Copyright

by

Philip Ryan Carney

2019

The Treatise Committee for Philip Ryan Carney Certifies that this is the approved version of the following Treatise:

The Participation of Elementary School Teachers in Restorative Practices: Enhancing Community and Connectedness

Committee:

Ruben D. Olivarez, Supervisor

Martha N. Ovando, Co-Supervisor

Edwin R. Sharpe

Patrick G. Pringle

The Participation of Elementary School Teachers in Restorative Practices: Enhancing Community and Connectedness

by

Philip Ryan Carney

Treatise

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2019

Acknowledgements

It is important to acknowledge that I have accomplished this milestone with the support of many people who have made significant contributions to my journey as a student, as an educator, and as a professional. I first want to thank Dr. Olivarez, Dr. Ovando, Dr. Sharpe, and Dr. Pringle for agreeing to serve on my dissertation committee. Their willingness to help guide me through this process is greatly appreciated.

I additionally want to thank Dr. Olivarez for all of the encouragement he provided throughout my time in the Cooperative Superintendency Program. His wisdom and guidance have helped me become a better practitioner and leader. I also acknowledge the significant contributions of Dr. Ovando. Without her dedication, feedback, support, and guidance, I would not have completed this project. Thank you for willingness to pass on the wealth of knowledge and experience that your mentors passed to you.

I want to thank Elizabeth Arredondo and Shelby Bordelon for volunteering their time to help in the collection of data. I also want to acknowledge Dr. Armour for her guidance in selecting this important topic. She has been a great champion for Restorative Justice. I lastly want to thank and acknowledge Linda Steitle for all of her help and assistance. She has been a colleague, a sounding board, and a friend. I could not quantify how much I appreciate the time she sacrificed to help me accomplish this great personal achievement.

Abstract

The Participation of Elementary School Teachers in Restorative Practices: Enhancing Community and Connectedness

Philip Carney, Ed.D

The University of Texas at Austin, 2019

Supervisors: Ruben D. Olivarez, Martha N. Ovando

Many issues confront educational leaders as they attempt to provide their students with equitable access to high quality educational experiences. One such challenge is creating the type of workplace conditions that lead to greater levels of teacher job satisfaction and lower levels of teacher isolation. A potential solution that has emerged is restorative practices (RP) which are being used to build a sense of community and connectedness among students and which might also be shown to enhance teachers' sense of community. However, given its limited application with teachers, research was needed to explore the extent to which RP may positively contribute to the work-place conditions experienced by teachers. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how the use of RP by elementary school teachers with other campus teachers and stakeholders contributed to their sense of connectedness and community. The study's participants consisted of five teachers, one counselor, and one campus administrator at a south Texas elementary school. Each participant engaged in one semi-structured interview and the

data were analyzed to understand the perspectives of teachers using restorative practices with their colleagues. Findings indicated that the use of RP contributed to the relational connectedness of teachers through enhancing the closeness they experienced with their colleagues and through improving their capacity as communicators. Additionally, the findings showed that RP use contributed to the teachers' sense of community by promoting bonding among campus teams and generating a positive culture across the campus. Educational leaders and researchers may consider the benefits of RP and how to use such practices to improve job satisfaction among teachers, enhance a sense of connectedness and community among all stakeholders, and provide students with equitable access to the experienced teachers needed to produce successful outcomes.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Few educational issues threaten our nation as seriously as the present and growing

shortage of teachers (Zhang & Zeller, 2016). Neason (2014) underscores this problem

when she found, "researchers estimate that over 1 million teachers move in and out of

schools annually, and between 40 and 50 percent quit within five years" (p. 1). The

financial and academic costs associated with this level of teacher turnover have severe

implications. A report from the Alliance for Excellent Education (2014) assesses that

state financial costs associated with teachers changing schools or leaving the professional

are estimated to be between $1 billion and $2.2 billion annually. Additionally, schools

serving low-income, minority students replace half of their staffs every three years

(Neason, 2014). This level of teacher turnover increases the likelihood that schools

serving predominately minority students living in poverty will continue to employ a

disproportionately high number of teachers with limited educational experiences

(Ingersoll & May, 2012). The widening access gap to an experienced teaching force

among students of different economic backgrounds is exacerbating the achievement gap

and causing predominantly minority and poor students to fall further behind their more

affluent, White counterparts (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wychoff, 2013).

The costs associated with low teacher retention rates have grown over time. The

U.S. Department of Labor found that in 2005, U.S. school systems spent $4.9 billion on

teacher turnover (Zhang & Zeller, 2016). In addition, more than $1 billion is spent

providing on-the-job training to teachers each year in the United States (Smith, 2013). If the annual amount spent on job-embedded training is cross-referenced with the percentage of teachers leaving the profession over a five-year period, it is realistic to estimate that U.S. school districts could be losing approximately $5 billion dollars every decade in on-the-job training costs alone.

In addition to the costs associated with current levels of teacher attrition, high teacher turnover creates volatility that negatively influences teaching quality, especially in schools that need the most continuity (Zhang & Zeller, 2016). Indeed, most existing research on the relationship between teacher turnover and student achievement is correlational, revealing that schools with higher teacher turnover rates also have lower achievement (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Specifically, results show that teacher turnover has a harmful effect on student achievement in Reading and Mathematics, even after controlling for varying indicators of teacher quality (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). "Moreover, teacher turnover is particularly harmful to the achievement of students in schools with large populations of low-performing and Black students" (Ronfeldt et al., 2013, p. 30).

In attempting to frame issues related to high levels of teacher retention, the terms teacher turnover, teacher attrition, and teacher drop-out have been used interchangeably to describe the decisions of teachers either to leave their current schools for other employment opportunities within the field of education or to simply leave the teaching profession entirely. Several factors appear to influence teacher turnover. For instance, teachers cite isolated working conditions as one of the reasons they leave the profession (Neason, 2014). Teachers also express the need for collegial working relationships that

are both positive and trusting (Boyd et al., 2011). When teachers are unable to engage in these types of positive collegial relationships, teachers can become alienated from their work (Martinez, Valdez, & Cariaga, 2016) and the likelihood of their retention within the education field decreases.

Other reasons given by teachers who exit the profession include student discipline problems, lack of influence in many of the key decisions that affect their work, insufficient time, and poor student motivation (Ingersoll, 2002). Without the support needed to maintain strong classroom management and the strategies necessary to increase student motivation, teachers are becoming increasingly frustrated. Furthermore, without the opportunity to have a voice in the important decisions that shape their work and the time necessary to meet the increasing demands placed upon them, teachers are feeling increasingly devalued. With monetary, academic, and societal costs mounting, it is important not only to examine the underlying causes of high teacher turnover, but also to explore the possible solutions.

One potential solution to address some of the concerns causing teacher isolation and alienation could be the creation of stronger bonds of connectedness among the teachers, their students, and other staff members. By purposely developing a strong sense of community among teachers, these bonds of connectedness may provide higher levels of job efficacy, satisfaction, and accomplishment. One promising approach in creating a sense of connectedness among teachers, students, and administrators is restorative practices (RP) (Armour, 2016). RP, also referred to as restorative discipline (RD) and restorative justice (RJ) in schools, is a "whole school relational approach to building

school climate and addressing student behavior that fosters belonging over exclusion, social engagement over control, and meaningful accountability over punishment" (Armour, 2016, p. 3). While the use of RP in schools was originally intended to focus on addressing student misbehavior and wrongdoing (Morrison, Blood, & Thorsborne, 2005), other applications have emerged to provide benefits for a school's entire community (Armour, 2016). RP replaces "fear, uncertainty, and punishment as motivators with belonging, connectedness, and the willingness to change because people matter to each other" (Armour, 2016, pp. 1016-1017). RP includes "processes and approaches that build community based on a relational ecology and are grounded in the values of showing respect, taking responsibility and strengthening relationships" (Sumner, Silverman, & Frampton as cited by Armour, p. 3). Through the use of RP centered on the needs of teachers, school leaders may be able to build and maintain both strong peer communities and durable bonds of teacher connectedness within schools to mitigate the problems associated with high levels of teacher attrition and as a result improve the teacher retention rate.

Chapter One provides an explanation of the problems experienced by schools in building and maintaining a strong sense of community and connectedness among teachers and campus stakeholders. The purpose, research questions, and methodology are discussed to establish how and why this study needs to be conducted. In addition, relevant terms are defined so that a clear understanding of the contextual factors that influence the development of community and connectedness can be established. Delimitations, limitations, and assumptions of the study to clearly articulate the scope,

expectations, generalizability, and transferability of the findings are provided. This chapter concludes with an explanation of the significance of the study and the potential benefits it may have for both researchers and practitioners.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In response to the complications arising from the driving factors that contribute to high rates of teacher attrition, researchers and practitioners have attempted to identify programs, approaches, and strategies to address the levels of alienation and isolation experienced by teachers and potentially increase the retention rates of teachers both within the educational profession generally and individual schools specifically. While the existence of strong intra-school communities has been recognized as a potential solution to the issues related to the teacher drop-out rate (Osterman, 2000), school leaders continue to struggle with implementing effective programs to create and maintain strong bonds of connectedness among teachers. With teachers expressing dissatisfaction with isolated working conditions (Neason, 2014) and the need for more positive and trusting work relationships with their peers (Boyd et al., 2011), there is an opportunity for school leaders to address the needs expressed by teachers to develop meaningful connections and relationships with their colleagues. In order to capitalize on this opportunity, it would be beneficial to study a specific set of practical approaches that could be used to build strong relational bonds among a campus' teaching staff. If teachers are able to build stronger bonds of connectedness among their peers, then improved internal school

communities might entice them to remain in their positions rather than leave the profession for seemingly better opportunities.

A suggested approach that has been used in schools to strengthen the sense of community among students and teachers is RP (Armour, 2016). While the use of RP in schools has focused mainly on students (Morrison et al., 2005), previous research findings have suggested that the ability to build strong communities and connectedness among students could also apply to the adults who work in schools (Morrison et al., 2005). While there is limited research on the specific use of RP focused on building community among teachers (Armour, 2016), proponents suggest that RP can build and maintain a strong sense of community and connectedness among teachers (Armour, 2016) and therefore possibly address the problems associated with high rates of teacher isolation, teacher dissatisfaction, and teacher attrition. Therefore, research is needed to determine if the benefits observed through the use of RP with students are transferable to teachers who are using RP strategies with other staff members (Armour & Todic, 2016).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The creation and maintenance of strong internal school communities are important indicators of a teacher's willingness to commit long-term to a school (Jason et al., 2016). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine how the participation of elementary school teachers with other stakeholders at their campus contributes to the development of their sense of connectedness and community. Through exploring the perceptions of selected teachers who have used RP with other staff members on their

campus, a set of practices may be shown to build stronger teacher communities and reduce teacher dissatisfaction.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1) How does elementary school teachers' participation in restorative practices contribute to the relational connectedness of teachers and other stakeholders on the campus?

2) How does elementary school teachers' participation in restorative practices with stakeholders contribute to a sense of community on the campus?

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach was chosen for this study because it offers many advantages in studying the perceptions of community constructed by teachers. Furthermore, the type of in-depth analysis provided by a qualitative study can enhance the understanding of educational leaders in relation to the types of strategies and factors that contribute to the development of a strong and durable internal school community. Through engaging in this type of study, it was possible to analyze how participants make meaning of their experiences (Somers, 2016), to examine the context of school-based work environments, and to gain a holistic perspective of how community is developed and maintained by teachers and administrators in their respective schools.

The paradigm chosen for this qualitative study is constructivism which "assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent co-create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of

methodological procedures" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 13). The recognition of knowledge and reality are important because "realities are apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature, and dependent for their form and consent on the individual person or groups holding the constructions" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, pp. 110-111). Therefore, this study examined how teachers' participation in RP with other elementary school teachers influenced how they constructed perceptions of connectedness and community.

A case study method of inquiry was chosen because it provides a "rich and holistic" description of the participant's experiences (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Razavieh, 2010, p. 454). Additionally, this is a single case study because a specific issue has been identified for exploration and insights are provided to increase the understanding of that issue (Ary et al., 2010). Lastly, this case study is bounded to a single elementary school.

The study's site was selected through a process of purposeful and convenience sampling. To be eligible for participation in the study, the south Texas elementary school must have used RP for at least two school years. An additional criterion in the selection process of the school district containing the site is that it employs the researcher. Through this employment relationship, the researcher has increased access to the selected site and chosen participants. The teachers, counselors, and administrators at the selected school will have received training for the use of RP at their campus. The district restorative discipline coordinator has conducted ongoing teacher support circles for participating teachers throughout the school year.

The participants consisted of five teachers, one counselor, and one administrator from the selected elementary school. In order to be considered for the study, teachers have been trained in the use of RP, have participated in at least three circles with other teachers on the campus, and have worked on the campus for at least two years. The circles, in which the teachers have participated, consisted of meetings where participants gathered, preferably in the physical arrangement of a circle, and had the freedom to express their perspectives, to be present as a "whole human being," to share their needs, and to benefit from the collective wisdom of the other circle participants (Pranis, 2014, p. 11).

The sources of data used in this study consist of individual interviews, field notes, and an analysis of archival documents related to the use of RP by teachers. The individual interviews consisted of nine questions posed to five teachers and eight questions posed to one school counselor and one campus administrator. In addition, field notes were maintained to document the researcher's thoughts, perceptions, and experiences as both the one conducting the research and as a participant who has supported the implementation of RP at the campus. Lastly, campus documents relating to community building activities, meeting agendas, and campus improvement plans were examined to verify the level of integration the campus has achieved with the use of RP and circles.

DEFINITIONS

Belonging is the sense that members of a community matter to each other and that an individual's needs will be met through a common commitment of the collective

members of that community to be and remain together (Osterman, 2000). Belonging or belongingness is closely related to an individual being part of a community or having a sense of community (Osterman, 2000).

      Circles are processes that honor the presence and dignity of every participant, values the contributions of every participant, emphasizes the connectedness of all things, supports emotional and spiritual expression, and gives equal voice to all (Pranis, 2014). For the purpose of this study, the primary restorative application used by teachers is circles. The types of circles used varied based on the intended purpose of the interaction such as community-building and amends-making.

      Community is defined by four elements: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). The first element of membership relates to an individual's "feeling of belonging or of sharing a sense of personal relatedness" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9). The second element of influence centers on "a sense of mattering, of making a difference to a group, and of the group mattering to its members" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9). The third element of integration and fulfillment of needs describes the feeling that a member's needs will be met by the resources received through membership in a group (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). The last element of shared emotional connection represents the commitment and belief that members have shared and will share history, common places, time together, and similar experiences (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

      Connectedness is the degree to which individuals feel close to other people in the school, are happy to be at school, and feel as though they are a part of the school (Libby,

2004). The term connectedness is closely related to a sense of community because when connectedness occurs or when individuals feel connected to each other, they most often do so within the context of a community.

Restorative Justice (RJ) is a philosophy, set of principles, and practices that "bring together stakeholders voluntarily in the aftermath or crime or wrongdoing to directly address harm, make amends, and restore, to the extent possible, the normative trust that was broken" (Armour, 2016, p. 1014).

Restorative Practices (RP), also referred to as restorative discipline and restorative justice in schools, are a "whole school relational approach to building school climate and addressing student behavior that fosters belonging over exclusion, social engagement over control, and meaningful accountability over punishment" (Armour, 2016, p. 3).

Restorative Discipline (RD) consists of the teaching and training of students to make better behavioral decisions through the use of restorative practices.

Stakeholders consist of the teachers, teaching assistants, counselors, and administrators working at the campus.

DELIMITATIONS OF STUDY

This research project focused specifically on how the participation of teachers in the use of RP with campus stakeholders contributed to their sense of community and connectedness. This study did not attempt to examine every aspect or every type of community that exists within a school. Instead of focusing on the professional coaching

or task accomplishment components of teacher work groups, this study attempted to examine the quality of relational connections among teachers within the context of their organized group interactions.

Additionally, this study did not examine all of the opportunities that might exist for teachers to connect with others staff members. The interactions of teachers in informal or social settings such as the lunch room, teachers' lounge, or outside school events were not studied. Instead, this study focused on how the use of RP within a school's established working groups contribute to the building of community and connectedness among participating group members.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is limited to a group of teachers at one urban elementary school in south Texas. As a result, the findings might have limited generalizability and transferability to other school levels and school settings. Another limitation of this study was that the selected campus has been using RP for only two years. Morrison, Thorsborne, and Blood (2006) found that it takes up to three years for a school to embed RP at every level of the campus and up to five years to see cultural change across the school community (p. 352). In studying a site that has used RP for only two years, it is difficult to observe the full contribution of RP towards the teachers' sense of community and connectedness. As a result, this study examined the influence of RP on the sense of community and connectedness among teachers during the beginning stages of RP implementation. Further study will be needed to explore the perceptions of teachers using

12

RP with other teachers and stakeholders once its use has been in place for at least five years.

