the greatest impediments and one of the outcomes of course is to be stuck is the fact that we can't validate our own story so if you think the intergenerational familial stuff where there's such a diminished sense of self they don't understand the story therefore they can't embrace it so the question that comes from that is Brené Brown's articulation of courage, telling your story with your whole heart, absolutely warts and all.*

*Now there's an interesting article and I think I might have sent it to you that sort of affirms this view about whole heartedness - 'The stories that bind us' [see Feiler, 2013], I think I sent it to you? Well it's a really interesting story, because it's about a narrative with the backdrop around Sept 11. And those who were better able to manage it, were those who could talk about it. So, the broader issue about culture and connectedness is being able to tell your story with your whole heart.*

*The second consideration is, she talked about compassion. Now what's particular about compassion is, if I was to embrace her meaning of it, it's to do with kindness but she says, and this is the whole point, that it is affirmed by a whole lot of other theories. I suppose she says the starting point is to be kind to yourself.*

*Now one of the issues about vulnerability and how it's played out if it's part of the narrative and individuals haven't been able to talk about it therefore by implication are defined by it, they can never arrive at a place of peace and as a result diminished self, therefore disconnection with self.*

*You see the reason I want to point that out is when I ask people about outcomes, I say I'm not interested in any of what you've talked about because that's a consequence of something else. So, what is the something else? And I'm saying whoever I work with if the outcome is that they have a better sense of self the rest is history.*

*OK so her notion of compassion, being kind to yourself, before you can be kind to others is fundamentally true. The third consideration is connection. You see if I can get to connect with myself, I get a better understanding, appreciation of the significance of connections and relationships.*

*In the Hilary Cottam video [see Cottam, 2015, which is a TED talk 'Social Services are broken, how can we fix them] there are layers of complexity that most just don't get, and the reason is that they haven't got a lens to look at it. Now what they're saying is, they inverted the ratio instead of servicing the system for 90%, they inverted the ratio, but this relational stuff, they had conversations, where they positioned families as being the experts and these families that have been serviced continually by a multitude of agencies... and what happened is they needed to have a different conversation.*

*You see no-one gets this shit and it doesn't matter who I... you know I don't go berserk about it, I just don't comment because you can't drag people to a place that they don't know exists.*

**NP:** *I guess I've heard that quite a few times from you over the years and I think that has, on some occasions, slowed up your opportunity to help people 'get it' because you have said to others, not necessarily to the people that you are in front of at a conference or... but 'they don't get it' and I think, I understand that in terms of... your vision has always been much further ahead ever since I met you, I identified that. I think I'm getting closer to understanding that, but in the early days with Thames Valley Police and when we worked with other partners, that bit induced 'shame' in people in terms of 'they don't get it' and so, and I understand that that's not necessarily something you would say to people, but I wanted to just send that back to you in terms of, is that the way that you're communicating your ideas to people then?*

**TO'C:** *Na, because again, I think that's a good observation, and when I say they 'don't get it', I'm simply saying to you,*

*the difficulty is that they have a completely different world view to mine around this ok? And that what I've got to do is to find a way through that, that allows them to see what I see, now why I'm saying that is...*

**NP:** *But is that something that all of us, who would like to be restorative facilitators, need to do?*

**TO'C:** *Oh, we do, but what I'm saying is it's one thing saying that at that level but allowing it to play out is a whole different ball game. I have no view about what people need to 'get', they will 'get' what they will 'get'.*

*Now, I point that out because fundamentally, it's a bit like me saying that with all the best intentions in the world, the idea of sharing the restorative story was useful to the extent that it raised the profile, created some good experiences but the bit missing was my failure, even though fundamentally I knew what it looked like, of being able to articulate that entry point.*

*It was the wrong entry point and the evolution of my thinking now is that I say, how do I actually create the space, the opportunity for them to get 'it'?*

*Now see, 'it' is not what I think, 'it' is what makes sense for them.*

**TO'C:** *The point I'm making is, the best part of the journey, is the fact that so many others didn't 'get it'. And the reason that I'm saying that, is because without that I simply wouldn't have landed in the space that I'm in now.*

