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**BUILDING BRIDGES: INTEGRATING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE
WITH THE SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER MODEL**

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ABSTRACT

This working paper uses a comprehensive literature review to assess the potential to improve school safety and the delivery of services by school resource officers through the integration of the school resource officer model with the restorative justice approach. Strengths and weakness of the school resource officer model are examined. Theoretical premises and empirical findings from restorative applications in school settings are reviewed. The paper identifies specific areas where the school resource officer program could benefit from restorative philosophy and practice.

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Introduction

This paper examines the possibility of integrating restorative justice principles and practices into the school resource officer (SRO) model to enhance school safety. In its solicitation for a national assessment of school resource officer programs, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) recognized the training of students in conflict resolution and restorative justice as one of numerous versions of SRO programs (NIJ, 1999). However, when the assessment was complete, restorative justice was not identified as a major component of any of the established or relatively new SRO programs surveyed in its national sample (Finn and McDevitt, 2005). Furthermore, the National Association of School Resource Officers which offers training to its 15,000 members does not highlight restorative justice among its workshop offerings (NASRO, 2005b). Nor are its university/educational partners affiliated with restorative justice education. This suggests that restorative justice is largely a footnote within the SRO community. Given its mission, could the SRO community benefit through the more explicit development of a restorative justice focus? To address this question, this paper 1) reviews the restorative approach to school safety, 2) reviews and analyzes the mission statement of the National Association of School Resource Officers and other related literature on school resource officer programs, 3) reviews and analyzes literature on the use of restorative models in schools, 4) reviews literature where police have worked closely with schools in promoting restorative justice, and 5) makes recommendations concerning the advantages and disadvantages of integrating restorative principles and practices more systematically within SRO programs. While there is discussion about whether law enforcement involvement will strengthen restorative programs, a full discussion of this issue is beyond the scope of the paper.

A Note on the Restorative Philosophy

Restorative justice can be described as an alternative to the retributive model of justice that prevails in our current system (Zehr, 2005). While restorative justice principles and practices have been introduced primarily into criminal justice and juvenile justice practice, over the last several years there has been an increased interest in public school applications.

Restorative justice can be defined as a response to conflict, misbehavior, and crime that makes things as right as possible for all those impacted by the incident (Claassen, 2002: 19). Rather than being rule based and punishment driven, the restorative justice model focuses on taking responsibility for repairing the harm done by the offending action. It is an inclusive problem-solving approach that is victim-centered, requires offender accountability, and encourages community responsibility for victim and offender reintegration. In *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*, Zehr provides one of the most parsimonious descriptions of the concepts on which restorative justice is based, noting that "...[it] requires at a minimum, that we address victim harms and needs, hold offenders accountable to put right those harms, and involve victims, offenders, and communities in the process" (2002: 25). The restorative model contrasts with retributive justice which prevails in most justice systems throughout the world. Retributive justice views crime as lawbreaking, involves establishing guilt when the law is broken, and assigns punishment to those who have been found guilty by rule of law (Zehr, 2005: 81). In addition to just deserts, other goals of punishment-based justice systems include deterrence and incapacitation.

The central goal for implementing restorative practices in the schools is the same as the goal underlying punishment-based models to produce safe schools. Punishment-based models in schools include but are not limited to zero tolerance policies, suspensions, expulsions, mandatory study hall, and other disciplinary practices. The restorative model focuses on developing a sense of "connectedness" and community responsibility within a school to promote safety. Thorsborne (2000: 4) notes that "restorative justice in the school setting views misconduct, not as school rule breaking, and therefore a violation of the institution, but as a violation against people and relationships in the school and wider school community." The typical law enforcement approach in a school

context focuses on respect for the law, violations of the law, consequences for breaking the law, and punishing those who have violated the law. In contrast, the restorative approach focuses on behavior that causes crime, the harmful consequences of that behavior for victim(s) and community, a process for the healing harm done, and a plan for improving the future (Amstutz and Mullet, 2005).

The restorative model is attractive to those concerned with school safety because of its relational component. A national longitudinal study of adolescent health in 127 schools found that school environments that promote a sense of community have lower levels of deviant behavior and violence (McNeely, Nonnemaker, and Blum, 2002). Theoretically, restorative justice strengthens community by holding those who cause harm accountable and engaging the community in processes of accountability, support, and healing (Wachtel and McCold, 2001). In the school setting restorative justice relies extensively on informal social control, while retributive justice is based on hierarchical authority models (Braithwaite, 1989).

Researchers and practitioners have been particularly interested in applying restorative approaches to the problem of school bullying. Through encounter, respectful dialogue, and support, restorative practices have the potential to help transform the denial, shame, and anger experienced in the victim/bully relationship to accountability, healing, and a sense of belonging (Morrison, 2005:34). More traditional rule-based punitive processes are associated with further alienation that can contribute to deviant behavior (Braithwaite, 1989). As Riese (2004: 4) notes, responding to the victim is central, but “everyone, including the bully, belongs to the community and needs our support.”

In the school context, best practice suggests that restorative justice involve a continuum of responses. At the primary level, all students are trained to develop social and emotional competencies that support respect, peaceful conflict resolution, and mutual support (Morrison, 2005: 37). This level equates with preventive action.

The secondary and tertiary levels target individuals or groups in a more reactive mode and draw on other members of the school and larger community. Peer mediation and problem solving methods might be utilized at this level at the

secondary level, while the tertiary level might require even more participation including members of the school community, family members, and other professionals (Morrison, 2005:37). Hopkins (2004) has identified a wider range of responses based on restorative justice. Her whole-school approach includes restorative inquiry, restorative discussion, mediation, victim/offender mediation, community conferences, problem-solving circles, restorative conferences; and family group conferences as a range of responses (see also, Wachtel and McCold 2001).

This brief introduction to restorative justice and its application in schools provides a backdrop against which to examine restorative applications to the SRO model.