ASSUMPTIONS

It was assumed that teachers who have a strong sense of community and connectedness with other teachers and campus stakeholders develop higher levels of job commitment and are be more likely to stay in the teaching profession. Another assumption is that when teachers participate in RP with other teachers and stakeholders, an enhanced sense of community and connectedness grows among the participating members. A final assumption is that through teachers' participation in RP with other teachers and stakeholders, teachers are less likely to experience the feelings of isolation and aloneness that have been shown to contribute to teacher attrition.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Understanding how teachers' participation in RP contributes to their sense of community may inform others who are interested in building authentic bonds among teachers and cultivating stronger communities and connections among the staff members of a school. Armour and Todic's study (2016) in an elementary school setting found that the use of RP built community and connectedness among students. If the results of this study are similar to the outcomes observed from the use of RP with students, the findings could inform others who are interested in building authentic bonds among teachers. Additionally, teachers, principals, and other campus leaders could benefit from the findings of this study through the identification of restorative strategies that can assist in

13

the cultivation of stronger communities and connections among school staff-members. Finally, the findings of this study could contribute to the current base of knowledge and practices among school and district leaders to increase teacher retention rates.

The objective of this study is to examine how the teachers' participation in RP influences the perceptions of elementary school teachers in relation to their sense of community and connectedness with other teachers and campus stakeholders. Since factors associated with isolated work conditions contribute to teachers leaving the profession, the findings of this study can add to the knowledge of both researchers and practitioners to support their efforts in building stronger relational bonds among teaching staffs in order to reduce teacher dissatisfaction. While the use of RP to this point has focused primarily on student applications, there are potential benefits to teachers using RP in building and maintaining a strong sense of community within a school's work environment.

This study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter consists of an introduction, a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, a brief overview of methodology, a definition of terms, the delimitations of the study, the limitations of the study, the assumptions, the significance of the study, and a summary. The second chapter includes a review of the relevant literature. The third chapter provides a general introduction, the research method and design, the population and sample of the study, the data collection protocols and procedures, the data analysis framework, and a

summary. The fourth chapter presents the findings of the study. The fifth chapter offers a

discussion of the results, findings, implications for future research, conclusion, and

closing thoughts.

Chapter 2

INTRODUCTION

This literature review provides an examination of relevant professional research pertaining to emerging, school-based RP strategies that have shown promise in building community within schools and have shown potential in addressing high teacher dissatisfaction resulting in teacher attrition. Initially there is an exploration of how teacher-communities develop, how communities have been studied in schools and other workplace environments, and how those intra-school communities relate to teacher employment and career decisions. The literature review then focuses on the importance of community, connectedness, and belonging in schools. This review of literature concludes with an examination of RP, the uses of RP in schools, and the potential impact RP can have on a teacher's sense of belonging and connection to others within a school's community. By developing a better understanding of how teachers' participation in RP enhances community, connectedness, and belonging as well as a school's ability to build social capital among its teachers, educational leaders might gain a more holistic perspective on how to successfully lower the teacher drop-out rate.

COMMUNITY IN SCHOOLS

An important aspect of understanding the dynamics of any school is to examine the health of the communities existing within that campus. Because a school is a convergence of many individuals with different positions of power and affiliation, a varying number of communities can exist simultaneously. As a result of the large number

of communities that can concurrently exist on different levels within a school, there are instances when the health of one community does not align with the health of another. Therefore, to accurately observe and comprehend the complex dynamics that influence the everyday operations of a school, educational leaders must understand both the inter and intra peer communities that exist among students, teachers, counselors, and campus administrators. By understanding these networks of human interaction, researchers can gain valuable insight into their efforts to address and counteract the high teacher attrition rate.

How a Sense of Community has been Theorized

Within the field of research dedicated to the study of communities, the psychological sense of community theory contends that a feeling of community is derived from "the interaction between the individual and the context" (Jason et al., 2016, p. 12). Sarason (1974) described this theory as, "the perceptions of similarity to others, an acknowledged interdependence with others, a willingness to maintain this interdependence by giving to or doing for others what one expects from them, the feeling one is part of a larger and dependable and stable structure" (p. 157). In the context of a school, this theory speaks to the importance of the interdependent connection and relationship between individual teachers and the overall context of the school, other staff members, and the work in which the staff is collectively engaged. According to this theory, if teachers feel that they are a part of a larger, interdependent network of professionals, they will be more willing to commit to the school or group and even make

17

personal sacrifices for the school's or group's betterment (Jason et al., 2016). As teachers

give what is expected and in turn receive what they expect from others within the

organization, a community can be developed that will lead to a school environment that is

stable, fulfilling, and durable.

An ambitious aspect of theories relating to a sense of community is the attempt to

describe both "individual-level feelings of connectedness and the implications these

feelings have on behaviors and settings as well as the reciprocal ways in which different

settings can facilitate feelings of connectedness and related behaviors" (Jason et al., 2016,

p. 13). The interaction of these relational connection points is important when studying a

teacher's sense of community because an individual's feeling of connectedness impacts

not only his or her behavior, but also the different settings within a school that

reciprocally influence an individual teacher's sense of connectedness. Therefore, this

circular pattern of influence and behavior between the individual and the context or

setting is important to understand in any attempt to evaluate an existing sense of

community.

A sense of community is usually based more on feelings and perceptions than a

"rational evaluation of the fulfillment of personal needs or aspirations" (Jason et al.,

2016, p. 12). As a result, a sense of community should be assessed through a

representative sample of individuals rather than the observation of one person (Jason et

al., 2016). Since the perceptions of individuals can vary greatly regarding the existence

and relative strength of a community, a skewed understanding can emerge if too great a

weight is placed on isolated, individual perspectives. A more comprehensive

understanding of a community can be gained through the comparison of multiple observations.

In attempting to operationalize concepts related to a sense of community, there have been various theoretical and methodological challenges. For example, the scope of measurement and generalizability related to these theories has been limited by the various conceptualizations from "place-based (locational) communities (i.e., neighborhood) to more generalized and abstract communities (relational communities)" (Jason et al., 2016, p. 13). Designing a reliable and valid measure of community has also been difficult because the attempt to capture a sense of community occurs between "different levels of influence (e.g., individual feelings, relational behaviors, and setting features)" (Jason, Stevens, & Ram, 2015, p. 13).

Despite the challenges, researchers have developed and tested a number of scales intended to operationalize a sense of community (Jason et al., 2016). McMillian and Chavis (1986) proposed four elements to define a common sense of community: membership, influence, fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection. The initial element of membership encompasses a "feeling of belonging or a shared sense of personal relatedness" (p. 9). The second element of influence relates to a sense of both mattering to a group and reciprocally having that group matter to the individual. The third element of need fulfillment focuses on the feeling that members' needs would be met through their membership to the group. The final element of shared emotional connection exists where there was a belief that the members of the group will have a shared history and common experiences (McMillian & Chavis, 1986). Additionally, Peterson, Speer,

and McMillan (2008) developed an eight-item Brief Sense of Community Scale to empirically confirm the sense of community dimensions identified by McMillian and Chavis (1986).

Jason et al. (2015) conceptualized a sense of community through the creation of the Three-Factor Psychological Sense of Community Scale that identified three ecological levels that describe an individual's experience as part of a system. The three levels of interaction identified by Jason et al. (2015) consist of entity, membership, and self. The entity level is the first and largest classification in scope and consists of an individual's connection to an organization such as a school. At this level of interaction, individuals need to become connected with group characteristics like goals, purposes, and objectives (Jason et al., 2016). The second level of membership addresses the relationships that develop between the members of the identified group (Jason et al., 2016). Examples of this level of interaction in a school setting would be the quality and durability of relationships between and among teachers, administrators, and staff members. The third level, self, "assesses the meaningfulness, commitment, and emotional connection experienced by members" (Jason et al., 2016, p. 14). The importance of this ecological model developed by Jason et al. (2015) is that it provides a multi-level examination of how a sense of community is developed and maintained. As a result of the many facets of interaction in organizations such as schools, varying levels of community can operate simultaneously. Without a more comprehensive account of the different levels of direct interactions, interpersonal connections, and community building that takes

place on the personal, peer, and organizational levels of a school, it would be difficult to understand the various experiences that impact a teacher's sense of community.

While there has been a great deal of effort and research conducted to understand and conceptualize a generalizable sense of community, there is still much work to do (Jason et al., 2016). The idea of a community can be as complex as the number of variables that influence and shape the formation and functioning of that community. It would be beneficial for further research to develop a more clearly articulated "theoretical statement" about the manner in which communities should be conceptualized and developed (Jason et al., 2016, p. 19). Through such an effort, a more generalizable theory regarding an individual's sense of community could be developed and used to further the connectedness of individuals living and working within the various communities in which they interact.

Ways that Communities have been Studied in Schools

Various approaches have been taken to study the development and existence of communities among teachers in schools. A popular model used by schools to facilitate teacher communities has been the use of professional learning communities (PLCs) (Woodland, 2016). As a result, there has been a great deal of research and study regarding many facets of the implementation and effectiveness of PLCs in schools. Woodward (2016) stated, "PLC's are conceived of as collaborative, networked communities, through which teachers look to transform what is learned through systemic collective inquiry into practice in order to improve instructional quality and curricular

outcomes across classrooms and schools" (p. 506). In the context of use, "PLCs are low stakes, non-mandatory" communities based on "collegial relationships" in which teachers are organized around some combination of professional development, problems of practice, and student learning (Woodland, 2016, p. 506).

Another form of teacher communities that have been studied is the use of Critical Friends Groups (CFGs). CFGs have been used as a "school-based professional community" whose purpose has been to spur "instructional improvement and schoolwide reform" (Curry, 2008, p. 735). Within a CFG, the members attempt to increase student learning, achievement, and performance through ongoing, practice-centered, collegial conversations that are embedded within protocols that consist of "structured conversation guides" (Curry, 2008, p. 735). Much like PLCs, CFGs are settings where teachers can collaborate through the context of student learning and professional practice.

A common theme of teacher-based communities in both workplaces and literature is that most school communities are principally structured around either teacher professional development, work tasks, or student learning. To most observers, it seems both reasonable and rational that work communities are organized around work tasks; however, there appears to be a missing element to these school-based communities. What seems to be missing in these attempts to build community among school-based professionals is a focus on connecting the members of a school's staff as people rather than just as employees working on a task. Potential benefits may arise from the creation of safe spaces for teachers to connect as individuals within the context of who they are instead of just the work they perform. Through the formation of communities that are

founded in relational ecology and conflict resolution, new opportunities for teacher

connectedness and collaboration can occur with positive benefits not only for teachers,

but also for students, campus leaders, and educational institutions.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BELONGING AND COMMUNITY

While the idea of community has been studied in different ways, a common theme

in much of the research conducted on community is the concept of belongingness

(Soloman et al., 1996). Furman (1998) found that community is based in finding

commonality and that a community does not truly materialize until its members

experience "Gemeinschaft," which is a sense of belonging, trust, and safety (p. 302).

Therefore, an essential part of membership within a community includes feeling part of

or belonging to a group (Osterman, 2000). In relation to the important connection

between community and belonging, McMillan and Chavis (2008) found that a "sense of

community is a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to

one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through

their commitment to be together" (p. 9). In schools, there are many potential groups to

which individuals can belong. Primarily these groups are made up of students, teachers,

and other staff members. For schools to cultivate a strong sense of community, campus

leaders should design communal activities in which participants can share, connect, and

contribute (Osterman, 2000).

The Need to Belong

In order to better understand and describe human motivation and behavior, Abraham Maslow (1970) developed a hierarchy to describe, organize, and prioritize five categories of human needs. Within this hierarchy, each of the five levels of human needs are expressed on a ranked continuum of need fulfillment. In order for a level of needs to be fully addressed and satisfied, the preceding levels of needs must first be met. The first of Maslow's five levels begins with basic physiological needs related to an individual's necessity for items such as food, water, shelter, and warmth. The second level of needs deals with factors related to safety. In seeking safety, an individual will search to find security, stability, and freedom from fear (Kunc, 1992). Once these two basic levels of needs are fulfilled, an individual will seek to meet the third level of needs related to belonging and love. This need of belonging and love might be fulfilled through a relational connection with a friend, family member, coworker, spouse, or lover (Kunc, 1992). The fourth level of human needs relates to the fulfillment of self-esteem which is characterized by pursuing achievement, obtaining mastery, receiving recognition, or earning respect (Kunc, 1992). Once the previous four categories of human needs are fulfilled, an individual is freed to pursue the highest level of human existence which is considered self-actualization. In Maslow's (1970) early accounts regarding this highest level, individuals are capable of fully pursuing their inner talents, engaging their creative impulses, and finding fulfillment in the various aspects of their lives.

Since an underlying premise of Maslow's hierarchy is that the needs at a lower level must be satisfied before individuals are liberated to seek a higher level of need

fulfillment (Kunc, 1992), the order in which human needs are organized provides insight into Maslow's understandings of the human psyche. Central to Maslow's hierarchy of human needs in both positioning and importance is the need of belonging. While the human need to belong (Kunc, 1992 & Osterman, 2000) can only be fulfilled after the physiological and safety needs are met, belonging is a prerequisite to the achievement of self-worth (Kunc, 1992). Kunc, further stated, "Maslow stressed that only when we are anchored in community do we develop self-esteem, the need to assure ourselves of our own worth as individuals" (p. 2).

Not only is it critical from a personal development perspective to understand that the need to belong precedes the need for personal achievement and self-esteem, it is also essential to consider the importance of belonging in the context of workplaces generally and schools specifically. While there is an "enormous amount of evidence" from the field of corporate management that a person's sense of belonging is a pivotal factor in the individual's ability to excel, it is surprising that in schools, the need to belong is the one level in Maslow's hierarchy in which little nurturance or assistance is provided (Kunc, 1992, p. 2). Kunc explained:

> We have practices and programs to support physiological needs (e.g., subsidized breakfast and hot lunch programs), safety needs (e.g., traffic, sex, drug and health education), learning structures to build confidence and esteem (e.g., co-operative group learning, mastery learning models with individualized objectives and performance criteria, esteem building curricular units), and specialized learning needs in a vast array of curriculum domains. Yet, creating caring communities has

25

not been a mission or practice in the overly tracked, segregated, exclusive schools of the 20th century (p. 3).

Over the years, Maslow's assertions about human needs have gained widespread acceptance (Kunc, 1992). In many ways, today's educational institutions have continued to focus on programs designed to provide services for students based on Maslow's central premises. Additionally, some school districts have taken steps to address the needs of their employees by offering counseling and other services to assist employees in coping with the needs that arise from personal matters. Although there seems to be general agreement among educational institutions about the validity of Maslow's hierarchy and that the fulfillment of certain needs is prerequisite to the fulfillment of other needs, educational leaders curiously seem to invert a central tenet of Maslow by making achievement and mastery the "primary, if not sole precursor for self-esteem," rather than belonging (Kunc, 1992, p. 3). Kunc (1992) states that the education system "has dissected and inverted Maslow's hierarchy of needs so that belonging has been transformed from an unconditional need and right of all people into something that must be earned, something that can be achieved only by the "best" of us" (p. 3). Through this inversion, the message sent to both students and teachers is that belonging is not something people receive because of who they are, but that belonging must be earned as a result of what they accomplish. This focus on achievement-based belonging is in direct contradiction to Maslow's hierarchy that positions the need to belong as a prerequisite to the self-esteem need to achieve. It is precisely when the need of belonging is met that individuals are freed to pursue the fulfillment derived from achievement. In the context of the vast

priorities and goals that are pursued by educational institutions, it is possible that a

heightened focus on performance and a neglected focus on building interpersonal

communities might be producing counterproductive outcomes.

Connectedness and Relatedness

An additional component to experiencing a sense of belonging within a

community is a feeling of connectedness to and relatability with other members that

make up that community. According to some motivational researchers, relatedness is a

"basic physiological need that is essential to human growth and development" (Osterman,

2000, p. 325). The need for relatedness is closely associated with the need to be "securely

connected" to others within a community to which one feels a sense of belonging

(Osterman, 2000, p. 325). The need to be relationally connected is so important that it can

even consciously or subconsciously affect the well-being and health of an individual

(Osterman, 2000). Moreover, when individuals feel a strong sense of connectedness to

others within their community, their willingness to display helping behavior increases

(Osterman, 2000). Other positive benefits demonstrated through organizational research

in schools have shown that the quality of relationships, collegiality, and collaboration

have an effect on the motivation and performance of the school staff (Osterman, 2000).

In a study exploring the relationships that make up the professional identity of

teachers, Canrinus, Helms-Lorenz, Beijaard, Butnik, and Hofman (2017) found that a

teacher's sense of professional identity is based on the interpretation of and interaction

within the context of relationships with others. Strong levels of teachers' relational

satisfaction with colleagues, ample support received from others on the campus, and high quality relationships with a school's administration cause teachers to have a higher level of self-efficacy, job satisfaction, occupational commitment, and motivation (Canrinus et al., 2017). Canrinus et al. (2017) further found, "relationship satisfaction could be strengthened by providing or enhancing a supportive environment, making sure that teachers feel they are listened to by the school board, and developing a strong feeling of relatedness between team members" (p.127).