*How to articulate that in practice, is of course, a different beast. You see 'getting it' is getting **their** meaning of what is important, what matters for them, whatever that looks like. And my role, just to create the space for that to happen.*

*So, if my tendency was to say, 'oh you don't get it', I'm certainly in a different space around that. It's really interesting because someone was making an observation in one of the sessions, somebody said I completely disagree with that. I said that's great tell us about all of that. We had this conversation and the guy goes full circle and he says actually, I agree with you. And I said but that isn't the issue, what you disagreed with was legitimate, because your understanding of that was very different to mine.*

*Part of the problem is, and this is particularly important to you, is when we make assumptions, that we all share the same understanding of what's happening, and it isn't true, and the only way we know that, is we actually talk about it. So, when somebody says I think this bloody restorative stuff is bullshit. I say, 'what do you mean? What's your understanding of it?' In other words, the Socratic way of just unpacking you know.*

*The essence of 'good collaboration' is built around storytelling, my experience, and your experience, what worked and why; what is your thinking around this; what can we learn from one another; to finally, our experience.*

*This is what I call 'Socratic' engagement. It is the only way we can move from 'sharing our view of the world' to 'having a shared view of the world'.*

**NP:** *So, you've created a safe space in which people can engage in that conversation?*

**TO'C:** *So, there's a difference that I really want you ... You know the scenario you gave around this troubled kid, the parent and all the rest of it? As a general scaffold, if I think about the way in which each of us engage others, the question you would ask the other is, what would need to happen for you to have a positive experience around me and what would you expect that I would do that would show you that relationships matter?*

*With the Youth Services organisation that I got to work with, what they got to really understand is, the notion of the kid and the 'stuckness'. I said, you know the kid you are working with is a product of that social environment and with the odd exception everyone has all the same issues around 'stuckness' informed by a myriad of things. If you began a conversation which is that 'I recognise that you're the expert and someone who has been asked to come in and assist.' 'I'm not sure what that looks like, although I really can't offer anything worthwhile unless I truly understand what's happening for your son. It seems to me that everyone is focusing on what he's doing, which is the behaviours, and I'm just wondering what's happening for him? So, much the same way that I did with the young man who assaulted me in 1973.*

*So, this is what the Youth Services staff became excellent at. For example, ring a parent and say I need to come out and*

*see you, and the first question they got used to asking was, 'what was it like for you getting a call from me?'*

*And of course, they would talk about how they became vulnerable and fearful and all the rest and then start to cultivate a conversation:*

*If our time together were to work, what would you have to take away from this?*

*I've come to recognise that as a parent, it's a tough gig, but no-one knows better about your son than you do. I'm trying to get a sense of what a day in your life as a parent looks like.*

*[As a parent] you mentioned that there's been a struggle, lots of different relationships, and there's alcohol involved, and you were talking about being vulnerable, you were saying that there's a whole lot of shame around this. Tell me what you mean by shame? What does that look like and how do you manage it?*

*What would you think if I said look you and I we're humans, who have a need to connect with others in relationships, and that 'shame' in fact, is our daily struggle and how we deal with it.*

*In many respects what's happening with your son, what's happening with you, is the constant challenge of trying to deal with this vulnerability and how we deal with our shame.*

*I hear that when I said to you what is it like, you talked about everybody sees you as the 'fault' parent and then you talk about increasing amounts of alcohol, and then you get so angry when he comes home and how it's so humiliating getting called to the Principal and 'not again'.*

*So, I'm wondering what it is that I might contribute that would give you a better sense of how to better manage? In many respects it's to do with the conversations we have.*

*So, if I said to you, you've been called to the school how many times? And I say tell me which conversation is the most usual one that you've had? Has anyone asked you what it's like being a mother in all of this?*

*I need to be clear that I'm here to help you to make sense of where things are at, because you know best about your son*

*and part of that is to be clear about the expectations you have of me and I should have of you.*

*You see I'm of the belief that when we better understand the 'why' of what's happening, we're in a much better space to be able to help you and others to navigate that space, I think, because what we've got to do is to be clear about what would you really like to see come out of whatever happens around your son. In other words what matters?*

