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Restorative Practices in One Pacific Northwest Middle School:
A Case Study of Multiple Stakeholders' Perspectives
and Experiences

by

Erin B. Shepherd

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education
in
Learning and Leading

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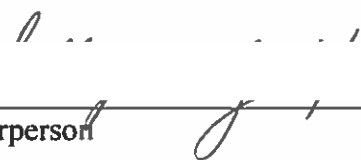

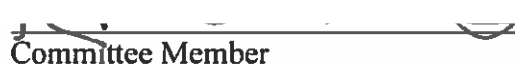
Restorative Practices in One Pacific Northwest Middle School: A Case Study of Multiple Stakeholders' Perspectives and Experiences

by

Erin Shepherd

This dissertation is completed as a partial requirement for the Doctor of Education (EdD) degree at the University of Portland in Portland, Oregon.




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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore restorative justice practices in one Pacific Northwest Middle School. The specific restorative practices used as well as staff and student experiences and perceptions explored. Data were collected from teacher surveys ($n=22$), staff interviews ($n=6$), student interviews ($n=3$), restorative circle observations (3 sessions) and a document analysis. Results included descriptions of seven distinct restorative practices as well as an in-depth account of a whole-class dialogue circle. Staff perspectives indicated the challenges, benefits, and recommendations for RJ implementation as well as key student viewpoints and experiences on the transformative power of restorative justice. Implications include the importance of the following: accountability within RJ, high levels of support from district leadership, developing staff commitment to RJ, and facilitating the culture shift needed to implement RJ successfully.

Keywords: restorative justice, case study, restorative practices, school discipline, middle school.

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degree, had I not been had the great fortune of being a student of these two great educators early in my school career.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Mark and Shannon Shepherd. You have been constant, unconditional forces of encouragement and strength for me. Throughout my life you have instilled in me that I really can do anything I set my mind to, while always allowing me to pursue my own passions. You have been my life coaches ever since I can remember. You have supported me and gotten me through many challenges in my life and I am forever grateful for your caring hearts. Ultimately, you are the ones who raised me to be hard working and to always to be striving towards new goals. I thank you and love you from the bottom of my heart.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This chapter provides context and background on the ever-changing landscape of school discipline in K-12, U.S. schools. The widely known, negative effects of exclusionary discipline in K-12 schools will be reported on, with further detail in chapter two. The emerging and promising empirical data regarding restorative justice (RJ), an alternative approach to school discipline, will be discussed. These findings will be housed within the context of both federal and Oregon state legislation, which have called for new approaches to addressing student conflict. A brief summary of the research gap, statement of the problem and purpose, as well as the research questions will be previewed and discussed in more detail in chapter two.

Background

Our approach to discipline in K-12 schools in the U.S. has been undergoing a slow, yet dramatic paradigm shift over the past decade. This movement is largely in response to the growing body of research indicating the negative impacts of exclusionary forms of discipline such as expulsion and suspension (Gonzalez, 2012; Rausch & Skiba, 2005; Gregory, Skiba & Noguera, 2010). Zero-Tolerance policies, originally used in anti-drug enforcement in the 1980s, began to permeate schools in the 1990s as a means to crack down on violent behaviors with pre-set consequences that were often harsh and highly punitive (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). Adding to this response was The Gun Free School Zones Act of 1990 and the Gun Free School Act of 1994 representing a federal response to increased presence of weapons on or near school grounds (Morrison and

Vaandering, 2012). The main objective behind these measures was to keep schools safe by applying strictly enforced levels of consequences based on a range of student misconduct. These two particular pieces of legislation created a ripple effect of school disciplinary measures that provided little support for the offender or victim; they were simply a means to get the transgressor out of the learning environment for the safety of others.

The Negative Effects of Exclusionary Discipline

Morrison and Vaandering (2012) stated, “Employing finely tuned, prescribed levels of punishment for a range of harmful incidents has resulted in little understanding of the root causes of the harmful behaviors, and their far-reaching effects” (p. 2). After an increase in school-shootings and the events of 9/11, zero-tolerance, punitive responses (office referrals, suspensions, expulsions, alternative schooling) to student conduct, were the norm and on the rise (Teasley, 2014). According to the Advancement Project (2010), from the years 2002 to 2006, suspension and expulsion rates increased nationally by 15%. Data from the Condition of Education report shows that U.S. students are being expelled and suspended at double the rate they were in 1974 (National Educational Statistics, 2009).

Today, the literature is saturated with studies indicating that Zero-Tolerance approaches not only are ineffective, but also have had detrimental effects on students and their social and academic development (Zero-Tolerance Task Force 2008; Arcia, 2006; Kang-Brown et al., 2007; Hemphill & Hargreaves, 2009; Lamont, 2013; Perry & Morris, 2005; Skiba and Peterson, 2000; et al. 2014). A retributive model of

student discipline, one based on punishments, has also been found to force a distance between the offender and the victim, and between them and the school community (Ryan & Ruddy, 2014). These findings suggest that when a student is expelled or suspended they lose trust in the school system that is ideally there to support them.

Punitive and exclusionary approaches to student misconduct have even further reaching negative effects at the cost of our children's educational opportunities. In fact, in an Australian study of the impacts of suspensions, researchers found there was no improvement in behavior and students had an increased likelihood of anti-social or violent behavior in the following 12 months after the suspension (Hemphill & Hargreaves, 2009). Students who are suspended were found to be significantly impacted from a loss of instructional time, felt 'lost' upon returning to class, had lower levels of trust in the adults at school, and became increasingly frustrated with their lower academic achievement (Brown, 2007). "Unfortunately, zero tolerance policies that prescribe automatic and/or harsh punishments undermine the ability of teachers and administrators to form trusting relationships with students, and ultimately, these policies transmit negative messages about fairness, equity, and justice" (The Advancement Project, year, p. 2).

The research regarding the negative effects on students who are suspended or expelled continues to weave a story that calls for new approaches to dealing with conflict in schools traditional, punitive approaches to school discipline result in higher absenteeism, increased drop-out and failure rates, and an increased potential for getting involved in high-risk behaviors such as drug and alcohol use and violence

(Gonzalez, 2012). Other negative impacts have been found as a result of exclusions including students feeling less connected with their school community, lowered self-esteem, and lower GPA's (American Psychologist 2008; Mann, 2013).

Federal and State Level School Discipline Changes

Federal Legislation. In 2014 the U.S. Department of Education published a set of guiding principles which recommended three areas to focus on to support schools in response to Zero-Tolerance policy failure: create positive climates and focus on prevention, develop clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations and consequences to address disruptive student behaviors and ensure fairness, equity, and continuous improvement. The document also stated that suspension should be used as a “last resort” and that keeping students in the learning environment should be the main priority within the context of discipline in schools. This federal document spurred districts around the nation to begin developing new discipline codes that encompassed strategies for keeping students in school amidst conflict resolution.

The Oregon Context. In the state of Oregon, particular legislation has created a need for school districts to revise their current approaches to student misconduct. House Bill 2192, passed in 2013, put an end to mandatory expulsion for students bringing dangerous weapons to school and requires school districts to adopt a graduated process of discipline when misconduct occurs. The action taken for discipline must take into consideration the student's age, development, and history (House Bill 2192, 2013).

In 2015, Oregon Senate Bill 553 created restrictions on the circumstances in which Kindergarten through fifth grade students could be expelled or suspended. The aim of the bill was to help reduce disproportionate numbers of black students being suspended in comparison with white students. Kindergarten through fifth grade students can still be expelled for intentional and serious harm to another student or school employee, or if the administrator feels that their behavior is a real threat to the school. The bill specifically states that schools are to, “Employ a range of strategies for prevention, intervention and discipline that take into account a student’s developmental capacities and that are proportionate to the degree and severity of the student’s misbehavior,” (Senate Bill 553, 2015, p.3). As a result of this legislation, school districts in Oregon have been working to put into place alternative forms of discipline to remain in accordance with these new laws. This study will explore one Oregon school’s experiences with alternative approaches to discipline.

Restorative Justice: An Alternative Approach to School Discipline

These concerning trends have had educational leaders seeking alternatives to exclusionary discipline practices to help mitigate their negative effects. The question at hand has become, how do we alter our current disciplinary measures to make a difference in reducing recidivism rates, supporting school attendance, and helping students feel like valued members of their school-community? Recidivism refers to the rate at which a person relapses, or falls back into a pattern of criminal behavior even after an intervention or consequence (National Institute of Justice, 2014). One alternative that has surfaced in the U.S. over the past decade is under a broad umbrella

term called Restorative Justice (hereafter referred to as RJ). Originating in the criminal justice field, RJ has been widely used in New Zealand, Australia, and Canada over the past twenty years as a promising alternative to punitive measures of discipline and has recently been gaining in popularity in U.S. schools (Morrison, 2002; Ryan & Ruddy, 2015; Wearmouth, McKinney & Glynn, 2009).

RJ has been defined in a multitude of ways as a philosophy or approach to conflict rather than a set of prescribed strategies or a curriculum to implement (Zehr, 2015). One of the main objectives of restorative approaches is to help students who struggle behaviorally to remain in the school environment with their peers and utilize structured dialogue to reflect on their actions. The process supports keeping students' dignity and educational opportunities intact, while working to solve a conflict with others involved. If punitive discipline creates distance between the individuals involved, RJ is seen "...to bridge the distance created during an incident and allow for healing to begin" (Ryan & Rudy, 2014). In order to better understand what restorative approaches to conflict in schools truly is, the following section offers some common definitions that will serve as a springboard for analyzing the current body of literature on restorative justice practices.

Defining Restorative Justice

Restorative Justice (RJ) was first introduced into U.S. schools in the late 1990s, as an alternative to traditional, punitive approaches to discipline. This philosophy is interpreted in a multitude of ways, yet focuses on inclusive dialogue circles to help repair harm done. RJ is an approach to wrongdoing that seeks to keep the dignity and individuality of all stakeholders at center of the process. The RJ

approach is inclusive and involves multiple perspectives to help solve problems (Zehr, 2015). The need for adopting restorative approaches to discipline in schools is becoming more urgent as a result from failed punitive measures and increasing federal and state mandates to keep suspensions and expulsions as a last resort. Identifying the root causes of behavior and seeking to repair the harm done is the heart of RJ.

Currently, there are numerous definitions for Restorative Justice in the literature as it has gained in popularity in U.S. schools over the past decade. The RJ philosophy has roots from across the globe including the Maori of New Zealand, First Nations of Canada, the and circle justice from Native American cultures, all of which will be explored further in Chapter Two. Many iterations of RJ exist as it is more thought of as an approach or philosophy, rather than a specific framework and has a rich historical context covering many continents (Zehr, 2015).

In order to better understand RJ, one must think critically about the differences between breaking a law and harm-done. Zehr, (1990) one of the leading researchers and authors in the field of RJ, states that crime is a violation of people and relationships, rather than simply a breaking of the law. Latimer, Dowden, and Muise (2001) describe RJ as the bringing together of an offender and victim and providing the opportunity to make amends. They argue that a restorative approach is the most appropriate for dealing with conflict and crime. The administrator at the Bronx Design and Construction Academy, a small public high-school in New York City that has implemented a restorative approach to discipline, describes RJ as helping students to be engaged in their own problem-solving and creates a culture in which it is an honor to be in the classroom (Davidson, 2014).

In a study with 72 juvenile offenders in areas of accountability, relationship repair, and closure, RJ saw statistically significantly higher scores when compared to the conventional youth court process (Calhoun and Pelach, 2010). A two-year study conducted in a middle school in San Antonio, Texas, demonstrated notable positive outcomes from decreased suspension rates and positive student self-reporting about how RJ was an effective means to putting an end to fighting (Armour, 2013). The findings from these two separate studies begin to suggest that RJ can be a powerful tool in supporting students reflection process after a conflict has occurred.

Zehr (2015) suggests that there are three main principles within a Restorative Justice model including: a focus on the harm done, demonstrating a responsibility for repair of the harm, and using respectful engagement and discussion as a vehicle for the restorative process. Although Zehr cautions the forming of rigid definitions of RJ, he offers the following:

Restorative justice is an approach to achieving justice that involves, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offense or harm to collectively identify and address harms, needs, and obligations in order to heal and put things as right as possible. (Zehr, 2015, p. 48)

Morrison and Vaandering (2012) describe RJ as a, "...distinct praxis for sustaining safe and just school communities, grounded in the premise that human beings are relational and thrive in contexts of social engagement over control" (p. 139). RJ relies on relational ecologies that seek to examine the problem from multiple perspectives and come to a shared conclusion for how to move forward,

whereas traditional approaches determine what code of law was broken to determine appropriate consequences (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). Shifting to considering all perspectives involved leads to the need for understanding RJ from a theoretical standpoint.

Research Gap

The body of literature currently suggests that RJ is a promising effective alternative to more retributive responses to student misconduct, yet still remains in its infancy. The gap in the literature that has yet to be thoroughly addressed lies in the area of deeply understanding the experiences and perspectives of all of the individuals that take part in restorative practices. Each voice and personal background plays an important role in a restorative dialogue. This study seeks to delve into the individual experience within the context of a school committed to restorative approaches to student conflict.

The current landscape of RJ empirical research demonstrates a focus on the effect of restorative approaches on suspension rates, academic achievement, and even student voice. The intersection of established relationships working to repair broken ones is the crux of restorative practices, which can be studied through the eyes of each participant. This study seeks to deeply explore multiple stakeholders' perspectives and experiences on the RJ process in one school community. RJ approaches will likely not be successful if the individuals involved decide not to contribute to the conversation or be open to other's viewpoints. RJ initiatives within schools may not have successful implementations if teachers are not fully engaged

with the idea. The deficiencies in the current RJ literature show a lack of in-depth exploration and description of the lived-experiences of all stakeholders within an RJ approach.

Purpose of Study

A deeper understanding of how RJ can be a viable option for conflict resolution and relationship repair has resulted from this study. This study is a unique contribution to the field of RJ research as it extensively explores, describes, and ultimately helps uncover the lived RJ experiences from a variety of individuals within the school community.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was three-fold. First, this study explored and described the specific types of restorative practices occurring in one Pacific Northwest Middle School. Second, the staff members' perceptions and experiences with RJ are deeply explored. Finally, the lived experiences and perceptions of students on participating in a RJ Youth Action Team are investigated. The study, carried out in one urban Pacific Northwest middle school, sought to better understand the individual impact of restorative practices. By exploring the range of stakeholders' perspectives in detail, this study adds to existing literature regarding the current reality and future possibilities of RJ in schools. This research seeks to better understand the individual perspectives of stakeholders within a school community that has been practicing RJ for approximately four years.

There is a clear need to continue to study RJ in its various forms across schools to help illuminate best practices and to evaluate the effectiveness of restorative dialogue. As more schools adopt RJ frameworks for addressing conflict, it is critical

to understand the experiences of various stakeholders in order to learn strategies for future success with the approach.

Research Questions

There are three main questions that this study addresses:

1. What are the specific restorative practices occurring at one urban, Pacific Northwest Middle School?
2. What are the perceptions, beliefs, and experiences of adults in the school community with restorative practices?
3. What are the perceptions, beliefs, and experiences of the YAT (youth action team) members in the school community with restorative practices?

Summary of Research Design

The research questions were investigated using a qualitative, case-study approach. First, the classroom teachers and specialists (ESL, music, PE) in one Pacific Northwest middle school were given a restorative practices survey to help obtain a broad sense of the current disciplinary approaches and participants' perspectives. The following staff members were then interviewed to gain a deeper understanding of RJ perspectives and experiences: two classroom teachers, RJ site coordinator, RJ multi-site coordinator, student management specialist, and vice principal. To explore student RJ perspectives, three members of the school's RJ Youth Action Team were interviewed. As a participant observer, I took part in three whole class RJ circles and observed an additional small group RJ circle. Finally, reifications of RJ, such as forms and documents were analyzed to support the triangulation of data.

Throughout the RJ circle dialogue observations data were collected in regards to the structure and setting, questions posed, and responses using an observation field notes template developed by the researcher. This data collection method served to understand how the dialogue protocol helped support open communication and addressed the harm that occurred. The five sources of data in this study include; interview transcripts, observational field notes, survey data and document analysis. Data collection and analysis methods are explained in Chapter 3.

Significance

The significance of this study is multi-faceted. As teachers and school leaders grapple with how to best approach discipline and opt for exclusionary methods such as suspension and expulsion, the negative impact on individual students continues to grow. The student is taken away from peers in their educational environment, often heightening their sense of disconnectedness with the school community. At the expense of the students involved, punitive approaches to discipline are often used by school leaders because of constraints on time and resources. In order for recidivism rates to decrease there must be a paradigm shift away from exclusionary practices to approaches that respect and amplify student voices and experiences.

There is a growing awareness in the U.S. that exclusionary approaches to discipline have historically had negative impacts on youth. As more and more schools seek out alternative, inclusive methods to help support struggling students there is a growing need to help educators and decision-makers gain a deep understanding of what restorative practices look like and how multiple stakeholders actually experience

them. This case study is significant in that it serves as a step inside one middle school that has been practicing RJ for multiple years, helping to illuminate the complexities of a holistic disciplinary approach and the valuable perspectives of the people who experience and facilitate it.

With dialogue at the heart of RJ, this philosophy has been successfully documented in the literature as a very promising practice, however, little research to date dives deeply into the experiences of each individual involved in the process. This study seeks to explore and learn from the process of restorative practices by delving into each stakeholder's experiences. The findings from this study will provide further support in helping to shape student conduct policy towards more restorative approaches at the school, district, and state levels. Additionally, the stakeholder's descriptions of the process will add to the growing base of literature regarding RJ, which is necessary for the development and understanding of sustainable disciplinary paradigm shifts to occur.

Summary of the Chapter

The way in which schools approach student misconduct today has been undergoing a dramatic shift. The failed zero tolerance policies of the 1990s have been gradually replaced by philosophies and programs supporting more restorative methods, although the transition has been and continues to be challenging. The retributive approaches of the past have become so ingrained in our ways of addressing school discipline, that radical shifts of philosophy are required to make changes. Retributive responses of the past to student misbehavior often mean that the,

“...community is built on fear rather than care” (Karp & Breslin, 2001, p. 253). This restorative shift for educators is being tackled in a multitude of ways in districts across the U.S., but more research is needed to uncover the effectiveness of the approach and how individuals view the process from their own lived experience.

This study seeks to explore and describe the specific RJ practices and multiple perspectives and experiences of multiple stakeholders in a restorative justice circle in a Pacific Northwest urban middle school to better understand the individual impact that restorative practices have. A case-study approach including teacher surveys, RJ stakeholder interviews and observational data seek to better understand the experiences of those participating in the dialogue process following a school disciplinary incident.

Chapter two, the literature review, deeply explores the theoretical foundations that frame this study, the historical implications of RJ in the U.S., as well as the current research landscape. Chapter three is a description of the study methodology connected to the research questions and theoretical framework. The following chapters will highlight restorative practices research to date and describe this current study to better understand RJ from multiple perspectives.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter will provide an in-depth review of the current literature in the field of restorative approaches to discipline (RJ). The historical roots of restorative justice from multiple areas around the world will shed light on how the approach came to be in U.S. schools will also be explored. Key empirical findings will provide an extensive look into the growing body of research regarding alternatives to exclusionary discipline in schools. The theoretical framework underpinning this study will be presented and described in detail.

Review of the Literature

The school disciplinary landscape in the U.S. has been slowly shifting over the past decade involving an increase in restorative practices in response to the ineffective zero-tolerance policies implemented in the 1990's (Gonzalez, 2012). The upcoming section will trace the roots of RJ in the U.S., followed by a review of the current research on effectiveness of RJ.

Historical Context: Restorative Practices of Indigenous Cultures

The current RJ practices in the U.S. in both the criminal justice system and our schools have evolved from processes of conflict resolution practiced by numerous indigenous communities around the world. Most notably discussed in the literature around the origins of RJ is that of First Nations communities of Canada and the Maori of New Zealand (Morrison and Vaandering, 2012; Zehr, 2015; Wearmouth, et al.,

2007). These practices have served as a basis for alternative approaches in criminal law in the U.S., beginning in the 1970's and leading into U.S. schools in the 1990's (Zehr, 2015).

The Maori. Indigenous people around the world have used circle dialogue processes to help solve conflict. The Maori of New Zealand have a long history of resolving conflicts through talking circles, called *hui whakatika*, which translates into, a meeting to make things right (Wearmouth, et al., 2007; Zehr, 2015). This culturally based system of solving conflict has deep roots within the Maori community. The practice consists of five distinct phases and is led by a kaumātua (elder) in the group. First, there is a Mihimihi (greeting) and Whakawhanaungatanga (introductions) followed by a Karakia, (prayer) a discussion of the purpose of the meeting, and time to share food. Next, a discussion of how the community is being affected and people's feelings around this begins followed by a practice called 'restorying' where the group comes to a new understanding of the situation. Then, a plan is discussed about what should happen next and who will be responsible for carrying out the upcoming steps to resolve the conflict. The meeting is concluded with Poroporoaki (farewell rituals), giving any group members another opportunity to share. A follow-up and review is typically scheduled for a future date. The four main tenets of traditional Maori hui whakatika are:

1. Reach a consensus through collaboration.
2. Reconcile by reaching an acceptable agreement that each person can agree to without isolating or punishing.

3. Examine the broader reason for the wrong-doing. Seeking to understand both sides.
4. Focus on restoring the harmony, rather than on the actual conflict.

In New Zealand in 1989 after much concern and debate that traditional Maori practices and values were not being upheld in schools, the legislation passed the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act. Part of this legislation gave families of school-age children the right to utilize family group conferencing as a way to solve conflicts that students are involved with at school (Wearmouth, et al., 2007). Classroom teachers were trained in RJ protocols based on Maori principles of restoring harmony to the community after harm is done. Maori proverbs are often used in the process of RJ:

By discussion you come to understanding, by understanding you shed light on the problem, by shedding light on the problem you come to wisdom to deal with the problem, and by dealing with the problem you make an everlasting peace (Wearmouth, et al. 2007, p. 200).

Wearmouth, McKinney, and Glynn argue that RJ can have a powerful healing effect on harm-done, although a school itself should dictate the process and the local community must have a voice (2007). Their qualitative research based on interviews with community members taking part in two dialogue circles also indicates how RJ can be a fluid process that adapts to changing needs of a school community. Their research focused on case studies of RJ used in New Zealand schools from the Maori culture. Preserving one's mana (an individual's autonomy,

self-esteem, integrity and standing within a group) is the essence of an RJ circle in the Maori culture (2007). Both cases involved teen-age boys in which their families took part in RJ circles to resolve conflicts in which they were involved. Interestingly, the circle discussions brought forth concerning information about how the boys felt that their classroom community was unsafe. There was a large degree of bullying and swearing happening daily. The administrator, in partnership with the school district's Restorative Practices Development Team (RPDT), implemented quick action in that particular classroom. They designed an 8-week program that focused on social skills and incorporated a *hui* every day. Social skills were taught in a context that was highly engaging for adolescent-age children including pop-culture, friendships and modern living. At the end of the program, the classroom observed a significant drop in put-downs and swearing based on student and teacher self-reporting (2007).

First Nations of Canada. Canada has had a long history of restorative practices both in aboriginal groups and in schools. There are approximately 617 different First Nations culture groups of Canada, which have been practicing community-based conflict resolution (Mirshky, 2004) throughout their histories. The Justice Department of Canada implemented the Aboriginal Justice Department beginning in 1996 in response to increasing incarceration rates of native community members.

The goals of this department are to decrease crime and incarceration rates in aboriginal communities, to help members assume a greater responsibility in their

own justice system, and include the values and traditions of native people in the process. First Nations, Inuit, and Metis people can apply for funding to support the development of their own localized approaches to dealing with crime. According to the most recent evaluation report of the program, there are multiple ways the communities have utilized the funds including community sentencing programs, diversion, and mediation.

Community sentencing programs allow for a group of people to work together along with the offender to decide on an appropriate “consequence.” Diversion programs, typically connected with drug and alcohol abuse involve offenders being placed in rehabilitations programs. Much like RJ, mediation programs allow for both victim and offender to come together in a facilitated discussion to help heal the harm done and move forward with new commitments and agreements in place.

The Mohawk Nation of Awkwesasne is a notable example of how government funding in Canada has supported restorative practices. Their territory spans the borders of the United States and Canada, the state of New York, and the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. Since this is a large area, there are numerous jurisdictions, which makes governance murky at best. They were in need of a system that could be consistent and supportive of such a large community. Circle sentencing is one practice that they use which is highly comparable to RJ practices observed in schools around the world.

The basic process of circle sentencing involves first paying respect to Mother Earth, followed by a hearing in which small group of community members listen to everyone's side of the story. Then, each person gets the opportunity to share how he or she thinks harmony and balance can be restored. An agreement is made and then everyone signs a document committing to making things right again. Facilitators report that circle sentencing allows for issues to come out that would not otherwise be resolved in the Canadian court system (Mirshky, 2004).

The Mnjikaning, another First Nations community, has developed their own restorative justice program and community-healing model, funded by the Aboriginal Justice Department. This approach is called *Biidaaban*, meaning a new day or a new beginning. Similar to RJ defined in chapter one, the Mnjikaning have a goal for helping offenders take responsibility for their actions and apologize publically. Many of these circles contain 20-25 people. Everyone involved has a chance to share how the situation or person has affected them personally. Then, the group works with the victim and offender to discuss what needs to be done to make amends and move forward. The person who was harmed has their voice heard throughout the process and gets the chance to ask for what they need to heal. Community members that are close to the individuals involved are asked to be present for support, similar to the Maori RJ practices.