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AND RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

In an effort to provide additional support to teachers, school leaders have looked to adopt new strategies and protocols to create an environment of sustained success for students and staff. An approach that has emerged across the country to address some of the complex issues confronting schools is the use of RP and RD (Armour, 2016). While RD has shown promise as a way to address conflict and reduce student suspensions (Armour, 2013), other applications of restorative philosophy have emerged. To this point, the efforts of those implementing RD in schools have focused primarily on students (Morrison, Blood, & Thorsborne, 2005). The emphasis of using RD with students has been rational because the early impetus of RD implementation was intended to address student misbehavior (Morrison et al., 2005). Through the application of RD strategies in schools, however, researchers have seen the potential benefits for using RP with teachers and other staff members (Armour & Todic, 2016). In order to contextualize the potential benefits of using RP with teachers, it is helpful to understand its emergence from RJ, the

28

research that provides a clear definition of RP, and the applications of RP that have been used in schools.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE: THE ROOTS OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES AND RESTORATIVE DISCIPLINE

In order to understand the various applications of RP and RD in a school setting, it is important to first examine their origins within the concept of RJ. In practice, RP and RD can be seen as school-based applications of many of the principles found within the RJ philosophy (Amstutz & Mullet, 2014). RJ has predominantly been used within the criminal justice system in response to crime and harm (Armour, 2016). The principles of RJ are rooted in the long-standing, peace-based "philosophy of the U.S. Mennonite community and the traditional practices of the indigenous people of North America and New Zealand" (Armour, 2016, p. 8). RJ seeks to include and involve everyone that has been impacted by an offense to collectively repair the harm and make things as right as is possible (Zehr, 2002). In practice, RJ views any violation of the law or school rules as a violation of people, communities, and relationships. As noted by Armour and Todic (2016), "violations create obligations to address the needs of those who have been harmed, the wrongdoer(s), and the community and provide an opportunity for those most directly impacted by that harm to be involved in responding to it and making things as right as possible for all concerned" (p. 8). RJ has been mostly applied in the American criminal justice system as a voluntary alternative to traditional punishments and sentencing (Armour, 2016). In many cases the victims of crime and wrongdoing have found the processes of RJ to be more personally satisfying and able to provide a higher

29

level of closure than traditional criminal justice approaches because the offender is held directly accountable to the victim through a process of making things right (Zehr, 2002). With the offender having to listen to, acknowledge, and make the circumstances as right as possible, a process of healing can often begin for the victim.

Given the philosophical foundation of RP in RJ, some school leaders have begun to embrace RP as a way to increase student engagement, decrease student suspensions, improve the relational infrastructure of a school, and address harm (Armour, 2013). There has been debate, however, over the use of RJ as a term in the school-based implementation of restorative philosophy. Some have preferred to use the designations RD or RP because the term RJ is so closely identified with the criminal justice system. It can be problematic to use a term that may connote the criminalization of student behavior. For the purposes of this paper, the term RD is used to describe the restorative approaches that are used to address student misbehavior and the committing of harm while the term RP is used in relation to the application of restorative practices that are meant to build relationships and community among the various members of a school.

The Use of Restorative Practices in Schools

RP as used in schools has been defined by Armour (2016) as, "a relational approach to building school climate and addressing student behavior that fosters belonging over exclusion, social engagement over control, and meaningful accountability over punishment" (p. 1019). This definition encompasses the breadth and scope of potential RP applications in schools. At its heart, the use of school-based RP is as much

about building a sense of community among a school's members as it is about addressing misbehavior. A common mistake made by practitioners and those new to the use of restorative applications in schools is that RP is only intended to be used to address serious wrongdoing. While the use of restorative approaches can have a beneficial effect on students who struggle with positive behavior choices, the most significant benefits are seen when a whole-school approach is adopted by campus leaders (Armour, 2016). A whole-school approach is one in which restorative principles are implemented at every level of a school and with every attending student. Instead of just focusing on fixing troubled students, RP is best used as a proactive measure to build capacity and competency in the academic, social, and emotional realms (Armour, 2016).

Traditionally when school officials administer student discipline, they use a variation of three questions to guide their campus-based investigations. These questions tend to focus on (1) what rule was broken? (2) who broke the rule? and (3) what should the punishment be? (Amstutz & Mullet, 2014). When school officials are operating in a restorative framework, three different types of questions are asked. These questions are (1) what happened? (2) who was affected? and (3) what needs to be done to make it right? (Pranis, 2014). When administering student discipline in the traditional sense, the school official is working to find answers to the original three questions so that proof of wrongdoing can be established and a punitive consequence can be administered. Often in this type of investigation the victim and wrongdoer are reduced to bystanders who provide evidence to an administrator who will ultimately be the one to whom the harming student will be held accountable (Zehr, 2002). The needs of the students, teachers, and

other parties involved in the situation are secondary to the investigation, the determining of fault, and the administering of punishment. When operating in a restorative framework, similar instances of student wrongdoing are handled differently. Instead of the individuals involved in the situation being relegated to a detached provider of evidence, both the individuals who have done harm and those who have been harmed are actively involved in a process of determining all aspects of what has occurred, how everyone involved has been affected, and what actions need to be taken to make amends (Zehr, 2002). While the traditional approach often results in the acceptance of punishment, the restorative approach leads to the acceptance of responsibility and accountability (Morrison et al., 2005).

The three goals of RP are accountability, community safety, and skill development (Armour, 2016). The first goal of accountability is critical to the long-term success of RP in schools. When students are given the opportunity to be accountable for the harm they caused as well as the opportunity to repair that harm, authentic social and emotional opportunities emerge for students to learn from their mistakes (Morrison et al., 2005). Through the second goal of community safety, RP empowers students to help resolve conflicts, create safe spaces to deal with disagreements, and maintain an environment of open communication where a school's students and staff work as partners to create successful outcomes across the campus. Within the third goal of skill development, RP addresses the underlying factors that lead people to cause harm and then provides students the tools for creating and maintaining community.

A Tiered Approach to Restorative Practices

A principle difference between the use of RJ in the criminal justice system and the use of RP in educational settings is the environmental context in which the practices are used. In the criminal justice system, there is a high likelihood that the victim and offender would not regularly interact either before or after the crime or harm was committed. This situation is not the case in schools. Within the context of a school, the students, teachers, and staff members regularly interact before and after wrongdoing occurs. As a result of the school-based communities that exist both before and after conflicts emerge, RP has the unique potential to act as both a proactive and reactive approach to address misbehavior and harm (Armour, 2016).

A framework developed to understand the potential applications of RP within a whole-school context is found in Morrison's (2005) hierarchy of restorative responses. In this hierarchy, Morrison provides a continuum of restorative responses that are organized into three tiered categories. The first tier of restorative practices consists of universal approaches that can be employed in schools with every student, teacher, and staff member. These whole-school applications, which are referred to as RP in this paper, consist of practices designed to build and reaffirm relationships between students and teachers through developing social and emotional skills. The second tier of restorative applications is targeted to problems, conflicts, and harms that occur as a result of student misbehavior or wrongdoing. The focus of the restorative applications used in this second tier is the repairing of relationships. The third tier of Morrison's hierarchy consists of intensive interventions that are focused on a small percentage of students. In the most

intensive category of serious and reoccurring misbehavior, the focus is on rebuilding

relationships among the affected parties (Morrison, 2005).

In an attempt to use Morrison's hierarchy as a framework for the implementation

of RP, leaders in the restorative field have developed practical applications aligned to

each of the three tiers for schools to adopt. To implement the universal tier-one practices,

schools have used various community building circles (Pranis, 2014), created respect

agreements, communicated in affective or "I" statements, and engaged in collective goal-

setting activities (Claassen & Claassen, 2008). The goal of these activities is to make

connections, build relationships, and create community. To address the conflicts that arise

in the second and third tiers of Morrison's hierarchy, school leaders have employee

interventions like restorative re-directions (Claassen & Claassen, 2008) and peace or

amends-making circles (Pranis, 2014).

Of the restorative practices adopted by teachers, the most commonly used are

circles. Generally, circles are opportunities for participants to sit or stand in the formation

of a circle and listen, share, and connect with the other individual that are involved in the

process. The importance of participants gathering in the circular configuration is that the

"physical format of the circle symbolizes shared leadership, equality, connection, and

inclusion" (Pranis, 2014, p. 11). Additionally, the circle format facilitates an additional

level of "focus, accountability, and participation" because each person can see and be

seen by the other individuals involved in the process (Pranis, 2014, p. 11).

A key philosophical foundation for circles is that every person is in need of help

and that through helping others, a person is able to reciprocally help themselves (Pranis,

2014). Pranis goes on to state, "The participants of the circle benefit from the collective wisdom of everyone in the circle. Participants are not divided into givers and receivers: everyone is both a giver and receiver" (p. 6). In essence, circles assume the universal human desire to be connected to others. (Pranis, 2014). An important benefit using circles in schools is the creation and strengthening of a "web of relationships among a group of people" (Pranis, 2014, p. 59).

In practice, there are different variations and applications of circles. The type of circle used is usually determined by the goal or the circumstances surrounding the interaction. Most often the intended purpose of circles in schools is to build community, communicate information, facilitate learning, or resolve conflict. In community-building circles participants are encouraged to share, listen, and connect with others through the discussion of a particular topic or the sharing of either individual or collective experiences. The aim of these types of circles is not the topic of discussion, but instead the connections that are created and strengthened through the process of sharing and interacting. Pranis found, "by sharing our individual stories we open places for others to connect to us, to find common ground with us, and to know us more completely" (p. 40). Through this process of sharing, individuals allow themselves to become more vulnerable, to open up, and to become more interpersonally connected through realizing ways that they are more alike (Pranis, 2014). Circles are also effective ways to communicate information and collaborate with a group of people. The norms and guidelines associated with the circle process allow for information to be communicated in an organized way that ensures that every voice has an opportunity to speak and be heard.

Additionally, there are academic applications of circles that have been used to facilitate learning in collaborative groups. Circle protocols are used effectively to engage students, to check for understanding, and to facilitate the sharing of understanding and strategies with other participating students. Lastly, circles are used to resolve problems and create peace among those in conflict. Pranis states, "peacemaking circles use structure to create possibilities for freedom: freedom to speak our truth, freedom to drop masks and protections, freedom to be present as a whole human being, freedom to reveal our deepest longings, freedom to acknowledge mistakes and fears, freedom to act in accord with our core values" (p. 11).

Since the members of a school's internal community have the opportunity to interact on a regular and ongoing basis, it is important to have systems in place to prevent harm and wrongdoing among students and teachers through the building of strong communities and to implement processes to deal with detrimental actions after they occur. Through adopting a whole-school approach to implementing RP, school leaders will be creating an environment in which the entire continuum from conflict to community can be addressed in a healthy manner by administrators, teachers, staff members, and students (Amstutz & Mullet, 2014).

The Benefits of Using Restorative Practices in Schools

Although RP in schools was originally designed to address serious incidents of student misconduct and harmful behavior, many have seen the potential uses and benefits of the restorative philosophy as offering much more (Morrison et al., 2005). In schools,

RP translates into building a "relational ecology, which relies on relationships as a motivation for change rather than fear" (Armour & Todic, 2016, p. 8). A differentiating aspect of RP from traditional approaches to discipline management is that when a restorative environment has been established, the members of the community make changes because they "care about each other rather than out of the fear of receiving punitive consequences" (Armour & Todic, 2016, p. 9). Once the impetus for action among the members of a school has shifted from fear to caring, a more authentic sense of community can take hold and act as a support system to further strengthen the community through the ebbs and flows of a school year.

In addition to the creation of stronger communities, another benefit of using RD and RP in schools can be found in the capacity to build "social and human capital through challenging students in the context of social and emotional learning" (Morrison et al., 2005, p. 335). According to Cox (1995), "social capital is the social glue, the weft and warp of the social fabric which comprises a myriad of interactions that make up our public and private lives" (p. 3). Through the use of RP, social webs can be created where actions and decisions are seen as interrelated events that impact everyone that is a member of that interpersonal network. Through framing the contextual situations in which students and teachers authentically interact as opportunities to connect, learn, and problem-solve, relevant learning opportunities can occur. Through genuine social and emotional learning experiences and a focus on relationships, the social capital of students and teachers can be increased and the likelihood of sustained civil educational environments can become more realistic (Morrison et al., 2005).

RP can additionally lead to the development and acceptance of personal responsibility. When individuals are able to develop communal bonds with others through a participatory framework, the growth of personal responsibility is more likely to occur (Morrison et al., 2005). In situations where teachers and students are able to work with others to resolve their interpersonal conflicts in a collaborative framework that is both safe and structured, participants are invited to take responsibility for their part not only in the problem, but also in the solution. Through the processes of collectively identifying harm and amends-making, participants are more likely to take personal responsibility for their actions because all affected parties are present and the focus of the processes is on making things right rather than just assigning blame (Morrison et al., 2005).

The Teacher Use of Restorative Practices with other Teachers

While many of the efforts related to the implementation of RP in schools have focused on students, the potential applications for teachers are numerous. The need to experience a strong sense of community, belonging, and connectedness applies as much to teachers as it does to students. While obvious differences such as authority, status, maturity, and compensation exist between teachers and students, basic human needs apply to every person within the school setting. Through the use of RP, teachers may be able to create the sense of community and develop the bonds of connectedness needed to mitigate teacher isolation.

The teacher-focused applications of RP must begin with a message sent from campus leaders to their staffs that the building of a strong relational infrastructure is a priority. According to Morrison et al. (2005), it is only through the "symbolic actions" (p. 340) and affirmative decisions of a campus' administrator that teachers can clearly see that they are valued members of the school's community. Schools at their essence are about people; therefore, the foundation of a successful school's climate and culture rests on both the communication and relationships among the staff (Brown & Vaughn, 2015). Brown and Vaughn (2015) found, "no greater solution exists for increasing teacher morale, empowering teachers, and promoting trust than open, honest, extensive communication among professionals working together to build community" (p. 34). It is incumbent on school leaders to create the safe spaces where teachers can be socially and emotionally engaged not only with their students but also with other teachers and professionals on the campus (Morrison et al., 2005).

By nature, human beings are "social animals" that seem to operate at the highest level when they are living in the context of "robust and healthy relationships with each other" (Thorsborne, 2015, p. 37). A key aspect of developing a social web of communication and relationships is "interaction rituals" (Collins, 2004, p. 78). Teachers need campus leaders to provide supportive environments where teachers can interact with others, be listened to, and develop strong feelings of relatedness to their fellow staff members (Canrinus et al., 2017). Through interaction and dialogue, not only can collegiality grow and the emotional needs of teachers be met, but greater personal and professional learning can occur (Osterman, 2000).

39

Since the use of RP has been shown to increase communication and build relationships among the membership of a school (Armour, 2016), researchers may explore other restorative applications that might contribute to the creation of strong bonds of connectedness and community among teachers and staffs (Armour and Todic, 2016). Furthermore, while the use of specific restorative strategies might be effective in isolation, it is through the ongoing, systemic use of RP, at both the individual and institutional level, that sustained improvement can be realized (Morrison et al., 2005).

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The purpose of this literature review was to explore topics of research related to restorative practices that may address causes of teacher attrition. Since isolated working conditions have been cited by some teachers as one reason they are leaving the profession, the literature review began with an examination of how communities have been studied in schools. Since schools have primarily formed their teacher communities around tasks associated with professional development and student learning, there could be potential benefits in allowing teachers to come together on an interpersonal level to connect and build relationships with other teachers and staff members.

The focus of this review then shifted to the importance of belonging and connectedness. A potential disconnect exists in schools because the need to belong is a fundamental human need which schools tend to neglect due to a prioritization of achievement. With a strong focus on creating authentic bonds of connectedness among a school's staff, educational leaders can make progress in fulfilling their staff's need to

belong and provide a clear rational for teachers to remain at their campuses and within the teaching profession. Lastly, an exploration of literature related to RP and RD provided valuable insight into the philosophical background of RP, a clear understanding of RP, the applications of RP in schools, and the potential benefits of using RP with teachers. While literature exists about the interpersonal needs of employees in the workplace, additional research is needed on specific practices that can be used to build community among teachers working in school environments. Questions need to be answered about the most effective methods that school leaders can use to build a strong sense of community among their teachers and make their campuses into employment environments that attract and retain quality teachers. Through an increased understanding of the potential use of RP by teachers to build strong intra-school communities, educational leaders will be better positioned to take informed action in their efforts to improve teacher retention and produce successful outcomes for their campuses, districts, and communities.

Chapter 3

INTRODUCTION

Teacher isolation is an important concern that educational leaders continue to confront in their attempts to build a qualified and experienced teaching force. To produce successful outcomes for the students and communities they serve, leaders are searching for innovative approaches to retain quality teachers. One potential solution to the problem of teacher isolation may be the building of strong communities among teachers within the school through their participation in RP. Through the development of authentic connections and relationships among teachers and stakeholders, school leaders may be able to mitigate some of the factors driving the high levels of teacher alienation that contribute to attrition.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the research method and design of the study. The chapter includes a description of the population that will be studied, the sample of selected participants, the data collection protocols and procedures, and methods for analyzing the collected data. The purpose of this qualitative research project is to study how the participation of teachers in RP with other teachers and stakeholders enhances their sense of connectedness and community within a school.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1) How does elementary school teachers' participation in restorative practices contribute to the relational connectedness of teachers and other stakeholders on the campus?

2) How does elementary school teachers' participation in restorative practices with stakeholders contribute to a sense of community on the campus?

RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

A qualitative approach was chosen for this research project as the preferred method to study how RP contributes to a sense of community among elementary school teachers. Qualitative research is used to understand "how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 13). Van Maanen (1979) described qualitative research as "an umbrella term covering an array of interpretative techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, or certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world" (p. 520). Therefore, this study engaged in qualitative techniques to explore how teachers construct, experience, and assign meaning to community and connectedness as a result of using RP.