The School Resource Officer Model

Should the integration of the restorative philosophy with the SRO model be more strongly encouraged to promote safer schools? To examine this question literature on school resource officer programs, along with the mission statement of the National Association of School Resource officers (NASRO) are reviewed and analyzed. Of particular interest is the extent to which the philosophies and working practices of the restorative and SRO models offer challenges and opportunities.

Involvement of the police in schools is not a new phenomenon, but the role has changed over time. Until the 1950s police officers were primarily involved with picking up truants, teaching bicycle and traffic safety, and manning crosswalks during the opening and closing of schools. The role of police in schools changed substantially in most Western countries from the 1960's to the 1990's due to changes in attitudes toward aggression and violence in schools, dramatic incidents of violence in schools involving weapons and mass shootings, drugs use, gang involvement, technological challenges brought about by issues of sexual exploitation and pornography on the internet, and the recognized connection between truancy and crime (Shaw, 2004).

The institutionalization of police-school linkages is primarily found in Western democracies. Shaw notes that in developing nations such as Africa and Latin America, corruption, violence, and low levels of police professionalism make comparisons with European countries, the United States, Canada, Australia, and

New Zealand difficult (2004: 6). One exception is South Africa where communities, police, and schools have formed alliances to reduce school violence (Shaw, 2004: 24). With this in mind, the focus of this writing is on western democracies in general, and specifically the School Resource Officer model (SRO) developed in the United States.

Shaw (2004) identifies three models of police involvement in schools: school-based police officers, police officers as teachers, and comprehensive police-school liaison programs. While elements of each model may coexist, the model of officers as teachers, for example, implies that teaching is the *only* involvement of officers in the schools as might be the case in teaching Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE).

This study focuses on school-based resource officers, with a particular focus on the School Resource Officer Model developed in the United States. The comprehensive police- school liaison model which includes linkages with a variety of social service agencies involved with at risk students may be more effective in implementing restorative based programs. However, at the present time, the best known and longest surviving model is the SRO which was established in the 1950s and adopted with variations by countries such as Canada, Australia and Great Britain (Shaw, 2004: 9). In England, police officers dedicated to schools are referred to as school liaison officers. Their role has paralleled that of the SRO model in the United States with an emphasis on law enforcement, counseling, and teaching. A new school officer program, the Safer School Partnership Programme (SSP) which began in 2002 targets high risk areas and schools and places greater emphasis on a prevention and welfare approach to offending. School based policing in the Netherlands and Queensland, Australia, are relatively new and similar to the SRO model but without teaching responsibilities (Shaw, 2004).

The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO), based in the United States, has over 15,000 members. The SRO model is recognized in Part Q of Title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act, and since 1999 the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) has funded more than 1500 SROs in more than 700 jurisdictions in the United States (NIJ, 1999: 1-2). While COPS has encouraged collaborative community based practices for SROs

that more closely resemble the comprehensive police-school liaison model, the program recognizes that SRO programs take on many forms from the collaborative-comprehensive to more traditional policing models (NIJ, 1999: 1).

The term *school resource officer* is attributed to a Miami, Florida, police chief who coined the phrase in the early 1960s (Cawthon, 2002). SRO programs expanded significantly in the 1990s with an increase in support for the concept of community policing. In 1999 President Clinton was successful in getting legislation passed through Congress that amended the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act to provide funding to encourage law enforcement-school district partnerships. President Clinton's initiative focused on hiring new police officers to work with the school community in a variety of ways including counseling and the mediation of conflicts (Cawthon, 2002).

NASRO's mission statement identifies the School Resource Officer Program as ".....a collaborative effort by certified law enforcement officers, educators, students, parents, and the community to offer law related educational programs in the schools in an effort to reduce crime, drug abuse, violence, and provide a safe school environment" (NASRO, 2005a). Building trust and rapport between police and the school community is emphasized as the primary way to achieve the overall goal of school safety (Finn and McDevitt, 2005: 17; Mulqueen, 1999).

NASRO sponsored training is wide-ranging including workshops in interviewing and interrogating, alcohol-drug curriculums, civil liability, gangs, crisis management, after school programs, bullying, youth suicide, and terrorism safeguards (NASRO, 2005b). While SRO programs have a preventive community policing orientation, some programs emphasis law enforcement functions.

NASRO has adopted what is referred to as a Triad Model to school policing which includes the role of (a) law enforcement officer, (b) counselor and (c) classroom instructor. While teaching content may vary, a major theme of SRO programs is the development of more responsible attitudes towards breaking the law (Shaw, 2004: 9). A 2001 NASRO School Resource Officer Survey showed that the work of the majority of respondents fit the model (Trump, 2001). A subsequent survey showed that respondents identified the role they spent the most time on while working as an SRO was 41% law enforcement officer, 46%

counselor/mentor and 13% instructor/teacher (Trump, 2002). Ninety-one percent of the SROs reported that at least half of their job consisted of preventative duties and only 7% said that their emphasis is on enforcement and investigation duties. The most recent national survey of SRO programs found a slightly larger proportion of weekly hours (20) spent on law enforcement in comparison to other activities including advising and mentoring (10 hours), teaching (5 hours), and other activities (6 to 7 hours) (Finn and McDevitt, 2005: 4). It was noted that different SRO programs vary a great deal in terms of the percentage of time devoted to the three major activities designated in the SRO model. In one large site, administrators indicated that they were as much interested in mentoring and teaching roles as they were in providing security (Finn and McDevitt, 2005: 22). In another large site, the amount of time spent on various activities shifted according to what was going on in the school so that in the beginning of the SRO program a fairly large percentage of time was spent on law enforcement but five years later 10% of the time was spent on this role.