*In terms of someone who is a youth worker or a teacher, what matters for me is that we understand what's really happening for your son. What matters is that he begins to understand it, so that he can get a much better sense of self. What matters is that whatever we do has to become a learning opportunity. The other thing is what matters is how do we set your son up to succeed?*

*I need to talk with your son and yourself, but what I'm suggesting is we want conversations that are less about blame, that draw us in, so whatever happens becomes a hopeful opportunity.*

*It's pretty hard to know how any of this can help, if we don't understand the 'why' of what's happening. So, part of my experience suggests, if I think about my experience of the conversations I have, I'm really interested in what impact this is having on you and the family. Because if I say to you what do you love about 'little Johnny'? What is it that you really want for him? And you know I've heard you talk about... you feel like a bad parent. Can I ask you something did you ever wake up one morning and think I'm going to work hard on being the worst parent in the world today?*

*So, do you understand, when I talk about engagement, I'm talking about an endless process, a seamless process. So, it's nothing to do with RJ in that regard, it's about striking a conversation and engagement process, that positions those individuals in a space that helps them to begin to understand. So, the idea with 'making sense' and 'working out what matters' and then 'working out what needs to change' and 'how do you learn to build and sustain healthy relationships?'*

**TO'C:** *When you guys were driving it... because look, I've revisited Thames Valley [Police] 100,000 times and realised that the entry point, it was always going to be the entry point, but the full cycle is that my entry point is at a fundamentally different point now.*



*So, we're in police HQ last week and there's some great guys. One of them says to me 'oh listen by the way this morning I've got a meeting with the looked after or the care homes'. So I said how did you become involved? He said, it's part of our remit, we get a lot of work from them. So I said, OK and I grab a fistful of these [picks up the restorative question 'business sized' cards].*

*I say, 'a little gift, say them at a critical moment, and by the way guys, you may want to think about shaping conversations around these.'*

*Anyhow he comes back 'oh by the way that went really well they were so interested I couldn't get enough cards'. I have this view that if we could capture cops in a way that says, as you're doing what you do, and you're using this scaffold to shape those conversations, we're going to get you hundreds of thousands of cards and you're going to say to everyone you come into contact with, you know what try this for size there you go.*

*So, then they are known as the force that is trying to promote a different kind of conversation, one that draws people in rather than pushes them away. Create the space for them to tell their stories. Everything we need to know about what needs to change in policing is found in your story. And it works brilliantly this idea of the challenges, reflecting on your journey, why has policing landed in the space that it has, what are the things that need to change. So the exemplars of the organisations that I have worked with that have re-invented themselves in terms of culture, - the aged care facility, the primary school, the youth services organisation - when I look at the commonality between them, it's what I'm doing now with this police force and that's the scaffold, getting them to think about their practice and it's always relationships, it all comes back to relationships.*

**NP:** *So, is that why you have changed the language to talk about 'we want you to have an experience today' not a training?*

**TO'C:** *Not only the language, but a lot more. I've always been Socratic, but much more intentionally now in terms of being able to frame what I know works in a way that allows others to discover it. It's about understanding the 'why' of your practice.*

**TO'C:** *So, Michael Jr. says 'the first time I asked him to sing, he knew what he was doing. The second time he knew why he was doing it. When you know your why, you're what becomes more impactful, because you're walking towards or in your purpose.'*

**NP:** *Understanding the why. Explain the importance of understanding the why in your practice. To help understand this question we will briefly explore the general theory of human motivation, the role that shame and vulnerability plays in relationships and how restorative dialogue creates the conditions that can consistently provide fair and respectful experiences.*

**TO'C:** *So, the only thing that I've learned that has made a difference is, when practitioners can get invested in a dialogue that helps make sense and meaning of where they're at, helps them to be very clear about a shared purpose, and importantly removes any doubt as to what the practice looks like and is capable of delivering on that shared purpose.*

*And it has to be a subset based on the experiences that they have that allows them to get to the point where they get to talk about what matters. And the idea and this is the critical factor is, my version of restorative is only the only explicitly stand that allows you to share the language and the practice with those you're working with. but you have to be clear the 'why' of what you're doing.*