Restorative Practices: Empirical Data from Around the World

Since RJ began to be utilized with youth in the criminal justice system before it was introduced in schools, it is important to look into research comparing traditional

court processes with restorative approaches. In a comparative study between the effectiveness of RJ versus conventional (youth court) processes of 72 juvenile offenders, researchers found multiple positive results for those involved with RJ (Calhoun & Pelach, 2010). Results from a pre- and post-test in the areas of accountability, repairing relationships, and closure, the participants of RJ saw statistically significantly higher scores than those taking part in the court system. One category titled, 'hopefulness for the future,' was measured as also being significantly higher in the post-test for RJ participants in comparison with the conventional process group. The results from this study point to positive outcomes of restorative approaches with the juvenile offender system, although the application to K-12 schools is a large leap that is in need of further study (2010).

A two-year quantitative study conducted in a middle school in San Antonio, Texas, saw notable positive outcomes from the implementation of a school-wide restorative discipline program (Armour, 2013). Teachers were provided training and time was scheduled weekly for restorative circles in sixth and seventh grades. RJ staff members at the school were available to fill-in for classroom teachers who needed to leave their rooms to conduct circle conferences. In the 2013-2014 school year, in-school suspensions for conduct violations dropped by 65% for sixth graders and 47% for seventh graders in comparison to baseline data from the 2011-2012 school year (Armour, 2013). Total out-of-school suspensions dropped by 57% for sixth graders and 47% for seventh graders. Students self-reported that RJ circles are effective ways to end fighting with each other and often requested the process on their own. Teachers self-reported a greater buy-in to the effectiveness of RJ as they gained more

experience with the process, although they expressed the need for further support for more challenging students.

The study also found that teachers and administrators would often alter the RJ process to help speed things up, which could reduce its long-term effectiveness (Armour, 2013). This study primarily focused on the number of suspensions, therefore a need to study the individuals involved in the RJ process could help further expose the reasons why it may be an effective method for conflict resolution.

The need for further study of the actual implementation of RJ in schools has also begun to reveal itself. In a case study in Ontario, Canada, a researcher wanted to describe RJ from a teacher and administrative point of view through interviews and observations. It was found that an administrator, supporting staff in implementing RJ in a K-8 school, self-reported being a large proponent of restorative practices, yet was observed announcing the need for strong teacher vigilance over the P.A. system as well as publically reporting to the school when the culprit had been caught (Vaandering, 2009). The administrator expressed that in certain serious disciplinary matters, there is a retributive response required rather than a restorative one (2009). Vaandering expressed in her analysis of this observation that even though restorative practices were supposed to be occurring at this particular school, traditional and punitive measures were still frequently seen. These results point to the fact that in order to implement RJ practices in an authentic manner, a complete paradigm shift must occur that is often very difficult for those involved because it challenges deeply held beliefs about discipline. This study helped to better understand those challenges

through in-depth interview questions aimed at exploring individuals' belief systems around conflict and consequences.

In another case study of three high schools implementing RJ in California, the research primarily focused on the processes for implementation of RJ through teacher, administrator, and counselor perspectives (Zulfa, 2015). Through interviews, the participants described how the first phase of the implementation focused on supporting staff in facilitating mediation procedures with students. The second phase involved the implementation of a classroom where students who misbehaved were sent to for a partial day, a whole day or multiple days to work with interventionists who guided them through reflective discussion, creating behavioral flow-charts, and restorative journaling. As in the study noted above, exclusionary practices were still occurring on an as-needed basis if an offense was serious enough. Students could be sent to off-site behavioral modification programs to deal with anger and substance abuse issues and were not reported as being suspended, even though they were not attending class at their regular school.

Zulfa also reported that students were sometimes offered the opportunity to transfer schools to avoid a potential stigma attached to being suspended or expelled. An additional component of the implementation process is that outside consultants were available at anytime to meet with staff and to help facilitate circle processes. Finally, a back-up support plan for discipline was a common theme in all three schools studied. Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) were utilized in conjunction with RJ, and administrators reported that RJ should not be viewed as a

program that will automatically fix all behavioral issues in a school and that it takes multiple approaches. The three themes that emerged from staff and student self-reported data on how RJ can be successful were: communication, community, and universal expectations. These emergent themes, although helpful in understanding RJ in broad systematic terms, still do not address the heart of RJ, which lies with the individual experience and relationship repair.

Schumacher (2012) studied the process and the meaning of restorative circles used by female youth living in a Midwestern metropolis. She transcribed the conversation from nine dialogue circles that were student-formed to look for emerging themes of student voice. Her findings add to emerging themes of effective restorative programs in U.S. schools. One successful component was the use of rituals performed before the official circle began. In this particular setting, the girls wrote down one word describing the value that they personally would bring to the circle. These words were placed in the center of the circle each time they met. Multiple participants reported that those words were of special importance during challenging and emotionally-charged discussions as a reminder to the girls of each other's worth and valuable contributions to the process. Schumacher (2012) asserted from her observations that restorative circles have the potential for creating safe and nurturing spaces that can help prevent adolescent girls from committing crimes. She based this assertion upon participants' reports that the circle helped "take a weight off their shoulders or chest," "released their stress" and "averted a big crisis or falling out" (p. 140). One impactful theme that Schumacher took away from her RJ research is that the girls repeatedly talked about how the power of the circle process was very much

from the feeling of not being judged. This study has very valuable implications for how a safe space can help foster honesty and openness for youth facing challenges.

Australian schools have adopted RJ practices and programs since the late 1990s in response to increased bullying rates (Morrison, 2002). A one-year, mixed-methods study of an RJ program implemented at a primary school titled the Responsible Citizenship Program involved multiple student perspectives. This study was focused on how bullying rates could be reduced through alternative programs. A program was developed from RJ principles of acknowledging everyone's feelings, repairing harm done, creating a caring community and taking responsibility. The classroom lessons emphasized healthy relationships, community building, conflict resolution, and shame management. Surveys and questionnaires were developed to measure 30 students' feelings of safety at school and their use of shame management strategies (maladaptive and adaptive). An example of maladaptive shame management is when a student who has hit someone is unwilling to admit wrongdoing and feelings of anger can develop. Adaptive shame is when a person takes responsibility for their actions and then is able to "discharge" their shame and move on in a healthy way.

Ranked on a 4-point scale, students' feelings of safety increased from 2.9 to 3.8 on pre- and post-survey results. Feelings of being rejected by others' wrong-doing decreased from 33% to 20%. Overall, there was a slight increase in the percentage of students using adaptive shame management skills from 83% to 87%. All participants surveyed, including students, administrators, and lesson facilitators, self-reported a

benefit to students who took part in the program. The results indicate that when restorative approaches to conflict are directly taught and practiced, students can begin to overcome social challenges and start to see themselves as capable of helping themselves. A missing component in this particular study is how student conflict is housed within a larger social context and the direct voices of the students in navigating shame need to be heard.

Denver Public Schools have implemented RJ in a course of three phases: exploratory, grant-funded piloting and district-adoption (Gonzalez, 2012). Cole Middle School, which was experiencing the district's highest rates of suspensions and arrests, was chosen for the exploratory program for the 2003-2004 year. Data were limited from the pilot, but the district felt that the program was successful enough to apply for a larger grant. For context, in the 2004-2005 school year at Skinner Middle School alone, there were 350 out-of-school suspensions, four expulsions and 72 tickets and arrests. Upon receiving the grant for the 2006-2007 school year, four more high-need middle schools (including Skinner) and their feeder high school began implementing victim-offender mediation and large group circles. In the first year, 213 students were referred to the RJ program. The included schools observed a 29% decrease (from 1,146 to 835) in out-of-school suspensions, and 26% fewer students were expelled across the four middle schools from the baseline year in 2005-2005. As the program grew, 812 students from the pilot schools were referred to the RJ program in the 2007-2008 school year and three more middle schools and one more high school began implementation. In the original four middle schools, overall expulsions decreased from 23 to six from the 2004-2005 school year to 2007-2008. Suspensions

decreased at Horace Mann Middle School from 218 to 77 and from 259 to 154 at Skinner Middle School.

Additional risk factors decreased as a result of RJ practices from North High School in Denver. In the 2009-2010 school year, a sample of 293 students referred to the RJ program were analyzed on attendance, tardiness and grades. Results showed a 50% decrease in failing grades for 30% of the targeted students. Daily attendance improved by 31% and by 64% for period absences for students that were involved in at least two RJ interventions. Timeliness (tardiness) was improved for 35% of the student sample. RJ approaches in the district were refined throughout the pilot phase and the district's Office of Prevention and Intervention Initiatives developed short- and long-term goals to help schools in implementation processes. In each of the pilot schools, a full-time RJ coordinator was employed. Specific changes to the districts' discipline policies were made to align with RJ practices including victim-offender mediation, small and large group conferences, and preventative classroom circles.

Several other aspects of Denver Public Schools RJ program help to set it apart from others. The program was developed by employees to help utilize knowledge of the local community as opposed to an outside contractor. During interviews, teachers self-reported that this helped develop and build trust in the RJ process (Gonzalez, 2012). Two full-time RJ coordinators were employed at North High-School to facilitate and lead the process and one paraprofessional was added to help target RJ interventions. Also, the district recognized the very difficult nature of shifting from retributive discipline forms to restorative approaches. The overall goal was to create

“...a multi-level alternative to punitive discipline policies” (p. 50). In response to these challenges, the developers implemented a series of short, medium, and long-term goals for the pilot schools to help break down the process of change and allow for adjustment time for all stakeholders. This study is a significant contribution to the RJ literature in that it explores the lived experiences and perspectives of staff and students, helping to uncover some of the roots of successful RJ programs.

Adding to the current literature are several studies that highlight how perceptions of RJ can affect its implementation. In a quantitative study done in the Pacific Northwest, 140 administrators, teachers, and staff were surveyed after participating in the Northwest Justice Forum Pre-Training on Restorative Justice to determine their willingness to adopt RJ in their schools (Etheredge, 2014). The researcher also examined district policy documents as a secondary data source. Etheredge’s findings suggest that the participants’ attitudes significantly affected their willingness to adopt RJ practices. Those that had a more positive attitude towards RJ also were more willing to be contacted in the future to receive further training. Survey results also indicated some concern about RJ being ineffective and the author suggests that future efforts to implement restorative programs should focus on building up positive attitudes towards RJ in the beginning phases. More in-depth exploration of why teachers might view RJ in a negative light needs to be explored.

In 2008, Parkrose School District in Oregon, in partnership with Resolutions Northwest, implemented a three-year pilot program to help reduce referrals, suspensions, and expulsions for minority students (Gonzalez, 2012). Quantitative data

were analyzed from school reporting systems, as well as student satisfaction surveys. In 2008-2009 it was reported that 89% of the 162 referred cases to the RJ program had been resolved and 91% of the cases were closed with no repeat offenses 90 days following the students' agreements. Eighty-five percent of the students felt satisfied with the RJ process and 75% felt that the harm had been repaired. The success of the program continued for the pilot phase and was, at the time of this study, expanding to the Portland Public School District. The Parkrose School District intended upon adding full-time RJ staff, providing training for all teachers and working to engage their community through intensive workshops.

RJ practices all over the U.S. are beginning to create changes in the disciplinary landscape of our schools. Gonzalez (2012) notes that these instances are not isolated, rather, RJ is a larger collective movement beginning the "...difficult task of reversing the negative impacts of punitive discipline" (p. 320). For example, in Fairfax, Virginia the County Public Schools have been working with the Northern Virginia Mediation Service (NVMS) since 2008 to train teachers in RJ practices. Their program includes two coordinators and twenty trainers for school staff. Circle dialogue and formal conferencing are the two most frequently used practices. According to self-reported administrative data from the state's largest high school, Westfield, the success of the program in reducing suspensions and recidivism has been so great that the state has developed a formal partnership with the NVMS (Gonzalez, 2012). This study demonstrates that schools can greatly benefit when partnered with knowledgeable, local non-profit organizations.

Pennsylvania has also been employing RJ practices in its public schools for quite some time (Gonzalez, 2012). In 1998, the Palisades School District located in Kintnersville, Pennsylvania became the first pilot district for the International Institute for Restorative Practices. Staff members at Palisades High School began doing RJ circles, one-on-one conferences, and daily check-in and check-out discussions with their students. Administrators involved in this pilot self-reported that the positive outcomes are linked to the adoption of RJ practices. Disciplinary referrals decreased from 1,752 in the 1998-1999 school year to 1,154 in the 2000-2001 school year. In those same years, incidents of disruptive behavior also dropped from 273 to 153 and out-of-school suspensions fell from 105 to 65 (2012).

The success at Palisades High School with RJ helped expand to other schools in the area. Palisades Middle School, which at the time of the pilot was struggling with issues of fighting and disrespect, had all staff members trained and they implemented numerous RJ practices. In addition to reporting positive effects on academic achievement as a result of the RJ implementation, their number of disciplinary referrals dropped from 913 in the 2000-2001 school year to 516 in the 2001-2002 school year (Gonzalez, 2012). These lower referral rates indicate that RJ practices are successfully being used as an alternative to punitive measures of discipline, although the individual experiences behind these numbers is not clear from this particular study.

West Philadelphia High School had its teachers trained by the International Institute for Restorative Practices in the fall of 2008 and behavioral data show a

decrease in suspensions by 50% (Gonzalez, 2012). Violent acts and serious incidents also decreased by 40% in the 2008-2009 year from the previous school year. When educators receive thorough training combined with full leadership support, RJ has many benefits as far as keeping students in school and helping them to feel more connected to their learning community.

Morrison (2006) conducted a quantitative study of RJ through a survey of 343 adolescents in 22 public schools and 10 private schools in the Australian Capital Territory. Morrison's purposes were to determine how, and to what degree students used shame management strategies that are either adaptive or maladaptive in situations involving bullying. The schools were implementing the Responsible Citizens Program which was based in restorative justice practices and involved dialogue and acting out scenarios where bullying was involved. Morrison administered the Peer Relations Questionnaire with four distinct groups including non-bully/non-victim, victim, bully, and victim/bully. The victim group reported using the most shame acknowledgment strategies, while the bully group used the least. The victim and non-bully/non-victim groups reported lower levels of shame displacement strategies in comparison with the bully group. The bully and non-bully/non-victim groups reported higher levels of respect in the school in comparison with the victim and victim/bully groups. A small overall increase in adaptive shame management strategies was reported from 83% before the program to 87% post program. This particular study may indicate that formally implemented social curriculum programs such as Responsible Citizens, offer strategies that support students' ability to adapt in situations where conflict is present.

Theoretical Framework

The following theories presented connect with the RJ philosophy of repairing harm done within a social context. John Dewey, (1922), argued that all conduct is a reflection of our social environment. He stated, “Neutrality is non-existent. Conduct is always shared; this is the difference between it and a physiological process. It is not an ethical ‘ought’ that conduct should be social. It *is* social, whether bad or good” (p.17). Dewey’s conjecture that we cannot be neutral in the process of dealing with conflict directly relates to the RJ philosophy. RJ utilizes structured dialogue processes to uncover each individual’s thoughts, feelings, and perspectives regarding a conflict that has occurred. The process and outcome of an RJ circle relies heavily on the people involved speaking honestly so that others can better understand their perspectives.

The social and environmental context is critically important when considering a theoretical approach to RJ within our school systems. The theories chosen to frame this study encompass the larger social dynamics within the educational system and funnel down into specific structural components of dialogue and individual internalization of conflict. First, Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory is posed as the overarching frame in which this study is grounded (cite). The research questions will be explored through a conceptual lens involving social-mediation and signs and symbols. John Dewey’s concept of social responsibility will provide supplementary evidence of our collective social responsibility when harm occurs. Next, within the larger social context, Freire’s critical theory will be utilized to describe and analyze group dialogue, power structures, problem-posing, and conscientization. Braithwaite’s shame theory

will be explored as an important psychological dimension to how individuals internalize a conflict resolution process such as RJ. Figure 1 represents how these theoretical concepts connect to one another and to the RJ philosophy. The following section will further explore each concept within the theoretical framework.

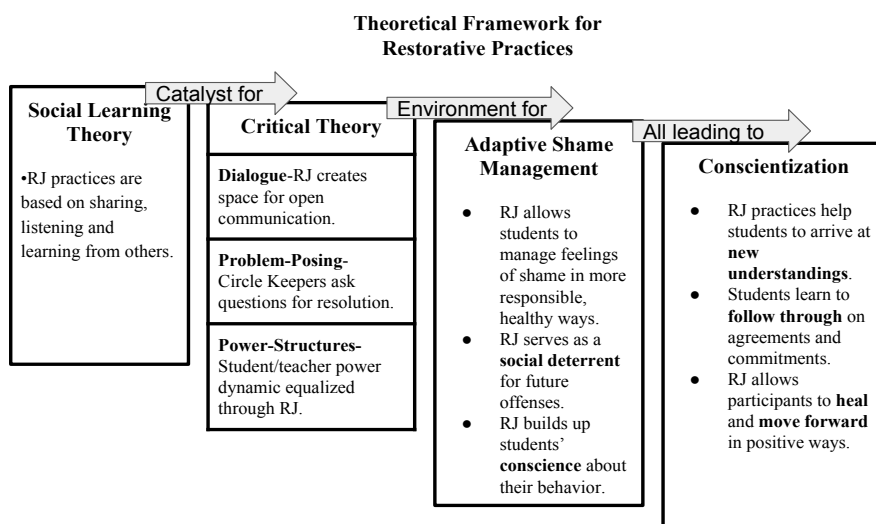


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework for Restorative Practices

Sociocultural Theory. Restorative Justice requires the willingness of stakeholders to come together and discuss issues that can be quite personal and highly emotional. The facilitator plays a key role in helping to create a supportive and open environment for discussion. RJ is a highly social process, that is not easily navigated, nor predictable. Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory provides yet another lens with which to look through when observing RJ practices in action.

Vygotsky described that signs and symbols within our social worlds help us make sense of it (Kozulin, 2003). These symbolic tools are important when describing the implementation process of a RJ model. In order to develop a culture in which RJ

is the norm within a school, one would expect to first find observable evidence of the practice. Through a sociocultural lens, we might investigate the symbolic tools that are present around the school building and that exist in the circles themselves.

Examples of such reifications might include RJ lesson plans and units of study that are built into the curriculum, visuals and graphic organizers around the building with RJ protocol or slogans, and formal staff trainings and materials. Even the physical arrangement of the dialogue circle represents community and a respect for all voices. Each of these tools help to shape, define, and add value to the culture of RJ within a school as the focal point of conflict resolution. As further discussed in the methodology section, such reifications of RJ within the local school and district context were analyzed for this study.

One's own perspective is expressed in an RJ circle as well as the processing of others' stories. This reflection that takes place upon hearing another's viewpoint can be linked with Vygotsky's idea of social mediation. Vygotsky believed that humans learn primarily through social interactions with others and in relation to RJ this lens provides an essential viewpoint to the philosophy (Kozulin, 2003). The power of RJ lies in the learning from others, which is socially constructed within the circle. Harm cannot be restored in a vacuum; it requires social interaction and processing.

Braithwaite describes that the power of a restorative approach to discipline lies in the fact that a judge, or police officer is not delivering a prescribed outcome to the student; it is the communication of a caring and familiar group who decides the process (2002). These social aspects of decision-making, and learning from past behaviors, connect with the management of feelings of shame within RJ processes.

If crime and punishment are viewed through a lens of social responsibility, we can begin to see how everyone's actions in a situation can impact the outcome for individuals at fault. John Dewey, (1922) argued that it is pointless to simply punish someone for wrong-doing if we do not seek to understand the conditions which led to the crime. Dewey explains, "Without an answer to it we cannot tell what forces are at work nor how to direct our actions so as to improve conditions" (p. 19). Dewey believed that we all have a responsibility to find the root of a problem; to help the individuals involved. These values were not apparent from Dewey's view of the justice system.

Dewey asserted that by locking up a criminal, "...we are enabled to forget both him and our part in creating him" (p. 18). He noted that both the wrong-doer and society lay blame on the other party for the crimes committed. In order to move past this cycle, Dewey argued that we must move past the actual act and onto the moral questions. What conditions led to the crime? How are we choosing to treat the person who committed the crime? What is our part in this situation? Dewey urged us to consider how our own decisions and biases can have a great effect on an individual's fate. Dewey noted,

To content ourselves with pronouncing judgments of merit or demerit without reference to the fact that our judgments are themselves facts which have consequences and that their value depends on *their* consequences, is complacently to dodge the moral issue, perhaps even to indulge ourselves in

pleasurable passion just as the person we condemn once indulged himself. (p. 19).

These judgments have been the status quo in traditional school disciplinary approaches. The actions of a student lead to a pre-determined consequence based on the judgment of school leadership. Dewey reminds us that we have a moral obligation to help each other and to deeply consider our own role as a society in creating conditions that either foster or deter harmful acts. Restorative justice models seek to create the time and space to hear the stories and situations that led to the conflict or crime. This study explored how individuals in a school work towards this model of social responsibility for all stakeholders.

Critical Theory. Restorative Justice is a multi-faceted philosophy that by nature is drawing upon the collective knowledge and problem-solving capability of a group consisting of a variety of roles and relationships. Since this approach takes place within institutions, it can be considered through the lens of critical theory to address the interplay of existing power structures. There are four concepts within Freire's critical pedagogy (1970) that help frame this RJ case study.

Dialogue. Focused and structured dialogue processes are at the heart of Restorative Justice. In a school setting, often an administrator or counselor facilitates the coming together of the victim, the offender, their family support, and the teacher if applicable. A series of planned questions are brought forth as each participant gets their opportunity to speak and be heard. Freire's concept of dialogue provides a strong lens with which to look at RJ circles, because the focus is on the truth of others'

words. Freire (1970) suggests that no person can speak true words for another. In this sense, the circle process may help to break down traditional power structures existing in a school system by allowing for the space and time for all perspectives to be heard and authentically considered to help heal the harm that has occurred. This study explored how one school encourages student voice through RJ and helps equalize traditional power structures.

Freire also describes how student and teacher relationships have been historically divided by power (1970). Banking education refers to the teacher as the one who deposits knowledge into the students' empty banks. The more passive a student is in the receiving of information has traditionally been equated with being a "good student." Freire argues that this relationship is one of oppression and does not allow for students to think critically for themselves and take actions in their world based on their own needs and desires. Vaandering (2009) argues that it is critical if RJ is to be an effective and long-term discipline solution that we must look through a critical lens that recognizes the systemic, institutional, and structural dimensions of power relations in school communities" (p. 28).

Power Structures. Vaandering (2010) suggests that Restorative Justice approaches cannot be fully effective if the existing structures of power are not analyzed. She brings to light the idea that the institution itself should be considered a participant within the circle process. With this lens, it is critical to consider how the process of reintegrating the students involved occurs and whether they are truly supported or simply placed directly back into the structure that allowed the original

harm to occur. Zehr (2015) notes that, "...it is important that those who have been harmed are provided an opportunity to define their needs rather than having others or a system define their needs for them" (pp. 32-33). Zehr and Vaandering's theories suggest that the power structures within schools can be broken down when restorative justice approaches are utilized and stakeholders collectively work together to resolve conflict.

Problem-Posing. Freire (year) argues for educators to come alongside their students and pose issues and questions to ignite authentic discussion. Freire's "problem-posing" approach to teaching, places reflective discussion on our current realities, at the center of the learning environment. This approach "...regards dialogue as indispensable to the act of cognition which unveils reality" and allows for the validation of all student voices (p. 83). In problem-posing teaching and learning, the history and current realities of students can be shared and considered. With banking approaches, these critical humanistic pieces are seen as barriers to controlling a situation. Restorative Justice approaches are directly connected to the idea that each individual involved in a conflict (or problem) must actively participate in dialogue and reflect on their own realities in order to bring healing to harm done.

Discussion of personal perspectives and feelings is a foundational concept to any RJ process. According to Freire, dialogue is how people name their world and is a pathway "...by which they achieve significance in the world" (p. 88). In traditional approaches to discipline, including suspensions and expulsions, there is no space for this critical dialogue to take place. Students involved in a given conflict resulting in

punitive disciplinary measures are not necessarily given the opportunity to share their reality or reflect on their actions and the actions of others. When a student can name their world, he or she exposes his or her reality. This naming, which can only surface through dialogue, is where transformation of negative situations can occur. Educators have this current power to support students in critical dialogue. This study delved into each participant's personal perspectives on the RJ process and provided them with the space to speak freely about their experience.

Conscientization. Freire's critical theory contains the idea of conscientization, which if applied to RJ, is the crux of the purpose of the approach. Conscientization, or critical-consciousness, is rooted in the development of one's social reality, critically examining it and then acting on realities that are not right (Freire, 1970). Through guided dialogue about a given offense, participants involved in an RJ dialogue will hopefully come to a new consciousness about the situation (Vaandering, 2010). This understanding can only come about through hearing others' stories and reflecting upon them. The idea of conscientization supports a framework for understanding the implementation of RJ in schools because it describes the process by which individuals learn of the impact of their actions and ideally agree to resolve and change. Conscientization, or coming to new understandings, is the final step in the theoretical framework as it is the goal of RJ. This study explored whether staff and students experience any shift in conscience from taking part in restorative processes.

Shame Theory. Theorist Erik Erickson described shame as, the feeling of "...being completely exposed and conscience of being looked at--in a word, self-

conscious” (1980, p 71). Erickson asserts that feelings of shame make children feel small in the midst of their own growth and development and can sometimes lead to defiant behavior. He also notes that primitive peoples used shaming extensively in dealing with conflict, which ultimately led to strong feelings of guilt. Interestingly, Erickson believed that children and adults alike have a limit to how much shaming they can endure and when pushed beyond those limits, may act out rather than conform to the social norms. Erickson writes, “Too much shaming does not result in a sense of propriety but in a secret determination to try to get away with things when unseen” (1980, p. 71). On the other hand, carefully managed feelings of shame and how a group chooses to work and overcome such feelings can positively impact a group process such as RJ.