NSRO surveys show that members identify with the importance of building trust between SROs and stakeholders in the schools, particularly students. Furthermore, students' perceptions of SROs do increase positively as their contacts with SROs increase (Jackson, 2002; Finn and McDevitt, 2005: 42). The most recent national assessment of SRO programs found that a larger percentage of students who have a positive view of the SRO report feeling safe in school and are more comfortable reporting crime. The authors of the report concluded, "...perhaps the most important and easily modifiable variable...is creating a positive opinion of the SRO among the student body. The results suggest that it is important to determine the best method for SROs to create a positive image" (Finn and McDevitt, 2005: 42). Interestingly, students who have experienced some type of victimization, either in school or out of school, are less likely to feel safe in the school locations (Finn and McDevitt, 2005: 41).

Survey findings also suggest that key stakeholders often *do not understand the role* of the SRO in the school community (Cawthon, 2002). In one study, school principals and SROs saw their roles differently, with principals emphasizing safety primarily through SRO presence, and SROs viewing their roles much more broadly than security focused deterrence (Lambert and McGinty, 2002)

Cawthon's (2002) research in a Florida school district found a recurrence of themes pointing to the importance of effective communication between SROs and their constituents with respect to role and function. The national assessment of SROs discovered that a major lesson learned was the importance of defining specific roles and responsibilities. The report noted that when this is not done, "problems are often rampant" and lead to role confusion and conflict with school administrators about SRO responsibilities (Finn and McDevitt, 2005: 43).

Of particular importance was the need to more specifically define "what it means for SROs to engage in law enforcement" (Finn and McDevitt, 2005: 44). In collaborating with school administrators and teachers, the national assessment found "a fundamental difference in the law enforcement culture and the school culture in terms of goals, strategies, and methods" (Finn and McDevitt, 2005: 45). Of particular concern were conflicts over "who is in charge" and who should decide whether the student should be arrested or referred to an alternative process.

The national assessment also noted role conflict resulting from the SRO model in terms of maintaining authority as law enforcers while at the same time improving relationships with students (Finn and McDevitt, 2005: 46). The power imbalance that exists between police and young people in street encounters or in school detracts from the trust-building process identified as being a key component of SRO effectiveness (Jackson, 2002). Teaching, and particularly counseling help familiarize officers with students, but some officers feel that while they have built positive relationships in the counselor role, they are exposed to the criticism and even civil liability, with respect to practicing psychology without a license (Finn and McDevitt, 2005: 46).

Very few evaluation studies of SRO programs have been conducted with sufficient design and statistical rigor to draw conclusions on their effectiveness in terms of outcome measures. In one southern district, Johnson (1999) found serious offenses in high schools and middle schools decreased substantially within one year after the SRO program was implemented. However, most studies focus on perceptions of teachers, administrators, and students, rather than objective measures of change. For example, Chen (1999) surveyed members of the school community in a suburban Kansas school district. Respondents believed their SRO program created a safe learning environment, but that it did not change students'

behavior. Interestingly, teachers, administrators and SROs showed a significantly stronger belief in the effectiveness of the SRO program than did the students. The need for more diversified topics related to youth problems in SRO training was noted in another evaluation (Cawthon, 2002). In their national assessment of SROs, Finn and McDevitt note that “the vast majority of responding schools expressed considerable satisfaction with their programs.” (2005: 4). Still, “most programs fail to collect important process and outcome evaluation data,” and compared to smaller schools, those surveyed in large schools were much less likely to attribute changes in fear of crime and trust in police to SRO programs (Finn and McDevitt, 2005: 4; 17).

There is also a perception that numerous kinds of activities contribute to safe schools. For example, in one large school district it was concluded that SROs prevent crime through their presence, tips from students about impending problems, and informally mediating disputes among students (Finn and McDevitt, 2005: 24). Clearly the range of activities of the SRO has expanded over time, and the latest national survey found that many SROs are responsible for activities *for which they have very little training* (Finn and McDevitt, 2005: 4). Indeed, among 19 schools that the national survey evaluated in depth, few officers had any SRO training before they entered the job, and many learned by a “sink or swim” approach (Finn and McDevitt, 2005: 44).

Summary of SRO Programs

The SRO programs are well established in the United States and have been adopted in other countries. They enjoy a great deal of support among their constituents, and have the flexibility to adapt to the varying needs of the communities they serve. The primary goal of SRO programs is to keep schools safe. A secondary goal emphasizes improving relationships between law enforcement and young people. While many programs focus on traditional law enforcement, SRO programs are part of a community policing approach which is pro-active and preventive. The teaching and counseling components of the tripartite model are associated with prevention. Teaching often takes the form of learning respect for the law and understanding the consequences of breaking it.

While perceptions of the effectiveness of SRO programs is highly positive, there is very little evidence that SROs improve school safety or improve relationships between the police and juveniles. The SRO model by itself is not based on a well developed model of prevention theory or research (Shaw, 2004: 10). While the tripartite model contributes to community responsiveness, it can also contribute to confusion and conflict particularly among administrators, teachers, and SROs with respect to what their role should actually be and how this role fits into the school culture and the overall objective of building safe schools. Reconciling the role of law enforcement with the need to build trust between police and young people also poses a challenge.

While the SRO model is very popular, particularly in the United States, its popularity is not matched with evaluation data on process or outcome measures. Furthermore, while the program has a framework (law enforcement, teaching, and counseling), it does not enjoy a well articulated theoretical framework that links its practices to safer schools.

Restorative Models in the School Setting: The Theoretical Perspective

Those who have linked restorative justice with school safety underscore the importance of grounding restorative practice in theory that supports safe communities.

Morrison (2005:29) notes that two theories, procedural justice and reintegrative shaming, are relevant to the analysis of restorative justice in schools.

Based on the concept of procedural justice Tyler (1990) explains why people comply with the law. While deterrence theory works in some situations, punishment and fear of punishment are less effective in bringing about compliance than “relational criteria” that give people feedback about the quality of their relationships with authorities and organizations. These criteria include evaluations of whether or not the individual is treated with respect, perceptions of the trustworthiness of authorities, perceptions of the neutrality of the decision-making process, and opportunities for the individual to participate in the outcome. Empirical research supports the relationship between perceptions of fairness and compliance in keeping mediation agreements and relationships with the police among others (Tyler, 1990).