An advantage of utilizing a qualitative approach in this study is that through the use of various qualitative techniques, a thorough understanding can be obtained about both the subject matter at hand and the context in which the phenomena exists (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Since the study takes place in the naturalistic setting of a school, there is the opportunity to study the participants' authentic experiences as they unfold in their everyday environments (Hays & Singh, 2012). The ability to examine how RP influences

teachers' sense of community within their work environment has the potential to provide a rich background of contextual data to better understand the participants' responses.

An added advantage of engaging in a qualitative study lies in the "inductive and recursive" nature of qualitative research through which the researcher is able to move back and forth between conducting research and reflecting on the process and findings (Patton as cited by Hay & Singh, 2012, p.5). This ability to reflect on the process and make modifications while still engaging in the collection of data enables a certain level of responsiveness and flexibility to ensure that a holistic representation of the data is captured. Reflecting and adjusting within the research process is advantageous when studying teachers in their natural school environments because those environments are not static. Schools can be viewed as dynamic organizations in which change is not only seen as a regular occurrence, but as a way of being. The addition of new students, staff changes, reassigned duties, and new directives are just a few examples of the factors that can influence the relational perspectives of teachers with others on their campus. Reflecting and adjusting within the research process to account for these factors gives this research project the flexibility required to more accurately contextualize and interpret the findings.

A limitation that the use of qualitative methods has on the findings of this study is the relatively small number of participants. What qualitative approaches gain in terms of capturing the quality of experiences, they lose in terms of capturing the quantity of experiences. Instead of reporting findings from a large and wide-ranging sample of participants, qualitative research tends to provide a more in-depth description of

44

experiences from a limited number of participants. For this reason, critics call qualitative researchers "journalists or soft scientists" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 2). Moreover, critics charge that the findings of qualitative research are more like fiction than science because there is no objective way to verify the truths that are discovered through the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Since qualitative research focuses on describing the socially constructed nature of reality and collecting an accurate perception of truth from participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), findings can change from context to context and therefore seem unreliable.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The theoretical perspective of this study is constructivism. "The constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent co-create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 13). Therefore, constructivism best suits this study because in exploring the participants' perceptions of how RP contributes to their sense of community and connectedness, the participants might construct their perception of reality differently. Additionally, the constructivist paradigm seeks to construct knowledge through social interactions (Hays & Singh, 2012). As a result, this theoretical perspective is an authentic frame through which to view how RP contributes to the inherently social concept of community and connectedness.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In order to understand the teachers' experiences of participating in the use of RP to enhance their sense of community and connectedness beyond students, a conceptual framework developed by Jason et al. (2015) was used for a secondary analysis of the emerging themes from the data. This framework is known as the Three-Factor Psychological Sense of Community Scale and has been used to understand the three ecological levels that describe an individual's experience as part of a system or community. The first and broadest conceptualization in which community is understood is entity. The second level, membership, examines the relationships with other members of the school community. The third and narrowest level used to conceptualize an individual's experience as part of a community consists of the individual or self.

At the level of entity, the themes were used to explore the connections experienced by elementary school teachers to their school and/or profession. At the membership level, the connections teachers experience with others within peer and team configurations such as grade level teams or other teacher work groups was examined. At the level of self, the personal meaningfulness, commitment, and emotional connection experienced by the individual teachers were examined.

RESEARCH DESIGN

A case study design was utilized in this research project because of its ability to provide "an in-depth description that is rich and holistic" (Ary et al., 2010, p. 454). Furthermore, a case study is optimal for this research project because the research questions are seeking to answer "how" questions, there is little control over events, and

the phenomenon can be studied in its natural context (Hays & Singh, 2012). For the purpose of this study, the focus is on how the elementary school teachers' participation in RP contributes to a sense of community among the campus stakeholders. An advantage of using a case study approach is the ability to understand the case within the "totality of the [studied] environment" (Ary et al., 2010, p. 455). Rather than simply recording data, a case study allows the exploration of the context needed to better understand the collected data. Case studies can also provide an opportunity to better understand human behavior because not only can the present actions or perceptions of an individual be studied, but also the participant's past experiences, emotions, and relationships (Ary et al., 2010).

This research project followed the case-study tradition since it was "bounded (i.e., [had] distinct boundaries), be functioning or have working parts, and indicate patterned behaviors such as sequence or coherence" (Stake as cited by Hays & Signh, 2012, p. 44). The case is bounded in that it will study the teachers' use of RP during the 2017-2018 school year at one south Texas elementary school. The functioning and working parts of the case are the methods employed to study the participants' perceptions of community. The patterns of behavior that will be studied consist of the teachers' behaviors in circles with other campus stakeholders and their actions within the intra-school community. Lastly, the research consists of a single case study because a specific issue has been identified for exploration, and the selected case will provide insights to increase the understanding of that issue (Ary et al., 2010).

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND SAMPLE

To select a site for the study, a process of purposeful and convenience sampling was used. To be eligible for selection, the south Texas elementary school had to have used RP for at least two school years and be located in the district where the researcher is employed. The selected school had received both tier-one and tier-two RP training for the staff, benefited from ongoing support by an RP district coordinator in the use of campus-wide RP, and engaged in ongoing circles that focused on both the needs of teachers and students. The school had adopted a whole-school approach to RP usage by the teachers and staff. A whole-school approach signifies that the campus does not just use RP to address misbehavior and harm, but attempts to adopt a restorative culture and restorative approaches for the entire school (Armour & Todic, 2016).

A total of seven participants including five teachers, one counselor, and one administrator was selected. The inclusion of a counselor and an administrator in the individual interview process was as focused informants who provided varied perspectives of how the teachers' use of RP has contributed to the teachers' view of community and connectedness with other stakeholders. After a campus presentation regarding the study and the criteria for inclusion in the interviews, participants were offered the opportunity to volunteer. From the pool of volunteers for the individual interviews, the study's participants were selected though a process of purposeful sampling. This method of sampling involved the development of a pre-determined criterion to identify which participants would best fit the goals of the research project. To be included in the study, the participants met the following criteria: 1) received RP training, 2) participated in at

48

least three circles with other teachers, 3) worked on the campus for at least two years, and 4) worked on a grade level that has used RD for more than one year. The only exception to these requirements is the fourth criteria for the counselor and administrator because they are not members of any grade level.

<div align="center">**DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOLS**</div>

Through the data collection methods used in this study consisting of interviews, member checking, researcher observations, and an archival analysis of campus documents, a comprehensive view was gained of how the teachers' use of RP with other teachers contributes to their sense of community.

Individual Interviews

Individual interviews were the primary data source for this study. Advantages of using individual interviews are that participants can describe what is meaningful in their own words and share their personal stories (Hays & Singh, 2012). Additional advantages of individual interviews are that the researcher can probe for more details, ensure that the participants are correctly interpreting the questions, and uncover unanticipated ideas and themes (Hays & Singh, 2012). The type of interviews conducted were semi-structured. Through this type of interview protocol, the questions serve more as a guide and starting point for the interview session. In a semi-structured interview, every question may not be asked, the sequence and pace of questions may differ, and additional questions can be included to uniquely capture the individual experience of the participant (Hays & Singh, 2012). While a drawback to this type of interview structure can be the lack of

consistency in data collection and the interview experience, these limitations are positively outweighed by the opportunity of participants to have more voice and to provide a complete picture of their experiences (Hays & Singh, 2012). There was one audio-recorded interview with each of the seven selected participants. The teacher interviews consisted of nine questions and the administrative interviews consisted of eight questions. Additionally, the interviews lasted between 30 minutes and one hour.

Observations

In addition to the interviews, data were collected through observations. The purpose of the observations was to gather behavioral data from the teachers that can be used to better understand and to provide additional context for the information provided in the individual interviews. Because the researcher has ongoing contact with the teachers who participate in the study and provides ongoing support with the use of RP, the researcher fulfilled the role of observer. Observations focused on the behaviors exhibited by teachers, the interactions that took place among teachers and stakeholders, the support provided to the teachers in their use of RP, and the assistance from the district restorative coordinator. The benefits obtained from observation data can be seen through the acquisition of additional context, the access to first-hand experiences, and the ability to collect data and identify biases that might not be reported by participants (Hays & Singh, 2012).

Other Sources of Data

While the majority of the data was collected through the interviews and observations, data also came from a collection of field notes and any archival documents related to the use of RP by teachers such as meeting agendas, the campus improvement plan, and communications with either staff members or the community. A document analysis of these and other items provides additional context to better understand not only the data collected from the interviews and observations, but also the themes and general findings of the study (Bowen, 2009).

POSITIONALITY OF THE RESEARCHER

In this research project, the researcher studied the experiences of elementary school teachers who were engaged in the use of RP in their school. It is important to note that a potential conflict between the role as a researcher and the researcher's various responsibilities as a trainer and consultant was possible. This conflict is difficult to completely avoid due to the researcher's expertise and role as a trainer of teachers in the use of these practices. As a result, many of the teachers who constituted the limited pool of available candidates to interview had ongoing contact with the researcher in the context of the study's topic.

In an attempt to mitigate the potential conflicts arising from the researcher's dual responsibilities in conducting research and providing RP support for the selected site, the researcher arranged for a colleague to conduct the seven individual interviews. The facilitator of the interviews was trained in RP and worked as a RP campus coordinator at different schools in the selected district. The individual that conducted the interviews did

not have any meaningful interaction with the study participants in relation to their work with RP before the interviews were conducted. Since the researcher's participation in the interviews might unduly influence the responses of the study's participants, he did not directly participate in the collection of data.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

In preparation for this research project, approval was obtained through the IRB process of both the University of Texas at Austin and the school district in which the site is located. To receive permission to begin the research project from the University of Texas, the researcher submitted the required application and supporting paperwork to the designated office within the University IRB department. Before research could be conducted, additional permission had to be received from the campus principal and the school district's office of Accountability, Planning, Research and Evaluation. To obtain permission from the school district, the researcher submitted a research outline, plan, and interview protocols through the required format and processes. After the researcher received the district's IRB approval, the interview guide was piloted with teachers who have characteristics similar to the participants in the study. Once the approvals were obtained and the piloting completed, the research project began.

One individual interview was conducted with each of the seven selected participants. These semi-structured interviews consisted of seven questions and lasted between 30 minutes and an hour. The interviews took place before school, after school,

or during the teacher's conference period. All interviews were scheduled and coordinated with the participants, the campus administrative team, and the interviewer.

The selection criteria and purpose of the study was presented to the school's staff and those who met the criteria were able to volunteer. Observation data was collected in an ongoing manner and documented through field notes and memos. The individual interviews and observations were conducted during the second semester of the 2017-2018 school year.

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

Data were initially analyzed through a process of open-coding in which general themes and domains were used to organize and connect the information obtained through interviews and observations (Hays & Singh, 2012). The data were organized into the overarching themes of community, connectedness, relationships, and job satisfaction. Once the data were categorized into the general themes, axial-coding was used to further refine the data (Hays & Singh, 2012).

The theoretical framework used to analyze the data collected from this study was Jason et al.'s (2015) three ecological levels of an individual's experience as part of a community. Participants' experiences as expressed through interviews and observations were analyzed through this framework to better understand the teachers' perception of any contributions their participation in RP has had on their sense of community with other teachers and stakeholders within their school.

TRIANGULATION

To ensure the study's findings were not skewed by a single inaccurate or biased source, multiple viewpoints and sources were used to triangulate the data. Through the triangulation of data, an attempt was made to gain a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question (Dezin & Lincoln, 2011). While true objectivity and validity cannot be obtained when studying the perceptions of study participants, the various sources of data collected from interviews, member checks, observations, and field notes provided separate and independent views of how RP contributes to the teachers' sense of community and connectedness within the school.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

In order to ensure the trustworthiness of the data, the researcher engaged in simultaneous reading and reviewing of the collected data, observations, peer debriefing, member checks, and reflective notes and memos. If the progression of teachers' attitudes and perceptions is not analyzed throughout the process, inaccurate findings and out-of-context conclusions could be generated. Up to three peer-debriefing sessions occurred during the collection of data. These sessions were important because of the researcher's close proximity to the work that is being studied. Since it is likely that he will have had some involvement with the teachers, school, or district, it was advantageous to have another peer who is objectively detached from the study to ask the researcher's questions, examine the findings, and give feedback. Engaging in participant checks was necessary so that the researcher was able to accurately record the experiences and perceptions of the teachers participating in the study. Finally, it was important to keep a record of the

researcher's thoughts, experiences, and observations to capture any real-time responses to the behaviors he intended to study. It was also be necessary to document any ongoing perceptions as both a researcher and as someone who has participated in the training and support of the teachers that were studied.

CREDIBILITY

The credibility or believability of the study was based on documenting the experiences of participants through multiple methods (Hays & Singh, 2012). The triangulation of data collected through various qualitative instruments such as individual interviews, observations, field notes, peer-debriefing, and member checking added to the credibility of the study. Since credibility is "one of the major criteria qualitative researchers use to determine if conclusions make sense for a qualitative study" (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 200), the use of these methods increased the likelihood that the findings are consistent with the responses of the study's participants.

TRANSFERABILITY

Since this research project was confined to a small number of participants at one urban elementary school, the ability to transfer and generalize the findings is limited. However, transferability and generalization are not goals of qualitative research (Hays & Singh, 2012). Hays and Singh (2012) went on to say, "the goal is for clinicians and educators to provide enough detailed description of the research process, including the participants, settings, and time frame, so that readers/consumers can make decisions about the degree to which any findings are applicable to individuals or settings in which

they work" (p. 200). Through a more contextual and in-depth description of the teachers'

experiences in using RP at the selected site, the findings of this study may provide

information for other researchers or practitioners to apply in other situations as they deem

appropriate. Therefore, transferability will be up to the consumer of this research.

TECHNOLOGY USE FOR ANALYSIS

The participants' responses from the individual interviews were collected via

audio recordings. Once the interviews were completed, the audio files were sent to

Rev.com, an internet-based transcription service, to produce the written transcripts. After

the transcripts were received, the data from the interviews, observations, and field-notes

were organized and coded using various word processing programs.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The purpose of this qualitative study is to gain insight into how the teachers'

participation in RP contributes to their sense of connectedness and community with other

campus stakeholders. Through a better understanding of how teachers can create and

maintain strong intra-school communities, school leaders might obtain guidance on how

to address and mitigate the problems associated with high teacher attrition rates. This

chapter provided the research method and design components of this study in order to

understand how this research project was conducted. The chapter also provided a

description of the population that would be studied and how the sample of participants

were selected. The chapter concluded with the protocols, practices, and procedures that

were used to collect and analyze the study's data. The next chapter will provide a

description and analysis of the data collected through the various methods employed in

this research project.

Chapter 4

The purpose of this study was to explore how the use of RP among elementary school teachers and stakeholders contributed to the teachers' sense of connectedness and community. The following research questions guided this study:

1) How does elementary school teachers' participation in the use of restorative practices contribute to the relational connectedness of teachers and other stakeholders on the campus?

2) How does elementary school teachers' participation in the use of restorative practices with stakeholders contribute to a sense of community on the campus?

While the research instruments employed in this study attempted to gather data related to the experiences of teachers using RP with other teachers and stakeholders, the actual concepts of connectedness and community were not defined for the study participants. Data were collected at a south Texas elementary school that met the study's criteria of 1) having used RP for two school years, 2) adopting a whole-school RP approach, 3) located in the district where the researcher was employed, 4) receiving both tier-1 and tier-2 RP training for the staff, 5) obtaining ongoing support from a RP district coordinator, and 6) engaging in ongoing circles that focused on the needs of teachers as well as students. The study's sample consisted of five teachers, one counselor, and one assistant principal. Each of the participants engaged in a semi-structured interview that provided an opportunity to present any additional information that related to either their personal or observed use of RP. The teachers, counselor, and administrator volunteered to

participate in the study after attending a campus presentation that was open to all eligible staff members.

This chapter describes the site and participants of the study, in addition to the results from the participants' interviews. To triangulate the findings, data collected from the administrator interview, the counselor interview, and the field notes were included.

PROFILE OF SITE

The study's site was a south Texas elementary school opened in the 1960's. The school's website describes the campus as a neighborhood school that values their parents and students in promoting student success. According to the school's 2017-2018 Texas Academic Performance Report, the campus' accountability rating for 2017-2018 was "met standard." Additionally, the campus had 593 students in grades pre-kindergarten through fifth. The ethnic distribution of the students was 9% African-American, 71% Hispanic, 15% White, and 5% other. The percentage of economically disadvantaged students was 67%. In terms of the professional staff, the campus had 51 teachers, one full time counselor, one part-time counselor, one assistant principal, and one principal. Of the 51 teachers, 3% were African-American, 47% were Hispanic, 46% were White, and 4% were other. The gender make-up of the teaching staff was 95% female and 5% male. In terms of teaching experience, 13% of the teachers had 0-5 years of experience, 23% of the teachers had 6-10 years of experience, and 64% of the teachers had more than 11 years of experience.

In terms of structural organization, the school had a principal, an assistant principal, a full-time counselor, a half-time counselor, and a set of grade-level teams that consisted of teachers working together as professional learning communities. The site began implementing RP during the 2016-2017 school year. In the first year, the campus introduced RP at the kindergarten, second, and fourth grade levels only. In the second year, the campus expanded the use of RP to the first, third, and fifth grade levels. The requirements for the teachers' training and ongoing support are documented in the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 Campus Instructional Improvement Plans. The training requirements found in the Campus Instructional Improvement Plans consisted of a two-day, initial RP training before the start of the school year; a one-day, tier-2 RP follow-up training; and a series of support meetings between the RD coordinator and teachers.