**TO'C:** *Key to all of this, is the starting point, the foundation of which you build a way of being explicit about your own practice, about understanding and from my perspective, I'm not talking about a multiplicity of theories. I'm talking about a theoretical framework that has ticked the boxes on everything I've done. In other words, from facilitating processes it is the only thing that has consistently been able to explain the impact, the dynamics and to do it on a consistent basis.*

*My point is, that the question about the use of theory, is only helpful to the extent that you are explicit about what criteria it would need to meet. It's no good saying 'oh look there's a whole lot to think about narrative theory or narrative therapy that is very similar to the stuff that you're doing around restorative'. And the answer is, that is true, there is considerable overlap but what I'm doing is I'm explaining why we want to hitch our way into a particular theory and why*

*that theory can help others to better understand themselves and to make sense and meaning for themselves.*

*If I'm to be true to what I believe, in terms of individuals being the experts, my pitch is that whatever is happening, there's a level of disconnect for someone who is either a 'victim' or an 'offender' in this case [talking about work in criminal justice] and the 'disconnect' is that they are struggling around themselves, to make sense of the meaning of it.*

*A classic example, I don't tell the story very often, is the young woman sexually abused, so when I asked her about what a good day looked like she couldn't describe it. She said, you know every time I begin to feel OK about myself, the history kicks in. What does a bad day look like? And she described, from the point of getting up, to going to bed, a whole raft of painful emotions and she said to me 'but the worst is my shame and humiliation'.*

*I said how do you deal with that? And she described the compass of shame. What I did, I had a handbook with me and I pulled it out and showed her the 'compass of shame' and she burst into tears. She said, 'do you mean I'm normal?'*

*What's interesting is, here's a young woman sexually abused between 9 and 13 years of age, her life's a train wreck, disclosed at 26, further isolated from family, something happened external to family, but family then put the dots together. Been through drug and alcohol, you name it, and you know she asked the question 'why did it take till now for me to understand what was happening for me?'*

*And I said because, frankly, my experience is that too many professionals don't really understand 'shame' and its impact. They'll be conscious of it, but they don't understand it from the perspective or the way in which Silvan Tompkins describes it. Now why I'm saying that is, the only thing I want you to take that is significantly different to how most articulate it is, the idea of an explicit practice framework provides a language and a practice that is shared with others, and the use of 'visuals' [showing me the laminated copy of the 'compass of shame'] is another classic example of how to do that.*

**NP:** *So, I guess this is the whole for me bit in terms of my 'why' and your 'why'. It's that sense of purpose my practice as well as my understanding of the why has taken me on my*

*own restorative journey from criminal justice to the IIRP working in different contexts to being a teacher to being a special educational needs coordinator to working in a University environment. So there's a lot of practical experience but it's only in I think the last year I guess as I've been developing my thinking around understanding what I do and my own 'why', that there's a sense of my own sense of purpose in terms of doing a PhD working in the higher education environment being able to reach more people to share that understanding. but also an acknowledgement, that that sense of purpose is to facilitate that in others, so to facilitate the opportunities, and that's the bit that I think works from those you speak with who have a light bulb moment or whatever you want to call it in terms of oh yeah I get that I get why I do what I do as a police officer as a teacher as a social worker as a parent whatever it might be a lecturer in the University, I get that . But my journey, working for various organisations including a restorative practices organisation, what you've described in relation to some of those difficult conversations and some of those difficult times...*

**TO'C:** *Of course, that had to happen, because that's part of the evolution, and I don't say that in a negative way.*

**NP:** *No, and I am seeking to understand my own similar experiences in terms of policing and the fact that four years after being immersed in this, been working and sharing it with others, working around the evaluation [Hoyle et al, 2002], continuing the conversation with you and others, taking it to other organisations and individuals, and working in the UK to develop what restorative justice was in the UK and in the context in which we were working. My own journey was then, right OK, you're going to be tenured back out onto shift and there's new Chief Constable, it's all well and good but you need to be back out on operational policing. And my own journey of well no, because I think I understand this, and if I go back out as an operational police officer, I'm not going to have the opportunity to share this with as many people as I would like to, and that's the whole...*

**TO'C:** *That's the narrative.*

**NP:** *That was my narrative around both practice and my own learning and my engagement with Higher Education and seeking to understand what underpins all of this and the key concepts. The implications for that in terms of developing an explicit framework and developing an understanding or a*