Since this case study utilized purposeful sampling to select individuals directly involved in several types of RJ circles, it was important to have an additional theoretical lens to shed light on how shame, a socially negotiated and reinforced emotion, can either support restorative work or undermine it. An individual’s feelings of shame are often viewed as the underlying reason why a person harms another (Morrison, 2006). With this in mind, the way in which a community manages shame is extremely important.

According to Braithwaite (1989), shame plays a large role in RJ processes. Shame deters future acts of crime because the social approval of those we care about is important to us. Second, when people feel shame and repent it, their conscience is built up, which helps to internally deter criminal behavior (1989). Braithwaite notes

that the "...fear of shame in the eyes of intimates rather than fear of formal punishment," is the ultimate deterrent for future crimes (p. 81). He describes shaming as a "social process" by which people learn that certain actions are unacceptable. Braithwaite asserts that the effectiveness of shaming is increased when an offender's family members are involved in the process. An individual's family is highly likely to want to support and help change the behavior.

Morrison discusses how shame can be either acknowledged or displaced (2006). RJ attempts to help individuals acknowledge their feelings. According to Morrison, there are three main steps in acknowledging someone's feelings of shame, and they run surprisingly parallel with the RJ dialogue structure. The first step in shame acknowledgement is that the offender needs to recognize the harm done and express their feelings about it. Secondly, they take responsibility for the harm that occurred and finally, they need to take action to help heal the harm. If these three steps take place, then the offender's internal sanctioning system can begin to work and reduce the possibility of the harm occurring again. If any of the three steps is lacking, the offender's shame may be maladaptive and they may be more at risk of repeating the undesired behavior.

The work of John Braithwaite in the late 1980's brought forth two theories that help frame an additional way to view this case study. These two theories are reintegrative shame theory and stigmatizing shame theory (1989). It is critical to first build an understanding of how these two theories connect to the process of RJ. Inherent in many forms of restorative approaches to discipline is that there is a deep

respect shown for both of the individuals involved in a conflict by involving his or her loved ones to share their support and highlight the special characteristics of each person. Even though the offense itself in RJ is discussed as “wrong-doing” or “harm done,” the person behind the act is viewed and treated as important and worthy of attention and respect. Reintegrative shaming theory involves naming an action as misguided followed by gestures, words of forgiveness, and a plan to bring the offender back into the community as soon as possible (Braithwaite, 1989). This approach is defined as a respectful disapproval of the offense and focuses on positive reintegration of the individual back in the community with a priority of keeping their dignity intact. The more interdependent a person is, the more likely that reintegrative shaming theory will be effective in deterring their criminal behavior. This theory is a helpful lens to use when determining the effectiveness and perspectives of RJ with school-age children, due to their high dependence on family and peer networks.

Braithwaite has described two key components that must be in place in order for the offender to effectively reintegrate (Braithwaite, 2002). First, a supportive community member must be present at the dialogue session for both parties. The second practice involves a respectful disapproval of the behavior that occurred. The community of care must make it clear that the specific behavior is not condoned; yet the individual offender remains an integral part of the community. The goal is to help both victim and offender find resiliency and to successfully reintegrate into their daily interactions within the given community.

On the other end of the spectrum is stigmatizing shaming, which is a negative feature of many traditional approaches to school discipline. Stigmatizing shaming involves out-casting the student from the school community, such as with a suspension or expulsion (Braithwaite, 2002). Morrison (2012) notes that shame can be adaptive or maladaptive. Students who are disciplined in an exclusionary manner are further isolated and their developing understanding of appropriateness and consistency of behavior can become negatively affected.

According to Braithwaite and Morrison, a very careful handling of an individual's feelings of shame can positively impact the process. Morrison argues, "Through taking responsibility for the wrong-doing and making amends, the shame can be acknowledged and discharged. Through this process our feelings of connectedness to the community affected remains intact" (p. 2). Referring back to Freire's idea of limit-situations, one may argue that an individual's feelings of shame could either limit them and prevent his or her own healing, or be used as a catalyst to repairing harm done.

Braithwaite (2002) discusses how the procedural justice theory is slightly more broad than that of reintegrative shaming theory, and supports respect as the cornerstone of RJ. Braithwaite asserts that offenders involved in the court system with its various protections are often less compliant and satisfied with outcomes in comparison with circle conferencing procedures. Braithwaite believes this is the case because the offender has a voice at the table and ideally has a loved one present to support them through the dialogue process. When offenders view the justice process

as fair they are more likely to comply with the consequences. In Braithwaite's opinion, this is a strong argument for RJ.

Social Discipline Window. A final framework to support this study of RJ is Wachtel's Social Discipline Window (McCold & Wachtel, 2003). According to this model, there is a continuum of high and low in the categories of support (encouragement and nurturing) and control (limit-setting and discipline) for a disciplinary issue. This model outlines four approaches to discipline: punitive, permissive, neglectful, and restorative. For example, traditional punitive approaches to discipline would be in a high control, low support category. RJ practices would fall into high support and high control category as it, "...confronts and disapproves of wrongdoing while affirming the intrinsic worth of the offender" (p. 2). The window lens is an additional framework for which leaders of disciplinary changes could utilize for understanding varying degrees of control and support.

McCold and Wachtel (2003) further support the Social Discipline Window model by describing how primary and secondary stakeholders take part in an RJ process. Primary stakeholders include the principal, victim and offenders; those that are most affected by the situation. Secondary stakeholders include the community of care, which is typically the friends or family of those involved. The researchers discuss how victims often feel hurt due to a loss of control when the offense occurred and to build back control, victims need to feel empowered again. Through sharing their experience while also being supported by their community of care, the healing process on the victim's part can begin. From the offender's standpoint, the community

of care not only provides strength and support, but helps facilitate the action needed to make things right. McCold and Wachtel note that it is critical for the offender's support to not take ownership of the crime, but to help the transgressor take responsibility for his or her actions.

Summary of Chapter

This chapter has reviewed the current literature in the field of RJ as well as the theoretical framework that underpins this study. The historical roots of RJ from indigenous cultures continuing on to the modern landscape of disciplinary approaches in U.S. schools today was explored. Concepts from Freire, including dialogue, power structures, limit-situations, and conscientization were linked to the purposes of this study in understanding and describing individual experiences in an RJ process. Vygotsky's Sociocultural theory and social mediation theory support the methods and purposes of this case study in that group dynamics and participant experiences are informed by collaborative dialogue. The work of Erick Erickson and John Braithwaite contribute to a discussion about reintegrative shaming and stigmatizing shaming and are both potential outcomes of disciplinary processes. Finally, Watchel's Social Discipline Window model serves as a way to understand restorative practices as being high support and high control. In the next chapter, the research methods of the study will be reported on including a detailed description of each data source, participants, context, and methods for data analysis.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will describe the methodology used to investigate the restorative justice practices and multiple stakeholders' perspectives and experiences in one Pacific Northwest Middle School. Descriptions of the research design, rationale for methodology, participants and study context as well as the role of the researcher and limitations will follow.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was three-fold. First, I explored and described the specific types of restorative practices occurring in one Pacific Northwest Middle School. Second, I interviewed staff members to explore their perceptions and experiences with RJ. I also interviewed students to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences and perceptions of students participating in a RJ Youth Action Team. Over the course of the study, I sought to develop a portrait of restorative practices within the school and uncover successes, challenges, and recommendations from those that closely involved in the work.

Research Paradigm and Ontological Assumptions

For this study, I chose qualitative case study methodology to support the in-depth description of one school's approach to restorative practices, which is a socially complex philosophy aimed at repairing harm done (Zehr, 2013). The research

paradigm utilized in this study is that of constructivist-interpretist, meaning I was seeking to explore the unique experiences that each of the participants have had in helping facilitate and participate in RJ dialogue processes (Ponterotto, 2005). The constructivist-interpretist paradigm views each individual's perspective as a separate and valuable contribution to understanding RJ. Within this paradigm, my role was to help uncover individual experiences and viewpoints throughout an interview process. In many cases this is a collaborative process. Creswell, (2013) purports that when using a social-constructivist lens, "Reality is co-constructed between the researcher and the researched and shaped by individual experiences" (p. 36).

The ontological assumption is that there is no singular reality and that each person approaches and considers experiences in unique ways (Creswell, 2013). The values (axiology) and potential biases of the researcher are explicitly described in the role of the researcher section to ensure clarity for the reader. From an epistemological standpoint, I took the time to get to know each participant and developed a positive rapport, thus supporting the accuracy of reporting through development of trust. This study was a collaborative process of learning through others' experiences and belief systems, working to understand its implications, and then returning to the participants for clarity and discussion. This method is rooted in the honoring and valuing of individual contributions to the research.

Exploring a RJ experience through multiple stakeholders' lenses requires a methodology that is open enough to capture the thoughts, feelings and attitudes of

participants, yet provide enough structure for a meaningful analysis. The research questions addressed in this study were as follows:

Research Questions

There were three main questions that this study addressed:

1. What are the specific restorative practices occurring at one urban, Pacific Northwest Middle School?
2. What are the perceptions, beliefs, and experiences of adults in the school community with restorative practices?
3. What are the perceptions, beliefs, and experiences of the YAT (youth action team) members in the school community with restorative practices?

To best triangulate the findings, this study included five different pieces of data aimed at exploring the experiences of those involved in restorative practices within the school. The five data sources were:

- 1) Staff survey ($n=22$)
- 2) Restorative Circle Observations (4 total)
- 3) Staff interviews ($n=6$)
- 4) Student interviews ($n=3$)
- 5) Document analysis

Research Design

The five data sources served to capture a well-rounded portrait of RJ in one middle school. This RJ exploration served as a window into the phenomenon of one school's approach to repairing harm done through dialogue.

Staff survey. The survey instrument was developed to better understand the overall landscape of disciplinary practices currently happening at this particular school from the perspective of staff members. This survey also aimed at identifying foundational information such as how many teachers utilize restorative approaches to help solve student misconduct issues within the school, the type of training they have received, and what strategies teachers employ along with successes and challenges to their restorative work (see Appendix A for survey instrument).

Staff interviews. I interviewed six staff members were interviewed to gain insight into individuals' experiences and viewpoints on RJ at the school. The individuals interviewed were purposefully selected to provide a range of perspectives. Those interviewed included: site-based RJ coordinator, multi-site RJ coordinator, vice principal, student management specialists (similar to a dean), and two classroom teachers. Each interview was approximately 45 minutes and consisted of eight questions. The interviews were conducted one on one in different areas around the school such as the RJ office, an empty classroom, and the cafeteria during non-lunch times. I audio-recorded each interviews and transcribed them for analysis (see Appendix B for staff interview protocol).

Student interviews. I interviewed three students to better understand their perspectives of RJ and their experiences of being on the youth action team (YAT). These students were recommended to me for interviewing, due to their involvement on the YAT and their own personal growth brought about through RJ practices. The students interviewed were one 6th grade male, one 7th grade male, and one 8th grade girl. The RJ coordinator facilitated the scheduling of interviews during non-academic times and were completed in a cafeteria with the multi-site RJ coordinator present. Each student interview was approximately 20 minutes in length (see Appendix C for student interview protocol).

RJ observations. I observed four RJ circles, three of which were whole class dialogues and one that was a small group. These observations were audio-recorded and in-depth field notes were taken (see Appendix D for observation field notes template). The three whole-class RJ dialogues were large circle processes facilitated by a social studies teacher. These took place in a series of back-to-back periods over the course of one afternoon. The small group observation involved three female students and the RJ coordinator.

Document analysis. To support triangulation of data collected at the school site, I conducted a document analysis. This review consisted of systematically reading five separate documents related to RJ work in both the school and district as a whole. The documents analyzed included: student and teacher RJ reflection sheet, circle keeper packet, tiered-fidelity inventory, and student handbook. Common procedures, language, and purposes were analyzed in connection with the goals of RJ. This

analysis also provided critical information regarding the structures in place that support staff when in the implementation of RJ (see Appendix E for document analysis matrix).

Rationale for methodology

This research utilizes case study methodology. To investigate the current RJ practices and the perspectives and experiences of each participant, a data collection method that allowed for deep exploration was the most fitting. The case study approach is one that "...explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection" (Creswell, 2013). This study was purposefully designed to explore and deeply describe restorative practices in one school housed in the greater context of a district aiming for full RJ implementation.

Fully implemented RJ programs in schools, although becoming more common, are still viewed as unique cases from which we have much to learn. There is a great potential to glean wisdom from those deeply involved in this work. This form of case study is intrinsic as it seeks to describe a unique occurrence that warrants detailed description and analysis (Stake, 1995). To focus in on specific individuals with stories and lived experiences to share, I utilized expert sampling. In order to gain access to the experts (those with RJ experience) chain sampling was utilized (Creswell, 2013). Chain sampling is when one participant leads to meeting another, and another, in an organic way.

Prior to the study, I contacted the Director of School Climate and Discipline of the participating district to explain the purpose of the study and to gauge interest in the project. This began a collaborative dialogue about the current state of RJ within the district and a discussion about the progress towards each school using restorative approaches to conflict. After two initial phone conversations about restorative work in the district, the Director of Climate and Culture and I collaboratively chose a particular school to study. Based on his suggestions, we concluded that Linden Middle School (pseudonym chosen) would be a good site to study because they were several years into RJ implementation and had been having success with the program. This led to meeting the administration who referred me to the RJ coordinator and initial meetings to discuss the purposes and procedure of my study began.

Context and Participants

The school involved in this study, Linden Middle School, is located in a large, urban Pacific Northwest district that has been implementing restorative practices since 2013. The participating district and middle school were specifically chosen for multiple reasons. First, the school district has a unique and multi-faceted approach to student management that warrants further exploration. There are multiple support documents and trainings that the district has created in collaboration with a non-profit organization called Resolutions Northwest. The district has been involved in implementing restorative practices since 2013 in conjunction with a tiered-response to student conflict called Culturally-Responsive Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (CR-PBIS). Each school in the district is encouraged to use what is called a Tiered-Fidelity Inventory (TFI) to evaluate their progress with implementing a tiered

response to behaviors. To supplement this inventory, the district has created a Restorative Justice Practices TFI Companion Guide. Additionally, the school is in the third year of implementing restorative practices to help solve student conflict. It was important for this study to select a school that has been involved in the work for several years already so as to learn more from their experiences beyond the initial implementation phases. The school employs a full-time restorative justice coordinator to help facilitate dialogue processes. This individual's perspective provided valuable insight into the successes and barriers of RJ implementation.

The participating middle school has grades sixth through eight and according to enrollment data for 2014-2015 has 369 students (Oregon District Report Card, 2014-2015). This middle school receives Title 1 funding and 65% of students are economically disadvantaged. Special education services accommodate 24% of the student body and 16% of students are English language learners. The students ethnic backgrounds are as follows: 24% African American, 5% Asian, 38% Hispanic, 2% Native American, 3% Pacific Islander, 23% White, and 6% identified as multiple races. According to the state report card for the 2014-2015 school year, 34% of 8th graders met or exceeded on the state reading test and 30% met or exceeded on the state math test. In contrast, statewide 57% of 8th graders met or exceeded the state reading test and 43% met or exceeded the mathematics assessment (Oregon State Report Card, 2014-2015).

The participants in the initial teacher survey consisted of classroom teachers, specialists such as special education and language teachers, as well as music, library,

and P.E. teachers. There were 22 staff members who completed the survey. This survey was introduced at a staff meeting, which is explained below. Teachers were given a small amount of time at the meeting to complete the survey, although many chose to complete it over the following week.

Research Procedure

This study took place during the 2016-2017 school year and consisted of four main phases. First, given the in-depth nature and topic of this study it was critical to establish a rapport with the staff and the individuals with whom I would be working closely during the year. This phase consisted first of several emails to the administration team and the RJ coordinator in regards to the purpose of my study. I then came in for an initial meeting with the site and multi-site RJ coordinators to introduce myself and describe the research further. I was told by the principal to work directly with the RJ coordinator for this project, as he had a lot on his plate this year. Although, I was able gain an interview with the vice-principal.

It was critical that the school team understood the nature of the study and had the space and time to ask questions and give input. During this initial meeting, the RJ coordinators reviewed the survey and interview questions that I had prepared. They asked if I could add another question to the survey regarding future training needs for RJ. I decided to add it because it was in line with my survey purposes and could shed light on future steps. The team also expressed some initial concern over how the student interviews would be conducted. They wanted to be assured that the students' academics would not be disrupted and that one of them could be present during the

interviews. All of these requests were part of the collaborative research process and helped to make it more meaningful and comfortable for all involved.

During that meeting we scheduled a time for me to meet the staff and introduce the study. This took place from 4:00-5:30 on a Tuesday afternoon and RJ was the topic of the meeting. During this meeting I participated, took field notes, and interacted with as many staff members as I could. I was given a few minutes in the beginning of the session to talk about the purpose of this research and explain that they might see me around the school quite often in the upcoming months. I explained during this meeting that their participation in this study could help other schools and districts better understand RJ and how they can make it work in their own contexts.

The data collection phase was not able to begin until January, due to my own health issues in the fall. At this time, I set-up interviews with each of the participants with the help of Morgan, the RJ site coordinator, and Lauren, the multi-site RJ coordinator. I also scheduled time to come in for RJ observations. During the interviews I was "...physically co-present with research participants in a naturalistic setting" (Williams, 2008, p. 12) to help the participants feel comfortable and deeply heard. Following each interview, I transcribed the audio using Dragon software by Nuance. I then went through the process of several reads through the transcripts before the formal coding process began to orient myself to the data. I found that I needed to do this to help place myself back in that time and space with the participant.

The teacher survey was explained and administered at the end of another RJ staff development session. I was given a few minutes to explain the survey and hand

out consent forms. Morgan emailed the Qualtrics survey link to all participants.

Morgan also volunteered to help round up any participants who had yet to complete the survey after a week.

The interview process took several months to complete. It was very critical to have a quiet space and time set-aside for each session. I provided each participant with the interview questions at least one day beforehand so as to provide them with some additional processing time before our session. I began each session by telling the participants that it was an opportunity for them to speak openly about their own personal experiences and beliefs about RJ and that they could stop, skip questions, or ask questions at any time. There were instances in each interview when a participant would tell a story or express an idea that warranted further explanation or discussion. In this case, I would prompt them with phrases such as, “Can you tell me more about that?” or, “Why do you think that is?” and “What is an example of that?” These were often the most interesting moments in the sessions; it was as if we were chasing after an elusive concept.

The classroom observations were set up with the help of Morgan. She contacted Kevin, one of the interview participants to see if he would be willing to have me come in to observe since he does circles quite frequently. He agreed and had planned whole class dialogue circles over the course of one day in each of his social studies classes. I attended three of these sessions in the afternoon. My role was a participant-observer. This allowed me to “...enter the scene with explicit researcher

status and a clear agenda of which data to gather,” while still taking part in the dialogue (Tracy, 2013, p. 128).

I had initially planned to sit outside of the circle, strictly as an observer, although after I had gotten to know the participants and learned more about how RJ creates a special space, I no longer felt comfortable with the thought of separating myself from the process. I, too, wanted to feel what it was like to be a part of the circle. Kevin explained to each class that I was there to observe and learn from them. The end result was that it made for a much richer learning experience.

As I participated in the whole-class RJ circles, I also took field notes as well as audio-recorded two of the sessions. The procedures for circles are set-up so that a talking piece travels around giving everyone the chance to speak. For example, the teacher facilitating the circle reviewed that when someone has the talking piece it is their turn to share while everyone else listens. This allowed me the time to jot notes down in my field notes journal. As I recorded my notes, I bracketed any personal feelings or potential biases, as described in the role of the researcher section.

Finally, I collected six documents that are used to support RJ practices in the school for analysis and data triangulation. These data added another layer of understanding about the RJ practices at Linden Middle School and the greater district context. These artifacts “...communicate the groups’ espoused values and images,” (Tracy, 2013, p.5) to contribute to a deeper understanding.

Research Instruments

There are three data collection instruments used in this study to gather an in-depth description of RJ practices at Linden as well as staff and students' perceptions and experiences.

Survey. The survey instrument is researcher-designed and was piloted by a group of doctoral students to gain feedback on the ease of use, clarity, and accuracy. I also provided the survey to the two RJ coordinators before administering it to gain insight into the reasonableness of each question, given that I was new to the school community. I used the feedback from both pilots to revise the survey before administering it to the school staff.

The survey contained eight questions and was administered online. Survey participants were provided the link during a staff meeting. The question types were both multiple choice and free-response, so as to collect quantitative data regarding RJ at the school as well as qualitative information centered on stakeholder experiences. The information solicited focused on RJ training experience, RJ practices used, and experiences and perceptions of the approach.

Observation field notes template. A field notes template was developed to record observations during the three whole class RJ circles and one small group dialogue. This instrument helped focus the observation on the research questions as well as providing a space to record the chronological flow of the dialogue circle (Creswell, 2013). Over the course of my time spent at Linden Middle School there

were often conversations and situations in which I wanted to log. I kept a research journal with me at all times and often wrote brief memos to capture the circumstances.

Staff and Student Interviews. Two different interview protocols were developed for the staff and students. The interview questions were designed to explore each participant's perspectives on the RJ process; addressing the main purpose of this study. The questions were purposefully designed to be open-ended so as to support the participant in fully describing his or her experiences with RJ.

Ethical Considerations

Each participant's clear understanding of the study purposes, data collection methods, and analysis was of utmost concern to the researcher. Since this study explored multiple stakeholder's perspectives and experiences about restorative justice, it was critical that each participant fully understood the purpose of the study and had time to ask questions of the researcher. Consent forms were given to each participant well in advance of data collection. Students were able to take consent forms home first, discuss it with their families and then return them to school. The University of Portland Institutional Review Board (IRB) granted permission to conduct this study on October 10, 2016. The school district granted study permission on December 12th, 2017 (see Appendix F).

I informed all participants that no identifying pieces of their information, including names, school, or district would be used during any part of the study. The school, as well as each participant, were given pseudonyms. Participants were ensured that their names would be coded as numbers in the raw data and that the only

descriptor for their school would be that it is in a Pacific Northwest middle school. Participants were also reassured that all data collected would be secured on a password protected Dropbox account and if printed it would be kept in a locked cabinet when not in direct use.

Knowing that the participants in the study would be discussing their perspectives on a process involving conflict, it was critical that I be sensitive to and immediately address any emotional challenges that could occur. For example, the pre-interview script notifies the participants that at any time they could stop the interview, ask for clarification, or decline response. Keeping the interview environment comfortable and private so that each participant felt at ease and as though they could speak freely was essential. Participants were also informed that a copy of their interview script would be provided for him or her upon request. I utilized a member-checking procedure by emailing each interview participant, following our discussions, with a summary of their main points. At that time, they could approve, add, or takeaway. This procedure helped improve the accuracy of responses. Since I was not able to email the students, I went through a similar procedure directly following the interviews. I reviewed their answers from my notes and gave them the opportunity to add or takeaway any information they talked about. The students did not have anything to add to their responses. Only one of the adult participants, the RJ multi-site coordinator, chose to add some additional viewpoints to her response regarding the implementation of RJ at schools and how to make it as successful as possible. The other participants confirmed my notes and interpretations as accurate.

Role of the Researcher

For this study, I sought to deeply explore restorative approaches to better understand how multiple stakeholders experience the process. The participants' perspectives help to illuminate best practices in restorative approaches and support identification of challenges. As this was a case study, it was critical to examine how my role as the researcher could potentially influence data collection and analysis. A brief investigation of my positionality will be explained.

My own background encompasses a wide-variety of experiences that have led up to this study. One of my very first experiences with working with children was in high school, when my parents made the decision to do emergency foster care. I grew up as an only child, so having other kids in the house was very new for me. At the time, I was excited that we were helping kids to have some refuge from traumatic events and situations. Most of my family's experiences with short-term foster care (and one long-term) were very positive. Although, when my family would take in children late at night with no extra clothes or supplies or when a child would display intensely angry outbursts, it really affected me. Coming from a home where I always had exactly what I needed, I was dismayed and frustrated to hear of the situations some of the foster children came from. At the time, I was not aware, but seeing children in crisis was, in part, what led me to pursuing a career in education.

I went on to graduate from the University of Oregon with a B.A. in Anthropology. This program taught me many basics of collecting qualitative data through field observations and interviews. I discovered that I loved the data collection

process because I have always been fascinated by human behavior and the origins of our perceptions and viewpoints. Ultimately, working in a variety of children's summer camps in Oregon, Hawaii, and Germany, led to me leaving the idea of a graduate degree in anthropology behind to instead earn my Masters in Teaching from Pacific University. Shortly after I began my first job teaching 3rd grade, I obtained my reading endorsement from the University of Portland and continued working in the elementary grades teaching all subjects.

I have been an elementary educator for the past 12 years. I've recently stepped out of the classroom into an instructional coaching role. Over the course of my teaching in grades two, three, and four, it became increasingly more complex to manage student conflict as more students were passing through classrooms that had experienced trauma, or simply were not well equipped with problem-solving skills to support themselves through difficult situations. Witnessing first-hand the negative effects on students from expulsion and suspension, the need for an alternative approach to student discipline issues was becoming alarmingly clear. My colleagues and I were finding that we were often playing the role of therapists and social workers for our students. We were struggling to teach content because of the intensity of behavioral needs, and punitive consequences were ineffective.

As I began to move into teacher leadership roles, earning my administrative license, and working on my Ed. D., I knew that if I were to pursue a principal role I had to be knowledgeable and skilled in restorative practices. Simply handing out consequences to students and not helping them engage in their own learning process

did not interest me. My role as an RJ researcher was to explore what makes it effective and to uncover the challenges it poses.