PROFILES OF PARTICIPANTS

The study's participants consisted of five teachers, one counselor, and one assistant principal. The number of years spent as educators and the background of the seven female participants varied greatly. The experiences of the teachers were also diverse in that some had spent all of their careers teaching at the same campus, some had taught at multiple campuses, and some had previously worked as campus para-professionals.

Mrs. Pevensie is a pre-kindergarten teacher who has taught in elementary schools for the past 18 years. She has worked at the selected site for the past five years. At her current school, Mrs. Pevensie has been assigned to teach at the kindergarten level for all

but one year. She obtained a bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Biology with an emphasis in Early Childhood Education and earned a master's degree in Early Childhood Education. Her teaching certifications are Early Childhood through eighth-grade Generalist, Bilingual Education, and English as a Second Language.

Mrs. Johnson is a second-grade teacher who has spent all 12 years of her teaching career at the selected site. She obtained a bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies and her teaching certifications are Early Childhood through eighth-grade Generalist and English as a Second Language.

Mrs. Green is a second-grade teacher who has taught all four years of her career as a teacher at the selected site. Before becoming a teacher she spent the previous seven years as a school para-professional at a different campus. She earned an associate's degree in Broadcast Communication Technology and a bachelor's degree in Multi-Disciplinary Studies. Her teaching certification is Early Childhood through sixth-grade Generalist.

Mrs. Meyers is a fourth-grade teacher who has worked as an educator for almost ten years. Like some of the other participants, she has spent her entire teaching career at the selected site. Before becoming a teacher, she worked as a para-professional at the same campus. She earned a bachelor's degree in General Elementary Education and her teaching certifications are Early Childhood through fourth-grade Generalist and English as a Second Language.

Mrs. Simon is a second-grade teacher who has taught for 16 years at schools located both inside and outside of Texas. She has worked the past 11 years as a teacher at

the selected site. She obtained a bachelor's degree in History and a master's degree in Teaching. Her teaching certifications are Early Childhood through fourth-grade Generalist and fourth through eighth-grade Generalist.

Mrs. Lands is a school counselor who has been an educator for 43 years. She was an elementary school teacher for eight years and a counselor for 35 years. For the past eight years she has worked as a counselor at the selected site. She obtained a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education with Kindergarten and Earth Science and a master's degree in Education with Counseling and Guidance. Her certifications are Pre-Kindergarten through eighth-grade Generalist and School Counseling.

Mrs. Magnolia is a campus administrator who has been in education for 23 years. She has spent 18 of those years as a classroom teacher at various elementary schools and the past five years as an assistant principal at the selected site. She obtained a bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies and a master's degree in Educational Administration and Supervision. Her certifications are Early Childhood through fourth-grade Generalist, English as a Second Language, and Early Childhood through 12th grade Principal.

Table 1: *Summary Information of Study Participants*

Name	Position	Gender	Years of Experience	Years Working at the Selected Site	School Years Using RP
Mrs. Pevensie	Pre-Kindergarten Teacher	Female	18 Years as an Elementary School Teacher	5 Years	2 Years
Mrs. Johnson	Second-Grade Teacher	Female	12 Years as an Elementary School Teacher	12 Years	2 Years
Mrs. Green	Second-Grade Teacher	Female	4 Years as an Elementary School Teacher, 7 Years Elementary School as a Teaching Assistant	4 Years	2 Years
Mrs. Meyers	Fourth-Grade Teacher	Female	9.5 Years as an Elementary School Teacher, 1.5 Years Elementary School as a Teaching Assistant	11 Years	2 Years
Mrs. Simon	Second-Grade Teacher	Female	16 Years as an Elementary School Teacher	11 Years	2 Years
Mrs. Lands	Counselor	Female	35 Years as a School Counselor, 8 Years as an Elementary School Teacher	8 Years	2 Years
Mrs. Magnolia	Assistant Principal	Female	5 Years as an Assistant Principal, 18 Years as an Elementary School Teacher	5 Years	2 Years

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: HOW DOES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' PARTICIPATION IN THE USE OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES CONTRIBUTE TO THE RELATIONAL CONNECTEDNESS OF TEACHERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS ON THE CAMPUS?

The teachers' sense of relational connectedness was conceptualized primarily on a personal level; therefore, this research question focused on the perceived influence that RP had on the teachers as individuals rather than on the teachers as members of a larger community. Based on the collected data, the following themes emerged: (a) teacher participation in RP enhances closeness and (b) teacher participation in RP improves communication capacity.

Teacher Participation in RP Enhances Closeness

All participating teachers spoke to how the use of RP with other teachers and stakeholders led to increased feelings of closeness with their campus colleagues. Closeness represented how the experiences among teachers and their colleagues led to the development of greater individual connectedness with others, to the willingness to be more emotionally open with others, and to the increased sense of togetherness between themselves and their co-workers. The following sub-themes emerged from the interview data: (a) building trust, (b) promoting connections, (c) building familiarity, (d) affording freedom of expression, and (e) strengthening relationships.

Building trust. According to the data, trust related to the teachers' willingness to be honest with their colleagues without the fear of repercussions or the holding of grudges. Trust also signified enhanced feelings of safety and security among the teachers as well as their willingness to be more vulnerable in their conversations and interactions.

Teachers remembered experiencing a strong sense of safety and security through their participation in circles. Mrs. Pevensie mentioned that her grade-level circles caused her to "feel safe. And I feel like there's nothing I can't handle." Mrs. Green credited the circles as having created spaces where she and her fellow teachers could safely open up to one another. She recalled:

> I could always take a time out, go to my core group or anyone else on campus that I had begun building a relationship with. It was always a sense of security. Really that's the best word, a sense of security.

Mrs. Johnson noted that after participating in circles, she experienced an enhanced sense of trust with the teachers on her grade-level team. She asserted:

> I think it really allows you to get to a place where you can trust each other and be honest with each other . . . And so, I think it allows the team to be more open and honest without the fear of a negative consequence or it affecting the day-to-day.

She continued, "when we have personal stuff going on, we know that we can share it in circle, and it's not gonna go anywhere else. It's gonna stay within our circle, it's gonna stay within our little family."

Mrs. Johnson further explained that through the teachers' shared experiences, their commonly developed values, and their increased understanding of each other, she was able to build trust before having to engage in difficult conversations. She reflected that "because we've done so many positive circles and so many circles that have been great . . . you build that trust, and you've talked about shared values, and you've talked about shared experiences.

Mrs. Pevensie shared her experience of using the tools she learned through RP to build trust with the other teachers on her newly assigned grade-level team. When she first joined the grade level, Mrs. Pevensie's perception was that the team was "broken" as a result of issues and circumstances that had taken place over previous school years. She found:

> [The] teachers [were] not getting along. Reporting it [the teachers' conflicts] to admin. Teachers finding out that it was reported. That it wasn't brought to them. It was kind of behind the back . . . That didn't go so well. So tensions were very high.

In response to the team's condition, Mrs. Pevensie started to incrementally build trust with the teachers by circling with the ones who were willing. Even though the other teachers on the team had not been trained in RP, Mrs. Pevensie had seen RP work with her previous team to resolve a difficult situation and wanted to try to use RP to improve the teachers' level of trust.

After engaging in RP throughout the school year with her new team, Mrs. Pevensie shared, "Last night, we went out for dinner. And a lot of things came up where, it's the end of the year, we're reflecting. And a lot of things mentioned were so wonderful." The teachers were able to discuss how "completely awful, horrific, and horrible" things were at the beginning of the school year. Mrs. Pevensie noted:

> Things have really changed. And changed for the positive. Trust is back. Maybe not 100%. But maybe 90% trust is back. And with trust, that's very powerful.

We're able to talk with one another. We're able to call each other out on certain

things without so much defensiveness and so much, I guess, attitude.

While growth was still needed, Mrs. Pevensie shared that the RP circles they participated

in helped the teachers overcome their difficulties and build a level of trust that did not

previously seem possible.

Apparently, the level of enhanced trust goes beyond the teachers. It also extended

to administrators as Mrs. Simon observed:

They [administrators] have to be in a certain professional position above us in a

way, and so for them to let down their guard and say, "I can share this with you. I

feel safe and comfortable telling you these things," then that's good. I'm glad that

they feel that.

Mrs. Johnson additionally explained that through engaging in circles, both teachers and

administrators were able "to let their guards down a little bit," were able to see

themselves "more as equal[s]" in the work of the campus, and were able to recognize that

they were all "in the same boat." She added that trust became stronger between herself

and her administrators because RP "builds that trust between the two [teachers and

administrators]."

Promoting connections. Data also revealed that the teachers become more

connected to each other as a result of their participation in RP. According to the

participants, connectedness refers to a greater sense of shared identity, closeness, and

belonging among the teachers as well as an increased ability to establish bonds of

commonality by recognizing similarities, acknowledging differences, and sharing common experiences.

As a self-described "loner by nature," Mrs. Green had been very hesitant about meeting her new colleagues when she first arrived to the campus. During previous teaching assignments, she recalled being distant from her fellow teachers. She shared, "we all got along professionally but I don't think we knew much about each other's personal lives, and so there was I guess for lack of a better word a sense of discord or disconnect." Once she attended RP training with the teachers on her new team, she "identified more with people because they had hurts and pains and things that happen in life outside of the classroom that let me see that we are all going through something, a struggle." Mrs. Green valued the opportunity to share her personal struggles and grow closer to her colleagues. She stated:

It was refreshing because there are times when you are in a classroom and you may feel alone because of what you experience in the classroom. When we get together and start discussing you realize wait a minute, we are all heavy at times. For me, I know I went through a lot of emotional - just a lot of family issues this year . . . Every time we met we just grew closer and closer as a result of the circles.

Mrs. Green added that after participating in circles:

I felt a sense of belonging. It made me feel great to be a part of a wonderful campus. It branched out. I felt walking in the hallway [that] my colleagues are not

just a colleague anymore. Now I know a story behind the face. Now I feel

connected.

Mrs. Magnolia, the assistant principal, offered a similar observation that when she circled

"with a group of teachers, you really feel a connection to them [other teachers]." She

added:

I think the most rewarding part [of RP] is the connection that you make with

colleagues . . . [it] kind of softens you, it gives you a little compassion for that

person. I think the connection is the biggest thing.

Mrs. Pevensie explained that through her team's circles, her feelings of aloneness

decreased as she began to more closely identify with her teammates. She recalled:

I've cried tears of frustration, I've cried tears of joy, I've just felt human, and [I've]

just felt not alone. Like sometimes I feel oh my gosh, I'm the worst. And then I

hear everyone else and it's like oh my gosh, I'm the same. We're all the same.

We're all in this together.

In the year that RP was introduced to the campus, Mrs. Johnson explained that she

not only changed grade levels, but also took on the role of being the grade-level chair for

the team she was joining. She recalled that the members of her new team had worked

together for a few years, and the team she joined had already developed a level of

comfort with each other and had established patterns for how the team operated. In

joining her new team as both a teacher and as the team leader, Mrs. Johnson recognized

the benefits of her team's participation in the community-building training circles during

the initial summer training and the staff development community-building circles at

beginning of the year. Participating in these circles provided Mrs. Johnson the chance to connect with the teachers on her new team, to feel welcomed by the teachers she would be working so closely with, and to share her experiences with those teachers. Mrs. Johnson recalled:

By being able to start the circles at the same time I started this new team was really beneficial for me because I was able to come in and I was able to, from the very beginning, just explain and just . . . I felt welcomed, I felt like we were able to share things and get so close.

In recalling her experiences in the community-building training circles, Mrs. Simon stated that "by the end of those [RP training] days, everybody felt very connected. And that's how I felt, too."

Building familiarity. According to the teachers, participation in RP creates a forum for teachers to share and learn more about the personal and professional circumstances of their colleagues. This process appears to build a unique level of familiarity and adds to the teachers' knowledge about each other and their ability to gain a deeper understanding of their individual lives, talents, and concerns.

In referring to the community-building training circles that she participated in during the initial staff training, Mrs. Green mentioned that such circles had a powerful effect on her because the teachers were able to learn about each other in a deeper way. She remembered:

When we come together and we're open enough to expose those things, we grow as a campus. And so it went from my core group feeling close to those that I

worked the closest to, to being in a hallway and seeing other people when they

bring their story and . . . getting to know them on a deeper level.

Mrs. Magnolia, the assistant principal, corroborated the experience of Mrs. Green in her observation:

When teachers participate in a circle, you learn a lot of about individuals, and you

learn a lot about why they do the things they do . . . it [circles] makes you

[teachers] feel like I've learned something about this person that I didn't know.

Mrs. Simon similarly observed that after "eight years of working here, I knew more about people I worked with after those two days [of RP training] than I did in the previous eight years. And that was big." Mrs. Johnson recalled overhearing other campus teachers express their enjoyment with the community-building circles they engaged in at the beginning of the school-year. She stated, "What I've heard from other teams is they enjoy circles with their teams because they get to know each other."

Mrs. Meyers explained that it was important to see other teachers in the context of their lives outside of the school or work environment. To hear about some of the things occurring in the teachers' personal lives allowed her to develop a contextual understanding of their humanity, decisions, actions, and behaviors. She stated:

It is nice to see not only that I'm human, but other teachers are human, too. We

have lives. We obviously know we have lives outside of the school, but it was

nice to know the teachers that may not smile all the time, that there was

something going on. To know that, and not to like oh, wow, but just to know that

oh, I get it. I understand why she or he may be this type of person.

Mrs. Meyers further reflected that the circles she participated in during the initial RP training "felt so powerful" and were "fun" because "I really got to know others [teachers and administrators] on a more personal level. Just as much as they got to know a lot about me at a personal level - that I was not used to." Mrs. Meyers found, "they [community-building circles] were just really . . . they were very relaxing and calm and, again, just positive . . . getting to know, again, things about people." She added, "I really enjoyed them [community-building circles], actually. I mean, I wish we could probably do that more often."

In a similar observation, Mrs. Magnolia concurred with Mrs. Meyers by sharing that when the teachers would participate in circles, they were able to have a better "understanding of everyone." She added:

> You may [have] had someone you really didn't quite understand. Once you sit in a circle, you really understand that person. So you're more tolerant, more understanding, of maybe some of the things that person does, or the choices that person makes.

Mrs. Magnolia concluded that a reason the teachers gained a better understanding of each other is because they get answers to "the whys: why we do some of the things we do or why a teacher may react."

Affording freedom of expression. According to participants, RP's use promoted freedom to express themselves, to be open with one another, and to allow vulnerability to surface. Through the increased openness experienced by the teachers, they were able to become closer not only on a professional level, but also on a personal level. Each of the

participants discussed how they were more comfortable sharing both personal and professional information with their co-workers, even if sharing that type of information was outside of their traditional comfort zones. The participants also mentioned that they were able to be vulnerable with their colleagues which helped them get through the difficult times that occurred during the year.

Mrs. Johnson shared an experience from a grade-level support circle in which the teachers came in "dragging" and frustrated. The circle took place in mid-to-late October, which the teacher noted was a traditionally difficult time of the year for the teachers. While she didn't remember the topic of the circle, Mrs. Johnson explained:

> We all ended up just crying about something. Not because we were sad, but it was almost like it was cathartic, we finally got the time to sit down, and decompress for a minute, and just kind of let our emotions out because everybody needs a good cry sometimes.

She went on to say:

> Especially in the chaos of everything, just to kind of sit down and just kind of take a breath for a minute and try to kind of keep going. It's kind of hard when you get into the day-in and day-out. But, probably that and the vulnerability. I appreciated that the team and the teachers felt comfortable enough to be vulnerable and share, and that I felt comfortable enough to be vulnerable and share.

Teachers also valued the chance to connect on a human level with their colleagues rather than to always be confined to interact within the prescribed roles of their professional positions. Mrs. Pevensie was relieved when she discovered that it was

acceptable to be "broken" and "hurting" with others rather than always trying to portray that everything was going well. She added, "Circles really just opened you up to where you can be human." The assistant principal, Mrs. Magnolia, offered a similar observation in sharing:

> I think the circle gives you that openness, that open area, where I can just let everything out, and I can just open up. No one feels over anyone because of the circle, we're equal, and I feel that I can let things out.

Mrs. Meyers additionally expressed the importance of getting to see the "softer side" of the teachers that she worked with each day. She went on to say, "I'm not a sharer of personal, private things, and something compelled me to share, and it was just very like . . . Oh my gosh. I can't believe I shared that." Mrs. Magnolia agreed with Mrs. Meyers in describing her surprise that teachers "who are very private" and "who you think would not share" were willing to "open up" with each other.

Mrs. Simon mentioned that by participating in RP with the teachers on her grade-level team, she began to feel that she had an open channel with her teammates because she knew that "I can be there and share with them." This recognition was significant for Mrs. Simon because she admitted that as a result of all the responsibilities she had in her life she did not have time to spend with friends. She shared, "I'm not super social and I've got a husband and four kids and a full time job. And there's not a lot of time for me to go hang out with friends." In reflecting on her interactions with other teachers during RP circles, she noted, "I really need to be more open with the people that I work with and

kind of be willing to share things with them and be vulnerable." In terms of how other teachers had perceived her, Mrs. Simon further revealed:

> I have been called maybe aloof and I'm not the type of person to share or overshare. And so I'm okay keeping to myself. But I think that's perceived as, she doesn't wanna talk to us, she thinks she's better than us, and I think [that she is] arrogant. And that's fair.