Braithwaite's (1989) theory of reintegrative shaming also provides theoretical support for the restorative justice approach. Braithwaite argues that when one's misbehavior is held to account by people that matter, the offender is more likely to "take on" responsibility for his or her actions and to experience true remorse (and shame). Taken together with the community's responsibility for holding the offender to account, healing the harm done, distinguishing the act from the actor, and welcoming the accountable offender back into the community, this process provides an alternative model to formal regulation (Braithwaite, 2002). Braithwaite's theory is grounded in both criminology theories and empirical findings (Braithwaite, 1989). A National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health in 127 schools found that school environments that promote a sense of community are less violent provides support for approaches that have strong relational and community oriented components (McNeely, Nonnemaker, and Blum, 2002).

Wachtel and McCold's (2001) social discipline window (Figure 1) illustrates reintegrative shaming in a more concrete fashion. The restorative approach in this context is high on control *and* support. Support for the offender is necessary for reintegration to occur. The punitive model, widespread in Western culture, is high on control but low on support contributing to problems associated with labeling, alienation, and future misbehavior (Braithwaite, 1999). The advantage of the restorative process is that it separates the act--which is the target of social disapproval—from the individual who committed the offending behavior. Thus, the boundary is still in place in terms of recognizing the injustice of an act and holding the individual accountable for the act (Marshall, Shaw, and Freeman, 2002). An example of restorative language in a case of arson might be,

"You engaged in an action that risked the lives of your teachers and classmates. Your classmates parents are now afraid to send them to school. Furthermore, we had to spend \$50,000 to repair the damage, money that could go to sports programs or other extracurricular activities. I am surprised that you did something like this."

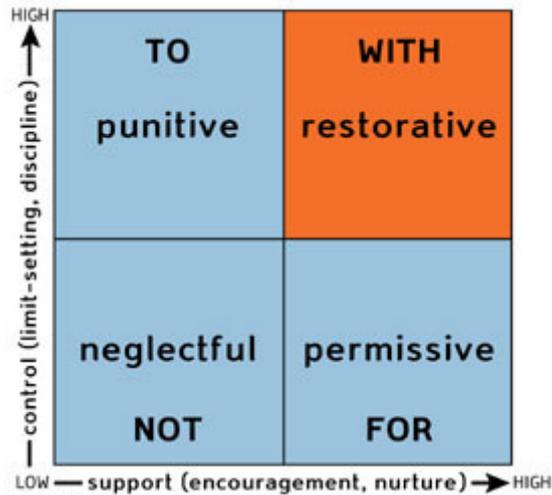


Figure 1. Social Discipline Window

Source: Wachtel and McCold (2001)

The therapeutic functions of talking and storytelling explained by Nathanson (1992) through affect theory and Pranis (2005) through circle processes, help understand the potential of restorative justice. Expressing negative emotions in structured restorative processes provides an opportunity for transforming these emotions to positive ones, reducing alienation, and promoting healing (McDonald and Moore, 2001:130). Pranis (2005: 9, 71-73) notes the positive function of circles for community building, particularly in schools, as well as the ability of the circle to safely address and process negative emotions.

Finally, restorative approaches fit well with international trends to promote school safety. A report of the International Centre from the Prevention of Crime identifies the following directions:

- Framing the issues less as school violence and more as school safety;
- Linking school safety to the needs of victims and victimizers and to healthy behaviors;
- A change in emphasis from a reactive and punitive focus on perpetrators of school violence to proactive approaches;
- A shift from physical situation prevention of school inclusion to comprehensive approaches using a range of policies and programs;

- These include not only programs geared to individual problem students, but to the school population as a whole to teacher needs, family, and community links, they see the school as part of its community;
- The involvement of young people themselves in the assessment of problems and project design (Shaw, 2001: 19).

Restorative Justice in the School Setting: Practice

The introduction of restorative justice in schools has occurred in a number of Western nations. There is some concern over the appropriateness of the word “justice” in school settings. As a result, some practitioners prefer the term “restorative discipline.” (Amstutz, L. and Mullet, J., 2005; Claassen, 1993). One of the conditions that exist in school settings is the lack of a clearly identifiable victim. Instead, more common is the existence of two or more parties in conflict who have perpetuated harm on one another over time (Edgar, et al. 2002; McDonald and Moore, 2001: 139). Furthermore, some of the incidences that restorative justice addresses in schools, such as bullying, do not fit the definition of a crime. Thus restorative philosophy addresses these kinds of events. The philosophy in this context remains the same, however, with its intent to address, heal, and prevent further harm.

Some restorative justice initiatives do not include law enforcement agencies. Others directly involve the police, although when police are involved, their participation more closely fits the comprehensive school liaison program model. Evaluations of restorative justice programs in schools are similar to those that have been conducted on SRO programs in that they often rely on perceptions of safety rather than being tied to objective measures of safety and security. Given the theoretical bases of restorative justice, measures of perceptions that are grounded in how the restorative process is designed to work—for example the linkages between perceptions of fairness, community support, and pro social behavior—are relevant from an evaluation standpoint.

The National Restorative Justice in Schools Program in England has recently been evaluated to determine the impact of restorative justice conferences and other restorative approaches in 20 secondary and six primary schools. What distinguishes conferences from mediations is that other parties are invited to

attend. Their role is to give voice to the aggrieved, make sure that the full consequences of the event are made clear to the perpetrator, and provide support to both parties. Ninety-two percent of conferences resulted in successful agreements among parties, only 4% of agreements were broken, 89% of pupils who participated in conferences were satisfied with the outcome and 93% that the process was fair and that justice had been done (YJB, 2004: 31-31). The National Restorative Justice in Schools Program includes law enforcement as partners, but only 8% of the conferences evaluated were conducted by police facilitators. One police officer/restorative justice facilitator who was interviewed noted, "Amazingly, kids tell the truth. The process allows them to be respected. People take their turns, they have their say...they feel listened to. They aren't talked down to...they can say what they feel." (YJB, 2004: 36).