A potential bias that I brought to this study is one of interest in restorative practices and the desire to learn how the approach can be implemented within schools in a sustainable manner. I addressed potential biases in several ways. First, a bracketing procedure was utilized throughout the data collection process to separate my own thoughts, opinions, and perspectives from that of the raw data (Creswell, 2013). As mentioned previously, I performed member checks with each participant after observations and interviews to check that what was recorded was an accurate account of what each participant expressed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Analysis

According to Auerbach and Silverstien, (2003) one of the most effective ways to gain a deeper understanding of people's viewpoints, is by simply asking them questions. People generally respond to open-ended questions in narrative, or storied form. This had important implications for how the data were analyzed.

Following each of the data collection phases (survey, observation, interviews, documents), analysis of findings was on-going. First, survey data through Qualtrics was analyzed in two ways. The quantitative data received from the teacher survey will be presented in descriptive table form to give a snapshot of the school's RJ landscape. The text from the open-response questions was analyzed using a structured process called grounded theory coding (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). This coding procedure

allows the researcher to discover emerging themes leading into theoretical constructs through a process of moving from the raw text to the main research concerns.

Grounded theory coding. The grounded theory coding process was used for three data sources: survey open-responses, staff and student interviews, and the RJ observations. Grounded theory coding first begins with an initial reading of the transcriptions followed by choosing relevant text (Auerbach & Silverstein, p. 37). Relevant text was identified according to connections with the three main research questions. Once chunks of relevant text were identified, I looked for repeating ideas that were commonly said by the participants. These repeating ideas were then used to extrapolate to larger themes that began to take shape organically. Subsequently, "...the abstract grouping of themes as theoretical constructs," followed (Auerbach & Silverstein, p. 36). The constructs were directly informed and analyzed through the framework and tenets of socio-cultural theory, critical theory, and the social discipline window.

The observation of the restorative circles resulted in raw data in the form of field notes and an audio recording based on the template in. The audio recording was transcribed by the researcher and using the constant comparison method, was cross-referenced with the field notes (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The constant comparison method allows for each individual source (survey, observation, interviews, documents) to be coded and subsequently compared between sources in order to explore larger emergent themes. Analysis of the observations resulted in an

in-depth description of the event including the setting, participants, dialogue, and the outcomes of the discussion.

Finally, I reviewed pertinent RJ documents from the school, the district and Resolutions Northwest. This process helped me to gain a more well-rounded portrait of the RJ context within the school and district as a whole. Each document was analyzed using a specific procedure. First, each document was read for its content and then relevant text was organized into categories based on the three main research questions (Bowen, 2009). The relevant text in each category was then compared to the larger themes from the other data sources. This process supported data triangulation so as to compare qualitative findings in the school context with reified RJ documents.

Validation strategies. Internal validity was established in several ways. First the validity, or reliability, of the survey instrument was addressed by piloting it with a group of doctoral students, as well as two RJ coordinators and then making adjustments based on their feedback. It was critical that the accuracy of wording allowed for consistent understanding and clarity. Creswell (2013), "...recommends the use of a pilot test to refine and frame questions, collect background information, and adapt research procedures (p. 165).

Member checks occurred throughout the data collection phase. This helped build credibility and accuracy of the results by showing each participant a transcript summary and asking them if it clearly represented what they wanted to say (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, all data from the surveys, observation, and interviews was

triangulated to support the strength of connections between the results. Triangulation was done through locating common themes across all data sources.

External validity is addressed by whether the methodology can be reasonably transferred to an additional study. Readers of this study can make determination whether or not the results could generalize, or transfer to their specific contexts. This process occurred through the use of member checks to support thick description of each participant's experiences, thus strengthening the transferability of the results (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, the study will be able to be duplicated in the future through a detailed description of the survey and interview instruments, observation protocol templates, and the coding procedure.

Limitations

There are a variety of limitations to this study that warrant discussion and potential future research. First, the small sample size greatly limits generalizability. Individual readers can make their own determinations about transferability to their own specific contexts. Additionally, this case study represents a school that is farther along in the RJ implementation process and may not be representative of the school district as a whole. There may be other schools that are struggling with the implementation of restorative practices, which may warrant further exploration. This presents an opportunity to learn from one schools that are reporting success with the approach.

Since the observation of the circle dialogue was limited to four sessions, this may lead to an under-representation of experiences. This study also does not consider

other outside factors in the environment that might affect participants' perspectives of restorative practices. These stressors might include: family or school stress, previous conflicts with students, trauma, or mental illness. Additionally, the focused participant observer status of the researcher, although structured and clear for the participants may limit the time to understand "complexities over time," with RJ as an approach and for the specific issue at hand (Tracy, 2008, p. 112).

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter reviewed the case study methodology of this research. The setting for the study was in a middle school within a large school district in Oregon with participation of students, teachers, administrators, RJ coordinators and parents. The researcher took the role of focused participant observer. The discussions with participants supported the exploration of multiple stakeholders' perspectives of RJ approaches. There were four sources of data including teacher surveys, staff and student interviews, RJ circle observations, and document analysis. The data provide an in-depth description of restorative practices at one school.

The researcher has taken great consideration of the ethical considerations of each participant in the study. Complete disclosure of all study phases was provided for each participant with consistent member checks for accuracy. The researcher recognizes multiple limitations within this study, most notably the small sample size. The following chapter will be a discussion of the results through descriptive analysis.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from a qualitative case study that explored the restorative justice practices utilized in one Pacific Northwest Middle School. A detailed description of the findings from the five data sources will be presented including: an analysis of RJ documents used in the school, twenty-two teacher surveys, six staff and three student interviews, and five observations. Findings will be presented as they connect with the following three research questions:

1. What are the specific restorative practices occurring at one urban, Pacific Northwest Middle School?
2. What are the perceptions, beliefs, and experiences of adults in the school community with restorative practices?
3. What are the perceptions, beliefs, and experiences of the YAT (youth action team) members in the school community with restorative practices?

Data Sources

The findings presented in this chapter draw from five data sources: staff survey ($n=22$), staff interviews ($n=6$), student interviews ($n=3$), four RJ dialogue observations, and the analysis of RJ documents to support triangulation of data. .

Introductions to the Interview Participants

I interviewed six staff members from a variety of roles within the school in order to gain multiple perspectives on RJ. Each participant had experience with leading RJ circles, participating in them, or supporting restorative work in the school.

The six staff members included the on-site RJ coordinator, the multi-site RJ coordinator (the site-based coordinator's mentor), student management specialist, vice-principal, and two classroom teachers.

To gain insight into the student perspectives, I also interviewed three members of the YAT (youth action team). The goal of the YAT, according to Lauren, the multi-site RJ coordinator, is to have youth who are leading restorative practices in their schools connect with and learn from each other. These students are chosen to participate on the team by exemplifying leadership qualities during RJ circles. The students have the opportunity to be trained in RJ facilitation skills during the summer. They also participate in community service projects and often lead circles for their peers that struggle with issues that they once did. The following section will provide a brief introduction to each of the nine interview participants in order to illuminate the personal contexts from which each perspective stems from. Each participant has been given a pseudonym to ensure anonymity.

John: 8th grade social studies teacher

John is a social studies teacher who has worked at Linden Middle School for the past 17 years. He enjoys working RJ circles into his social studies content. He has the historical perspective on the school's discipline pendulum swing. When I asked him describe how discipline has evolved at Linden, he explained how they used to be "very handbook and authoritarian in their approach." He noted how there used to be set consequences for each type of infraction up until about five years ago when they made the switch to RJ. Interestingly, he felt that in the beginning they had swung too far towards the restorative practices and noted that staff members felt that certain kids

were getting away with behaviors such as intense bullying. John says, “We did a 180 [towards RJ] and we needed to do a 120.” He laments that they had particular kids wandering the halls that year with no accountability.

Kevin: 6th grade social studies teacher

Kevin is also a social studies teacher who has a diverse background in education. He mentored at-risk youth on the Southside of Chicago, taught pre-school in Mexico, was a Spanish instructor, and has held instructional coaching roles before he came to Linden. He has been teaching for eight years and reports that he has had approximately seven hours of formal training in RJ practices. He describes himself as “...a huge fan of RJ.” He has been doing RJ circles for several years and uses it as a tool to set up classroom expectations and encourage respectful dialogue. He views his students as trying to become adults and holds them accountable in restorative conversations by having them identify the harm that occurred and reflect on what they can do to make it right moving forward.

Morgan: Site-based RJ Coordinator

Morgan has been the full-time RJ coordinator for the past three years. She has approximately 15 years of experience that have brought her to this position including mentoring in local alternative schools and teaching in Alaska. She has gone through advanced restorative justice training through the Resolutions Northwest classes. From my perspective, she spoke about RJ with much enthusiasm.

Out of all of the interviewees, I was able to spend the most time with Morgan as she went about her daily activities. She carries a walkie-talkie to be able to quickly respond to any student incidents. She walks through the halls in an alert, yet relaxed

manner. She chats easily with every student, asks them about their families and how after school sports are going. I witnessed her personal knowledge about each student and the deeply caring way she interacts with them. Throughout each day she checks in with individual students to see how they are feeling and what they might need to have a good day. Groups of students come up to her just to talk or to share with her that one of their friends needs some support. It is clear that students feel safe and supported around her. She takes the time to get to know everyone on a personal level.

Lauren: Multi-Site RJ coordinator

Lauren is an RJ coordinator employed by the non-profit organization, Resolutions Northwest. She oversees the RJ programs in three middle schools as well as trains local teachers that are new to restorative practices. Her job requires at least eight hours per week be spent at Linden Middle School directly supporting and mentoring Morgan. She works closely to problem solve and plan circles with teachers that reach out to her with specific problems in their classrooms. She whole-heartedly believes in restorative work and says that to her, "...RJ is valuing each other enough to make the time and space to work things out." Whenever she is facilitating a circle her goal is always for participants to feel inspired and moved so much that they, too, want to lead a circle.

Samantha: Student Management Specialist

Samantha has been a part of the Linden Middle School community for the past 17 years. Samantha's position in the school is the student management specialist, which is similar to the role of a dean. She handles any disciplinary actions in the school and meets with each grade level team monthly to discuss how student behavior

is going and who she may need to focus on more. Making sure that students are adhering to the student handbook is her overarching responsibility. She says that restorative work is integrated into every part of her job. She will often facilitate the difficult work of bringing two students together that are having a conflict and helps them navigate tough conversations to get to a place where they both can have their needs met. Samantha explained that the power of RJ versus traditional methods of discipline is "...When you get students eye ball to eyeball and knee to knee that, to me, is where the real learning happens."

Becky: Vice Principal

Becky is in her first year at Linden in the role of vice-principal. Becky has a wide variety of educational experience including teaching math, science, language arts and social studies at the middle school level for over ten years. She also served as the district's testing coordinator. She explained how she has always viewed education through a restorative lens because it is about what individual students need. She says, "As an administrator I cannot just look at the action, I have to look at the child's needs." She sees her position in helping staff to feel heard and supported during restorative practices with students and making sure expectations are clear for all involved. She also helps facilitate and schedule time in the year for RJ trainings and activities for staff.

Youth Action Team members

At Linden, there is a Youth Action Team (hereafter referred to as YAT) that does a variety of leadership activities that support and enhance the RJ work in the school community. According to the Resolutions Northwest website, which helps plan

and facilitate YAT meetings, the “Youth Action Team members are advocates and leaders in their schools, giving voice to injustice and inequities. The Youth Action Team provides a platform for them to learn, support, and collaborate with youth leaders in other schools as well as connect in their communities outside the confines of school.” Morgan, Lauren, and other staff members often ask students to be on the YAT that exemplify leadership traits during classroom circles or show a particular interest in RJ. The students are often identified during RJ circles themselves and demonstrate thoughtful reflection about their actions and the actions of others. YAT students also do community outreach projects such as donating clothes to those in need and serving in soup kitchens. The students are also trained using the Courageous Conversations Protocol by Glen Singleton in order to have a framework for talking about race with their peers. It is important to note, especially for future research, that the three students interviewed are African-American. Racial issues and students’ interpretations did come up during our conversations, even though the questions did not specifically refer to race. The following section provides a short introduction to each of the three students who were interviewed.

Student interviews: Jamal, Dominique, Amara

Jamal is a seventh grader who described how he really struggled in sixth grade because he was always shouting out in class for attention. He said that RJ helped him realize that he gets more done if he just sits and does his work rather than arguing with his teachers. Jamal’s parents talk with him a lot about how getting an education is important and that it can serve as a “way out” of bad situations. During Jamal’s interview, it became clear that he was in a transitional point in his middle school life

and is grappling with how to become the student both he and his parents want him to be.

Dominique is a sixth grader who enjoys being a part of the YAT because he gets to talk about what is going on in the world and figure out how he can help things get better. He said that at first it was difficult for him to have the confidence to speak in front of other people during the circles but he has gotten better at it. Interestingly, Morgan pointed out that he is very outspoken in the YAT meetings, although during his interview he was on the quieter side, and I often needed to re-phrase questions or circle back to them. He needed some extra thinking time with a few of his responses.

Amara is a expressive eighth grader who leads circles with other girls that are currently struggling with what she was in sixth grade. Amara talks about the importance of teaching her younger nieces and nephews about RJ so they know how to solve problems when they get older. She explained that in YAT they have learned that students of color are often suspended more than white students and she wants to change that. The teachers at Linden speak very highly of Amara's communication abilities and are very proud of how she has worked hard to learn from her mistakes a few years ago and is now putting that new understanding into her work on the YAT. Amara was a delight to learn from, and she speaks with the wisdom of someone much older.

Results: Document Analysis

The first phase of data analysis included a review of pertinent RJ documents that are used to support and inform the discipline approaches at Linden Middle School. The purpose of this was to triangulate data between what was expressed in the

interviews, with what was observed. It was also important to have an understanding of the training documents, and other reifications of RJ from the school and district.

This analysis included five different documents that are connected to RJ at Linden Middle School. A matrix was set up for analysis to compare and contrast the documents in five different areas including: the purpose, RJ support for teachers, RJ practice support for students, and RJ language used (see Appendix E).

The first area that was considered was the purpose of each document. These ranged from helping students and teachers to reflect on difficult situations, to providing detailed information on how to run a circle, to a district created inventory for schools to assess where they are in implementing discipline supports for students at various behavioral levels. The following section will describe each document and then connections will be drawn between the analyses to the study results.

Teacher and Student Reflection Sheets

If a student exhibits a behavior during class that is disruptive or harmful and the teacher feels they need some time to think about the situation and make a plan for how to change, a reflection sheet is completed. For the teacher, this means describing the location, time and nature of the event as well as what they think should happen before the student is allowed to return to class.

For the student, this entails going to an area other than the classroom such as the RJ or counseling office to complete the sheet from their perspective. The student sheet is more detailed than the teacher's. It asks students to describe the event that happened and the school rule that was violated, explain how their actions negatively

affected their own ability to learn, reflect on who was harmed, two things they can do to prevent it from happening again, and what they need.

In analysis of these two documents, the purpose is three-fold. First, the reflection sheets allow for some “cooling off” time for both teacher and student. This helps both parties to get some space from the intensity of the event to think clearly. This also allows for the student to think through how their actions affect not only themselves, but others. Finally, it helps students reflect on actual changes they could make in the future and possibly most importantly, what they need in terms of help. The form ends in allowing students to comment on anything they would like to say in their own defense. This process is restorative because it provides time and space for thoughtful reflection and supports students’ ability to make things right again.

Circle Keeper Packet

This eleven-page document serves as a training resource for teachers learning to facilitate RJ circles. It was created by Resolutions Northwest to be used in their RJ facilitator trainings. The packet provides a brief background on what RJ is explaining that its roots are with aboriginal and native traditions. The introduction describes RJ as, “Intentionally creating a space that lifts barriers between people, circles open the possibility for connection, collaboration, and mutual understanding.”

The introduction also explains that RJ circles are a place where everyone is equal, has a voice, and is respected. The typical structure and format for RJ circles is described in sequence. This format includes the following steps: opening, guidelines/values, introduction of the talking piece, check-in, discussion rounds,

check-out, and closing. These steps were all observed at Linden Middle School when I joined the three social studies classes for their RJ circles.

This detailed packet proceeds to define the role of the circle keeper. It is clearly stated that the circle keeper is neither the leader nor the facilitator of the circle. They are there to ensure that the values and agreements of the circle are upheld. Several suggested phrases to be used by the keepers include: “We all have important experiences and something to offer,” and “We have a responsibility for finding solutions.” These provided phrases are clear, and directly transferrable for classroom teachers to use.

The document then describes the different types of circles. One is the beginning of the day circle. These types of circles can be helpful in establishing goals and guidelines, easing tension from the previous day, or simply allowing students to talk about how their night was. The second circle type is called, anytime circles. With this format, curriculum can be discussed or teachers can build circles just for fun and creating a greater sense of community. There also may be a need for circles involving parents and family members that are going through a stressful event. The final type described was end of day circles. This type of circle can be helpful to support students in talking about their day or reflecting on what they learned.

The final section of the circle keeper packet includes ideas for how to start circles and a planning guide for teachers. There are question ideas, prompts and phrases for teachers to try out. There is a note in the beginning of the importance of selecting good questions and carefully considering who is in the circle. This section seemed to be of particular help especially for those new to circles.

School-Climate Plan

Each school within the district is required to have a student handbook, or climate plan. This document lays out expectations and explains a tiered response to student behaviors and what supports are in place for them. The document emphasizes that at Linden Middle School, they utilize proactive and inclusive practices so students feel connected to the learning community. The introduction to the school climate plan states, “At Linden Middle School, we will provide students with the opportunity to reflect on the impact of their actions, restore the harm, and develop the skills to make better choices in the future with the goal that the student be reintegrated back in the learning community.” Inherent in this statement is the commitment to serving students based on their individual needs, rather than a system based on set consequences.

Linden Middle School and the district as a whole adhere to the C.A.R.E model. C.A.R.E stands for communicate, achieve, respect, and effort. According to the document these values are important because they, “... are the actions and attributes that help students be successful in life.” It is the expectation that the C.A.R.E model be explicitly taught throughout the year and the values it espouses are to be embedded in all lessons everyday. The document states that throughout the year direct instruction on behavior, classroom expectations, and common area expectations will occur.

The next section of the handbook contains two charts. One explains three different categories, or tiers, of behavior with examples. Tier one behavior might be teasing or excessive talking and is expected to be handled by the classroom teacher. Tier two behaviors cutting class, property misuse, or minor vandalism. In this case, the

SMS or the RJ coordinator to address the issue supports the classroom teacher. In both tier one and tier two, the student remains in class. Examples of tier three behaviors are fighting, drug and alcohol use, or major theft. These issues are immediately dealt with by the SMS or administration and the student is removed from class. A referral is written across all three tiers.

Following the three-tier chart, is an intervention plan connected to each respective category. For tier one behaviors some examples of interventions include, re-teaching expectations, use of RJ, and private redirection. Tier two interventions include starting check-in and check-out routines with the student, identifying a safe place to cool off, and a parent conference. For tier three specialists such as SPED case managers, psychologists and nurses are consulted. The student might be referred to the intervention team or the major suspension program. Each layer of intervention brings more adult support into the situation and clearly explains a variety of options for classroom teachers to try before the student is removed from the learning environment.

Following the tier charts, definitions of Culturally-Responsive Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (CR-PBIS) and RJ are stated. According to the document, CR-PBIS involves three approaches. First teachers need to explicitly instruct students on the expectations of the school and their classroom. Second, teachers should actively acknowledge when students are following those expectations. Lastly, teachers should instructionally correct students when they are not following the expectations. RJ is defined as, “a range of community building, peacemaking practices adapted to the school setting. The intention is to build trusting relationships and offer restorative alternatives to punitive discipline.” Over the course of this study

community building circles were not directly observed, although both teachers and students reported that they planned and participated in them. Peace-making or restorative circles in response to an issue were directly observed in whole and small group settings.

The climate plan also includes who in the school is responsible for and has expertise in behavior, academic programs, and school operations. This group of educators is called the School Climate Team. Following this description, a schedule of professional development for teachers as well as C.A.R.E student assemblies is displayed.

Tiered-Fidelity Inventory

The purpose of the Tiered-Fidelity Inventory (TFI), "...is to provide a valid, reliable, and efficient measure of the extent to which school personnel are applying the core features of school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports." The TFI is split into three categories: universal supports, targeted supports, and intensive supports for each respective tier of behavior (as described in the school climate plan). Each category is broken down into a matrix describing specific important actions to have in place, sources of data and then scoring criteria. The document suggests that an external coach complete some of the data collection such as the walkthrough tools to increase reliability.

Restorative Justice Practices TFI Companion Guide

The purpose of this document is to supplement the TFI and help school teams assess where they are at with implementing RJ. There is an introduction to restorative practices including a definition of, "Restorative practices are processes that

proactively build healthy relationships and a sense of community to prevent and address conflict and wrongdoing.” The document describes how RJ is a shift away from punitive approaches and more towards relational and community responses to conflict. It also explains that RJ is rooted in ancient and indigenous communities and has also been used in the criminal justice system. There is also an explanation that programs such as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports compliment restorative practices and are best used together.

The second section of the document includes a detailed rubric that is broken down into three tiers. Tier one includes a RJ Practices Implementation Action Plan. This section includes designating a school climate team to be trained in a two-day introduction to RJ. It also guides school teams to plan professional development sessions on the RJ philosophy and time for teachers to receive a two-hour Community Building for Classroom Teachers training as well as Restorative Chats training. There is also a section on teacher coaching and who will be responsible for that support.

The Tier two section serves as a rubric for assessing how teachers are using targeted RJ practices in response to harm such as restorative inquiry, restorative circles, peer mediation, restorative meetings, and restorative community service. Tier three focuses on individualized RJ practices to support rebuilding of relationships and community. This practice is generally completed by a designated staff member who is trained in restorative conferencing, which is used to bring people together that have been impacted by an incident.

Each document reviewed provided a slightly new context with which to situate the RJ practices and perspectives. The purpose of the student and teacher reflection

sheets supports the observation and interview data. The process allows for a thoughtful and student-centered approach to discipline. The circle packet provides background and support for teachers to plan circles for their students and greatly encourages individuals to speak their own truth and work together to solve problems. Each interview participant, including the students, shared this viewpoint. This analysis indicates that the way in which RJ is reified in the school is reflected back in the perspectives and actions of staff and students.

The school climate plan, even though it is a district requirement, serves as a clear communication tool for school community stakeholders. Parents can look the plan up online and clearly see what types of behaviors will receive certain interventions. The interventions are supports for students, not consequences. This seems to help shift the culture of punitive outcomes to considering how student needs inform the type and intensity level of supports.

The six documents reviewed for the study provided a window into how RJ has been reified not only in at Linden Middle School, but with the district and Resolutions Northwest. The procedures and RJ philosophy described in the documents connected well with the observed practices at Linden. The circle keeper packet completely aligned with Kevin's RJ circle in his social studies class. The need for leveled responses to student behavior expressed in the interviews, was reflected in the tiered intervention format of the School Climate Handbook.

Restorative Practices Teacher Survey

Twenty-two classroom teachers including specialists (P.E. teacher, AVID teacher, counselor, ESL teacher, RJ coordinator) completed a survey to report on their background knowledge, classroom practices, perceptions, beliefs and experiences with RJ. This survey was administered to gain a general understanding of the current RJ landscape at the school. Table 1 represents the estimated number of hours spent in training around RJ concepts such as dialogue circles and conflict resolution. Of those that took the survey, participants in the “other” category have the most training overall. This category includes the RJ coordinator and counselor. Several participants noted that they would like more training in restorative practices in order to better meet the needs of their students.

Table 1

Estimated hours of RJ training

	0 hours	1-4 hours	5-9 hours	10+ hours
Classroom Teachers	2	3	3	1
Specialists	2	3	1	0
Counselor	0	3	1	0
Other	0	0	0	4

Training from Resolutions Northwest is offered to the teachers throughout the year, although it is on a volunteer basis. Once a month there is a dedicated staff meeting in which the RJ coordinators engage teachers in RJ activities and teach strategies to be used in their classrooms. The survey results indicate that teachers

want more training and some expressed that they wanted more ideas for quick restorative strategies they can use with their students.

Staff members were also surveyed on the estimated amount of times per month that they use restorative practices with students. The specific type of RJ in this instance was purposefully kept open by the researcher in order to capture a variety of practices being used. Table 2 shows staff members estimated times per month of using RJ with their students. These data indicate that most classroom teachers are using some form of RJ with their students between one and four times a month. The teachers that reported using RJ with even more frequency may be using one on one or small group RJ dialogues, but this survey did not address the specific types used.

Table 2

Estimated monthly use of restorative practices

	1-5 times	6-10 times	11-14 times	15+ times
Classroom teachers	4	1	1	2
Specialists	5	1	0	0
Counselor	0	1	0	0
Other	1	1	0	2

The survey participants who had an experience with supporting a student in restorative conversations with another adult mediating were asked to provide a description of what the experience was like. One classroom teacher wrote, “It was helpful to have a third party step in and help both the student and I feel as though we had a voice. Through the process, we were able to find solutions that worked for both of us.”

Another classroom teacher explained,

“I found it very helpful to have another adult to help guide the conversation and keep emotions in check. I rely on the RJ team when I feel I've hit a wall with the conversation. It is also comforting to know where to go when I need a sounding board.”

A specialist noted how RJ helps to keep discourse positive, although one participant explained that in one experience, they felt as though the students involved simply said what he or she wanted the other person to hear.