While Mrs. Simon understood other teachers' negative perception of her, she admitted that she was not comfortable sharing or interacting on a more personal level with others. However, Mrs. Simon did acknowledge that her participating in circles helped her interact with other teachers on a more interpersonal level. Mrs. Simon noted that RP had "opened a door" for her with other teachers so that they seemed more comfortable approaching and talking with her. She further shared that her eyes had been opened through this process to the lives and experiences of other campus teachers and that many of them were struggling with the same types of issues with which she had been encountering.

On the other hand, participants described two difficulties relating to becoming more open with their colleagues. Mrs. Green stated that the most challenging part of the process was confronting her fear that "if I open up then everybody is going to see the real me" and as a result "people are gonna to judge me." Mrs. Simon further reflected that at first it was difficult to know how much she wanted to share with other teachers. She stated, "it's been I guess a challenge to figure out how much I wanna share and with whom, because I don't want everything out there for everybody." In ultimately

determining what she thought was the right balance, Mrs. Simon became more comfortable sharing with the teachers on her "smaller [grade-level] team" because "they know those things along with all of the other just big huge things in my life that have happened. They know because they're my core."

Strengthening relationships. According to the data, participation in RP enhanced the participants' ability to build stronger relationships with their campus administrators. These stronger relationships surfaced through the teachers seeing the humanity of their administrators and developing a greater level of respect, compassion, and empathy for the work in which they engaged. However, in order for strong relationships to be built between the teachers and administrators, certain relational barriers had to be overcome. The relational barriers described by the participants were the teachers' hesitation to interact with their administrators, the teachers' misunderstanding of their administrators' ability to support them, and the teachers' perception of relatability with their administrators.

In describing how she traditionally felt when encountering her principal, Mrs. Green remembered thinking, "Here comes the boss, here comes the principal. Automatically that wall goes up . . . because sometimes they're [administrators are] seen as like the leadership team and they're untouchable." However, after participating in community-building circles with her principal, Mrs. Green also began to notice that "those walls started falling slowly. It's still a professional relationship, but deeper." In recognizing the difference in how Mrs. Green was able to relate to her principal, she recounted:

I realized that sometimes we [teachers] can look at them [administrators] and forget that they are human also. In hearing her story, it calls me to not just have a respect for her position but a respect for her as a person and it created a sense of empathy. I may not would have had it right away. It might have taken some time to deal, but after hearing her story I immediately connected with her. That built a better professional relationship as well as personal relationship.

In a similar experience with the assistant principal, Mrs. Pevensie reported that the opportunity to talk with her administrator was powerful for her and her teammates. She remembered, "we were able to hear from an administrator, her honest, honest feelings. And what she's going through. And it just kind of gave you a sense of compassion . . . and empathy." Mrs. Johnson saw the connection that had developed as different from her previous experiences where the members of her administrative team were seemingly "untouchable" because "they're [administrators] in charge and you don't get to know them very well." Mrs. Simon attributed the improved relationship with her administrator to being able to see her as "one of us."

Teacher Participation in RP Improves Communication Capacity

Each of the participants reported how the use of RP with other teachers and stakeholders enhanced their sense of relational connectedness through an improved ability to communicate with each other. According to the data, communication capacity referred to the quantity, quality, and frequency of interactions and sharing of information

77

between and among teachers. Communication capacity is improved by (a) enhancing communication skills and (b) facilitating courageous conversations.

Enhancing communication skills. According to most participants, RP either helped them to become better communicators or helped them engage in better communications with their fellow teachers, counselors, and administrators. The improvements noted by the teachers related to their increased willingness to converse with and listen to their colleagues. The teachers also expressed that the conversations they engaged in were more honest and reflective.

Teachers stated that RP circles helped their ability to share with other teachers because the circles provided them with a forum to communicate in more authentic ways. Mrs. Meyers expressed surprise of her own willingness to communicate about herself to other teachers in RP circles. Mrs. Meyers explained, "I'm not a sharer of personal, private things, [but] something compelled me to share." Similarly, Mrs. Simon recalled that circles had "made me more comfortable talking to them [other teachers and administrators]." Mrs. Pevensie mentioned that engaging in RP with other teachers made her want to become a better listener to her colleagues so that she could better understand their perspectives. Describing her change in approach, she stressed, "now, my thinking is let me hear their story. Let me see where they're coming from."

Mrs. Green mentioned that the communication skills her fellow teachers developed while using RP benefited them during the rough times they encountered throughout the school year. She asserted:

We have learned how to communicate through those tough times. We have been

able to pull each other aside and say, "Hey, this is the issue I want us to resolve

it." We have been able to have peaceful resolution. I feel like an intricate part of

the process has been Restorative Discipline [Practices].

Mrs. Johnson observed that her communication with others seemed more honest and

reflective. She stated, "when you're in a circle, you're more honest, you kind of tend to

think more about feelings and emotions and how things impact you." Mrs. Johnson

further explained that her willingness and ability to communicate with her campus

administrators were enhanced in ways that were similar to the improvements she

experienced with other teachers. She recognized, "I can have a conversation with an

administrator first, and issues [needing to be] brought to attention before it's like a gotcha

[of the teacher]."

Facilitating courageous conversations. According to participants, their

improved ability to communicate with other teachers helped them work through difficult

situations that arose during the school year and have the courage to openly discuss those

issues. These difficult situations consisted of both interpersonal conflicts and problems

encountered by teachers during the school year. With their improved ability and

willingness to communicate with their colleagues, teachers were better positioned to

interact candidly with each other and in ways that led to more positive outcomes. The

participants associated the teachers' enhanced ability to talk through their problems to

their improved understanding of their colleagues' perspectives, their acknowledgement of

how their actions impacted others, and their increased willingness to address issues with each other.

Mrs. Pevensie shared an anecdote of a time when one the teachers on her grade-level team became so frustrated with the problems she was experiencing that the teacher considered leaving her position in the middle of the school year. The struggling teacher told her teammates, "I'd rather just work at Bill Miller [fast-food restaurant]." Mrs. Pevensie recalled thinking, "Oh my gosh. No. We need to do something." At first, Mrs. Pevensie tried to solve the problem on her own. When she recognized that her approach was not fixing the problem, she came to the conclusion that all the team's teachers needed to meet to discuss what was occurring. She decided:

> They [the other teachers] need to, number one, be aware of what's happening. Be aware of what's going on in their team. Maybe they have gifts and talents that they could offer. So we did that. We circled with the team . . . And the team was . . . they were unaware. Things that we were thinking that they knew what was going on, they really didn't know what was going on. Because they're in their classrooms and they wouldn't see half of what was happening.

As the teachers communicated in their circle, a better understanding of the situation grew and decisions were made "that alleviated some of the burden off of the teacher who was having the problem." Mrs. Pevensie reflected that the greatest outcome from the team circle was that "the weight was lifted" because the burden was shared among the members of the team rather than being solely placed on the shoulders of the teacher having difficulties.

Another positive development of the teachers uniting in a circle to address the problem as a community was that the struggling teacher was able to "breakdown, share, and talk" while the other teachers on the team were able to listen and offer assistance in whatever way was needed. By handling the situation as a community, developing a collaborative support plan, and sharing the burdens together, the grade-level teachers became much closer throughout the RP process. Even though the struggling teacher ultimately left after the school year to pursue another opportunity, the team was able to successfully get through the year supporting each other.

Mrs. Pevensie additionally shared that as she was able to more effectively hold difficult conversations with others, she was able to better understand the perspectives of other teachers or staff members with whom she might be in conflict. She began to realize "that there's always another side. There's not just my side. But there's always another side . . . because they [the other people] probably have a reason." Mrs. Lands, the school's counselor, observed that teachers were able to "listen or seek first to understand where they weren't [doing so] before." She added that in these conversations the teachers were "able to wait and not just insist on their [own] point of view."

Mrs. Johnson mentioned that engaging in RP allowed her not only to comprehend the events that occurred during a conflict, but also to acknowledge the impact of those events on other staff members. She reflected that when she was participating in circles she tended "to think more about feelings and emotions and how things impact you." She added that teachers were willing to "be honest about how they felt and be honest about how things affected them." Mrs. Magnolia, the assistant principal, shared that teachers

don't always recognize the effect of their words or actions on their co-workers and don't often have an opportunity to discuss how they were affected during times of difficulty. She shared:

> Someone may not realize what you're saying, or what you're doing is having an effect on that other person. So the circle gives them an open space to where, I can share with you, this is how it makes me feel. You may not feel that way when someone tells you that, but this is how it makes me feel. The other person, that makes this person feel that way, may realize that was not my intent, but until you open that up in the circle, we just keep holding on to stuff. We go around [during] the day not knowing that I even hurt you. I might have said something that would roll off of my back, but you really hurt a teammate by saying that, or you're causing more tension on the team.

According to the counselor and the assistant principal, they also witnessed improvements in the ways that teachers were communicating with each other when conflicts arose. Mrs. Lands recalled that one of the biggest changes she had seen among the teachers was that they were more willing to "come to the table" and engage in "more courageous conversations" with one another. Mrs. Magnolia added that among teachers "it's a lot easier to have those difficult conversations" once they gain a better sense of the other teachers involved and their perspectives. She clarified, "I think with teachers, if you've built a rapport with one another through circles, or if they understand one another, then it becomes easier to have those difficult conversations, and they can just facilitate a circle on their own."

From her perspective as the campus counselor, Mrs. Lands remembered that after the campus' adoption of RP, the teachers were increasingly willing to try new ways to address issues and problems before they escalated. Whereas before, "negativity" tended to define the culture and the teachers "weren't talking, they weren't trying new things, they weren't willing to go outside the box and think about what to do." Now that the teachers had engaged in RP Mrs. Lands reflected, "I think they're finally problem-solving." One reason given by Mrs. Lands for the increased problem-solving was that teachers were talking through issues, more than just "getting angry with each other." She stated, "They hear and work through problems. We have used circles to work through problems with teacher to teacher disagreements."

In describing a problematic situation, Mrs. Green shared a story about when she was able to avoid a potential conflict by talking with another teacher about a misunderstanding that occurred over a student. While on duty, Mrs. Green had given permission to a student to participate in something while being unaware that another teacher had previously denied the student's request. After granting permission to the student, the other teacher arrived, observed what the student was doing, and said, "well I said that student couldn't do that. They need to go sit down." Mrs. Green reported that the two teachers avoided going "back and forth" with each other in front of the students. She recalled:

> I felt like in that moment it [giving permission to the student] was in the best
> interests of the child. I realized the situation was getting heated on her [the other
> teacher's] end. I was able to say, "I don't think this is the best time. The kids are

in the hallway and I don't want to give them a bad impression. We don't need to look like we are arguing. Can we talk about this later?"

Mrs. Green continued:

We came back later in the day and she was able to tell me how she felt. I was able to tell her how I felt, and apologize. I told her my intentions were never to undermine you, but I had no idea what you had told this child, to deescalate the situation, I felt was in the best interest of the child to go ahead and go. She was able to see things from my point of view, too. I told her my intentions were never to hurt you.

As a result of using a restorative approach, Mrs. Green reported that after her conversation with the other teacher:

There were no grudges. It was as sincere and genuine as "Okay I understand your point. Okay I understand your point." We went through the rest of the day like nothing had ever happened. I don't think that would have been possible if we had not been so close.

Mrs. Magnolia, the assistant principal, observed that the teachers developed a greater capacity to talk about problems on their own as a result of their participation in circles. She attributed the increased ability of teachers to address their own problems to the training and support provided to the teachers in RP. She reflected:

Last year we only [trained] half of the campus, and this year we've done [trained] the whole campus. For example, last year when there was an issue on a team, grade levels that were doing restorative practices . . . were very willing to

84

immediately call a circle. They wanted to resolve this. We do it [RP] with our kids so we need to resolve it amongst ourselves. Grade levels, who are not doing restorative [practices], when there is an issue with a colleague, they immediately come to administration, versus, I have an issue with a colleague, let's circle. Let's get some supports into circle . . . They come to administration, and say I think we need to circle, versus this is what teacher A is doing to me, and I've had enough of it. They will come to you and they will say, I think we need to circle.

However, it appears from the data that not all teachers are able to resolve conflict through courageous conversations. For example, Mrs. Meyers referred to the lack of cohesion on her grade-level team resulting from a new team leader and a pre-existing set of conflicts that had occurred among the teachers in previous school years. Mrs. Meyers remembered feeling, "Oh my gosh. I cannot have a whole year of this." At the end of the year, Mrs. Meyers concluded that the overall experience was unsuccessful because she did not have a positive outcome with the leader and the team circles were "emotionally exhausting."

Field notes from the grade-level restorative circles and the observations of the assistant principal offered a different view. The field notes identified that "they [the team] had seen improvement in the team communication and functioning . . . [that] there were improvements in talking about issues as a team . . . [and that] the team does a good job of sharing ideas with each other."

Being aware of the situation, Mrs. Magnolia, the assistant principal, expressed, "I think the most challenging part [of the RP process] is when you have someone who is

85

still not quite there, and willing to share how they're truly feeling, or to kind of let the

things out." She found that for the process to be effective, everyone that is involved must

be prepared for the circle, take the process "seriously," and be willing to "truly share."

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: HOW DOES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' PARTICIPATION IN THE USE OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES WITH STAKEHOLDERS CONTRIBUTE TO A SENSE OF COMMUNITY ON THE CAMPUS?

The aim of the second research question was to examine how the teachers' sense

of community was influenced by their participation in RP with their colleagues. For the

purpose of this study, community was defined as the teachers' interactions within their

various social or organizational groupings. It is within the frame of these formal or

informal teams that various aspects of the teachers' sense of community were examined.

According to the data, the contributions of RP to teachers' sense of community

(a) promotes bonding and (b) generates a positive culture.

Teacher Participation in RP Promotes Bonding

All of the participants reported that their use of RP with other teachers and

administrators played an important role in facilitating the development of communal

bonds within their campus teams. Bonding refers to the creation and strengthening of

close personal relationships through consistent interaction and association with their

colleagues. Two levels of bonding emerged from the data: (a) building grade-level team

associations and (b) furthering teacher and administrative associations.

Building grade-level team associations. Most of the time teachers spent

planning, preparing, and meeting was within their grade-level teams. As a result, the

majority of their experiences related to the use of RP within these grade-level communities. When considering their perceptions of these teams, the participants credited restorative processes as contributing to the development of stronger bonds.

Mrs. Johnson explained that participating in RP provided her grade-level team with a set of tools that helped them come together, create norms, and start the year on a much more positive footing. She expressed, "I feel like we have a tool that will help us. I feel like with the circles, we have the opportunity to kind of come together and create norms and it's a new, it's a fresh start."

Mrs. Simon stated that RP offered the campus an important opportunity to bond as a community in a way that did not previously exist. She expressed that these bonds were "not something that normally we have the time for or something that we do organically." In elaborating about what occurred in the community-building circles, Mrs. Johnson added, "I felt like we were able to share things [personal information] and get so close so soon that it didn't take us the whole year to kind of bond like it can sometimes." Being a member of various teacher and campus teams over the years, Mrs. Johnson noted that RP offered a more effective method of team bonding than previous activities in which she had participated. She shared, "I think that it [the RP process] allows teams to bond together [in ways] that I don't think happens if you necessarily do those typical team bonding activities like a ropes course or painting activities." In comparing her experiences to other campuses where she had been a member, Mrs. Green observed that "it [RP] created a sense of community and unity amongst my peers." She added, "it [RP] was very emotional at times, but I feel like we all bonded."

Furthering teacher and administrative associations. According to the participants, bonding went beyond their grade-level teacher teams and expanded to connect the teachers and administrators. Because of the differences in the two teams' responsibilities and their status in the organizational hierarchy, participants noted that it can be difficult for positive bonds between these two groups to form. The results emerging from the creation and strengthening of these bonds were captured by the teachers in their interviews.

It appeared that when RP was used to bring teachers together with the administrative team, teachers realized that their collective bonds with the campus administrative team improved. Mrs. Pevensie shared an experience about a time when her grade-level team was able to engage in a problem-solving circle with members of the campus administrative team. An outcome of this circle was that the bonds that developed helped the teachers and administrators to act more as a unified team rather than two teams working separately to achieve the same goal. Mrs. Pevensie reflected that the experience "helped us [grade-level and administrative teams] band together even more." She shared that it was important to her team to know that they were in sync with the administrative team and that they "had admin support."

In offering her perspective as a counselor who had participated in the circle between the grade-level and administrative team described by Mrs. Pevensie, Mrs. Lands shared:

I thought we were walking into a session where they were going to lambaste us [Mrs. Lands and Mrs. Magnolia] because we hadn't done our job. Maybe they

88

were, I don't know, but that's not what the meeting was about; that's not what it

turned into. I realized how hard they were working to help these kids and how

frustrated they were and how frustrated they were with each other because they

couldn't solve the problem. These kids didn't have problems that could have

[been] easily solved.

Mrs. Simon was also impacted by the enhanced bonds she built with her

administrators. She recalled, "that's important to me. I think being in a place with my

bosses where I know that if I need something they understand my priorities and they can

help me with the things that I need." In reflecting on how the use of RP among

administrators and teachers could have helped unite the teachers and administrators, Mrs.

Johnson shared:

> With our previous principal, it [RP] kind of would have maybe cleared up some
>
> misconceptions that people have or even with our current administrative team. It
>
> would be beneficial for some people to kind of be able to be honest without fear
>
> of repercussions or fear of it hurting them in their evaluation and employment.