Whole-school findings were less dramatic. Baseline and follow-up pupil surveys were conducted in program and non program schools targeting the problem of bullying. Program school students showed greater increases in the perception that the schools were doing a better job in preventing bullying, but differences with non program schools in terms of attitudes and level of victimization were not statistically significant (YJB, 2004: 37). While bullying actually increased in some program schools, it increased at a much lower rate than in non program schools. Furthermore, there were statistically significant reductions in both bullying and verbal threats in the Lambeth schools where restorative justice had been more successfully implemented (YJB, 2004:40). There was not a consistent pattern for the implementation of restorative justice and school expulsions, although the data on expulsions suggested the merits of categorizing restorative programs into those that have been more fully implemented and those that have been poorly implemented (YJB, 2004: 46).

The use of restorative community conferences was first introduced into schools in Queensland, Australia, in 1994 and two evaluations were published in 1996 and 1998 involving 119 schools. The first study showed highly positive outcomes for satisfaction of participants, recidivism, compliance with agreements, perceptions of safety by victims, perceptions of closer relationships with conferencing participants, school administrator beliefs that conferencing reinforced school values, and perceptions of participating family members of the process and the

school (Department of Education, 1996 as reported in Cameron and Thorsborne, 2001). However, the 1998 study indicated that while conferencing was a very effective strategy, a significant number of cases were not being referred to conference. This was primarily due to decision makers' perceptions about offender "attitudes" (Department of Education, 1998 as reported in Cameron and Thorsborne, 2001). Cameron and Thorsborne analyzed these seemingly contradictory findings, noting that "...while schools generally become more positive towards a restorative approach, they still favor a traditional approach for students with a 'bad attitude'" (Cameron and Thorsborne, 2001: 183). Thus a major obstacle to change is that the control paradigm is deeply embedded in school policy in many cultures.

Addressing the same issue on implementation in Australia, Morrison (2001), notes that while teachers agreed that bullying behavior could be effectively addressed through restorative practices, reported bullying as well as suspensions were increasing. After surveying teachers, Morrison (2001:206-7) concluded that while teachers supported restorative practices and found them to be compatible with their own views on education and behavioral change, they perceived parents as favoring more punitive approaches. Follow-up interviews with a sample of parents showed this not to be the case. Another evaluation involving juvenile offenders in non school settings found that, parents whose children participated in restorative conferences had higher levels of satisfaction and perception of fairness than the parents of children in a control group who used the juvenile court system (McCold and Wachtel, 1998: 72) The findings suggest that while the restorative philosophy is very compatible with educational theory and with teachers and parents themselves, the traditional control paradigm is strongly embedded in belief systems in Western nations.

The Safer Saner Schools program has introduced pilot programs in 30-40 schools mostly in Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, and Michigan, as well as Canada, Hungary, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, South Africa, and Australia. Selected schools in other states such as Indiana, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Florida, and Colorado have also introduced restorative practices.

Preliminary data from Palisades High School in southeastern Pennsylvania showed decreases in disciplinary referrals to the student office, administrative

detentions, detentions assigned by teachers, incidents of disruptive behavior, and out-of-school suspensions: (Mirsky, 2003: 2). The program was subsequently introduced in Palisades Middle School where decreases in disciplinary referrals as well as incidents in fighting were realized (Mirsky, 2003:4). Springfield township High School in the suburbs of Philadelphia also introduced the Safer Safer Schools Program and found substantial decreases in incidents of inappropriate behavior, disrespect to teachers, and classroom disruption (Mirsky, 2003: 6). However, while these initial data are encouraging, they do not provide for sufficient rigorous design and statistical treatment to conclude that there is a causal relationship between the program and school outcomes.

One of the most rigorous research designs to date on the implementation of restorative justice was completed for a treatment program for adjudicated delinquents in the CFS Buxmont schools in southeastern Pennsylvania. Although the program was not implemented in a traditional school setting, the findings are noteworthy because they involve school aged youth and the program was evaluated using a research design with statistical controls. Findings showed significant improvements in attitude and behavioral measures of the delinquents and a reduction in offending after completing the program (McCold, 2002). A subsequent study with a new cohort as well as an extended evaluation period for the original cohort showed that prolonged exposure to a restorative setting reduced the recidivism rates of misbehaving and at risk youth (McCold, 2004).

Summary of Restorative Justice in Schools

The restorative justice model provides a comprehensive, holistic, and well integrated model for managing conflict and reducing crime and misbehavior. The restorative approach is supported by empirically tested theories based in psychology, sociology, and criminology. Furthermore, the approach is compatible with behavioral theories in the education field.

As is the case with SRO programs, few school-based restorative programs have been tested using a rigorous evaluation design. Findings show a high degree of participant satisfaction with the restorative method and are based on those who have actually participated in restorative processes. Some research points to successes with respect to behavior change and repeat offending. As is the case

with SRO model, restorative justice programs have faced implementation problems. While participants do not see apparent conflicts between the restorative model and school culture, at a deeper level, authority based punishment driven approaches are often viewed as the safe “fall-back” position.

Law Enforcement Involvement with Restorative Justice in Non-School and School Settings

Police involvement with restorative practices originated in a non-school setting in the New South Wales city of Wagga Wagga in 1991 (Daley and Hayes, 2001). Police introduced restorative conferencing to the administrative procedure of cautioning juveniles. Replacing a stern warning or lecture from the police officer in charge, restorative cautioning and restorative conferences were held in the local police department, facilitated by an officer in the community policing unit, and designed to both shame and reintegrate (support) the offending juvenile with the assistance of family or community members.