Restorative Practices at Linden

Triangulated data from observations, interviews, and surveys brought forth multiple common RJ practices occurring at Linden Middle School. The practices described below were found to best exemplify the current restorative actions being taken by both staff and students. Table 1 shows a brief summary of each of the RJ practices observed at Linden.

Table 3

RJ Practices Observed

RJ Practices
Restorative lunches: Reflection page completed and reviewed with student during lunch, in cafeteria.
One-on-one sessions: Staff member working individually with a student to resolve a conflict.
Small group sessions: Staff member facilitates small group discussion among involved students.
Whole class sessions: Teacher or RJ coordinator facilitates a planned dialogue circle with whole class.
Informal check-ins: Staff member informally chats with students before and after class.
Staff/RJ coordinator consultations- Direct support is provided to the classroom teacher by the RJ coordinator. Typically involves problem-solving and circle planning.
Staff RJ dialogue- Monthly professional development for teachers led by RJ coordinators to practice RJ strategies, analyze behavioral data, and collaborate.
Parent conversations- Meetings between the SMS, or RJ coordinator and the parents to problem-solve around a student conflict, aimed at student needs. When needed, student is present as well.

Restorative lunches

Linden Middle School has a unique way of helping students reflect on their behavior that does not affect classroom-learning time. Restorative lunch has been implemented to allow students to sit down in the cafeteria with their peers and complete a reflection sheet that helps them to process their behavior and what they will do differently next time (see Appendix G for Restorative Lunch Sheet).

Then, either the RJ coordinator or student management specialist will have a quick talk with them about their reflection. The SMS describes restorative lunches as, “A place for kids to contemplate their actions. It’s where they think about who they harmed, to whom they owe an apology to, whether they need help with the problem and who they can ask.” When appropriate there is dialogue between the students involved with the RJ coordinator present to help facilitate. The restorative lunch is purposeful and thoughtful, with the intention of helping students reflect on how they can follow through and help make a situation right again.

One-on-one sessions

The second RJ practice occurs frequently throughout the day and involves an individual student and a behavior support staff member. For example, when one student is struggling with a particular issue, or has been part of a larger conflict he or she will either be asked to or request themselves to engage in a one-on-one dialogue with the RJ coordinator or the SMS to help sort out the issue.

One-on-one sessions are often the starting point to gather information on an incident and figure out what an individual student needs before bringing in others involved. This practice typically involves taking the student out of class for a period of time, unless a staff member can manage to meet with him or her before or after school. The staff member that facilitates these discussions has the student fill out a short reflection sheet that helps them to think through the situation. During the discussion, the facilitator will take notes on the discussion, follow up with other students involved, and contact family members if necessary.

Small Group Sessions

An additional common RJ practice observed at Linden was a variety of small group sessions. The RJ coordinator, SMS, or vice-principal would often have scheduled or unscheduled discussions with several students to work out an issue. One such group that was observed involved three female students that were not getting along during a field trip and had been mocking a girl for the type of braids in her hair. It was clear that the girls had a history of difficulties getting along and the individual who was being picked on was visibly distraught. The RJ facilitator was able to sit down with the group of girls, have them each tell their side of the story to clarify the situation and then make agreements for how to move forward.

Whole Class Sessions

Three whole class RJ discussions were observed in this study. Each took place in a sixth grade social studies class. The students were all encouraged to share their feelings and perspectives as they worked to unravel a problem that was continually coming up in each class. The teacher guided and facilitated the discussion adding prompts as needed, although most students were very willing to share their thoughts. Whole class sessions happen in quite a few rooms in the school and across subject areas. Teachers are encouraged to have these sessions to proactively address potential issues and even tie them into content.

Several teachers explained in their interviews that they use the RJ discussion protocol to discuss larger social issues. For example, following the 2016 presidential election one teacher held dialogue circles in all of his classes to give students a chance

to voice their feelings and process some of the challenging emotions they were experiencing. Another teacher used RJ circles to help students process their feelings about Immigration Control Enforcement (ICE) raids that were happening in their community because many kids were feeling very anxious. It appears that RJ circles can be used for much more than restoring a harm done between individuals. They can be used as an avenue for social justice.

Informal Check-Ins

Another form that RJ takes at Linden is that of quick student check-ins. These take place throughout the day and typically involve the teachers, RJ coordinators, SMS, principal, and vice-principal simply chatting with individual students to see how they are doing that day. From the student interviews, I found that the students who experienced the check-ins with a staff member really appreciated them and felt special that an adult took the time to talk with them. Observations of staff at Linden showed that each adult makes a concerted effort to engage kids in these informal conversations each day. When I would walk through the halls in between interviews during passing time, teachers were out in the halls interacting with their students by asking them about their day. It became evident that strong and positive student-staff relationships exist at the school. Students frequently seek out the help and advice of their classroom teachers, but also visit the counseling and RJ offices throughout the day just to say 'hello' and to receive some positive support. This was observed numerous times during the course of the research, where students felt comfortable enough around the adults in the school to approach them for not only support but to interact with them in a casual, social manner.

Staff/RJ coordinator consultations

An additional RJ practice observed was that of consultation support provided by the RJ coordinators for staff members at Linden. This practice occurred when classroom teachers were struggling with a particular student or class and needed some additional ideas for how to address them. For example, I observed the multi-site coordinator, Lauren, work with a newer teacher who was trying to deal with a challenging Language Arts class. This practice usually involves the teacher reaching out to an RJ coordinator to explain what the situation is and ask for help in a specific area. The RJ coordinator then works in collaboration with that teacher to develop a lesson or series of lesson plans involving RJ circles that focus on solving the class conflict. In this particular instance, the RJ circle was not particularly successful because there had not been a foundation of dialogue circles previously with this specific group of students.

Following this specific RJ circle, I was able to debrief with Lauren about how she felt. She was visibly upset and expressed her frustration about how the circle did not go as planned. She explained that since the students had not been in a routine of participating in circles in this particular class, and were already struggling with getting along with one another, the circle, in this instance, did not serve its purpose and ended up being counter-productive to conflict resolution.

Staff RJ dialogue

Each month at a regular professional development session after school, RJ is the focus. The SMS, site-based, and multi-site RJ coordinators plan the agendas for these meetings. The sessions give the staff members a chance to practice RJ strategies,

engage in circles themselves, and share ideas and classroom struggles. I observed two of these professional development meetings during the course of the year.

Each meeting typically opens by an RJ check-in involving staff members in small groups turning towards each other and openly sharing how they are feeling in that moment. In the second meeting I participated in, everyone stood in a large circle and then each person shared one word to describe their current mood or state of mind. I was able to speak with Morgan following this meeting and she shared how the group activity serves two purposes. First, it grounds participants in the moment and asks them to tune into their current emotional state. Second, it engages teachers in an RJ practice that can be used with their students.

After the opening activity, the SMS gave each grade level behavioral data to review and discuss. This data analysis activity does not happen at each RJ staff meeting, but the SMS does meet monthly with individual grade level teams to look over behavioral trends. The data was broken down by race and the teams were encouraged to share how they are working to meet the needs of their students of color. Following this discussion and whole group share-out, each team was given a written scenario of a classroom situation and were asked to act it out in two different ways. First, each team role played their scenario with a traditional disciplinary approach and then repeated the process using a restorative strategy. After each team performed, the whole group analyzed the details and reflected on how each approach affected both students and staff.

Parent conversations

The final RJ practice observed at Linden involves parents and families. Although none of these interactions were directly observed, these data are from interviews with the vice-principal, SMS, and RJ coordinators. The SMS often calls parents to inform them of their child being involved in some type of school conflict. She reports that parents typically are very appreciative of the RJ process and explained “Parents are happy when they know someone has taken the time and slowed down to actually listen to their child.” Samantha noted that when she speaks to parents of a child who has been hurt in some way due to a conflict, they often want to know that the student responsible is going to be held accountable for their actions. She said that in those instances she is able to reassure parents that the other student truly is being held accountable, although it is often done in a manner that may involve restorative conversations and that it takes a lot of time and effort to work through issues with this approach to discipline.

An in-depth look into one RJ circle

I had the opportunity to be a part of three whole-class RJ circle dialogues as a participant-observer. I took field notes and audio recorded the experiences. The following section describes one of these circles in a sixth grade social studies class as well as my own observations and perspectives about the process.

When I came into the classroom a few minutes before the students, the teacher, Kevin, had the chairs set up in a large circle. Kevin had planned a series of three circles during this particular afternoon in each of his sixth grade classes. Before the students showed up, Kevin told me that the circle’s focus would be on de-briefing and

coming up with solutions about a student teacher that was struggling to connect with them and as a result, challenging behaviors in his classes had been increasing. On this day, the student teacher was not present, and Kevin felt the need to have help his students talk through some issues they had been experiencing in the class recently with the student teacher.

As the bell rang, students spilled into the room seeing the chairs set up for RJ. Some students were surprised, some seemed excited while others came in and sat down quietly. In the middle of the circle were two objects, these are called “centerpieces.” They are objects that are special or important to the class community, that represent experiences they have shared together. One of the objects was a student-created poster with six puzzle pieces drawn, each having different ideas and images about what makes a strong community. There were phrases such as, ‘mutual respect, ‘collaborate and work together,’ and ‘be kind.’ The first few minutes Kevin spent asking several students to switch spots, and helping kids to focus. The other object was a 3-D puzzle of the Sphinx, representing a monument and time period that the class had studied. Kevin had also placed a plant in the center as a decoration.

Kevin began the circle by passing out a half sheet of paper to the twenty-six students in the class. He asked them to quietly fill out one side, which asked everyone to think about a time when they tried something for the very first time and to write down emotions that they felt in that moment. He asked the students to do the activity quietly so everyone had the opportunity to think and to just focus on the emotions. The room quieted as everyone began writing.

As the students finished, Kevin directed their attention to the circle agreements. These agreements were created by another class, although, he said if anyone wanted to add to them they were welcome to do so. The first agreement was to participate in the circle. Kevin said, "Each and every single one of you in here has a voice that is powerful and important to this discussion." He encouraged students to speak up that typically do not. The next agreement was to keep the details of the circle within the walls of the classroom and to not go out in the halls and tell others about what they discussed. The third agreement was about keeping words honest, but not harmful. Kevin stressed that speaking openly was important and modeled a phrase in two very different tones of voice so the students could hear the difference in intent. The fourth agreement was about mutual respect. He said, "Everyone in here is worthy of your respect whether or not you are friends with them." The last two agreements were be kind and speak your truth. Kevin again explained, "It's okay for you to share your own feelings and own emotions." He then asked the students if they felt the agreements were reasonable and if they wanted to add anything. They agreed and no one had anything to add.

Kevin then briefly went over some expectations for the circle. He reminded the students of sign-language to be used when they agreed with someone. He had a stuffed monkey that was the "talking piece." He explained that whoever has the monkey is allowed to talk, and the others need to be listening. Kevin then explained the purpose of the circle was about how they could successfully work with, help and learn from their student teacher in the remaining five weeks of the placement. There were audible sighs and groans from the students at this point in the conversation.

Kevin then launched into the sharing phase of the circle. He explained that each person would share the emotions they felt when they tried something for the first time. The talking piece monkey was then passed around the circle. One student shared about how she was nervous during her first talent show. Another student said how when she came to middle school she was nervous to open a locker with a combination for the first time. Some students told short stories about trying sports for the first time. Other words that came out during this share out were: frustrated, sad, scared, uncomfortable, angry, and anxious. The monkey came back around to Kevin and he asked the class, “Why do you think I just asked you about emotions?” One student immediately raised her hand for the talking piece and responded, “So we’ll know how Miss Jenkins (pseudonym) feels because she’s teaching for the first time.” Kevin then asked the class what it is called when you identify with other’s feelings. One student quietly said, empathy. He then said, “Those emotions that you just shared are what Miss Jenkins walks through this door feeling everyday.”

Kevin then asked the students if they felt like they were experts the first time they tried the activity they wrote about. He asked students to stand up if they felt that way. Two students did, amidst some giggling from the class. Kevin joked with one girl who shared about softball saying, “Okay so the Chicago Cubs could have drafted you right after your first try?” The class, along with her smiled and laughed. Kevin explained that it can take 10,000 hours to become an expert in something and that their student teacher is just now starting out.

Kevin then explained how at this point in the year, their class is experiencing more behavioral issues than he normally has in his classes. He asked the class why

they think they spent the first month of school talking about what makes a good community. A student asked for the talking piece and answered, “If someone was to come or something was to happen with someone in our class that we would know how to act as a community and what to do.” Kevin said, “Yes, we cannot succeed on our own, think about the early civilizations we’ve learned about, they would not have made it if they didn’t work together.”

The next phase of the conversation started with Kevin asking his class to share out ways in which they think their student teacher could improve and help them feel more successful in their class. He explained that the student could say pass if they wanted to. At this point the monkey was passed around as the kids shared their ideas. Some ideas that the students shared were to have the student teacher slow down a little, to not get frustrated with the class, to teach more confidently, have more respect towards kids, to be more fair, to explain things so they can understand, talk louder, and to make the learning more challenging. Kevin then said he agreed and that he has had conversations with the student teacher about all of those things and he will continue to do so.

Then he asked the whole class to respond together to this question, “Who do you have control over?” The students quickly and confidently said, “Ourselves.” He then gave an example of when he gets frustrated he uses deep breathing to calm himself down. He posed the question to the class about what they can do to have control over their voice and their body so they don not escalate to a level of detention and referrals. A variety of ideas were shared by students including: take deep breaths and count down from ten, take a one or two minute break, to ask for what they need in

a nice way, tell yourself it will be over soon and you get to go home. Kevin then said he would be happy to talk with them about other ways that they can help calm their body and voice so that they do not say something or act in a way that they will regret. He said, “At the end of the day we cannot control anybody but ourselves and remember what we put out in the world comes back to us and the way we represent ourselves is the way people treat you.” He ended the circle with telling the kids how important they are in helping the student teacher to learn and grow and that he loves each and every one of them and wants them to continue to improve.

From my researcher perspective and having taught in elementary classrooms for the past 12 years, I was particularly struck by this circle process. Kevin took an issue that was affecting all of his classes, a struggling student teacher, with whom he himself was frustrated and turned it into a beautiful practice in developing empathy all while working towards real solutions. Having his students tap into emotions and experiences allowed for them to make connections with their student teacher that they otherwise would not have. I also thought it was extremely powerful when the students got to share specifically what they needed from the student teacher. It was immediately clear that they knew exactly what they needed and for them to be able to share and have their ideas truly listened to by their teacher was something very special to witness.

What was also highly evident in the circle was the strong relationships that Kevin had developed with his students. He was able to navigate the conversation with grace and humor, which got a bit chatty and silly at times. He re-focused the group as needed, yet still allowed everyone their time to talk. I was able to make these

conclusions from the student's positive reactions to his questions and their willingness to participate and share. When a certain student seemed a bit more hesitant to share, he would give them the opportunity to pass for that round, but gently let them know to be thinking of a response for the next time the talking piece went around the circle. In each case, the student was ready by the second pass through and shared their ideas and thoughts.

Stakeholders' Perspectives and Experiences

Data gathered from in-depth interviews, surveys, and observations were compiled into initial categories that reflected each participant's perspectives and opinions on the RJ approach and process. The viewpoints emerged through participant stories of personal experiences with facilitating RJ in their classrooms or engaging in and RJ process themselves.

After initial coding, I returned to the data to further explore for emerging commonalities. The stories told and views expressed by the interview participants brought forth a set of overarching collective perspectives that will be reported on in the following section. Each common perspective will be described within the following categories: beneficial aspects of RJ, challenges of RJ, and ideas for best practices of RJ implementation. Analysis and reflection from the researcher will follow each description of the collective themes within the three categories.

Stakeholder Perspectives: Benefits of RJ

Student Empowerment and Ownership. Each adult participant in the interviews spoke passionately about their beliefs in restorative practices. One theme linked to benefits of RJ that came out across the data from staff interviews is that RJ

empowers students and fosters a stronger sense of ownership over one's behaviors within the school and greater community. Kevin, the sixth grade social studies teacher said that the number one benefit he sees for students with RJ is ownership. When asked to expand on that idea, he said that "...RJ gives students power when you have a conversation with them about something that they want to talk about. It helps kids realize that their voice and their opinions matter."

John, the eight grade social studies teacher talked at length about how RJ "...empowers students with the language to help solve their problems." John views RJ as a philosophy that teaches students words and expressions that support conflict resolution. He shared that his students are much more likely to be proactive and "get in front of" an issue by, for example, letting him know if they are having a bad day or something is happening with their family or friends.

As the interviews took place, what was striking was a common mentality among staff members of truly wanting each child's voice to be heard and that their emotional well-being is a priority every day at Linden. This restorative mindset was not just simply given lip service; I directly observed it in the hallways, classrooms, and the counseling office. Kevin noted, "RJ is empowering because it gives kids the chance to talk through their barriers with a trusted adult." Kevin takes the time daily to have these types of conversations with his students.

Samantha, the SMS, added to this support when talking about the changes she has seen at Linden throughout her time here. She commented, "I've seen it, I've seen it in the last 18 years in how it's changed the kids we work with. The most powerful thing about it is the kids are in control of it, and they have the power to get help...I'm

giving them tools to make the choices to help themselves out of a tricky situation.” She said that often students will come to her office and tell her about potential conflicts within friend groups and she can then talk with those students first before the issue gets bigger. She spoke of RJ as “clearing a space,” for students to work out conflicts in ways that work for them. For Samantha, RJ is helping kids take ownership of their feelings and behaviors and work to make things right again.

The student interview data also indicated feelings of empowerment and ownership. One poignant example of this is the school’s practice of training students to facilitate RJ circles themselves. Amara, who had struggled behaviorally during her first year in middle school, talked about how leading RJ circles with girls who have similar needs has been a good experience for her. She said, “It [RJ] makes me feel like I’m actually able to give something back to someone who helped me before. If I learn something new about RJ, I can go home and teach my little nieces and nephews about it. We can actually go to school to help each other.” Amara was able to articulate how being a student in an RJ school has positively impacted her, and she even discussed taking her conflict resolution skills to high school with her next year.

Jamal, a seventh grader, also helps lead circles with both younger and older students. He explained how when he was younger he always wanted attention and talked back to his teachers, got in fights, and was in trouble frequently. Jamal, as if processing on the spot how he has evolved as a student, explained, “If you get in trouble every day, that’s another time that you’re missing out on school. Then you’re not gonna know nothin’ and not be that smart when you get older.” He went on to talk

about how he has changed and has realized that people enjoy being around him more when he acts mature and gets his work done.

During the student interviews Amara expressed a fascinating metaphor for what RJ is like that she had learned at a camp over the summer. She said, “If you think about a pot of crabs that are all trying to get out on their own, they end up pulling each other down. Instead, they can work together and lift each other up. It’s like, no one will be left behind if we all work together. That’s what RJ is like, we help each other.” Amara beautifully articulated not only what she had learned in the RJ camp, but had actually interpreted it into her very own philosophy.

Expression and Social Justice Framework. As the study progressed, it became evident that both staff and students view RJ as much more than an approach to discipline. RJ seemed to permeate the entire school culture. Staff and student conversations as well as classroom lessons housed the language of conflict-resolution and restorative work. It appeared that RJ has become a framework of sorts for how the school goes about their daily business. This framework is student-focused and was directly observed as a benefit of RJ at Linden.

One illustration of RJ as a framework for expression is in classroom lessons that utilize RJ dialogue as a foundation for processing content or working out a problem. The very nature of RJ dialogue circles is that of self-expression. In the three lessons I observed, students were asked to deeply think about another person who was struggling and link it back to their own personal experiences. Amara discussed how in the beginning of the year her math teacher had them do RJ circles to meet each other and also see what they aspired to do in the future.

We got in these circles and the teacher asked us like ten questions. One was do you want to go to college? Everyone was standing up for that one. It helped us get to know each other...it won't be so hard [when problems come up] to understand people when you know them better.

For Amara, a simple getting to know each other activity and talking to kids with whom she would normally not hang out helped support her feelings of belonging to the classroom community.

RJ at Linden is also an avenue for conversations regarding race. The youth action team has been trained in the Courageous Conversations protocol. Morgan, who often leads these group sessions, explained how they use RJ as a structure to discuss issues dealing with race that are happening in their school and greater community that are affecting students' lives. She described how there are often underlying struggles related to race that often go unsaid and RJ is one way to support students to speak out about what they are going through. Morgan shared with me that she began to notice that the students at Linden would often bring up racial issues during circles. This area was not the focus of my research questions, but it definitely warrants further exploration. One student said, "In the youth action team it's fun because we get to learn about each other and the world. We talk about problems going on and how we can help fix them."

RJ allows all voices to be heard. Another theme that emerged from the data in relation to the positive aspects of RJ is how the approach to discipline supports the expression of all stakeholders' viewpoints and experiences. This theme was quite strong among participants' reports across data points. Morgan describes, "RJ allows

every stakeholder to be heard and to get their whole story out. It helps students and families feel more connected to their community and even after kids leave Linden, they know they can always come back for support if they need it.” For her, RJ is a community approach to discipline and it is critical that they have everyone’s voice expressed in order to solve problems.

For Lauren, allowing the students involved to express their side of the story is also essential to RJ. Lauren feels that restorative practices help empower students by given them the opportunity to share and take part in the healing process. Lauren explained, that with restorative practices students are, “...seen not just for their actions, but as a whole person.” She is also a firm believer that when students are allowed to voice their feelings and how they were hurt, it helps adults to see past the single incident and to consider the child standing before them.

A survey participant responded to the benefits of RJ writing, “RJ allows every stakeholder to be heard and to get their whole story out. Also, I have found that the "punishments" more often fit the "crimes" and relationships can be maintained or improved in the process.” Another participant responded, “RJ is not punitive. Rather than taking the punitive road it's helpful to try where both or all parties are heard.”

Teachers at Linden see a value in the process of RJ for everyone involved. One survey respondent wrote that, “...RJ allows for teachers to think more fully about the purpose of discipline,” inferring that traditional approaches do not accomplish this task. Interestingly, John explains that in an RJ model his experience shows that students are much more willing to engage in conversation with adults because they know they are not “...in trouble,” and they will get a chance to share their viewpoint.

He notes how critical it is though to have a good relationship with the kids before this type of interaction is possible. RJ is a community-centered approach to conflict resolution. If the purpose of discipline is to learn from one's mistakes, help others and the larger community heal, and to move forward in a positive way, then the staff and students at Linden are seeing success with RJ.

A humanistic approach to discipline. Throughout the interview process, an additional theme emerged from the data regarding the philosophy of RJ. Multiple participants commented on their reasons for believing in this approach toward solving conflicts with youth. These discussions were very much beyond weighing what an appropriate consequence may be for given infractions; there was a deeply embedded sense of responsibility for promoting and maintaining a caring community.

Samantha, who works with students, staff, and families everyday regarding disciplinary actions has seen a marked increase in how the Linden community feels as a whole. She said, "Linden feels much safer and much more calm now that we've been doing RJ work for awhile." She notes that it is still a work in progress and they are always learning and growing, but there have been a lot of positive changes brought to the school community through RJ practices.

In her interview, Samantha also commented on her own perspectives and experiences with the differences between RJ and more traditional approaches to discipline. She notes, how important it is for kids to see how, "...human it is to hurt and make mistakes and allow the grace to make those mistakes right again. RJ is a very human approach." She even sees how social media has in some ways taken the human aspect out of interaction. As a direct example of this she explained how

students today seem, "...more emboldened online than they are in person so when they have to sit across from another human being and see the hurt, it makes it a lot easier to do this work."

For the staff at Linden, using RJ is really about creating a whole-hearted community. Lauren explained RJ as,

"We tell the kids that we don't have snitches at Linden, we're a community, and we hold each other accountable. The adults need to make sure that the students are holding that accountability...but the kids are really good about it as well."

Table 4

Participant Perspectives: The Benefits of RJ

Classroom teacher: "RJ is empowering because it gives kids the chance to talk through their barriers with a trusted adult."
RJ Coordinator: "RJ allows every stakeholder to be heard and to get their whole story out."
Student: "It's like, no one will be left behind if we all work together. That's what RJ is like, we help each other."
Classroom teacher: "RJ gives students power when you have a conversation with them about something that they want to talk about. It helps kids realize that their voice and their opinions matter."
Specialist: "RJ actually works to solve the problem, rather than just punishing it."

Stakeholder Perspectives: Challenges of RJ

Data collected from interviews, surveys, and observations brought forth several common themes among participants regarding the challenges that RJ has brought to this specific school setting. Staff and students differed in their perspectives in this area, although they expressed one commonality that deals with the confidence to speak in RJ circles. The upcoming section discusses three common challenges that adult participants expressed, their RJ implementation recommendations, followed by student perspectives on difficulties they have encountered with restorative practices.

Time and patience. In comparison with traditional forms of discipline, RJ simply takes more time. This can be a real challenge in a busy and underfunded public school setting. Morgan, the site based coordinator, spoke at length about how the challenge of time, for her is the “real work” and is completely worth the extra effort. She explained, “It’s time consuming. One of my biggest challenges is needing to always remind myself that I’m on the child’s time. They don’t always learn in one day, but sometimes they do. In a lot of cases it will take days, weeks, if not months for a child to realize and learn from their mistakes.”

Morgan also talks about the challenge of time in the way that RJ can take away from academics. She says she sometimes struggles with the balancing act of working with students in small groups or one-on-one with getting them back into their classroom setting. Morgan notes, “I have to slow myself down, not dismiss anything and find that finesse, I guess would be the word, to use just the right amount of time to send a clear message, but not have the student away from academics too long.” One classroom teacher respondent on the survey commented, “We need our students in

class as many minutes as possible. If they are not here and/or ready to learn, we can't move them towards success.”