*definition of what restorative is, of being able to relate to a theory that underpins it... I guess it's the... what's the importance of all of that?*

*What's the importance of... is it so that you can help many more people understand the way in which they are going to be able to find their 'why', find their own sense of purpose and be able to manage difficult emotion, develop their own narratives in a positive way, find their own sense of purpose, so that they can have positive outcomes themselves in that sense of purpose whatever that might be, to be a parent, to be a police officer to be a partner a mother whoever it might be. That's the big picture how can you capture it to a level it doesn't turn it into a tool in the toolbox but does allow us to promote something that we call restorative and help others find their own way to develop their own stories and deal with 'shame' deal with negative affect move themselves back into the positive affect and that doesn't matter about the context. It's about the 'tool in the toolbox' to help a child that's got attachment issues, through to the 'big picture' of this is an issue in this context, it might be knife crime, it might be exclusion in schools, it might be more children being taken into care, it might be looked after children not succeeding at school, it might be the cultural/organizational piece. It doesn't matter what it is, but my sense of purpose in relation to those issues that create negative affect... It doesn't matter what it is, it all depends on the people that are leading it and what's being said and what is being done.*

**TO'C:** *And what matters.*

*I can respond to all of that, but in a way, that provides a scaffold, so you can better understand where I'm coming from. You see I'm far more ambitious than what you suggest. I'm not interested in stopping at the idea of this just being a universal framework for dealing with things that go wrong. I want to take it to a higher level.*

*Why I'm saying this, I'd be saying regardless of what you said, in the sense that it's a bit like saying, well what were you attempting in the aged care facility? And I said to develop a normative practice that was really good at drawing people in and building and sustaining relationships. OK end of session.*

*So, the question is, how do you do that? It's just to alert them to the idea that there are conversations, and some moving bits and particular questions, that when we share, we are*

*able to actually connect at an emotional level, because the conversations are more inclusive rather than exclusive. We change the conversation, we change the experience, we change the world, simple as that.*

*So, I want to alert you to the fact that, we don't make any assumptions about theories, we don't make an assumption that we're going to select a theory because it generally reflects an ethos that makes what I'm on about... and it's built on a number of constructs.*

*I'm just saying the starting point is what are your expectations from a theory? If I say to you, I think explicit practice is fundamental and you say absolutely. So, what is it? What would the criteria be that would allow you with a high degree of certainty to say it's explicit? You see they're stand alone. I'm talking about building the framework, the foundation on which you make judgements that have got rigour, that are able to be articulated, that are logical, that can be proven to deliver on what they claim and do it in a consistent way.*

*This sort of instrumental view of restorative, was this great stand-alone process when in fact it was a relational framework that engaged everybody on their journey wherever it landed. It may not have landed them in a process and what I was saying was the moving bits of a conference script that did well at engagement I said let's tease those out what are the moving bits of that and how do we capture that as a normative process and that was the thinking behind it.*

*Forgetting about RP, forgetting about all of that, just thinking about how you construct a rigorous well thought through scaffold, that incorporates all those drivers, that influences what you are doing and why you're doing it.*

*My starting point is, therefore, what is keeping them out of relationships. So, when you draw on the whole theoretical basis it says to me, if I were to draw a road map, scaffold, that sets the parameters on what my thinking is about, what I believe and what I have drawn on to inform my practice.*

*What would a 'road map' or scaffold look like? I call that my working assumptions because everyone has a set of working assumptions.*

*When I mention working assumptions, people go what is he going on about? And yet when I sit with a police officer and get them to unpack what they are doing they describe their*

*working assumptions. You see what you did [in Thames Valley Police] is you hit across the very issues that helped me actually to frame the idea of a set of working assumptions. A working assumption is based on our beliefs and values, what we know to be true, evidence and direct experience all sort of interrelated.*

*The beauty of... you know my decision in 1999 to uplift the questions from the script was a direct result of the fact that I just saw practitioners running processes that were stand-alone events and the only restorative bit was if you were 'lucky' enough to be in the actual conference process itself when in fact that was never, ever the message I wanted.*