While there are a number of police restorative led conferencing programs used throughout the world, the Wagga Wagga model developed in New South Wales, Australia has had the most influence (Young, 2001: 195). This model uses a script to facilitate best practice. Three programs embracing this model have been subject to evaluation—one in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, another in Canberra, Australia, and a third involving the Thames Valley Police in three counties in England. All three programs found high levels of satisfaction and perception of fairness on the part of participants. The Canberra reintegrative shaming experiments found that young offenders who attended police led conferences were less likely to state they would reoffend than those who went through traditional court proceedings. Interestingly, for young offenders, the average court case took 13 minutes, while the average conference took 71 minutes (Sherman and Strang, 1997).

A key concern has been whether there is a conflict between police culture which could lead to dominance and control on the part of the police facilitator, and the restorative philosophy which emphasizes empowering the parties to a conflict as well as giving victims and offenders an opportunity to express their views and reach mutually agreeable settlements (Young, 2001: 205). The possibility that

police will take a punitive and less than impartial role with respect to the offender has also been voiced. Further concern has been expressed about issues of fairness should an incidence of police misbehavior come to light during a conference. Focusing on the general need for accountability in restorative justice, Roche (2003: 137) argues that conferences should not be led by police officers nor should they be convened in police stations less the appearance of independence be compromised. On the other hand, O'Connell (2000) who has conducted training for police officers in both school and non school settings, cites a number of advantages of using police officers as conference facilitators, including skills in managing difficult situations, ability to maintain a clear conference focus, and a sense of formality.

Young (2001) has been involved in a review of Thames Valley Police participation in restorative practices and has compared his findings with those in Canberra and Bethlehem. The Canberra study was not designed to focus on police behavior, although observations of conferences did not raise any red flags about the appropriateness of law enforcement performance in the role of facilitator (Sherman and Strang, 1997 as reported in Young, 2001: 202). In the Bethlehem study, there were observed incidences of police lecturing and domination, but these problems were reduced substantially after the officer facilitators received feedback about their behavior in light of the restorative philosophy (McCold and Wachtel, 1998: 37). Interestingly, the evaluation of the Bethlehem restorative policing experiment found that officers who knew about conferencing or participated in conferencing showed significant increases in their perception of community cooperation and a significant decrease in the crime control view of policing (McCold and Wachtel, 1998: 56).

Young's (2001) study focused more specifically on police practices and found more subtle indicators of sources of police dominance such as bringing the case file to the conference and referring to it during conference proceedings, and asking questions that seemed more investigative than facilitative. When the number of words contributed to the conference proceedings was counted, there were cases where police domination was evident, although there was a great deal of variation by case, and in the case that was the most one-sided, the "offending" professional was a social worker (Young, 2001: 206-213).

In contrast with Roche (2003), Young concludes that the popularity of police led restorative practices, the perception of participants that police led practices contribute to legitimacy, and the reported fairness on the part of conference participants needs to be weighed against problems that could arise from aspects of police culture that contribute to authoritarian control (2001: 222-3). These potential problems can be checked through training, evaluation, and requiring a sufficient number of non professional participants to be present at conferences.

Restorative justice programs in schools that involve police as partners in what Shaw describes as a comprehensive police liaison program were included in the “National Evaluation of the Restorative Justice in Schools Programme (YJB, 2004). Graham Robb, a former head-teacher of Drayton School in Oxfordshire, England, worked in partnership with the Thames Valley Police, Youth Justice Board teams and a restorative justice trainer/consultant between 1999 and 2004 to improve the quality of relationships in a school that had received the designation of “Special Measures’ which meant it was lacking in leadership, achieving, teaching, and learning (Robb, 2005 102). While Robb observes that there were implementation failures, there were also stunning success stories for individual pupils and staff. He notes that

As head of a school in challenging circumstances, it would have been easy to adopt a punitive policy towards children displaying challenging behaviour. This would have led to exclusions from school, further corrosion of relationships between the school and the community, and an increased chance of excluded young people engaging in crime and anti-social behaviour (Robb, 2005: 103).

The Annual Youth Crime Survey conducted in Great Britain showed that students expelled from school are more than twice as likely to commit offenses than those who remain in school (MORI, 2004). Support for this concept was expressed by two police officers who were part of the restorative justice school programming reviewed by the Youth Justice Board.

One police officer noted,

Keeping kids in school is a major protective factor. When they are excluded they are more likely to cause trouble in the community and they end up in the criminal justice system. Restorative justice is a key approach to achieve this (YJB, 2004: 48).

Another officer commented,

Restorative justice keeps kids in schools and lets you continually challenge their behavior. It also challenges parents to work with the school for the benefit of their child. Exclusion just makes things look less visible, as if the problem's gone away until such time that a crime has been reported (YJB, 2004: 48).

At Draydon, police participated in training and development work involving a variety of restorative approaches ranging from informal inquiry and problem solving through the full conference. Robb (2005: 103) emphasized the importance of placing police officers in schools *and* deploying restorative justice as the primary strategy to prevent crime. He concurred with the Youth Justice Board evaluation that police should be among a range of conference facilitators and are especially helpful in serious cases (Robb, 2005: 108). Additional feedback from the Youth Justice Board report was provided by a head teacher and a police officer:

There is no substitute for having a police officer running the conference. It sends a clear message that if the young person doesn't take the opportunities on offer to change, they will be seeing a lot more of the police, maybe in a different role (YJB, 2004:54)

(Head teacher, secondary school)

While this particular head teacher took more of a deterrent than a restorative approach, a reaction from a police officer was much more restorative in tone. I think it gives us a great opportunity for young people to get to work with us so they can get to see us as human beings—as people—not just the law. I think it's building relationships between the police and young people, breaking down barriers, preconceptions... (YJB, 2004:54).