John also expressed a similar challenge in facilitating circles. During his interview he said, “One of my challenges is being patient and not paraphrasing what the kids are expressing in the circle. Sometimes the best thing is to have students learn from each other and their class community.” He expressed how he often hears from teachers that are frustrated about student behavior and the immediacy of a consequence. He shared that if teachers are just willing to step back and see that child as a whole-person and not just that one action, it can really help students.

Becky, the vice-principal at Linden expressed a time challenge of her own, from an administrative point of view. When RJ circles occur that involve both the student and teacher, she says that it’s important for everyone to be heard. “How do you integrate that into our day, when you have classes. It’s hard getting teachers available.” She feels that it is critical for staff to feel like situations and conflicts with students are being handled responsibly and that they feel as though their voice is heard in the process.

The student management specialist, Samantha, also discussed the issue of time during her interview. She explains, “RJ is very time intensive and in order for it to work, you have to give it time. Lunch detention is much easier, but to take the time to have those conversations and give teachers class coverage so they can be involved...you must have administrative support. It does take time, but it’s worth it.”

Even though the adult participants brought up the challenge of finding enough time in the day, they all quickly followed their statements with the worthiness of the

RJ efforts. From my observations, it was evident that staff members were more than willing to put forth the extra time, effort, and patience for the benefit of their students and the greater school community.

Navigating the Circle. The second challenge that emerged from the data as common among several participants is that the adults often struggle with specific aspects of the dialogue circles. Kevin described that it is sometimes difficult for him to keep the conversation going in a circle that is happening in his classroom. For example, there were several instances in the RJ circle I observed in his classroom where a student expressed something that other's thought was funny. Some of the kids started to laugh and he had to ask the kids to take a moment to pause and re-group before continuing. He says, "Having the confidence to get the kids in the circle, to navigate it, to make sure the kids feel safe and respond and participate is challenging." Interestingly, he describes himself as having the personality for this type of work with kids and he really believes in it. He views, as does John, that RJ is how they manage behavior in the classroom and both teachers explain how it has been a very effective approach for them because it builds trust. Kevin explained how, "You can be a great teacher but not have the skills to keep an RJ conversation going. I think RJ should be differentiated by teacher comfort level." Even Kevin, who self-reports being comfortable with RJ, believing in its value, and having a personality suited for the practice, still struggled with dialogue facilitation at times. For teachers that do not have the same skills and perspectives as Kevin, it is plausible that navigating the circle is quite a large barrier for them.

Further classroom level challenges surfaced from teacher comments in both interviews and survey responses. One classroom teacher survey respondent wrote, “Time is my biggest obstacle. Also getting the out-spoken students to listen to their classmates and change their thinking based on discussions.” It was evident that multiple classroom teachers struggled with the social dynamics of navigating a circle, yet still felt as though RJ was worthy of continued practice.

John talked at length about how the RJ circle itself can be a bit-off putting for some teachers. He does not really like circling up all of his students for more formal dialogues. “The circle can feel very vulnerable at times and that’s why I think some students and teachers shy away from it.” He recognized that it is most likely his own discomfort that plays into the experience, but says “... it ultimately ends up to feeling pretty comfortable.” It was unclear exactly why he felt a vulnerability, although he did mention it is sometimes a challenge to get certain students to participate, or to keep the conversation going. John prefers to have one on one or small group conversations with his students to help solve problems. He expressed that since not all teachers are bought into RJ, that the training for it should be differentiated for different personality types and should not be so prescriptive. He explains that, “ I think if you have the same RJ principles and foundations, RJ can look a lot of different ways in a school. It’s sort of like how canned curriculum doesn’t work...a canned prescriptive RJ doesn’t work either.” John seems to have found a balance that works for him. He prefers supporting his students in repairing harm done through small group sessions rather than whole-class, formal dialogue.

District Support. The data on stakeholder perspectives also brought to light that the culture of restorative practices at Linden and the several other schools that are supported by Resolutions Northwest with RJ coaches are somewhat unique cases within the district. The school district as a whole promotes the use of restorative practices within their tiered-fidelity support system. The tiered system consists of examples of three levels of behavior ranging from mildly disruptive to intense and dangerous. Each tier connects with recommended interventions. This document is analyzed later the chapter. Although multiple participants expressed that even though district leadership espoused RJ, little was being done to provide real support.

A common frustration centered around inadequate district support was found throughout participant interviews. Lauren, who oversees RJ at multiple schools within the district expressed that the, "...elephant in the room is district support. How do we get district leadership to champion RJ more?" She explained that a high turnover rate of building administrators is a frustrating aspect of her job. Just as she gets a foundation of RJ in place and develops relationships, a new administrator comes in and may have a different philosophy. Lauren note, "It's hard to build consistency, especially with a lack of staffing in schools that can support RJ." Table 3 displays salient quotes from staff participants connected to the challenges of RJ.

Table 3

Participant Perspectives: Challenges of RJ

<p>RJ Site Coordinator: “It’s time consuming. One of my biggest challenges is needing to always remind myself that I’m on the child’s time.”</p>
<p>Classroom teacher: “One of my challenges is being patient and not paraphrasing what the kids are expressing in the circle. Sometimes the best thing is to have students learn from each other and their class community.”</p>
<p>Classroom teacher: “Having the confidence to get the kids in the circle, to navigate it, to make sure the kids feel safe and respond and participate is challenging.”</p>
<p>Classroom teacher: “The circle can feel very vulnerable at times and that’s why I think some students and teachers shy away from it.”</p>
<p>Classroom teacher: “I do feel like there are times when RJ does not work - generally when it takes place outside of the classroom, thus removing the teacher's voice or the voice of those other students in the classroom who may have ended up feeling unsafe, disrespected, or have had their learning interrupted.”</p>

Stakeholder Perspectives: Staff RJ Recommendations

Throughout the data collection phase, the benefits and challenges with RJ at Linden naturally came out in conversation and observation. One additional and critical areas of understanding upon which this study seeks to gain is that of best practices with restorative work. The following results may serve as an avenue for staff members to reflect on their work and also to help inform and support future RJ practices in other schools. The question was posed during each staff member interview about the advice or suggestions they have to a school or district looking to implement restorative approaches to discipline. In this area of data, there were great commonalities among participants' responses. Common themes will be presented and discussed in the following section.

Accountability is Key

The most commonly stated "advice" that staff members have for schools looking to adopt restorative practices is the idea of holding kids accountable for their actions. Samantha, the SMS, explained that when they first started RJ they went from following the student handbook, where every action had a direct consequence, to completely the opposite where it felt as though kids were getting away with stuff. John felt similarly and lamented that they had some students the first year of RJ that would simply roam the halls all the time and were not being guided correctly.

During this rocky first year, many staff, students, and families were upset by the new changes in the approach to discipline at Linden. There were issues with bullying that some felt were not being taken seriously enough. The missing link seemed to be accountability. Samantha commented that, "We had to go through those

trials and tribulations in the beginning to help make it work for our school and we learned there still has to be accountability.”

Morgan contributed to this common thread of the need to hold students accountable for their actions, but within a restorative framework. Morgan explained that, “If there is not an accountability piece, restorative work gets lost in translation and those that are hurt feel like nobody’s doin’ anything about it. We cannot be afraid of accountability.” When questioned further about what that meant, she went on to explain that students must come to agreements and then commitments to what they will do moving forward. It is up to the students and to the adults working with them to help hold them accountable. If an agreed upon commitment, such as treating someone respectfully is not being held up, Morgan said that usually the kids themselves will let her know and then she has a conversation with them to come at it from a new angle.

Morgan also talks about, “non-negotiables” in the student handbook. These are infractions such as touching, hitting, and threatening that do have an immediate consequence that is spelled out in the student handbook. If a student is not being safe they are sent home, but the difference at Linden is that upon return they go through restorative reflection. This typically means that the student or students involved sit down with Morgan, Samantha, or Lauren and talk through the incident so they can help identify what went wrong and what they need help with to move forward in a positive way. “Every child, regardless of what they did will get tools and talk time to help them out of the situation.”

It seems that the difference between RJ here at Linden in comparison with more traditional, punitive approaches is that accountability is an agreement. It is a

process whereby all stakeholders have a chance to weigh in and only then can appropriate accountability measures be discussed. Morgan explained, “You do develop relationships with all those involved so that the accountability piece doesn’t have to be a disagreement, you can come up with those together. It’s not, here’s what we want to do with your child, it’s, let’s do this together.” The work that the staff does to make strong and meaningful relationships with the students is absolutely central to RJ’s success at Linden.

Conversations with classroom teachers also led to the discussion of accountability. John, the eighth grade social studies teacher was also witness to the pendulum swing of discipline approaches when RJ first began at Linden. He now feels that after an initial lack of holding students accountable, they have a much more balanced approach. John explains, “RJ doesn’t absolve us or our students of accountability. It removes the power struggle and anger. It’s really about teaching and healing.”

Analysis of Samantha, John, and Morgan’s comments on accountability within RJ, suggests that relationships are central to the approach. If students are asked to come together and not only face their peers that they have hurt, but also come up with ideas for making it right again in a collaborative manner, they must trust the adults facilitating the process. When students trust the adults and the process of RJ, it supports them in taking responsibility and being able to express what they need. Samantha explains that the adults facilitating the process have an important job, “If you don’t do it with fidelity, the kids will figure it out. For it to work, the kids have to

hold each other accountable, the grown ups have to hold the kids and themselves accountable to do the checking in and hold those agreements.”

Rather than disciplinary action being placed on a student without their voice in consideration, the very premise of RJ is that everyone involved has a say and can actively participate in the healing process in ways that work for them personally.

RJ School Leadership and Staff Commitment

An additional theme in the recommendation category is the importance of having an on-site RJ coordinator or coach to lead and guide the work. With time constraints as previously discussed being so much of a challenge in a public school setting, having a designated position on the school faculty that can focus solely on restorative work with students is critical for the success of the program.

John explained that although he has been using restorative approaches with his students for a number of years, Linden is the first school he has worked for that has an RJ coach. For him, this position is essential, “Having an RJ coach is awesome and you can tell that our students have had training in the language that helps them express their feelings.” He told a story of when he first came to Linden and was having trouble with a student being disrespectful to him and another teacher in the hallway. He said that about one hour later, the RJ coach had talked it through with that student and he had an apology letter on his desk. He said that would not have been possible without an RJ coach.

Survey data also reflected how appreciative staff members are of having a dedicated RJ coach at their school. One respondent wrote, “I found it very helpful to have another adult to help guide the conversation and keep emotions in check. I rely

on the RJ team when I feel I've hit a wall with the conversation. It is also comforting to know where to go when I need a sounding board.”

From Lauren’s point of view, she thinks that the model of an RJ site coordinator that is supported by an outside, multi-site coordinator is ideal. Since Lauren spends approximately eight hours a week at Linden, while splitting her time among several other schools, she can have an outside perspective that can be of support for Morgan. She also can plan PD, do paperwork, and create materials that Morgan may not have time for in her busy day. Lauren explains that in RJ work, “You need the support of a team and the more heads around a problem, the better.”

Being part of this RJ team at Linden allows for Lauren and Morgan to run monthly PD sessions with the staff to help teach them strategies and also experience RJ first-hand. Lauren feels that teachers most likely will not buy-in to RJ unless they have, “...personally been moved by it and until then they won’t keep driving the work.” She explains that teachers often feel fear around the unknown of RJ if they have not experienced it themselves. These fears are rooted in teachers’ self-perceived lack of skills in effectively leading an RJ dialogue, or feeling uncomfortable with sharing their own emotions, or navigating the emotions of others. These apprehensions suggest that having a designated RJ staff at the school is critical in helping teachers move forward in their practice and understanding of how restorative work can benefit students.

Along the lines of school leadership for RJ work, exist the issue of teacher buy-in. The classroom teachers interviewed expressed ideas for supporting this for staff who were more hesitant to adopt restorative practices. John commented, “You

have to have buy-in from the staff and sometimes that might mean the administrators have specific conversations with teachers who are struggling with RJ so they can better understand where the accountability comes in for students.” In his experience, teachers had been frustrated with not seeing how students were held responsible for their actions, so if school leadership could work with them to support their understanding of how accountability works within an RJ framework, teachers might be more likely to use RJ strategies.

Another recommendation that John has for creating strong staff buy-in is tailoring trainings of RJ that meet the different learning styles and backgrounds of teachers. He explained that what may work and feel comfortable for some teachers, may create anxiety for others. For example, he said that he is quite comfortable sharing his own emotions in front of his students, whereas other teachers might be a lot more hesitant to do so. Also, knowing how to keep a conversation going if it begins to wane, as well as re-directing if students get off topic are challenging skills that take practice, so teachers must have a vested interest in RJ to be willing to work at it.

There needs to be some differentiation in how RJ looks from classroom to classroom so that the foundational principles of RJ are consistent and school-wide, but the strategies themselves may look slightly different. He advised against being prescriptive in how RJ should look. An example of this differentiation would be the RJ coordinator working closely with individual classroom teachers in a coaching role to develop facilitation skills that felt comfortable for them.

Kevin spoke about his recommendations centered around RJ training for teachers. He felt strongly that teachers need to be thoroughly trained in RJ strategies, but not pulled away from their classrooms. He said ironically that, “If I’m away for an RJ training, I often have to do RJ with my students when I return because of experiences my kids had with the substitute.” He also suggests the importance of having everyone in the school know what the goals of RJ are and that being on the same page is critical. He discussed how he would like to see parent trainings as well. John also believes it is important that staff realize that RJ may not be the best solution in every case. It could be that the student does need to be removed from school for a time period because of physically harming someone or bringing a weapon to school. There may also be cases where RJ has been tried many times with a student and does not seem to be effective, in which case the RJ coordinator and SMS work closely with the school counselors to figure out the needs of the child and develop a plan for helping them.

Plan proactive circles

An additional common suggestion for RJ practice that was brought about through interview data was the importance of involving students in fun and proactive circles that are not necessarily about a problem that is occurring. For example, Lauren explained that it is not effective to only use RJ circle dialogue for conflict resolution. She says, “If you’re only doing circles in response to problems, it can become a source of stress.” She said that to help mitigate this, she helps teachers plan positive circles that are fun for the kids. This practice helps kids to start seeing a connection between the circle and engaging with peers in a relaxed environment that helps them share and

express themselves. When it comes time to circle up for more serious issues, there is already an environment that exists for support and having their voice heard.

Several teachers at Linden talked about their use of RJ circles as community building activities where students get to know each other. Amara, one of the students on the YAT, commented on how much she liked the fun circles where she had the opportunity to branch out and learn about students she wouldn't normally have talked with. She said that when it came time to solve a problem with other students, it was a lot easier because she knew them.

Morgan also discussed the importance of circles that are not solely focused on a specific problem. "We try to plan circles of fun, that's what this age group really enjoys and it also helps lay a foundation for those times down the road when the kids might need to sit down and solve a problem together."

Table 4

Participant Perspectives: Recommendations for RJ Practices

RJ site coordinator: If there is not an accountability piece, restorative work gets lots in translation and those that are hurt feel like nobody's doin' anything about it. We cannot be afraid of accountability."
Classroom teacher: "RJ doesn't absolve us or our students of accountability. It removes the power struggle and anger. It's really about teaching and healing."
Classroom teacher: "Having an RJ coach is awesome and you can tell that our students have had training in the language that helps them express their feelings."
Multi-site RJ coordinator: "You need the support of a team and the more head's around a problem, the better."
Multi-site RJ coordinator: "If you're only doing circles in response to problems, it can become a source of stress."

Student RJ Perspectives and Experiences

I worked closely with both Lauren and Morgan to find students to interview. Originally I was not sure how to go about selecting students because I was not going to focus in on one specific RJ circle. Then, through my conversations with Morgan I learned about the Youth Action Team (YAT). Morgan and Lauren help lead this group of students. The specific individuals and the number of kids on the YAT changes throughout the year, although some students stay in the group for longer periods of time. The goals of the YAT are to encourage and develop student RJ facilitators as well get together and talk about social issues. Both Lauren and Morgan

suggested that I interview students from the YAT, and they helped arrange days and times for me to meet with them that didn't interfere with classroom learning.

I spent approximately 30 minutes with each student asking them questions about RJ at their school, their experiences, and how they felt about it. There were several common themes that developed while coding the interview transcripts.

RJ Encourages Self-Expression and Positive Problem-Solving

The first common thread that wove the students' perspectives of RJ together was how the process helps them to feel better about themselves. All three students expressed, in various ways, that being involved in RJ at Linden has helped them to work through problems. Amara said, "RJ gives you opportunities and options so you can feel good about yourself." She was speaking in the context of instead of being expelled from school, that the teachers at Linden work with the students to help them to catch up on work and to talk through issues that are going on for them.

Jamal also expressed how RJ has helped him. During his interview he spoke a lot about how he enjoys being on the YAT because he has the opportunity to help other kids. "It [RJ] makes you feel better because you get to talk about your feelings and tell your story." Jamal explained how he feels protected in the circle because he knows that the kids in it will not go and tell others about what was discussed.

Dominique shared a similar view, "RJ helps me sometimes, like when Lauren comes to talk with me and check-in... I like that." He also shared a very interesting viewpoint about kid-to-kid communication. "It's like, kids talking to kids get more respect. Teachers have different languages, but kids talk regular talk so we can understand each other." I asked him to explain this statement a bit more. He said that sometimes

when teachers are talking to kids they use words and language that are hard to understand, but when it is just kids talking with other kids it is easier to understand one another. This is a powerful way to describe student dialogue that is at the heart of RJ.

RJ has a Transformative Effect on Student Behavior

Another common theme among student perspective data was the idea that RJ has helped shape the kids they are today through reflection and dialogue. With each student interview, it was brilliantly clear that they each had overcome something in their school life with the support of RJ practices. For example, as noted earlier, Jamal had a difficult sixth grade year and was getting in trouble at school and at home for talking back to teachers, being disrespectful and not completing his work. He said that because of RJ, he was able to talk about why he was acting that way and it was to get attention. He realized through conversations with other kids and the RJ coordinator that he would receive much more positive attention if he focused. “I learned to just sit there and get my work done and not talk back.” For Jamal in particular, his parents played a large role in this realization as well. They talk with him frequently about the power of education and the opportunities it can bring. He brought up his family quite frequently during the interview.

Amara is a striking example of a student who has turned her behavior and perspective around with the help of RJ. As briefly described earlier, Amara struggled during her sixth grade year and had many referrals. Her behaviors ranged from excessive talking in class to getting into physical fights. With numerous RJ circles and one-on-one sessions with teachers and RJ staff members, Amara realized that she

was trying to gain attention with her behavior. “I learned that you don’t need to be the center of attention to get help.” Amara proudly talked about how she leads circles now with girls who also struggle with needing attention. She’s able to bring her eighth grade wisdom to these circles and help the girls reflect on their actions. She was able to verbalize how things have come full circle for her and she is looking ahead to high school to help her fellow students learn to “...use their words and not their hands,” to solve problems.

Dominique also expressed some personal takeaways from his experience being involved with the YAT. His perspectives about the world opened up. In contrast with Jamal and Amara, Dominique mostly talked about how being on the YAT helped him learn more about the needs of his community and his role in helping others. He projected a sense of pride when he told me about getting the chance to donate clothes and help serve hot soup to those in need. He explained how in their groups sometimes they talk about problems happening in the world and he’s learned that, “RJ can help me to make a difference, to make a change.”

Student Challenges: Confidence and Perspective-Taking

The students were also asked about what they think is difficult about RJ. Each student had slightly different responses. Jamal responded that he thinks it is sometimes easier to help lead circles when he does not really know the other kids. He explained that it is harder for him when he is friends with the others in the circle. For Amara, trying to understand other kids’ perspectives and where they are coming from poses the most difficulty. Finally, for Dominique he said that having the confidence to

speak in front of the group has been his biggest challenge, but he's gotten better at that.

Themes across data sources

Each of the five data sources provided unique insights into RJ practices at Linden Middle School. Several cross-cutting ideas and strong connections emerged from comparing the major themes from each data set. By first conducting the document analysis, I was able to collect a basic knowledge of the espoused RJ values and systems that were currently in place in both the school and district. This provided a solid background going into the survey, interview and observations. I was then able to take survey and interview data and compare it to the observed RJ practices. This process allowed me to see where teachers and students were making strong connections to the RJ systems and values currently in place. It also enabled me to see where those elements seem to break down or need more support. Overall, I have found three overarching themes that tie the themes from each separate data source together.

Strong relationships are essential. Across each data source, participants reported that the strength of their individual relationships is what enabled RJ to be successful for them. As a grounding for this theme, the document analysis demonstrated that teachers must take the time to plan positive, community-building circles and develop good rapport with their students. The students each expressed feeling personally connected to at least one adult staff member at Linden and how that allowed them to feel comfortable enough to share their feelings with them and go to them in times of need. Discussions in staff interviews centered on how building positive relationships with students was absolutely critical to the success of RJ in their

classrooms. It was reported that those connections are what allows the difficult conversations about conflict and accountability to occur.

Compassion is the linchpin for RJ. A second theme that emerged from across the five data sources is the importance of compassion for others. The document analysis emphasized developing the skills of listening to each other with care. This skill was embedded in both the small group and whole group processes I observed. Students must wait for their turn to speak and respond respectfully to others' thoughts and feelings. The students interviewed talked about how taking the view of another was very difficult, but ultimately one of the most important things they could learn how to do. In the staff interviews, John spoke about how RJ slows the discipline process down and it helps teachers view their students as humans that are learning, rather than kids deserving of punishment. Across staff interviews RJ was referred to as creating the, "time and space," for students to talk through problems in a supportive environment and to come up with solutions that fit everyone's needs.

In my observations of RJ in the classroom I saw tremendous compassion from students that were frustrated by their student teacher, yet still shared numerous ways, in a very respectful manner that they could help her. I also witnessed three female students in an argument where one student was very hurt emotionally, but they were able to work it out with the guidance of the RJ coordinator and the time to sit with one another to work things out.

RJ is inclusive of all voices. The very premise of RJ at Linden Middle School is that it is an avenue for everyone's voice to be heard and considered. The circle

process outlined in the RJ documents includes specific protocols for teachers to follow to ensure everyone has a chance to share their ideas and feelings. This was evident in the classroom observations as well as the multiple on-one-one, informal conversations I witnessed that took place during passing times. Kevin shared how in one of his classroom circles, a student shared a political view that he and his family had, which was quite different compared to many students in the rest of the class. Kevin himself had a hard time hearing the opinions the student expressed. The RJ process allowed for that student to share, to be listened to, and for others to respectfully share their opposing ideas.

The students interviewed also shared how RJ has made them feel better about conflicts in the past because they actually get to talk things out and find solutions. The more outspoken students must wait to share, while other students who are more reserved get some thinking time to prepare what they want to say as the talking piece makes its way around the circle. In small group situations, every student had the opportunity to voice their entire side of the story. Everyone's thoughts are considered in the process of RJ at Linden.

Summary of Chapter

This chapter presented the results of the RJ practices and staff and student perspectives and experiences at Linden Middle School. The findings from the five data sources were discussed including: staff and student interviews, RJ observations, staff survey, and document analysis. In the next chapter, further discussion and analysis of the results will help connect the findings to theoretical framework and current

literature. Study implications, limitations and recommendations for future research will be discussed.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

This qualitative case study explored the experiences, beliefs, and perceptions of multiple stakeholders involved in restorative justice practices in one Pacific Northwest middle school. The purpose of this research was to deeply explore the viewpoints of those directly involved in and affected by restorative approaches to discipline, in comparison with traditional, punitive measures. Data collected and analyzed from RJ dialogue observations, staff surveys, in-depth interviews with students and staff, as well as document analysis have helped shape a portrait of RJ at Linden Middle School. This portrait provides insight into the participants' lived experiences of restorative practices as well as recommendations for those looking to implement or improve their current programs.

The following chapter will expound upon the research questions by connecting study results to the theoretical framework and the current literature in the field of restorative practices. Conclusions will be drawn through the exploration of theory and practice. Finally, study implications, and limitations will be discussed as well as recommendations for further research.

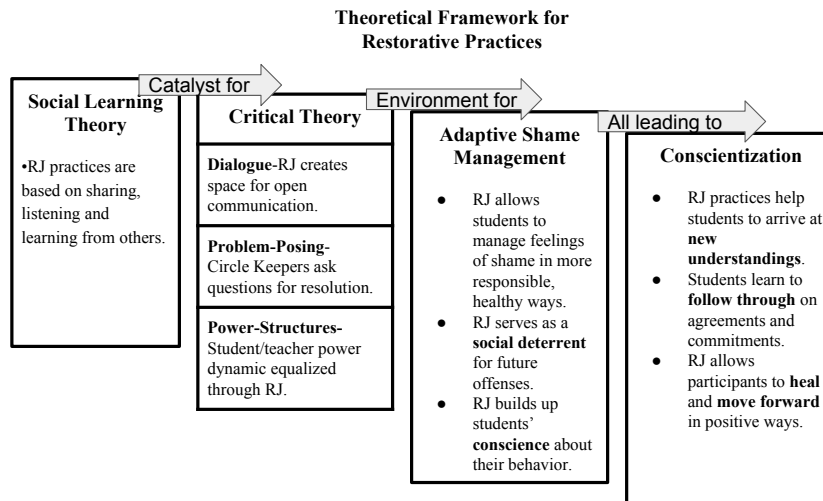
The literature review from chapter two focused on reporting quantitative data regarding the effectiveness of RJ in schools. Findings from this particular study add to a research gap by providing a robust description of RJ practices and stakeholder perceptions. For this study, I purposefully chose to study the lived

experiences of students and staff involved in RJ practices. I wanted to learn from and share their stories. The study implications and recommendations have been drawn from the participants' perspectives and experiences.