Teacher Participation in RP Generates a Positive Culture

The teachers participating in the study reported that the use of RP helped to

facilitate the development of a more positive culture across the campus. According to the

teachers, such culture relates to the positive interactions, the tangible resources, the

logistical assistance, the access to support, and the emotional availability they received

from their teams. It appears from the data that a positive culture emerges by

89

(a) enhancing team communication, (b) encouraging reciprocal support, (c) building a sense of family, (d) facilitating team appreciation, and (e) promoting willingness to remain on the job.

Enhancing team communication. Teachers credited the improvement of communication within their grade-level teams for the creation of more supportive campus communities. The ways that teachers described improvements in team communication related to the members' increased focus on reciprocal listening, their expanded willingness to share information, and their improved ability to be aligned with the actions of others.

Mrs. Pevensie found that her approach to communication with her team members had changed as a result of her participation in RP. Whereas before she would have quickly judged situations based on her assumptions, she now attempts to listen to her teammates, to understand their points of view, and to presume a positive motive before passing judgment and deciding how to respond. She shared:

> Now, my thinking is, let me hear their story. Let me see where they're coming
>
> from . . . let me try to get to the bottom of it . . . if it's somebody on my team that's
>
> hurting. Or that they're not being productive . . . there's probably a way we can
>
> help, or support, or guide, or encourage, or just listen, sometimes, to them.

Mrs. Johnson found that the increased opportunity to communicate with the other teachers on her grade-level team allowed them to share more deeply with each other, and therefore, they were more willing to talk about any issues that were collectively affecting the team. She reflected, "I appreciated that the team and the teachers felt comfortable

90

enough to be vulnerable and share, and that I felt comfortable enough to be vulnerable and share. That, I think, comes with that community culture and that team culture." Mrs. Johnson further shared that once RP had "taken root," she observed a "more positive [school] culture." Mrs. Simon, the sixteen-year veteran, expressed, "I think that I'm currently in the most positive school community I've been in." The school's counselor corroborated the teachers' perceptions by recalling, "I see them [teachers] talking, their climate has just changed. Instead of the negativity I see a lot more positive things. Positive interactions."

In terms of the improvement in communication between teachers on their grade-level teams and the administrative team, Mrs. Johnson recognized the value of the teachers, counselors, and administrators participating in ongoing circles. She stated:

It doesn't have to be a circle every month. It doesn't have to be a circle every week, but just a planned time to come together as a team, I think would be beneficial. I think that you probably could do [RP], with the grade-level chairs, that would probably be a good circle, with the administrators and the counselors. Have that team circle, so that you can kind of all get on the same page.

In order to avoid misconceptions, Mrs. Johnson asserted that engaging in regular circles with administrators would be beneficial because teachers would "get a feel of what's going on, and they [administrators] can get an actual feel of what the tone is and how things are really going on the campus instead of hearing it by word-of-mouth because the walls have ears."

As a result of her participation in RP with her campus administrator, Mrs. Pevensie expressed relief that she could be her authentic self and have her ideas acknowledged. She stated:

> You can be honest. You could be broken. You could be hurting. You could cry. And it's okay. In front of administration. And it was okay. Just very free. It just feels very liberating. And just to be able to talk freely and honestly. And have your voice heard.

Encouraging reciprocal support. A positive development mentioned by participants from their use of RP was the increased amount of support they were able to give and receive within their campus community. The support mentioned by the participants centered on the willingness of teachers to offer help, to work together, to accept ideas, and to pool resources.

Mrs. Pevensie mentioned that as a result of RP the gifts and strengths possessed by each team member became visible, utilized, and acknowledged by the community. She shared:

> Everyone brings gifts. Everyone brings their strengths. And you kind of tap into other people's strong qualities. Learn from them. Grow from them. Not be afraid to ask for help. Even when you think you know it all, you don't. And so there's always other people that know more, or have experienced more. But I think in a positive learning community, a positive learning environment, I just feel like you're not afraid to ask for help. And when you ask for help, it overflows. It comes and just overflows.

Mrs. Pevensie went on to say that from the available collective support received in their community-building circles, the team members started "pooling" their resources so that they could offer more support to members that had expressed needs. Additionally, Mrs. Pevensie began to consider ways that she could better support the other teachers on her team because they were her community. She asserted, "there's probably a way we can help, or support, or guide, or encourage, or just listen, sometimes, to them [teachers]." Mrs. Simon similarly expressed, "I'm gonna support them [teachers on her grade-level team], and I'm gonna help them in whatever way I can." In offering her administrative perspective of the teachers' ability to increase levels of support to each other, Mrs. Magnolia expressed that she was "amazed" to see how RP caused teachers to see how they could work together, support each other, and "realize how strong some of your [their] teammates are." She reflected that when teachers used RP, "they have a camaraderie with their team, their team is just more cohesive. Their team gets along better, their team is stronger. More supportive of one another, too. A great support system for one another."

A benefit mentioned by Mrs. Johnson of the strong communal bonds that developed through RP was that as situations would arise throughout the school year, the grade-level teams became a powerful emotional resource for the teachers to rely on. She described how her team "supports me in home stuff, school stuff, [and] I support them." Mrs. Johnson further explained that through the strong community they established, the team members were liberated to ask for help and support from each other. She explained, "I know that I can go to my team, and I can ask for different things and that they will be

open and honest and helpful." Mrs. Johnson also mentioned that teachers were more comfortable making requests such as "I need help with making sure I have copies on time, I need help making sure the plans are done on time, or I need help with the way that you interact with my kids." Mrs. Simon similarly shared:

> I think that it goes both ways. They know they can come to me and no matter what's going on. They can tell me and I'm going to support them. I'm going to help them in whatever way I can. Sometimes it's just a hug or I'm going to say a prayer for you, whatever it is. But sometimes it's, "I actually need you to take over this task and do it so I can let my mind do something else for a minute," They're really, really good about that.

Mrs. Green stated that as a result of the community she had developed within her grade-level team she "knew that if I were struggling with anything or if there were something that I needed from my colleagues I didn't have to hesitate to go [ask] because that support was always there." Mrs. Johnson agreed in her statement that "if we need help with things, we can go out and ask for it."

As the school's counselor, Mrs. Lands recounted a story that illustrated the collective emotional support received by a teacher who was dealing with the sudden death of a former student, Mrs. Lands recalled:

> Watching her team circle her [teacher] was just unbelievable. It was a team that wasn't gelling, wasn't really working together, but they circled that teacher. Of course, the teacher felt like she hadn't kept up with her [the student] enough, that if she had done something different, things would have ended differently, but that

94

team just really worked with her. I think it was because we're a restorative campus.

Teachers also spoke to how the use of RP within their various communities promoted a greater sense of resiliency. Mrs. Green shared that the support she received from other teachers in her community-building circles gave her "the sense that I could make it, no matter what occurred."

Mrs. Simon shared another anecdote involving one of her teammates who was going through an emotional, personal struggle, but her team initially didn't know how to handle the situation. She reported that the team was able to come together in support of their struggling teammate, and she attributed a significant portion of the team's success in this situation to the RP they had engaged in as a grade-level community. She asserted:

> I think had we not been in tune with her from the way that we know each other and the way that we circle, we might have pushed when we weren't supposed to and caused a really big problem. And I think kind of when she came out of it, she goes, "You guys did this exactly right. This was what I needed. It's going to be okay."

So through their use of RP and their ongoing, supportive interactions, the team was able to save not only their personal relationships, but also the improved sense of community that was developing.

It appears from the data that reciprocal support also occurs between teachers, counselors, and administrators, Mrs. Pevensie recalled a story of when some resentment had developed among her grade-level colleagues and the administrative team because the

95

teachers did not feel supported. The source of the teachers' frustrations was a perception that they were being asked to deal with a student's behavioral problem on their own. An idea was proposed by one of the teachers to hold a restorative circle with the team and invite the assistant principal and counselor so that each group could hear the perspective of the other, have a common understanding of what was occurring, and develop an effective, realistic plan of support. Mrs. Pevensie described the circle as "awesome" because many misunderstandings were resolved. She recalled:

> She [the assistant principal] was able to tell us her version. And basically, her hands were tied. She wanted to help us, deep in her heart, she was wanting to help us. And she was doing everything in her capacity to help with that student and that teacher.

Mrs. Pevensie emphasized that the circle "helped us [teachers] band together even more. Because we realized, she [assistant principal] was doing everything in her power to help and to support." Mrs. Pevensie remembered the team shifted their perspective and started to conceptualize that the student who was having problems was not just the student of one teacher, but instead a student who belonged to the entire grade-level and administrative teams. She recalled that the teachers realized, "that child belongs to all of us." Ultimately, Mrs. Pevensie reflected:

> It kind of lifted the burden off of the teacher; a little bit off of the team. Just to know we had administrative support. That we could just go in there at any time. And whether it was to vent, whether it was for leadership guidance or advice. We

could be really honest and just go in there at any moment for her support even if there was nothing she could do, just to listen, it was powerful.

Building a sense of family. According to teachers, a sense of family emerged as a way to improve the campus culture. In describing how they experienced this sense of family, teachers observed that the members of their grade level and campus communities authentically cared for them in deeper ways, that they were able to share personal information with the confidence that it would stay within their group, and that they were a part of a larger support system that extended outside of the workplace environment. Through their ongoing interactions in RP, teachers noted that many of their professional relationships evolved into deeper emotional relationships that they associated with family.

Mrs. Green shared that the community that was developing among the teachers on her grade-level team seemed to get stronger with every circle they conducted. She felt that the team fostered "a sense of tight family." She continued:

I really do feel like all campuses could benefit from this. This isn't the first campus I have been to, but it is the first campus that I've been on where I've felt like it's truly a sense of family. At the end of the day everybody cares about each other.

Mrs. Johnson, referencing the emergent sense of family, asserted:

It really has made us more family and not just coworkers. When we have personal stuff going on, we know that we can share it in circle, and it's not going to go

anywhere else. It's going to stay within our circle, it's going to stay within our

little family.

When reflecting on how use of RP with her colleagues had influenced her thinking, Mrs.

Simon recalled that she didn't realize how important the relationships she made during

those staff circles were until later in the school year. She noted:

It kind of came to me that these are the people I am doing life with. I spend ten

hours a day, five days a week here. And if we are not each other's family and

support system, then who is? It's incredible.

Facilitating team appreciation. According to teachers, a specific aspect of

circles credited for the creation of a more positive culture was the opportunity for team

members to affirm each other through expressions of appreciation. During the grade-level

support circles, the teachers participated in discussion rounds dedicated to teachers'

affirmations or appreciative recognitions of other teachers in the circle. When thinking

about the affirmation round of her team's circles, Mrs. Simon recalled:

Our little team circles are always, I feel like, productive and good, but mostly in

the sense of we get to encourage each other because we know that we're always

there to support each other and learn from each other and those things, but it's

very rare that we sit down and go in a circle and say, "Here's something I

appreciate about you. Here's something that I can affirm about you.

In remembering her positive experience in circle, Mrs. Green added "It [circles] gave me

the opportunity to tell my colleagues that I appreciated them."

Mrs. Johnson mentioned that giving the teachers an opportunity to affirm each other contributed to the sustained culture of positivity within the grade-level team. She recalled a time during the year when the team was preparing for a series of upcoming tutoring sessions and a great deal of work needed to be completed. As the leader of her grade-level team, she did a lot of the work to take the pressure off her other teammates. When the team came together in circle and the teachers began affirmations, every team member chose to affirm Mrs. Johnson by expressing their gratitude for all of the work she had done on behalf of the team. She acknowledged:

> When we have circles together, it's been really, really positive . . . I think the affirmation part of circles too has been really helpful to our grade-level community because you may feel like you're just dropping all the balls, and you're not being appreciated for the work that you've been doing.

Mrs. Johnson went on to say that without RP, she most likely would not have felt so appreciated by her team. She asserted:

> Before we did circles, I don't know that [affirmations] would have been easily shared in that kind of context. I think it may have been like one or two people that were like, "Hey, thanks for doing that," or "Hey, thanks for doing that." But really, having the circle and being able to sit down and being able to have the opportunity to stop and think, "Okay, what can I affirm? What is it?" I think that's beneficial. I think that's rewarding. I think that's something that has been missing for a while in teams.

Promoting willingness to remain on the job. According to the data, an enhanced sense of community with their colleagues increases teachers' desire to continue working at their campus and not seek employment opportunities elsewhere. The teachers attributed an enhanced desire to remain at their campus due to a stronger sense of a positive school community. It appears that such a sense of positive community enables the teachers to experience a more supportive and inviting school culture, an excitement to come to work, a feeling of happiness while at work, and an enhanced sense of belonging.

Mrs. Johnson recalled that before she had engaged in RP with other teachers in her school community, she was seeking a transfer to a different school that was closer to her home and had a better culture. After participating in RP, Mrs. Johnson was proud of what was happening within her campus community and that she was able to play a part in bringing about those improvements. Mrs. Johnson also noted that her thoughts used to be, "I don't want to be on this campus anymore. I need to get somewhere else." Now her thoughts were, "No, I really like what's happening on this campus. I'm going [to] stay longer." Mrs. Johnson remembered thinking, "there's something special going on here."

Similarly, Mrs. Pevensie expressed that the community that was developed in RP was "very liberating . . . just to be able to talk freely and honestly and have your voice heard." As a result of those feelings, she began to realize that she was working "in the right place at the right time," that she was "exactly where she needed to be," and that she had no desire to seek a position at another school.

Mrs. Green expressed that she developed a greater connection to her community. Even after a bad day, she no longer "dreaded" coming to work because of the increased

level of happiness she was experiencing at her school. After the campus adopted RP and she had participated in circles with other teachers, she stated that "I found myself being really excited to go to work because of the camaraderie that it [RP] had created," that "I have people [at work] that really care [for] and love me," that "I'm happy to be here," and that her school had become her "home away from home." Mrs. Green concluded, "honestly, restorative discipline has kept me from walking out when I had, not just a bad day but a bad week. Knowing I have the support of my colleagues has kept me here."

ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

The Three-Factor Psychological Sense of Community Scale (Jason et al., 2015) was additionally used to further analyze the collected data. This conceptual framework identifies three different levels of an individual's experiences with a community. These levels consist of (a) entity, (b) membership, and (c) self.

Entity

According to Jason et al. (2015), entity relates to an individual's overall connection to an organization and its various units. In exploring how the teachers experienced community at the entity level, it is important to note that this level attempts to understand the teachers' connection to their school and to their grade-level teams. Teachers described their experiences at the entity level as promoting bonding through building grade-level team associations and generating a positive culture through encouraging reciprocal support and promoting a willingness to remain on the job.

When considering the connections and bonds that developed, Mrs. Pevensie shared that her team, "really banded together and held each other afloat." Mrs. Johnson added, "for our team especially, it [RP] has just bonded us." Mrs. Green concluded, "it [RP] was very emotional at times, but I feel like we all bonded. Every time we met [as a team] we just grew closer and closer as a result of the circles." In describing the level of reciprocal support that occurred within her grade-level team, Mrs. Simon shared, "my team is a pretty solid support system for me" and that "I think that it goes both ways. They know they can come to me and no matter what's going on." Mrs. Green added, "I knew that if I were struggling with anything or if there were something that I needed from my colleagues, I didn't have to hesitate to go because that support was always there." When talking about the overall sense of connectivity they had to their campus, Mrs. Pevensie shared, "she was in the right place" and Mrs. Johnson recognized, "at the end of the day everybody cares about each other" and "there's something special here."

Membership

According to Jason et al. (2015), membership relates to the interpersonal relationships that develop among community members. In examining how the teachers were able to relate to their community at the membership level, data were analyzed so that a better understanding could be gained of how the use of RP contributed to the interpersonal relationships of teachers with their colleagues, and therefore, increased their sense of community. According to the teachers, they experienced membership as

enhanced closeness through learning more about their co-workers, feeling more open about sharing personal information, and developing more positive relationships.

Mrs. Meyers described the opportunity to get to know other teachers in circles as "nice because it was fun getting to know [other teachers]. It was a softer side of everybody, and I really liked it." When describing her experience of learning about teachers and administrators in circle, Mrs. Green shared, "The most rewarding part I would have to say . . . is getting to know them on a deeper level, and knowing that at some point in time we have all had the same struggle. We are all in this together." In discussing how she was able to learn more about the members of her campus' administrative team, Mrs. Johnson reflected, "you get to know your principals and your counselors on more of a personal level." Additionally, Mrs. Meyers discussed how the closeness she felt in circles caused her to talk about personal situations that she normally would not have shared. She asserted, "They [circles] felt so powerful . . . something compelled me to share very intimate things about myself . . . personal, private things . . . I can't believe I shared that."

Self

According to Jason et al. (2015), self relates to an individual's assessment of the "meaningfulness, commitment, and emotional connection experienced by members" (Jason et al., 2016, p. 14). In examining how teachers experienced community at the level of self, data were analyzed to determine how the teachers perceived their own importance in the organization. Teachers expressed that RP enabled them (1) to experience the

103

positive culture inclusive of team affirmations, (2) to appreciate how they mattered to others as a result of bonding and building grade-level team associations, and (3) to sense their individual importance.