(Police Officer)

Sir Charles Pollard, Chief Constable of the Thames Valley Police in England, has been a leader in introducing restorative interventions for young people. Pollard explains the usefulness of the restorative approach from a police practice perspective:

One of the main options for the police has always been strict law enforcement. For officers faced with minor disorder and nuisance, the only viable alternative was to exercise their discretion and use negotiation and persuasion to solve the problem. This highlights a curious paradox: these informal skills are used much more often and usually with greater impact than law enforcement, yet police

training has always been about how to access and use the mechanics of the formal criminal justice system (Pollard, 2001:165-6).

The more mundane nature of school conflict was empirically verified in a project supported by the National Institute of Justice in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg County School District (Kenney and Watson, 1999). The Charlotte School Safety Program used a problem solving approach to school safety incorporating a student-teacher-police partnership. In a series of problem solving exercises attend by representatives of all three groups in the partnership, the group concluded that while gangs, drugs, and guns in school receive the most attention, most conflicts identified during the project were part of everyday school interactions including long lines in the lunchroom that led to campus disorder as a result of service delivery problems (Kenney and Watson, 1999:10). These findings were supported by Charlotte Police Department records which reported that of a total of 1409 events in the year prior to the implementation of the project, most were for order maintenance problems which “contribute to a sense of an unsafe environment.” (Kenney and Watson, 1999:2).

In addition, many youth problems stem from interpersonal conflict whether they are with family, friends, teachers, administrator and others (Karp and Breslin, 2001). When these conflicts occur, it is often not clear which party or parties are at fault. Thus the retributive model that assigns guilt and deals out punishment may be less appropriate than a restorative approach that uses dialogue to explore the nature of the problem and works toward its solution. A survey of SROs in middle and high schools in the Okaloosa County, Florida, School District indicated that SROs favor punitive approaches, they are receptive to conflict resolution and restorative principles. However, without training and an organizing framework, it is difficult to bring these ideas to fruition (Owen, 2003).

In addition to providing new approaches to working with juveniles, Pollard notes that the restorative approach is important to assisting the police in moving more toward a problem-oriented, community style of policing (2001: 167). While the community policing approach has been encouraged at the national, state, and local levels, police may have difficulty defining what constitutes their respective communities and effectively involving community members with their work.

Putting It All Together: Problems and Opportunities

Strengths and weaknesses of SRO programs. This paper examines the possibility of more fully integrating the restorative justice philosophy into the school resource officer model. To assess the possible pitfalls and potential for doing so, the SRO model has been examined from the perspective of its mission and operating framework as well as assessments of its application. The philosophy of restorative justice and literature on its application to schools has been reviewed as well. Finally, relevant literature on police involvement in restorative practices has been discussed.

A major challenge is posed by differences in philosophies underlying the two models. The training of SROs is rooted in a retributive philosophy. Police officers are embodiments of the law and are viewed as authority figures. Those who practice restorative justice cast themselves in non-professional roles as facilitators of a process. The retributive model on which the entire criminal justice system is based focuses on law-breaking, assignment of guilt, and punishment. The restorative model focuses on harm that results from misbehavior and crime, repairing that harm, and making plans for the future. However, there are more bridges between the SRO model and the restorative model than might be suggested by their different approaches to offending and misbehavior.

First, while grounded in a law enforcement, the SRO model fits squarely in the tradition of community policing. Community policing focuses on building relationships between community and law enforcement with the recognition that these relationships have the potential to contribute to safer communities. Effective community policing requires trust, participation, respect, and empowerment. The SRO mission statement reflects the community policing approach through its partnership status with relevant stakeholders including teachers, students, and the community. The question then becomes whether the SRO triad of law enforcement, education, and counseling is the best design for a community policing approach.

It has been documented that the SRO model is extremely popular in the school community. The triad approach is flexible and allows officers to adapt to the needs of a particular school environment. One the other hand, while popular, like

the DARE program, there is no evidence that the SRO program works nor is the SRO framework a product of a single theoretical approach that links its activities to crime prevention and safety (Brown and Kreft, 1998). Police presence in the schools to prevent crime is closely associated with the traditional law enforcement function, while practices that bring the student in closer contact with the SRO such as teaching and counseling, are more closely aligned with community policing.

Evaluations of SRO programs suggest that the SRO model can contribute to role confusion and role conflict. Expectations of SROs by teachers and administrators can be very different than those of the SROs. Furthermore, over time the SROs have been given greater and more varied responsibilities in the schools while commensurate training has lagged behind. Thus while there is strong support for the SRO model, there is not a solid integrated theory behind it that can guide the direction of the SRO or show the SRO how what he or she is doing can be improved upon.

Integrating a restorative component. The literature review suggests a number of possibilities for strengthening SRO programs through the restorative approach. These include methods for better realizing the community policing philosophy, providing a more coherent philosophy for meeting SRO objectives, role clarification, training, and moving SRO programs closer to approaches that fit with international trends.

There is a gap between theory and practice that often occurs in community policing (McCold, 1998:13). Evaluations of SRO programs show the need for involving stakeholders including administrators, teachers and students with their work. Indeed, programs that do not do this are less likely to be successful. The restorative philosophy requires community involvement and provides models for bringing stakeholders together. For example, the YJB study found that restorative practices worked well to provide a needed bridge between various professionals working with youth (2004:67).

Furthermore, a strength of restorative justice is that it provides some practical working concepts of community. It is often difficult to define community or bring about community participation, when one defines community solely in terms of

place. Restorative justice practitioners have suggested defining community from the perspective of the “event” or as a “community of care”, in other words, those who have been affected by the event or care about people affected by the event (McCold and Wachtel, 1997). Presently the SRO approaches community policing through trust building. Students who positively interact with SROs are more likely to trust them and hopefully feel more comfortable reporting crimes. While this is a good strategy, the restorative approach gives SROs a framework and additional tools to broaden community involvement in problem solving and developing relationships that build trust. Figure 2 (see below) depicts relationships between community policing, the SRO model, and restorative justice.