Review of the Theoretical Framework

The following section describes each component of the theoretical framework as it connects to the findings of the study. First, data from the study were analyzed through the lens of Vygotsky's social learning theory (Kozulin, 2013). Conclusions will be drawn about the observed RJ practices at Linden Middle School and how they connect to Vygotsky's key ideas of mediation and learning through social interaction. Social Learning theory is framed as the catalyst for creating the conditions needed in order for critical dialogue to take place.

The second component of the theoretical framework is Freire's Critical Theory. Results from study will be linked to four aspects of the theory including: dialogue, power-structures, problem-posing, and conscientization. Analysis of how theory and observed RJ practices are strongly connected in this particular section of the framework will be discussed. Finally, conclusions will be drawn regarding the connections between RJ practices at Linden Middle School and how they support adaptive shame management. Figure 2 reviews the visual display of the theoretical framework.



Social Learning Theory Connections

Students learning to navigate and regulate their thinking, emotions, and reactions in social settings is a ubiquitous practice at Linden Middle School, which is the direct result of RJ. From this study, I have learned that RJ is a flexible range of social learning practices. RJ is enmeshed in the school culture as students and staff members continually work to problem-solve in ways that involve deeply listening to others. Samantha, the SMS, explained that RJ is central to everything they do at Linden. During the course of this research multiple restorative practices were observed that support social learning. For example, in both small and whole group RJ dialogues, staff members facilitate and support student interaction to help solve conflict. In these sessions students are encouraged to share their perspectives, emotions, and what they needed to make

things right again. This practice was highly evident when analyzing transcripts from whole class RJ circles.

The student participants were also able to articulate how they have learned from others in RJ sessions. They shared how RJ has been impactful in their own understanding and growth as a young adult. Amara shared that, "One of the hardest things for me is learning someone else's perspective and tryin' to understand that, but it helps me learn more about them." Her own very thoughtful perspectives on RJ reflected a deep internalization of the process. She shared that in their school they try to "...lift each other up," and that students can "...actually go to school to help each other." Jamal talked about how he and Amara used to get in fights all the time but with RJ, "...we worked it out and we're good now." It became clear that for these students, RJ has been a highly positive influence in their lives and that they would even continue to use the skills they have learned in the future.

The RJ dialogue also has helped students feel connected to their school community and that they will not miss out on academic opportunities from detention or suspension. Each student interviewed discussed how he or she felt supported by the teachers at Linden. For example, Amara shared that when students have to leave the classroom for a behavior, the teachers will give them extra time to catch up on the work they missed. Dominique explained the process as, "In RJ they let us talk it out so we don't get kicked out." My time spent talking with the students and hearing their stories allowed me to see that they

felt very appreciative of having RJ at their school, almost as if they felt lucky. Each student interviewed expressed a wish for all schools to have RJ.

Connecting Staff perspectives to the Theoretical Framework

A variety of staff perspectives and experiences were shared through interviews, observations and survey data that reflect viewpoints in connection with social learning theory. Morgan, the site-based RJ coordinator, talked very passionately about her work at Linden in that for her, it is truly all about the connections with kids and families. She explained that the strong relationships she has worked to build with staff, students, and parents have allowed her to have the difficult conversations that often arise with conflict. John also explained in his interview that students are more willing to engage with teachers during a tense situation in their school because they know the adult will listen to them and they are not, “in trouble” in a traditional, punitive sense with immediate consequences attached.

Observing these strong relationships play out on the day-to-day basis at Linden was inspiring. The staff actively practices using a range of RJ approaches to support students. It was quite evident that these practices have taken a long time to develop. The real takeaway is that RJ when seen through a social learning lens requires compassion and the willingness to understand someone else’s’ background and perspectives. A flexible restorative program that supports structured student dialogue is critical for the development of these social skills in youth. Through social means, this is carried out time and time again at Linden.

The small group circle dialogue that was observed reflects ideas in social learning theory as well. Social mediation is the interaction between people to help work towards a goal or resolution (Kozulin, 2013). It is premised upon the idea that through a back and forth sharing of perspectives and experiences, we can learn and grow together. The power of mediation was directly observed in this study both in small and whole group settings. In one small group that was observed, two girls that were very upset with each other over a negative exchange during a field trip, were able to have a space to share not only their emotions but what they wanted the outcome to be. After some respectful argument, mediated by Morgan, the girls were able to agree on several commitments they would make towards being more kind to each other. The social interaction, with the facilitator present, is what allowed for this discourse to be successful. The interaction and problem solving would not have been possible if one of them simply got sent home for their behavior.

Connecting Student Perspectives

Throughout the course of data analysis, there were several themes that emerged from the students' perspectives of RJ that connect with the theoretical framework. Each student interviewed, expressed that RJ was helpful because it was supportive. For example, Amara spoke that in RJ they, "lift each other up," instead of being hurtful. This "lifting" is a social process. Vygotsky theorized that since we are social creatures we learn through interacting with others and the world around us. Inherent in the RJ practices observed at Linden Middle school is

that we can learn with and from each other to repair damaged relationships. For Amara, the strength of RJ lies in the positive social interaction she has had from being involved with the YAT.

Continuing to connect social learning to students' experiences and perspectives, the other two students interviewed, Dominique and Jamal, expressed several different ways that RJ has benefitted them. For Jamal, RJ allows him to share his feelings in a way that he feels protected by the confidentiality of the circle. The actual procedures and agreements of the circle contributed to his feelings of safety. He was also able to come to new understandings about the negative consequences of his actions by way of talking them through with teachers, peers and his parents. The positive conclusions that Jamal has drawn from his RJ experiences are a direct result of social learning processes being actively encouraged and scheduled at the school.

Interestingly, Dominique had a slightly different perspective on RJ's benefits from a social standpoint. During his interview he explained that what he enjoys the most about being on the YAT is that they get to talk about world issues. They discuss issues around poverty and even the unequal treatment of minorities. Dominique shared that he likes to learn about other people and to find ways to, "make a difference, and make a change," for the better. For him, RJ represents a way to learn about the world and try to come up with solutions for improving it. Again, this learning came about through discussion and interaction, which support the ideas of social learning theory.

Connections to Critical Theory

Within the theoretical framework for this study, social learning theory (Vygotsky) is viewed as a catalyst for three components of critical theory to occur including: open dialogue, breaking down traditional power structures, and problem-posing (Freire). The following section will describe how the study results relate to each of these components, drawing conclusions from each.

Dialogue. Freire believed that when we can name our own worlds, we will be empowered and closer to being free (1970). This philosophy was absolutely integral to RJ practices and perspectives at Linden Middle School. Samantha explained that at Linden they are simply creating the, "...time and space," for students to express their own stories and viewpoints. The vice principal spoke about her belief that every student, parent, and staff member deserves to have their voices heard. These staff perspectives directly shape the observed RJ practices at the school.

In order for the dialogue to result in resolution, all parties involved need to share their story, and express what they need. Allowing students the time and space to express their needs during the school day has not been a common practice in schools. RJ respectfully places the students at the center of the disciplinary process and makes it meaningful for them. Through dialogue, students are given the time and space to reflect on their actions and feelings. From the observations and interviews that I analyzed, I have come to the

conclusion that RJ is a whole-hearted approach to supporting kids as they sort through the difficult situations.

Problem-Posing. Freire's concept of problem-posing, challenges the traditional notion that teachers are 'banks' of knowledge ready to be dispersed among their students. Problem-posing works hand-in-hand with dialogue to create a partnership between teachers and students and helps to undo the notion that teachers are the directors of student learning. Problem-posing in regards to RJ is a way to ask critical questions to an individual or group to help solve a conflict. In each RJ observation, I noted strong evidence of problem-posing.

In the three whole-class RJ dialogues, the teacher used open questioning techniques to get his students to deeply consider their own feelings and experiences. In the small group observation, Morgan guided the conversation between several girls to include a series of thoughtful questions. This strategy is central to RJ at Linden. When the facilitators inquire about problems or challenges that students are facing, again, the focus becomes directly on the needs of the students. The RJ documents analyzed also included numerous open ended questions designed for deep-reflection. RJ creates the conditions so both students and teachers, "...become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow" (Freire, 1970, p. 80).

Power-structures. Along this same thread, researchers such as Vaandering (2010) have theorized that we must look at existing power structures within schools when studying RJ because they play a critical role. She argues that the

institution itself should be considered a part of circle dialogues. When we take this into consideration, we begin to look at traditional power imbalances of teachers in relation to students. This rings especially true in school discipline. Historically, school leaders have decided the consequences for students with little to no opportunity for students to voice their needs and concerns. From what I have learned at Linden Middle School, these power structures have begun to break down in positive ways that help empower students.

There are several examples that illustrate the breaking down of traditional student-teacher power dynamics at the school. First, at Linden, there is a practice of adults deeply listening to their students. Both classroom teachers interviewed discussed how it is not up to them to make choices for their students, rather, they provide the time and space for students to share and then come to their own conclusions. Admittedly, this was a challenge for the teachers to not intervene or interrupt the process, but they felt it was a very powerful and worthwhile practice.

RJ also helps empower students by helping them take responsibility for their own decisions and actions. This perspective was found to be a common theme among staff participants across data sources. Both teachers and students discussed their viewpoints in connection with the theme of empowerment. Kevin explained, "...RJ gives power to kids to stick up for themselves." He believes that RJ sets students up better for being in the working world in the future. Observational data of Kevin as circle keeper reinforced his perspectives as he

encouraged his students to speak open and honestly and that their voice matters. These phrases are very powerful for a teacher to say, because they demonstrate that what students have to say is important and it will be valued. It also places the ownership back into the students' hands, once again helping to equalize traditional power structures.

In traditional disciplinary approaches, power structures are very black and white. A teacher or administrator has the ultimate say over a child's consequences with little to no room for the expression of the student's needs. One of the most striking things at Linden Middle School, is a real sense that students' voices matter. This is not simply something that people talk about, the students actively participate in their own disciplinary processes from the standpoint of learning and moving forward in more informed ways. John, the eighth grade social studies teacher said, "We are more interested in teaching them [students] as human beings, rather than punishing them." Time, space and personnel have been set up for these conversations to occur.

Freire, (1970) discusses the idea that teachers and students must be in a partnership with each other in order for authentic learning to occur (p. 75). The communication between teachers and students is absolutely critical for this to occur. In the RJ practices observed at Linden, evidence of this partnership was very strong. The RJ coordinators, SMS, administrators and teachers were all observed having caring conversations with students throughout the building and

in a variety of contexts. Students are asked how they feel and are encouraged to share and work towards making things right with those that were harmed.

Conscientization. This study also explored whether or not participants of RJ circles had come to any new understandings about their behavior as a result of the dialogue process. Vaandering, (2010) referred to Freire's theory of Critical Consciousness, or conscientization, as being the goal of RJ. Participants of RJ processes would ideally make some type of discovery about the consequences of their own actions and therefore, choose to make positive changes.

There were several study results that pointed towards both the support and development of conscientization. First, the documents reviewed in the study each provided a structure for student reflection that supported coming to new understandings. The RJ lunch reflection sheet includes prompts that help kids deeply think through their thoughts, actions, and ideas to make things right again. The circle keeper packet provides teachers with very specific procedures and prompts to support student dialogue that can help them see the perspectives of others.

Most notably, the students interviewed shared several ways that they have expanded their own understanding about their behavior through RJ. Amara, who had received numerous referrals during her sixth grade year, came to the realization that when she acted out, it did not actually help her situation. She explained, "I realized that you don't have to be the center of attention to get help."

This new understanding, brought about by RJ dialogue, has enabled her to be a part of the YAT leading circles with younger girls.

RJ also served another purpose for Amara, she explained that in the YAT meetings, they learned that black students are suspended at higher rates than white students. During her interview she expressed a desire to change this. She explained that in the YAT discussions they have talked about "...how are we gonna take that [knowledge] out in the community and to tell our young children of color what they can do to not get suspended, so the numbers can go down in a good way." Amara has made shifts of conscience not only with her own behaviors, but now has a goal to help others due to her leadership involvement with RJ.

Jamal has also come to a few new understandings about how his own decision-making affects his behavior. As noted in chapter four, Jamal frequently got in trouble in sixth grade for arguing with teachers and being disruptive in class. Interestingly, he said he felt that he needed to act that way so he would get attention from his peers. He said, "In sixth grade I thought that I should just get in trouble everyday, so that people would notice me." Similar to Amara, he realized through RJ dialogue, that people would respond to him in much more positive ways if he acted more "mature" and worked hard to get his assignments done. Jamal also shared that he used to get in arguments with Amara, but by sitting in RJ circles with her they talked things out and are friends again.

Most notably, he has come to the realization that if he gets suspended, he will miss out on school, which is not something he wants to do. He expressed how important it was for him to get a good education. In listening to both Jamal and Amara, I have concluded that RJ has truly changed their lives for the better. It was evident that both students have reflected on their actions extensively to arrive at new understandings. Their realizations have led to positive behavioral changes and the opportunity to help other students. The social learning in RJ dialogues and support set up by teachers has created the environment for transformation in student's lives.

Connecting results to Shame Management

An individual's feelings of shame are often viewed as the underlying reasons for why a person harms another (Morrison, 2006). Braithwaite, (1989) discussed that shame plays a large role in restorative practices because of the power of social influence. This study was analyzed through the lens of adaptive shame management, meaning that RJ can be a support for students to work through difficult feelings of shame and learn to act in healthy ways as opposed to re-creating conflict.

According to Braithwaite, the disapproval of one's behavior by people that are important to them is powerful enough to deter future offenses (1989). There were several examples of this theory that surfaced through my data analysis. First, Samantha, the SMS, shared that some people view RJ as being too lenient and that parents want to know how kids are being held accountable. From her

perspective though, RJ is the most effective way to hold students responsible. She expressed that it is much more difficult for a student to have to face another that they harmed, and to hear how they have negatively affected that other person. She also explained that it is easy to simply send a student to detention or suspend them and that the difficult, yet worthy endeavor is a restorative approach to discipline because it openly and respectfully addresses what led to the conflict, emotions experienced, and steps needed for resolution.

Alongside social disapproval, Braithwaite asserted that if people feel shame and consequently feel badly about it, their conscience builds up, thus decreasing the possibility for future offenses. Evidence of this theoretical connection was more difficult to pin down from the data I collected, although both Amara and Jamal expressed that RJ helped them realize that others were not responding positively to their former behaviors in school, so they decided to make changes. Additionally, data collected from this study did not include parents that participated in RJ circles with their children. These types of observations could have led to a better understanding of how parental disapproval of their child's behavior expressed in an RJ dialogue could affect them enough to make changes.

Adaptive shame theory also connects with Morrison's idea that shame can either be acknowledged and discharged or become maladaptive (2006). This area was found to have strong connections with the RJ practices at Linden Middle School. According to Morrison, the first step in shame acknowledgement is that

the offender needs to recognize the harm done and express their feelings about it. Secondly, they take responsibility for the harm that occurred and finally, they need to take action to help heal the harm. This same procedure was reflected in the RJ documents analyzed, interview data collected, and small group RJ observations witnessed. At Linden Middle School, RJ is viewed as a way to own up to one's mistakes, express feelings, and then move forward with positive actions.

It is critical to also look at how students are reintegrated back into the learning environment after harm has been done. According to the SMS and the RJ coordinator, this is a very thoughtful process. Morgan explained that if damage is done in front of an entire class, then all students deserve to discuss what happened and how they feel about it. There are times when a whole class RJ session is appropriate, and other situations that might best be dealt with in small groups or one-on-one. The important thing to note, is that both the student or students involved are given time to speak and that the others present when harm occurred also feel they have had a place to express their feelings.

Samantha also explained that with certain student behaviors, such as physical fighting or bringing a weapon to school, that warrant an immediate removal of the student, there may not be a restorative process right away. Upon the students' return to school though, she said that RJ dialogues are used to help support the student in feeling comfortable in coming back to their class. It is also an expectation that the teachers at Linden will provide extra time for the student

to finish missed work. This process vastly differs from a traditional suspension where little chance is given for the student to tell their story and they are also expected to make up all work missed on their own.

Connections with current literature

Conflict-solving practices from around the world were reviewed as part of this study, specifically from the Maori and First Nations cultures. In analysis of whole class RJ dialogues many parallels were drawing between the Maori's process of a *hui* (meeting to make things right) and the approaches observed at Linden. Figure 2 below visually demonstrates the connections between both approaches.

Component of Practice	Hui	RJ at Linden
Introduction	Greetings (Karakia), introductions and prayers (Mihimihi).	Circle Keeper welcomes everyone to the space.
Setting the purpose	Purpose is stated by the kaumātua (elder leader).	Purpose is stated or question posed by the Circle Keeper
Sharing	Each person shares their story and how the incident affected them.	Talking piece travels around for each student to share their story and feelings.
Plan moving forward	New plan is made and those responsible make commitments.	Session closes with new commitments agreed upon.

Figure 2. RJ Practices Comparison Chart. Compares components of Maori's hui practice, and RJ at Linden Middle School.

The common features of both the whole group RJ circle at Linden and the Maori Hui practices were quite striking. Data used for this comparison were taken both from direct classroom observations as well as the Circle Keeper procedural resource document. Both circles have a facilitator that welcomes everyone and sets a purpose for the time spent together. In the Maori culture, this person is called the kaumātua and at Linden they are referred to as the circle keeper. Both have the important role of helping participants to freely share while adhering to their agreements. The hui is a, "...meeting to make things right," and the practices at Linden were consistently observed as serving the same purpose.

Both the whole-group and small group sessions were focused on repairing a conflict. The interview participants often referred to RJ as a way to make things right again and to heal.

In Maori culture, the idea of “preserving one’s mana,” or their feelings of self-worth is central to the circle process. Loved ones are invited in to share the positive traits about both victim and offender to help keep self-esteem intact. Jamal expressed in his interview that one of the things he most appreciated about RJ is that the circle feels protected and knows that the kids in it will not go around and tell others what he shared. So, in a sense, Jamal’s mana has been preserved through RJ at Linden.

Amara also expressed that she was thankful that the teachers at Linden do not bring up a student’s past mistakes or their reputation from another school. She likes that because it feels as though she gets a fresh start. Being given multiple chances and opportunities to learn from their mistakes was very central to the students positive associations with RJ.

Another area of the literature that connected to the study findings was from the philosophy and RJ teachings of Howard Zehr. Zehr, (2015) notes that, “...it is important that those who have been harmed are provided an opportunity to define their needs rather than having others or a system define their needs for them” (pp. 32-33). Becky, the vice principal echoed this mindset when she spoke about how she cannot simply look at the action of a child, she must see them as a whole person and figure out what their needs are. Samantha held a very similar

view when she expressed that by bringing students together it does not let them avoid the situation; they have to work together to repair the damage done.

In connection with a study done in Australia, Morrison (2002) found that through direct teaching of social skills to address bullying, students and staff reported positive benefits of the program. The approach also included RJ practices. The study results indicated that through guided practice of social skills, students began to see that they were capable of helping themselves. This connects to interview data from Linden Middle School from teachers expressing how they have seen RJ empower students with the language to stick up for themselves. RJ also benefitted the students interviewed by allowing them to take on leadership roles to help other students.

Interestingly, across all staff interviews there was a viewpoint that RJ may not work for every child and there are also certain times where you, “have to go punitive and handbook.” Several participants explained that in cases of student safety, such as fighting or bringing a weapon to school, students must be removed from the school for a reasonable amount of time. A sense of needing to keep the school safe was heard as a top priority with all staff interviewed.

The observation of punitive measures still being used in some cases directly connects with Vaandering’s study in Ontario (2009). In her research at a K-8 school, she found that despite the espoused RJ values of the staff, there was still a high frequency of punitive measures being taken to discipline students. At Linden, I did not directly observe traditional approaches to discipline, although

teachers frequently talked about the need for them. Staff seemed fairly direct in their perspectives on this. They talked about the need for set consequences for the safety of the school. Morgan and Samantha were quick to point out that although punitive measures must be taken sometimes, the students involved are always offered a restorative process upon returning to school.

Implications and Recommendations

During interviews with staff members, I had the opportunity to discuss with each participant about what they feel are key pieces to have in place when implementing RJ into a school or district. Multiple participants, upon being asked this question, said they were very grateful for the opportunity to respond to this. There were several common themes that came about through interview transcript analysis. Each of these areas will be described below.

Accountability must be a priority

As discussed in chapter four, the need for accountability within an RJ framework was the number one recommendation across all adult participants. In the beginning phases of RJ at Linden Middle School, there were concerns that the approach was allowing certain students to get away with some fairly egregious behaviors, particularly with bullying. It took several difficult years of adjusting their model to incorporate ways to hold students responsible for their actions, while still allowing their voice to be heard.

From my perspective, this is where teachers who not fully on board with RJ practices struggle. They have yet to make the shift from wanting to punish the behavior to supporting the growth and learning of individual students. Staff members need further guidance and training on how to regulate their own emotions around student behavior. Professional development must include time for teachers to learn about the current RJ research to help them understand the benefits of the approach.

A strong supportive model, at all levels

Across the six staff interviews, participants expressed that they want further support from the district level. Even though the RJ program at Linden is going well, there are other schools that do not have an RJ coordinator, so it is difficult to further the work. Kevin mentioned that he thinks it would be great for RJ to be practiced even in the decision making process that district personnel use. This idea connects to Lauren's viewpoint that in order for people to want to encourage RJ practices in schools, they need to be personally involved with and moved by a dialogue experience. From my outside perspective, it seems that the district encourages use of RJ, explains that it is used across the schools, yet it is only fully supported in a few. This makes the culture shift of restorative discipline that is needed for RJ to be successful, extremely difficult to gain a foothold, let alone grow into a fully-functioning set of values within a school.

Develop Staff Knowledge and Commitment to RJ

Another common theme that was seen across interviews as being essential for an RJ program's success is that of creating staff buy-in and a natural willingness to commit to restorative practices. From John's perspective, without strong teacher-buy in, RJ practices will not happen. Teachers must see the value in the approach. In his opinion, RJ should be tailored to meet the different instructional preferences and personalities of teachers.

There are already a variety of RJ supports for teachers at Linden including monthly meetings and optional trainings from Resolutions Northwest. For the teachers that struggle to agree with RJ philosophically or with the actual implementation of RJ strategies, I believe they would greatly benefit from an embedded coaching model, similar to the cycle process used by instructional coaches. With this approach teachers would get coaching support to develop lessons, co-teach, observe model RJ circles, reflect on the practice and have guided support for when they try strategies out on their own.

Another approach that should be taken to further teacher efficacy and commitment to RJ is have students from programs such as the YAT share their personal stories at staff meetings. The student stories are extremely powerful and great educators do what they do because of the kids. By listening to the positive ways that RJ has helped students such as Amara and Jamal, hesitant teachers may be more willing to incorporate it into their classrooms.

An additional way that RJ professional development could gain greater teacher-buy in is by helping them to see how RJ can be embedded directly into their classroom management plan. Teacher like Kevin and John reported that RJ is their behavior management plan and it has been very effective for them. Creating professional learning opportunities for teachers to share their success stories with RJ is critical to spreading and moving the approach forward so it can help more students.

Support the Culture Shift Required for RJ

As much of the current literature in the field of restorative practices suggests, changing a culture in a school in regards to student discipline requires an entire mind shift. A restorative model takes considerable time to develop and those involved must be willing to take on a student-centered approach to discipline. Foundational school changes such as RJ can be very difficult and require a lot of forethought and long-range planning. Teachers' own feelings and pride can become stumbling blocks. Personal belief-systems and backgrounds can hinder educators' ability to think beyond the immediate consequence. If RJ is to be successful and continue to grow in our schools, we must put just as much effort in supporting the teacher's mindset shifts required to use restorative practices as we do teaching the students how to interact and learn from each other in RJ circles.

In order to accomplish this task and provide scaffolding for teachers learning about RJ, frameworks such as the Change Based Adoption Model (cite)

should be used to help leaders facilitate long-range plans for RJ implementation. This model takes a step-by-step approach to supporting the change process while addressing stages of concern that people typically experience when learning to implement new approaches. Since RJ is a philosophy that can be supported by specific practices, there must be a space for teachers to learn, try, fail, share, and practice again with new understandings. Linden's monthly RJ meetings are one way to support this as well as the collaboration between Resolutions Northwest and the staff. Although the feedback from teachers in interviews and observations is that there is need for more specific training on RJ strategies to be used in classrooms.

Limitations

There are a variety of limitations to this study that warrant discussion and potential future research. First, the small sample size limits generalizability. The multiple stakeholder perspectives gathered provided an-depth portrait of RJ practices at one middle school. The struggles, successes, and belief systems may have commonalities with other schools that use restorative approaches, although more comparative research is needed to provide further insight into this area.

Additionally, this case study represents a school that is farther along in the RJ implementation process and may not be representative of the school district as a whole. There may be other schools that are struggling with the implementation of restorative practices, which may warrant further exploration. The classroom teacher participants interviewed were suggested by the RJ

coordinator, which may have resulted in a biased viewpoint towards the positive aspects of RJ. The data gathered in this study points to the fact that having a dedicated RJ staff member is highly beneficial for supporting a culture of restorative work and helping teachers to gain confidence in the approach and work through roadblocks that inevitably come up.

This study also does not consider other outside factors in the environment that might affect participants' perspectives of restorative practices. These stressors might include: family or school stress, racial issues, language, previous conflicts with students, trauma, or mental illness. Additionally, since my role was a participant-observer at the school over the course of the year, it may have limited my ability to understand "complexities over time," with RJ as an approach and for the specific issue at hand (Tracy, 2008, p. 112). Further longitudinal studies would address this.

A final limitation to this study is that parent perspectives were not directly collected. There was anecdotal evidence of parent views gathered from both staff and student interviews, although parents were not interviewed. The data could have provided insight into how families view and experience the RJ process.