*Having said that, the greatest challenge, is to go back to some fundamental principles which was nothing to do with 'restorative' or anything. It raises the issue about theory, what do you mean? How would it be purposeful? What would be the criteria? What would you look to a theory to provide? Then you say, so how does that fit and help make what you're on about much more explicit and intentional? What do we mean by explicit? How do we develop that? So, part of it is to say... I hit across working assumptions a long time ago, I just struggled to get people to pay attention. And it's to do with the process that telling has a limited impact but inquiring using their own experience to describe, as I have with the cops, they found this compelling. They thought shit, this guy's bloody unpacking this, you know, but it's purposeful and what it does is it allows them to articulate what they're on about and as you said it picks up on the beliefs. You ask the question 'to what extent do our beliefs and our experience influence how we practice?' And people say greatly, and I say so let's unpack it.*

**NP:** *Working assumptions are shaped by our beliefs, experience and what we know to be true – evidence. The following are examples:*

*shame is the dominant negative affect of everyday life.*

*most of the problems of interpersonal life can be traced to shame-based issues.*

*creating the conditions that help others to deal honestly with their vulnerability is an important step towards building trust and more positive experience.*

*Silvan Tomkins' blueprint for individual psychological and emotional wellness prescribes the conditions needed for this to happen.*

*The restorative questions go some way to satisfying those conditions.*

**TO'C:** *Remember when I talked in the email about theories and I said 'you know Nicola you need to draw on a number of theories to reinforce that'... and I'm saying to myself, well that's orthodoxy, that's how it's always done.*

*What would happen if you established criteria that would be open to discussion, that would clearly delineate theory? What would you expect? What it would have to be able to deliver on? Okay, and then you did the same thing in terms of your practice.*

*In other words, you remove any confusion about original criteria and then you said, well I might like Tompkins theory, because what it does is it satisfies all of those requirements, which is a very different notion to saying can we have a bit of this and a bit of that - narrative therapy, psychotherapy, you know have a bit of this have a bit of that.*

*It doesn't do anything for me, and the reason it doesn't do anything for me and that isn't to say it's not a valid way, it's just that I'm a hard taskmaster. I'm saying to you, what's the criteria to select your theories? What are you trying to achieve? What is it about your practice that you need to be certain about? And what is it that shapes and moulds the practice?*

*I'm just saying I've given it a lot of thought. So, what we end up with is a set of working assumptions.*

*So, the outcome is to strengthen relational capacity and using the explicit road map, you help people with 'the why', 'the how', and 'the what'. In other words, whatever else, what we know with absolute certainty, is that strengthened relationships are the greatest predictor of healthy behaviours. The aggregate of all of this provides capacity for individuals, or the individual, to be able to navigate things through dialogue.*

**NP:** *Creating the conditions for relational outcomes.*



*The aim is to create the conditions to allow others to sit with the discomfort of their vulnerability, so they can make sense and meaning of their lives.*

*Identify what is most important in all that is happening - what matters.*

*Explore what needs to change and what their part will be in this change - process.*

**TO'C:** *Let me just qualify that what needs to change and their part in it are two different things.*

**NP** [reading]: *...and importantly learn how to build and sustain healthy relationships – engagement.*

*The restorative definition -*

*Restorative practices is a way of thinking and being focused on creating safe spaces for real conversation that deepen relationships and build stronger more connected communities:*

- *making sense of restorative practices*
- *why it works*
- *the psychology of affect*
- *Tomkin's community blueprint - affects*
- *the restorative questions make the 'what' more purposeful,*
- *respectful, fair and inclusive process*

*So, what is respect? Braithwaite suggests -unacceptable behaviours to be rejected whilst acknowledging the intrinsic worth of the person and acknowledging their contribution to their own community. I value our relationship but not your behaviour.*

**TO'C:** *Then we talk about relational stories, we talk about the inclusiveness.*

**NP:** *So now you're back to... you've filled in the blanks. So, the 'why' is beliefs, values, working assumptions and theory. The 'how' is restorative dialogue that satisfies the conditions for emotional wellness. The 'what' is Socratic engagement, respectful, fair and inclusive process. This all leads to increased relational capacity and that is your explicit practice road map.*