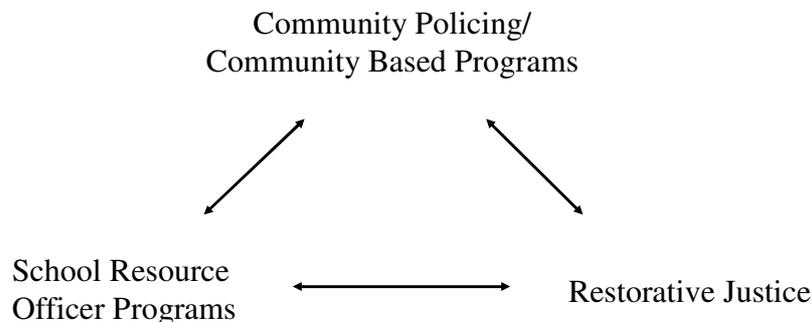


Figure 2:
Interrelationships between Community Based Programs, School Resource
Officer Programs, and Restorative Justice

Second, restorative justice, provides a coherent philosophy for school safety which is not incompatible with the retributive approach. Retribution seeks accountability and vindication through punishment. Restorative justice seeks accountability and vindication by addressing the victims’ harms and needs, encouraging the offender to take responsibility, repairing the harm, and supporting parties to the conflict in making plans for a more positive future (Zehr, 2002: 59). Both theory and empirical studies point to the effectiveness of using high levels of control and support in response to misbehavior and crime. Those police officers who have been involved with restorative justice understand the

process, evaluate it positively, and are less likely to focus on control to the exclusion of support.

The restorative approach can reduce role conflict because it provides mechanisms for realizing social control as well as building trust and supportive relationships. Qualitative research suggests that when restorative processes are implemented correctly, the presence of the law enforcement officer adds legitimacy to them. Provided that the officer understands the restorative approach, he or she can provide useful information to both parties and can serve as a community member speaking to the consequences of the misbehavior. In this role, the officer is not an “outside authority” but rather a member of the community itself, holding those responsible for misbehavior accountable but also providing support.

Furthermore, when cooperation cannot be obtained from the offending student, restorative justice practice acknowledges that it may be necessary to fall back on traditional authority. (Claassen, 2002).

Fourth, evaluation of SRO programs suggests that officers are being asked to take on more diverse functions, many for which they feel they have little or no training. Figure 3 shows restorative practices on a range from informal to formal. These practices can be linked to activities encompassed in the SRO triad particularly with respect to counseling. For example, affective statements, affective questions, and affective small impromptu conferences can enhance the counseling role. Restorative justice trainings and certification are available which would give the police officer effective tools for dealing with negative emotions that do not violate professional ethics. Training in affective statements and questions are also helpful in moving the officer away from the role of aggressive interrogator which does not contribute to building trust and conflicts with the school culture. Providing officers with training to lead formal conferences, particularly for serious, controversial cases, give the officer the tools to better bridge the law enforcement and community policing roles.

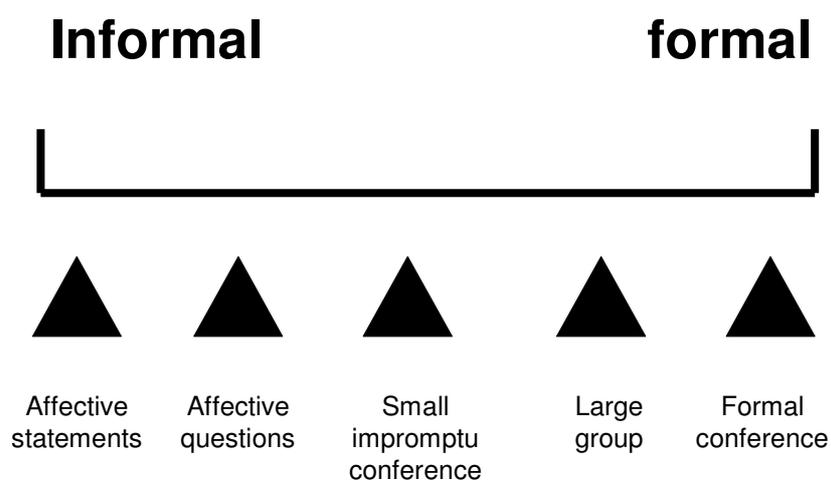


Figure 3: Restorative Practices Continuum
Source: Wachtel and McCold (2001)

Finally, NASRO does an excellent job providing trainings that reflect popular concerns such as internet crime, drug use, gang membership, bullying, and the like. However, more comprehensive approaches are evidenced in trends in school safety. These include responding to the needs of victims and victimizers, using proactive rather than reactive approaches, and using inclusive processes that involve student, teachers, administrators, parents, and other members of the community. The literature review speaks to the strength of restorative justice both in philosophy and practice in responding to these trends.

Summary and Conclusions

School resource officer programs and restorative justice share the common goal of creating safer schools. Restorative approaches are not a panacea for creating safer schools nor are they easy to implement on a whole school basis. However, a more modest objective, that of more effectively introducing the restorative philosophy to SROs through teaching, training, and pilot projects is merited given this review.

School resource officer programs are highly decentralized and the SRO model provides for responding to the needs of their respective schools. However, research suggests that what SROs are doing could be improved upon, particularly

with respect to expanding their tool kit in a complex, primarily non criminal environment. The restorative justice community could do more in terms of establishing links with the SRO national organization, building bridges through education partnerships between NASRO and numerous restorative justice training centers. Administrative heads of law enforcement agencies with SRO programs may wish to directly participate in restorative justice training/education partnerships as well. Finally, funding agencies could be encouraged to provide support for the development of these relationships, creating pilot projects, and providing for their evaluation in terms of impact on building trust, establishing community connections, promoting community participation, and producing safer school environments.

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