Future Research

This study warrants future research in multiple areas. First and foremost, additional research should address how teachers' backgrounds and beliefs effect their willingness to commit to using restorative approaches to discipline with

their students. From a theoretical standpoint, these studies should be framed with components of change theory. Shifting approaches to discipline requires an entire mind shift away from traditional structures. In order for RJ to succeed, we must address teachers' pre-conceived ideas and biases. From this current study, it was apparent that some teachers whole-heartedly believe in the power of RJ, while some were much more hesitant. If there is a better understanding of teacher belief systems around discipline, more meaningful professional development can occur.

There is also a need to study how RJ can be implemented effectively from a systems approach. Several participants spoke about the need for further district support for RJ and wanted to see a more complete implementation for all schools in the area. It would be of benefit to the field to further study school districts that have effectively put RJ into practice K-12, and to learn from their strategies.

Further qualitative research of the impact of RJ on students could also greatly contribute to the field of restorative discipline. The student stories shared in this study were powerful and we need to hear more of these first-hand accounts to continue to share the benefits of RJ. An interesting theme that surfaced from both staff and student interviews is how issues surrounding racial identity are often a central topic in RJ dialogues at Linden. For further research, it would be important to explore how the RJ process can support the development of positive race relations and a greater understanding of each other.

Finally, the YAT is another group to specifically focus on for future research. This study could focus on how student leaders are developed, and how the program is set-up. The student leaders are central to the success of RJ and require further study. Findings from a YAT study could be used in other schools to help implement similar programs.

Conclusion

I began this study with the desire to expand my own knowledge of restorative approaches to discipline. I had found myself increasingly frustrated and saddened with school's responses to student behavior that were commonly results of trauma, poverty, and other intensely challenging situations. I felt that these students subjected to punitive measures of discipline were not equipped with the skills to function well within the traditional social context of a classroom. I saw students time and time again that would be suspended, only to return to school and shortly begin the cycle again. Their parents were not involved; it was merely a punitive consequence that resulted in a loss of classroom learning and very little understanding of the root of the behavior. Even more concerning was that both the students and teachers involved were not a part of the discipline decision process.

Early on in my doctoral program, I learned about restorative justice from a presentation by a group of my classmates. I was instantly intrigued with the potential of the approach to help students sort out their feelings and learn from their mistakes. I was also very touched by the empathy and patience required

from the adults facilitating the dialogue. This led to my interest in RJ research. I felt encouraged by the emerging quantitative literature in the field, although I saw a need for more understanding of the actual lived experiences of those involved. This process has been difficult beyond measure, yet one of the most incredible learning experiences I have ever gone through. In a sense, I have come to my own new understandings regarding restorative discipline.

As public school teachers we are stretched to our limits with addressing the learning standards, state testing, performance evaluations, and so much more. When student conflict and challenging behaviors are thrown into the mix, it can become very overwhelming to even the most seasoned educators. The intense realities of teaching students with intense behavioral needs can quickly arise and interrupt the learning environment. I continue to see teacher burnout all around me for that very reason. I, too, fell into this category. I was searching for a holistic approach that helps students reflect on their behaviors with continued support beyond the infraction.

In our teacher preparation programs, very little is done to prepare young educators for the challenges they will face with students' emotional needs. One of my conclusions from this study is that we are at a critical point in teacher education programs and approaches to discipline must be explicitly taught to those entering the profession. RJ must be incorporated into courses in classroom management. If RJ practices are not embedded in teacher preparation programs, we run the risk of our future educators entering the field ill-equipped to address

students' social and behavioral needs. A teacher's knowledge of RJ and basic skills in classroom practices can greatly support students desire to be in school and to work towards their own academic goals.

From my researcher perspective, I have also come to the very simple conclusion that RJ is endlessly difficult work and it truly takes a village to ensure its success. Samantha remarked that she could not do this work alone and that she relies on the team around her to work together for the benefit of each student. Lauren echoed this sentiment saying how she values the RJ team at Linden and that it is critical that everyone collaborates in order for RJ in schools to be successful. Having all staff members fully committed to RJ is a challenge for school leadership and takes years to develop. This must be a key consideration for any school looking to implement restorative practices.

I have also learned that RJ may not be the most fitting course of action in every context and with every student. For example, there are students who have been expelled for extreme incidents and may require mental health services before a restorative practice would even be considered. There are also students who repeatedly get suspended, and have participated in numerous RJ circles, yet they continue to break school rules. The interview participants made it clear that they knew RJ was not a fix-all, but it does provide a range of student-centered practices that can help most kids to reflect on their actions.

An additional learning of mine throughout this process has been that teachers need just as much support in their own learning about RJ as the students

do. At a school such as Linden, many supports are in place already such as monthly professional development, one-on-one sessions with the RJ coordinators and a several documents that help teachers plan for RJ circles. There are networks between RJ schools in the district for the people in leadership positions, but deeper work is needed to support classroom teachers in how to truly integrate RJ into their instruction and overall approach to teaching and learning. This warrants a strong, embedded, and highly supported professional development plan.

The question now has become, do the RJ practices occurring at Linden Middle School meet the goals of RJ? The overarching goal of any restorative practice is to heal harm done with all parties involved and to make plans for moving forward. Every one-on-one, small group, and whole-class RJ dialogues at Linden, indicated that the objective was to repair harm and collectively decide on solutions. Each staff member interviewed had a very firm grasp on this idea and could articulate it well. Another RJ goal is creating and sustaining a sense of community. Linden also succeeds in this area. Caring for one another is at the heart of each RJ circle and students are taught that their actions affect the whole community. This philosophy of care permeates the culture at the school. Classroom teachers work hard to develop as strong sense of togetherness through community building circles and each month there is a C.A.R.E assembly to celebrate students' development in communication, achievement, respect, and effort. RJ can be viewed as an avenue for helping kids achieve C.A.R.E.

As I reflect back on the many conversations I have had with students and staff members at Linden, I am filled with a great sense of hope. Each of the three students interviewed expressed how RJ has changed their lives for the better. They articulated how RJ has not only supported them in positive behavioral changes, but also in how they view their own futures. Amara spoke about wanting to use RJ when she gets in high school to help other students to not fight. Jamal explained how RJ has positively impacted his achievement in school and has made the key connection that getting in trouble in school is a barrier to his education. Dominique was able to describe how RJ helps kids work together to prevent getting kicked out of school and he also views RJ as a way to learn about the world. The students that participated in the study, have internalized RJ practices and I believe they will carry them on throughout their lives helping to impact the community and world around them in lasting ways.

The powerful impacts of RJ on students at Linden were life changing to witness. Students learned to be compassionate, show empathy, and openly communicate with a wide range of their peers. They learned to take a step back in a challenging situation and to think and reflect before they took action or said words they may have regretted. They learned to deeply listen to one another and to apologize when they were in the wrong. They learned to speak up and express their needs to their teachers. They learned that their voices matter.

Dewey reminds us that we have a moral obligation to help each other and to deeply consider our own role as a society in creating conditions that either foster or

deter harmful acts (1922). Restorative justice models seek to create the time and space to hear the stories and situations that led to the conflict or crime. RJ is a framework for allowing people the opportunity and support needed to explain their story and to heal harm done. When crime and conflict are viewed through a social justice lens, meaning that we all have a collective responsibility to help out those in need, RJ practices in schools and the broader criminal justice system play a critical role in fostering more human ways of addressing harmful acts. This study shows that the students themselves have tremendous capabilities of solving their own conflicts if given the time, space, and support to do so.

The specific RJ practices at Linden Middle School along with the stakeholders' experiences and perspectives have provided evidence that with enough time and support, RJ can provide a positive, culture-shifting framework for discipline in schools. Restorative approaches continue to evolve and I am hopeful that RJ will spread into more schools, creating the environment for more compassionate responses to student behavior and space for student empowerment.

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Appendix A: Restorative Practices Teacher Survey

Q1 Have you participated in any training around any of the following: 1) Restorative Justice 2) Restorative Practices/Approaches to conflict or discipline (dialogue circles, restorative conversations)

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q2 If you answered "yes" to Question 1, please estimate the amount of time you have spent in training around Restorative Justice/Restorative Practices/Restorative Dialogue:

- 0-4 hours (1)
- 4-8 hours (2)
- 8 or more hours (3)

Q3 Do you use Restorative Approaches to solving conflict with the students you work with?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q4 Have you referred a student or students to participate in a restorative dialogue?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q5 Have you personally participated in a restorative dialogue to support a student or students in order to solve a conflict?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q6 If you answered yes to question 5, please respond to the following question: Can you describe what it was like to be a part of a restorative dialogue from your perspective as the educator in the process? Please explain in detail your feelings, thoughts, and perspectives on the restorative process.

Q7 From your perspective, are there benefits to participants (students, staff, families, community) using a restorative process rather than a traditional disciplinary action such as a suspension or expulsion? If you think there are benefits, please describe them below. Feel free to use specific examples from your experiences.

Q8 From your perspective, are there challenges to participants (students, staff, families) using a restorative process rather than a traditional disciplinary action such as a suspension or expulsion? If you feel there are challenges, please describe them below. Feel free to use specific examples from you experiences.

Q9 How likely are you to advocate for or recommend restorative approaches to conflict resolution to other educators?

- Extremely likely (1)
- Moderately likely (2)
- Slightly likely (3)
- Neither likely nor unlikely (4)
- Slightly unlikely (5)
- Moderately unlikely (6)
- Extremely unlikely (7)

Appendix B: RJ Staff Interview Protocol

“Thank you for taking the time to sit down and talk with me today. The purpose of this interview is to better understand your perspectives **as a staff member** on the restorative practices used at your school. Please speak openly and honestly and ask me any questions you have as we go. If you forget something and want to go back and add to your answers, that is perfectly fine. It is okay to skip questions or stop the interview at anytime. I’ll be audio-recording this interview also.”

Interview Questions

1. Tell me a little bit about your background, and how you got to your current role here at _____ Middle School.
2. How would you describe RJ to someone that doesn’t know about it yet?
3. How do you view the RJ experience from the teacher’s perspective?
(meaning, what is it like to play the teacher role in a circle dialogue? How often are you able to do restorative work in your class?)
4. From your perspective, what are the benefits of RJ?
5. From your perspective, what are the challenges of RJ?
6. What do you think a school needs to have in order to help RJ be successful and sustainable? *Imagine you are giving a school or a district advice for implementing restorative work.*
7. Compared to more traditional responses to discipline, such as _____ suspension and expulsion, what are your thoughts on RJ as an _____ alternative approach?
8. Anything else you’d like to add or that you’d like me to know about RJ at _____ Middle School?

Appendix C: Youth Action Team Interview Questions

I'm doing a research project to learn more about RJ at your school. I'm a doctoral student at the University of Portland. My reason for wanting to interview you is to be able to learn more about your experiences and opinions about RJ. During the interview, please feel free to speak openly and freely. You can always skip a question, stop the interview at anytime, or go back and add to an answer.

1. Tell me about your experience being on the youth action team. *How did you get to be on the YAT? (What is it like? What are your responsibilities? What do you do? How is it helpful to you?)*
2. What does RJ mean to you? *(if someone who didn't know asked you, how would you describe it?)*
3. Why do you think your school does RJ?
4. Which adults to you see using RJ in the building the most?
5. How has RJ helped you?
6. What's hard/difficult about RJ?
7. How do you think restorative circles to solve conflicts are different from a student getting suspended?
8. Anything else you want to add?

Appendix D: Restorative Circle Observation Field Notes Template

Date: _____

Number of participants: _____

Time: _____

Participant codes:

Location and Context (description of seating arrangement, room layout, participant seating placement)	Researcher bracketed notes
<p>Dialogue Structure</p> <p>Who is the facilitator?</p> <p>How does the dialogue begin?</p> <p>Ground rules/expectations?</p> <p>What occurs if conversation becomes tense/heated? How is this handled?</p> <p>How is dialogue encouraged, if conversation stops?</p> <p>Other notes/observations</p>	

Social Context notes (body language, facial expressions, specific notes on how participants appear to be feeling, level of engagement)	
Other notes	

Appendix E: Excerpts from Resolutions Northwest's Circle Planning Guide

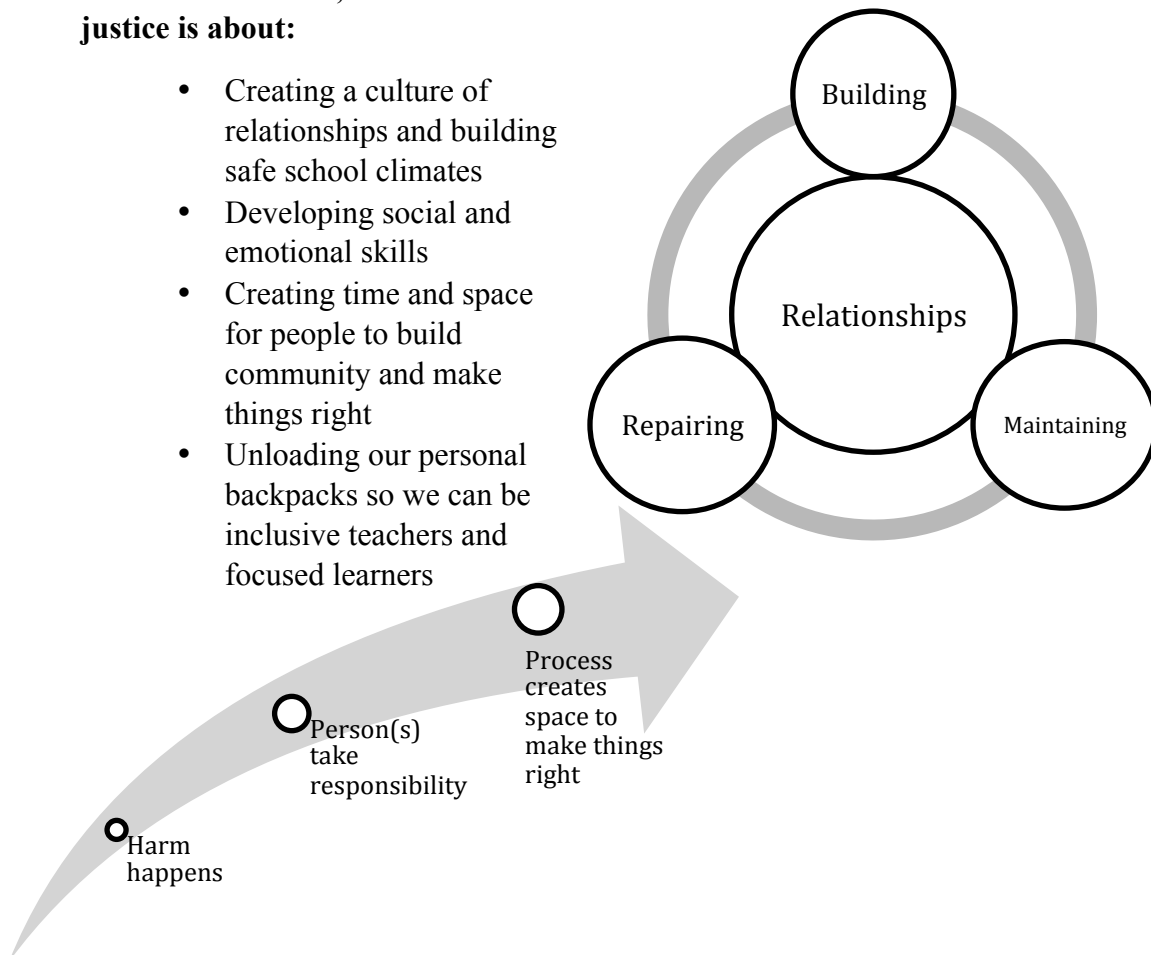
Restorative Philosophy

Restorative Justice is about Relationships

...building, maintaining, and repairing relationships to form healthy, supportive & inclusive communities. When we do things that impact others and create harm in the community, it is our individual and collective responsibility to make things right. Restorative practices help create spaces that hold us accountable in supportive and inclusive ways.

In a school context, restorative justice is about:

- Creating a culture of relationships and building safe school climates
- Developing social and emotional skills
- Creating time and space for people to build community and make things right
- Unloading our personal backpacks so we can be inclusive teachers and focused learners



Restorative Practices are based on principles and processes that emphasize the importance of positive relationships as central to building community and restoring relationships when harm has occurred (SF Unified School District).

Circle Philosophy

*with contributions from Circle Planning Guide

Circles are rooted in indigenous traditions. They are spaces and places to build caring relationships, provide opportunities for all members of the community to have a voice, understand, honor and work through difference, and repair harm. They intentionally lift barriers between people and open the possibility for connection, collaboration, and mutual understanding.

*Circle processes serve numerous **purposes** in school communities.*

1. Build healthy and meaningful relationships among and between students, staff, and families.
2. Create a climate of care and connection.
3. Communicate to all members of the community that they belong and are significant.
4. Create a supportive environment for maximal learning

*Key **goals** of circle processes include*

- Everyone gets the opportunity to talk without interruption
- Everyone gets to tell their own stories
- Everyone is equal - no person is more important than anyone else
- Everyone is welcome to bring to the Circle emotional aspects of their individual lived experience

Values and Principles of the Circle and Community

Circles are a special process that needs to be presented as such. It's extremely important to set the tone and expectation of the circle to reflect the core values upon which it is based each and every time a circle forms. These values are what distinguish circle time from all other time. If used consistently, the values that govern the success of the circle, and foster the relationship building and skill development will eventually spread out of the circle into the greater community.

Circle Nuts & Bolts

- Participants are seated or stand in a **circle** so that everyone can be seen. It is important to move desks/tables to the side of room to the best extent possible.

- There is always at least one **circle facilitator**, and sometimes two. The role of the circle facilitator is to structure the circle process with purpose and intention, hold space for the circle, and support all voices being brought into the room. Often, and usually unconsciously, participants will situate the facilitator as an authority figure, looking to him/her to direct or make decisions for the group. Instead, the circle facilitator is empower the group to do the work they need to do.
- There is typically a **centerpiece** in the middle of the circle; the purpose of the centerpiece is to have something to center our eyes on when we are having heartfelt discussions. For ongoing groups, centerpieces are also an opportunity for the group to build their own community by creating their centerpiece.
- A **talking piece** is used to give voice to the person holding it and communicate to the other circle participants that their role is to listen. Often the talking piece carries meaning or significance for the circle facilitator and/or the group. It can be passed around the circle, or shared across the circle. It is important to honor if participants would like to pass.
- **Group agreements** are best when they are co-created by the circle participants.
 - It is important that the agreements are written (could be on slips of paper, paper plates, or even laminated for groups coming together regularly)
 - It is also important that group agreements be positives AND are generally limited to 5-6 agreements
 - Ex. “Don’t disrespect > Show respect” “Don’t make fun or laugh > ‘can this go under ‘show respect’?”
 - The following concepts are helpful to include: Talk one at a time (honor talking piece); show respect; confidentiality (what is said in room stay in room); speak YOUR truth.

General Circle Format

*adapted from Circle Planning Guide

This format can be amended depending on the amount of time or topic. While it can be tempting to skip the agreements and values round, it is important that you don’t unless you are in a group that has been meeting in a circle for a while and have covered values in previous circles. A reoccurring group should always revisit the guidelines and values even if just briefly.

1. **Opening**
2. **Agreements / Values**
3. **Introduction of Talking Piece**
4. **Check-In**
5. **Discussion Rounds**
6. **Check out**
7. **Closing**

1. Opening

Purpose: to create a special or sacred space where everyone will come together to share in ways we ordinarily don't have the opportunity to do. Also to ground everyone, set a positive tone for participants to transition into the circle process.

Examples of an opening: poems, quotes, guided meditation or breathing exercise

Suggested opening language: "We have come together today to learn more about one another and to be together in a way which will make our school community (or our class or group) stronger, closer and safer."

2. Group Agreements & Values

Purpose: to allow Circle participants to identify and agree upon shared agreements for the circle. It's very important to convey the importance of, and hold participants accountable to the agreements as they directly impact the success of the circle.

Example of possible Circle agreements:

- **Respect the talking piece: everyone listens, everyone has a turn**
- **Speak from the heart: your truth, your perspectives, your experiences**
- **Listen from the heart: let go of stories that make it hard to hear each other**
- **Trust that you will know what to say: no need to rehearse**
- **Say just enough: without feeling rushed, be concise and considerate of the time of others.**
- **Keep what is shared in the circle in the circle (confidentiality)**

Suggested agreement language: “Here are some core circle agreements. Are there any other agreements you would like to add?” Pass the talking piece around the circle and chart any other guidelines.

Values: Circle participants identify and agree upon personal and shared group values which everyone will honor during the circle. Note: The traditional way is to ask people to bring their “best selves” to the discussion. Values are a reminder for how to ‘be’ in Circle. Respect, honesty, trustworthiness, courage, are examples of such values.

3. Introduction of the Talking Piece

Purpose: to create an equitable environment for sharing. Everyone gets a chance to speak or have the right to pass. For those that do not have the talking piece, it is an opportunity to actively listen to the speaker. Sometimes the talking piece may be suspended to encourage spontaneous sharing or brainstorming.

Example of a talking piece: Meaningful objects that community members can relate to or something that has meaning to someone or is relevant to the topic to be discussed. (Stuffed animal, rock, stone, etc.)

Suggested language: The person holding the talking piece is the person with the turn to speak and share. Everyone else in the circle is actively listening and trying not to spend time thinking about what they are going to say.

The talking piece usually moves in a circular format (clockwise or counter clockwise). Every person has the opportunity to speak and the right to pass if they choose. Even though someone may pass, they must still be present and participate.

4. Check-In

Purpose: to invite participants to talk about how they are feeling on physical, mental or emotional levels at the moment.

Suggested check in language: Q: Name one word describing how you are feeling? If you could be a weather pattern, what pattern would describe how you are feeling right now (today)?

5. Discussion Rounds

Purpose: choosing a topic that is appropriate for the group to discuss will directly impact the success of the circle.

If this is a new group and you are just getting to know each other, you may ask people to share what is important to them about being in this community.

- A good prompting question for a circle will allow people to speak from a personal perspective about something that relates to the group. After asking a question that allows people to tell a story, you may ask a question that encourages people to speak about the issue or reason they were brought into the circle today (community building, celebration, general check in, current event etc.)

6. Check out

Purpose: To invite participants to express how they are feeling at this moment as the circle is about to end.

Suggested check out language: Share one word about how they are feeling at the end of the Circle or about what they most appreciated about the process.

7. Closing

Purpose: To close the circle with intention and allow participants to re-enter the world and acknowledge the work done in circle.

Examples of a closing: poems, quotes, do a guided meditation or breathing exercise, etc..

- You may suggest that everyone stand shoulder to shoulder and take three deep breathes together. You may also read a short poem or quote and with an expression of gratitude to all present for their participation.

Appendix F: School District IRB

Document component	Teacher reflection sheet	Student reflection sheet	Tiered-Fidelity Inventory	Circle Keeper Packet	School Climate Handbook	RJ TFI Companion Guide
Purpose	Teachers provide summary of incident.	Students think, reflect on incident and write details.	School discipline assessment resource.	Teacher resource for circle facilitation.	School-Wide Expectations Guide	School RJ implementation rubric.
Instructional Supports for RJ teachers	Reflection, documentation		Reflection feedback, planning, guidance	RJ definitions, facilitation guide, prompts, topics	Consistent expectations, guidance, reference	Planning, assessment, team reflection
Supports for students	n.a.	Slow down, reflect, process, express concerns and needs	n.a.	n.a.	Clear consistent expectations and guidelines for behavior	n.a.
RJ language used	C.A.R.E, describe event, infraction, reflect, time-out	C.A.R.E, calm down, honestly, rule violation, apology,	n.a.	Community, space, listen, speak, respect, heal, reflect, repair	Community, trust, peacemaking, restore, commitments, support	n.a

Appendix G: University of Portland IRB

Memorandum

To: Erin Shepherd
From: Laretta Frederking, Ph.D.
Date: October 10, 2016

RE: IRB Approval of University of Portland Project # 2016182

Dear Erin Shepherd:

On behalf of the University of Portland's federally registered Institutional Review Board (IRB00006544), a member of the committee has reviewed your research proposal, titled "Examining the Effectiveness of Restorative Practices." The IRB concludes that the project satisfies all IRB-related issues involving human subjects research under the "Expedited" classification. A printout of this memorandum should serve as written authorization from IRB to proceed with your research.

The expiration date for this approval is 10/9/2017. If the study is expected to go beyond that date, you must submit a Continued Review Form (located on the IRB website) for continuing review. I recommend that this form be submitted to the IRB at least 30 days prior to the expiration date.

Please note that you are required to abide by all requirements as outlined by the IRB Committee.

A copy of this memorandum, along with your Request for Review and its documentation, will be stored in the IRB Committee files for three years from the completion of your project, as mandated by federal law. Thank you, and good luck with your project.

Yours truly,



Laretta Frederking, Ph.D.
Associate Provost
Chair, Institutional Review Board
Professor of Political Science

July 5, 2017

Erin Shepherd; Final Dissertation Defense

Revisions Requested by Committee

1. Add to “Limitations” section: your pool of interviewees were limited and biased toward RJ.
2. “Descriptions of Participants” section: make no value judgements (remove them) unless you have data to support them.
3. Throughout all chapters: do not generalize to the whole school, keep narratives, results, and analysis within your study and the data you collected.
4. “Results” section: reorder and place “document analysis” first, followed by staff, followed by students.
5. After presenting the results from each set of data collected, integrate the themes that cross staff, students, observations, and documents. How are the different data sources connected? What are the major themes that arise from all data sources?
6. Please refer to and address Peter’s editing suggestions.