**TO'C:** *So, you could argue that maybe there are elements of the 'how' as opposed to the 'what'. The 'how' you go about it, is using the restorative questions, so what you're doing is providing a process that's very Socratic and therefore is inherently respectful.*

**NP:** *So, in a way if we're looking at this with a theoretical lens, these are the key concepts?*

**TO'C:** *Yes, that's it, that's it there.*

**NP:** *[reading]: So, working assumptions, restorative philosophy, fair process, relational styles, Socratic engagement, gives you relational capacity.*

**TO'C:** *So, it's the synergy of those, there's nothing sequential and what it does, there are a whole lot of beliefs and philosophies and practices that merge together, by way of synergy, to create the conditions that that are more likely than not to enhance relational capacity.*

*Can I tell you, you're probably the first one to ever have sat through and got to appreciate how this has evolved and the sort of rationale for it. It's been a long journey.*

## Appendix 'Q'      O'Connell presentation outline

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Outline for UK police presentation – July 2019

One way to describe what we are attempting is to ensure that every interaction is an 'experience' rather than a 'training'. What is the difference? I suggest the answer will be found in the following dialogue.

-----  
1. Introduction/welcome

- name, your role and how long you have been involved in policing.
- in what way is policing different from how you first imagined it.
- what you enjoy most about policing.
- what are your challenges.
- what you would like to take from today.

2. These questions then asked of the group:

- why have you been invited here today?
- what do you think is likely to happen?
- if we said that we are wanting today to be an 'experience' and not a 'training' what do you think we mean? What would be the difference? What does 'experience' infer?

3. We could respond by saying:

The idea of an 'experience' recognises that you are the 'expert' in your role and that our contribution is to ask questions that help you all to:

- make better sense and meaning of your practice;
- identify what you feel makes the greatest difference, and then to understand what matters;
- work out if there is a need for change in your policing practice; and, if so, what your part will be in that change process;
- learn how to make policing practice more explicit, intentional and consistent.

We argue that strong collegial relationships provide the foundation needed for structured conversations to become a regular part of how you discuss and critique your policing practice.

Being explicit means that you can confidently describe what you do; why you do that; why doing that works; and, how you know if what you do makes a difference.

#### 4. What our policing experience [and research] has shown:

We will now share some insights from our own policing experience that help explain why we looking for a 'new approach involving a different practice conversation'. As a general rule police:

- do not usually critique or discuss their practice.
- do what they do because that is what is always done,
- operate on the assumption that we all share the same understanding of policing.
- struggle to articulate their practice: what they do; why they do that; why doing that works; and, what a difference looks like.
- operate in a 'authoritarian' culture where compliance is rewarded and mistakes punished.
- focus on outputs [KPI's] with little regard for outcomes.
- tend to measure accountability in terms of compliance.

We now invite you to discuss these observations.

#### 5. What Restorative Justice has to offer:

You will have noticed that we have not mentioned RJ but we know that you all have some view that RJ is what we are all about. This is not strictly true.

If you were to reflect on what we have been doing far, you will begin to understand where RJ fits. What has been the purpose of:

- inquiring about your policing experience, the high and lows and what you want to take from today.
- getting you to think today and our mention of an 'experience' and not a 'training'.
- acknowledging each of you as an 'expert' and that our contribution will be to ask questions to help make what you do more explicit and intentional.
- offering an explanation that explicit practice is being clear about what you do; why you do that; why doing that works; and, how you know whether you have made a difference.
- sharing our observations of police and policing practice?

What did you learn from this experience? What has been helpful?

Now let's talk about what we think RJ is and where it might fit into policing practice.

- Any thoughts?
- How would you describe RJ?

We offer a simple definition [or explanation] of Restorative Justice. We asked a number of experienced RJ practitioners the following questions:

- What attracted you to restorative justice/practice?
- What difference has it made to your practice?
- What definition [of RJ] best describes your thinking and practice?

Mark Vander Vennen [2016] shared the following definition:

*Restorative Practice is a way of thinking and being, focused on creating safe spaces for real conversations that deepen relationships and build stronger more connected communities."*

Discussion:

- What is particular about this definition?
- What is the main focus of this definition?
- How might this definition prove a better 'fit' than one that talks about 'victims and offenders'?
- How could we use RJ to make policing practice more impactful?

