

Discussion following Brenda Morrison's Paper

The discussion focused on meanings of key terms in the field: 'restorative', 'transformative', 'reparative', etc and how these might relate to one another. *Questioners included James MacAllistair, Julia Fielder, Belinda Hopkins, Helen Holman, Hilary Cremin, Peter Smith.*

Q. Which of the three principles (encounter, reparation, transformation) is violated by what the teacher did?

(Q refers to story from BM about an announcement over a school PA system in North America).

BM. These three principles are the necessary characteristics of RA. The underlying values of RJ, ie the 'naming and shaming' aspect of announcements across a school intercom system is counter to the values of RJ.

Q. Can you have simultaneous 'restoration' and 'transformation'? Are they counter-productive? Which of the two is more important?

BM. Both. 'Transformation' relates to how conflict/problems are understood within an institution; the relations between people in an institution. The term restoration is widely questioned as it infers taking it back to how it was before, as in the case of furniture restoration. We are hoping for something better than what was before. Some people use the term 'transformative justice'. The focus is on restoring social and emotional circle of care around a young person and it is not on the past. It is more about human dignity. We know that this is what makes us social creatures. The notion of transformation is a slippery slope. For me transformation means making things different by changing the social and emotional environment. Restoration can happen alongside transformation in the sense that RJ helps to repair the social and emotional fabric within institutions.

BH. RJ is based on the principle that if you get something wrong in school, you get the chance to put it right – and this is a paradigm shift for many schools. I use pulling on a rope in different directions in training (or a scarf in this instance) as a metaphor for the connection between two people fraying and breaking. The solution is to repair the rope (scarf) but it is then transformed and won't be the same again.

BM. Yes, but with criminal conferences, rebuilding a relationship is not an aim because there may not be an existing relationship. (She gave an example of a case where a man had been murdered by a young person). The partner of the murdered man wanted to meet his murderer. The family of the man

could not understand. She did meet with the murderer in a face-to-face encounter but the woman eventually moved away from her community because she needed to do this to restore her life. This example highlights the complexity of the issues that are raised and the need to ensure that this complexity is recognised. This move could be seen as transformative. Following an RJ encounter people may stay in their community, sometimes they cannot.

HC. Suggested that the term 'reparative' represents a minimal concept whilst 'transformative' can be seen as maximal. The past is gone and therefore the focus is on what can we grow now.

Q. Can RAs be used instrumentally for different ends? We have been using RA in school for a while but I am concerned that, if used instrumentally it takes on a life of its own. How do we ensure the outcomes and ensure that young people are subjects and not objects of the process? How do we ensure that we recognise the negative outcomes of any process?

BM. Good question. We learn a lot and are socialised within a classroom environment. If we send children out of the classroom for their behaviour what does that teach them? There is also the systems level. There may be protocols but what happens if it goes wrong? Sometimes you get very punitive outcomes coming out of the conferences e.g. Braithwaite. It is important that RA is seen as an approach not an intervention. The hidden curriculum can be evident in responses to misbehaviour.

Q. When an encounter goes wrong – how do we respond?

BM. Referred to Braithwaite and what we aim to get out of an encounter: respect maintains dignity and a need to consider emerging values as 'blessings' e.g. forgiveness, mercy, censure. We must ensure support for the person but censure for the behaviour.

Q. Who decides the behaviour is wrong? Who decides the censure?

HH. We need to keep up the training, the agenda and high visibility high within school to ensure it is sustained.