Our hope is that each of you will take away a sound understanding of how Restorative Justice can help make your existing practice [that works]: more explicit, intentional and consistent.

Discussion:

- What does this mean?
- Do you have any thoughts on how this could happen?
- Why are relationships important in everything we do?
- Why are people most likely to obey the law?
- If we are consistently good at the 'relationship' bit what difference will this make to our policing practice?

## 6. Where to from here?

We argue that RJ can help us become more deliberate and consistent with the 'relational elements' of our practice. We have some thoughts on how to do this and it involves 'asking you questions' rather than offering answers or advice. In other words, we want to 'collaborate' with you. Briefly, this is what we intend doing:

### Step 1

- inviting someone in the group to describe their last intervention involving a victim and offender.
- this person will then facilitate a roleplay [with the group] in which he/she will model the process used with this intervention [repeating the actual dialogue and in the order the process happened].
- the 'facilitator' will then be asked questions as a way of unpacking the modelling to help us understand the rationale behind the practice.
- finally, the group will be asked to identify the various 'assumptions' informing the practice.

### Step 2

- a member of the 'visiting group' will then facilitate the same roleplay [involving the same participants.]
- at the end of the process, participants will be asked to compare their two experiences.
- the first facilitator will be invited to provide feedback.
- the group will then be asked to explain the rationale behind the practice.
- finally, the group will be asked to identify the various 'assumptions' informing the practice.

### Step 3

Participants will be given a brief but detailed overview of the theory and 'working assumptions' that explain the 'why' behind the 'what'. This exercise will explore:

- a general theory of human motivation
- the role shame [vulnerability] plays in relationships
- how restorative dialogue creates the conditions needed to ensure a consistently fair and respectful experience.
- ways that restorative dialogue can build relational capacity.

### Step 4

Each participant to identify a matter that they recently dealt with, and as a result of today's experience, how they would have dealt with it differently.

### Step 5

Ask the group to list areas of policing practice that would benefit from restorative processes with a strong focus on briefings and debriefing processes.

Invite discussion on ways to embed, consolidate and evaluate the influence of restorative processes on policing.

## Step 6

Participant feedback on:

- what they found useful
- what they will now do differently

Note: I can arrange the information in a simple slide presentation.

## Appendix 'R' Business sized restorative question cards

<b>REAL JUSTICE.</b> Tel: +44 (0) 1706 810201 · Fax: +44 (0) 1706 810793 email: <a href="mailto:uk@realjustice.org">uk@realjustice.org</a> · <a href="http://www.realjustice.org">www.realjustice.org</a>	<h3>RESTORATIVE QUESTIONS 1</h3> <p><u>To respond to challenging behaviour:</u></p> <p>What happened?</p> <p>What were you thinking about <u>at the time</u>?</p> <p>What have your thoughts been <u>since</u>?</p> <p>Who has been affected by what you did?</p> <p>In what way have they been affected?</p> <p>What do you think needs to happen to make things right?</p> <p><small>INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR RESTORATIVE PRACTICES</small></p> <p>Affiliates of the IIRP <a href="http://www.iirp.org">www.iirp.org</a></p>
<b>SaferSanerSchools™</b> Tel: +44 (0) 1706 810201 · Fax: +44 (0) 1706 810793 email: <a href="mailto:uk@saferanerschools.org">uk@saferanerschools.org</a> · <a href="http://www.saferanerschools.org">www.saferanerschools.org</a>	<h3>RESTORATIVE QUESTIONS 2</h3> <p><u>To help those harmed by others' Actions:</u></p> <p>What did you think when you realised what had happened?"</p> <p>What have your thoughts been since?</p> <p>How has this affected you and others?</p> <p>What has been the hardest thing for you?</p> <p>What do you think needs to happen to make things right?</p> <p><small>INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR RESTORATIVE PRACTICES</small></p> <p>Affiliates of the IIRP <a href="http://www.iirp.org">www.iirp.org</a></p>

Restorative Question Cards (O'Connell, 1999) All contents are copyrighted and shared with permission



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