Mrs. Johnson shared that her teams' interactions in circles helped her recognize the appreciation of her teammates and realize how much she mattered to others. She shared, "to have five people that are your colleagues who you spend day-in and day-out with, that they all see it [the hard work], and they are all thankful for what you do . . . they do notice. I think that I didn't have that for many, many, many years. I still was doing the same amount of work for a different team, but it wasn't as appreciated." In discussing how Mrs. Green's participation in RP influenced her perception of her importance to her campus, she expressed, "when you have a sense of community you feel a part of something, and I felt more significant than I did before."

It is important to note that the data revealed a limited focus on teachers' own self-importance. This diminished focus might be due to greater attention given to teachers' interactions with others on their campus teams and their interpersonal relationships rather than on their own sense of self-importance within the school community. The limited data also illustrates the teachers' altruistic desire to improve their connections with their peers as opposed to highlighting their own personal value and importance within the school's community.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This research study attempted to examine how the use of RP by elementary

school teachers, counselors, and administrators contributed to the teachers' sense of

connectedness and community. The chapter began with a description of the site selected

for this research project and of the study participants. In examining the data collected in

the interviews and supporting documentation, this chapter documented how study

participants perceived that the use of RP among teachers positively contributed to their

sense of connectedness with other teachers and staff on the campus. The teachers shared

that their increased closeness with their colleagues and their improved communication

skills enhanced their sense of relational connectedness with their co-workers. The study

participants additionally reported that the use of RP with their colleagues positively

contributed to their perception of the school's community. The teachers reported that RP

helped them to build stronger communal bonds with other teachers and administrators, to

experience a more positive school culture, and to enhance their desire to continue their

employment on the campus.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter revisits the study's problem statement, purpose, research questions, methodology, and conceptual framework. Moreover, this chapter provides a discussion of the findings as they relate to each research question with pertinent connections to the extant literature. Implications of the findings for educational practice are also provided in addition to the recommendations for future research that could further contribute to the creation of stronger bonds of connectedness and community among teachers in school environments.

RE-STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Given the concerns related to high levels of teacher dissatisfaction with isolated working conditions (Neason, 2014) and to teachers' expressed needs for more positive and trusting work environments with their peers (Boyd et al., 2011), educational leaders have attempted to implement strategies that address the challenges that are causing teachers to become alienated from their work (Martinez et al., 2016). A potential solution that has been identified to counteract the problems related to teacher isolation and alienation has been the creation of strong intra-school communities (Osterman, 2000). According to researchers one approach known as RP that has been found to build a stronger sense of community and relational connectedness among students (Morrison et al., 2005) might also serve to enhance teachers' sense of community. However, RP has not been extensively used by teachers with each other. As a result, more research was

needed to determine if the use of RP by teachers may increase the level of connectedness and community experienced by teachers with their colleagues.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to examine the extent to which the use of RP by elementary school teachers with other campus teachers and stakeholders contributed to their sense of connectedness and community. Through exploring the experiences of teachers participating in RP, a collection of relevant practices might be identified that educational leaders may employ in an attempt to cultivate the type of supportive workplace environments needed to reduce isolation and in turn decrease teacher attrition.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1) How does elementary school teachers' participation in the use of restorative practices contribute to the relational connectedness of teachers and other stakeholders on the campus?

2) How does elementary school teachers' participation in the use of restorative practices with stakeholders contribute to a sense of community on the campus?

OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY

For this study a qualitative approach was chosen as the methodology because it provides the opportunity to more holistically understand the perceptions and experiences of the teachers participating in the research project (Ary et al., 2010). Through using qualitative instruments of inquiry, this study focused on teachers' sense of connectedness and community within the teachers' workplace environments. Furthermore, a case study

was followed because it can provide a rich description of the participants' experiences (Ary et al., 2010). Because this study was conducted in one elementary school, this research project is a case study that is bounded to a single elementary school. Participants included five teachers, one school counselor, and one assistant principal. Data were collected through interviews and document analysis.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The use of RP by elementary school teachers appears to positively contribute to a sense of connectedness and community on the campus. Teachers experienced increased levels of connectedness through their enhanced closeness and their improved capacity to communicate with their colleagues. Additionally, teachers develop an enhanced sense of community from improved team bonding and a more positive school culture. As a result of the growing sense of community, teachers were also willing to stay at their campus rather than to seek external employment opportunities.

RP Contributions to the Relational Connectedness of Teachers and Stakeholders

Findings suggest that when teachers use RP and engage in specific activities such as circles, they are able to *enhance their level of closeness* with their colleagues and *improve their individual capacity as communicators*. These two themes are summarized and followed by connections to the extant literature. First, it appears that the use of RP by teachers contributes to elevated closeness by building trust, promoting connections, building familiarity, affording freedom of expression, and strengthening relationships.

Building trust among teachers and between teachers and administrators appears to be accomplished through the use of RP. This trust represents an enhanced sense of safety and security where teachers could be more honest with each other and with their administrators without the fear of negatively impacting their working relationships. As trust is built, individuals may become more comfortable sharing their experiences, talking about their struggles, letting down their guards, and becoming more vulnerable. These findings support previous research in that "once people are vulnerable with one another, trust begins to build" (Pranis, 2014, p. 42). Furthermore, as Armour and Todic (2016) state, "RP was an effective approach to building and sustaining trusting relationships" (p. 4). This finding also aligns with Brown and Vaughn's (2015) assertion that there was no greater solution for promoting trust than "open, honest, extensive communication among professionals working together" (p. 34).

Promoting connections among teachers is another way that the use of RP contributes to teacher connectedness. Through the conversations in circles, teachers tended to gain a greater sense of shared identity, of closeness, and of commonly held experiences. As a result of their improved relational connections, teachers may experience a stronger sense of belonging, develop compassion for their colleagues, and recognize that they are all in the work together. These findings are in concert with research that reports that RP is an approach that can "increase connectedness among the members of a school community" (Armour & Todic, 2016, p. 3), as well as with Pranis' (2014) finding that when people share their stories "we feel more connected to them" (p. 40).

Building familiarity appears to occur as RP provides teachers with a forum to develop a better understanding of their colleagues and to gain a deeper insight into the personal and professional issues that their teammates confront on a daily basis. Through enhanced relational connectivity, increased familiarity, and recognized commonalities, the teachers are able to know each other on a deeper level and develop a better understanding of the behaviors, decisions, and actions of other teachers and administrators. These findings echo Pranis' (2014) assertion that "by sharing our individual stories we open places for others to connect with us, to find common ground with us, and to know us more completely" (p. 40).

Affording freedom of expression may result in teachers' increased ability to more honestly share their feelings, ideas, and perspectives with their colleagues. Teachers can gain a level of comfort with other teachers and administrators to freely express their ideas, thus, empowering them to share personal information, to recognize the humanity of their co-workers, and to communicate with teachers they might normally avoid. These findings are consistent with the research by Armour and Todic (2016) that found, "the structure of RD gives you boundaries and allows you to operate within them, with freedom. So, because of that, you're able to feel safe in those environments and feel like you can communicate what you need to communicate" (p. 17). Further research suggested:

> [Circles] create possibilities for freedom: freedom to speak our truth, freedom to
> drop masks and protections, freedom to be present as a whole human being,

freedom to reveal our deepest longings, freedom to acknowledge mistakes and fears, freedom to act in accord with our core values. (Pranis, 2014, p. 11)

Strengthening relationships between teachers and administrators appears to emerge from the collective use of RP. Teachers were able to develop an enhanced respect for the members of their administrative team and to overcome relational barriers that traditionally can separate them from their administrators. As a result, the teacher and administrative relationships become more authentic and meaningful, the administrators are more accessible, and the teachers develop compassion and empathy for the responsibilities borne by their administrators. These findings align with Armour and Todic's (2016) findings that "teachers and administrators reported that RP has positively impacted relationships among the staff members" (p. 15). The importance of these closer relationships between teachers and administrators also reinforces Thorsborne's (2015) research that human beings, by nature, are "social animals" that seem to operate at the highest level when they are living in the context of "robust and healthy relationships with each other" (p. 37).

Second, in addition to the enhanced closeness, findings indicate that RP improves the communication capacity of teachers. Through participation in circles, teachers appear to be more willing to share information openly, honestly, and authentically and as a result, they are able to improve their communication skills and engage in difficult conversations.

Enhancing communication skills of individual teachers appear to result from using restorative protocols and increased opportunities to interact in circles. RP seems to

encourage individual teachers to become better listeners, more willing to communicate, and increasingly reflective about what and how they communicate. These findings are in concert with Armour and Todic's (2016) report that "RP inspired teachers to be more honest, direct, and authentic with colleagues" (p. 5). Furthermore, Armour and Todic (2016) suggest that through RP "teachers learn about themselves and about how they interact with others, resulting in their greater ability to be in touch with the notion of shared humanity and be curious about other people" (p. 20).

Facilitating courageous conversations appears to encourage teachers to directly engage with each other when they experience difficulties. As teachers experience circles together, they may become more willing to address issues with each other rather than to attempt to avoid the conflict or to immediately involve an administrator. Much of the increased willingness to discuss conflicts through collaborative conversations may result from the relationships that are built in community-building circles. These findings are consistent with Amstutz and Mullet's (2014) research that recognized when a campus adopts a whole-school approach to implementing RP, an environment is created in which the entire continuum from creating community to resolving conflicts can be addressed in a healthy manner by administrators, teachers, staff members, and students.

Findings also suggest that RP facilitates courageous conversations through providing teachers a set of protocols to proactively deal with situations before they escalate. This way the teachers seem to be able to discuss problems before they grow to a point that seems unmanageable. This finding is consistent with Armour's (2016) assertion that RP has the unique potential to act as both a proactive and reactive approach to

112

address problems because of the school-based communities that exist both before and after conflicts emerge. Apparently, challenging situations may also be used as opportunities to build capacity and develop the tools that would be needed to address both current issues and future problems. This finding supports the recognition that RP needs to be used as a proactive tool (Morrison, 2002) and that "these proactive practices recognize that managing relationships and resolving conflict are important life skills which assist in the de-escalation of conflict before serious incidents arise" (p. 338).

The findings also indicate that the regular, ongoing teacher-support circles in their grade-level teams help teachers to engage in more courageous conversations, resolve conflict, and address problems in a healthier manner. Additional tools and support systems serve to solve issues and increase the teachers' collective ability to achieve successful outcomes in the midst of difficult circumstances. These findings are in concert with Collins's (2004) report which described regular "interaction rituals" as a key way to develop the social webs of communication and relationships needed to achieve successful outcomes (p. 78).

Additionally, by engaging in courageous conversations, teachers' willingness to acknowledge the impact of their actions on others and to attempt to make amends is enhanced. Through conversations based in the acknowledgment of mistakes and the making of amends instead of airing grievances and assigning blame, teachers can become more willing to let go of grudges and more able to move forward with a clean slate. These findings support the research of Morrison et al. (2005) showing that through processes of collectively identifying harm and amends-making, participants are more

likely to take personal responsibility for their actions because the involved parties are more focused on making things right rather than just assigning blame. Further, this study's findings also corroborate Pranis' (2014) assertion that RP circles are effective ways to address misunderstandings, resolve problems, and create peace between those in conflict.

RP Contributions to the Teachers' Sense of Community

Findings indicate that as teachers engage in RP, a greater sense of community is developed. Such sense of community appears to be accomplished by *promoting bonding* and *generating a positive culture*. First, through enhancing the level of association within grade-level teams and between teacher and administrative teams, teachers create stronger bonds within their various communities.

Building grade-level team associations tends to promote bonding as a result of RP experiences. Through the use of restorative protocols and processes, grade-level teams become more unified, establish group norms, begin the school year on a more positive footing, work more cohesively, and connect with each other in a shorter period of time. This finding aligns with Sarason's (1974) notion that when individuals gain a better knowledge of others and develop a sense of interdependence with others, the individuals develop "the feeling one is part of a larger and dependable and stable structure" (p. 157).

Furthering teacher and administrator associations appears to result from increased interactions in circles and through enhanced alignment in the ways school-related issues are confronted on campus. Instead of attempting to solve problems as two

114

separate entities, teams are able to work more as a single, unified community. It appears

that when members of the administrative and teacher teams engage in a process of

collaborative problem-solving, both teams can become more aligned, teachers may feel

more supported, and the teachers and administrators develop a better understanding of

what is needed from each other to produce successful outcomes. These findings are

consistent with Armour and Todic's (2016) assertion that as school administrators and

teachers participate in ongoing circles they may "strengthen the community," "clarify

community values," and develop a "shared understanding" of expectations (p. 7).

Second, an increased level of association through RP also appears to generate a

positive culture across a campus. Enhanced team communication, reciprocal support, a

sense of family, team appreciation, and the emergence of a willingness to remain on the

job tends to influence teachers to have a stronger connection to their campus community.

Enhancing team communication appears to lead to a more positive work-place

environment. Within the grade-level circles, teachers seem to be less likely to judge and

more willing to listen to their colleagues. Improved team communication also helps

teachers align their actions and interact more authentically. Furthermore, as RP is used,

the tone of group communication appears to also improve, and as a result, a more positive

team culture emerges. The effect of the improved communication on the school's climate

supports previous research showing that since schools are at their essence about people, a

school's culture rests on the communication and relationships among its staff (Brown &

Vaughn, 2015).

Encouraging reciprocal support results as the grade-level teams interact more regularly in circles. As the strengths, talents, and gifts of teachers become more visible during their team circles, they tend to become more willing to ask for support from other team members, to show more willingness in offering support to teammates who are in need, and become more apt to pool their resources within their communities rather than try to accomplish their goals unilaterally. Moreover, a greater sense of resiliency seems to develop among teachers through the additional support systems they build as a team. As a result of the increased level of resiliency and the additional level of support from their communities, teachers become more willing to voluntarily engage in reciprocal actions to assist their fellow team members. These findings are consistent with Morrison et al.'s (2005) view that the aim of RP is creating an environment where individuals can "learn from and support each other through building on the ties of social capital" (p.338).

Building a sense of family within their grade-level teams is recognized as an outcome of teachers' collective participation in RP. An enhanced level of caring seems to be experienced by teachers, enabling the teams to create an emotional support system to address personal as well as professional needs. These findings support Osterman's (2000) research which emphasized the overall well-being and health of an individual is affected by one's ability to "experience oneself as worthy of love and respect" (p. 334). Further, Armour and Todic (2016) suggest that RP positively impacts the development of these caring connections among teachers and staff members.

Facilitating team appreciation for team members appears to take place as groups participate in sharing affirmations and recognitions in circles. Reciprocal affirmations by

116

teachers within their grade-level team seem to contribute to a better sense of community. Appreciation received during circles tends to also motivate teammates to make sacrifices for their teams and expand their desire to remain connected to their grade-level communities. Teachers' increased willingness to sacrifice for their grade-level communities is in concert with Jason et al.'s (2016) contention that when teachers feel that they are a part of a larger, more connected community of professionals, they become more willing to make personal sacrifices for the betterment of their school or team.

Promoting a willingness to remain on the job appears to be an important contribution of RP. The emergence of a more caring community, an increased level of support from colleagues, and a stronger sense of belonging dissuades teachers from wanting to leave their campus. After participating in RP and focused circles, teachers wish to stay and be a part of something they perceive as special. These sentiments align with research from Canrinus et al. (2017) showing that strong levels of teacher relational satisfaction with colleagues, ample support received from others on the campus, and high quality relationships with a school's administration cause teachers to have a higher level of self-efficacy, job satisfaction, occupational commitment, and motivation. The increased willingness of the teachers to remain at their campus echoes research by Jason et al. (2016) which reported that if teachers feel that they are a part of a large, interdependent network of professionals, they will be more willing to commit to the school.

Additionally, findings suggest that a greater level of satisfaction in the workplace environment and more excitement to go to work comes from an increased sense of

camaraderie and a greater connection between teachers, their colleagues, and administrators. These findings are consistent with Osterman's (2000) research that showed a connection between relational connectivity and the well-being of an individual. Further, Osterman (2000) states that the quality of relationships, collegiality, and collaboration have an effect on the motivation and performance of a school's staff.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Findings related to the secondary analysis of themes using the Three-Factor Psychological Sense of Community Scale conceptual framework including (1) entity, (2) membership, and (3) self suggest that these levels of community identification are reflected in teachers' experiences in RP and circles (Jason et al., 2015).

First, the entity level describes an individual's overall connection to an organization and its various units such as the teacher's grade-level team and to the school. Findings suggest that improved interactions with members of the grade-level team's teachers appears to develop a greater connection to their community by providing additional logistical support and to increase their willingness to reciprocate the support received from their team members. These findings are congruent with research of McMillan and Chavis (1986) that defined a sense of community as including a feeling that members belong to their community and "a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (p. 9). In addition to an increased closeness experienced within grade-level teams, a stronger connection to the school appears to develop. This connection may be illustrated by a perception of the school's environment

118

as a more inviting, positive, and caring place as well as by teachers' increased desire to continue teaching at the campus. These findings support the research of Osterman (2000) that recognized, "conditions in the workplace profoundly affect worker behavior and performance" (p. 325) and that "collegiality is one of the most important organizational characteristics influencing teachers' professional commitment" (p. 325).

The second level, membership, is represented by the interpersonal relationships that develop among individual community members. The membership level is conceptualized as the strength of the relationships among individual campus teachers and stakeholders. Whether among teachers, counselors, or administrators, the use of RP appears to improve relationships with all involved. This finding corroborates Pranis' (2014) assertion that people have a "universal human wish to be connected to others in a good way" (p. 24). Additionally, as a result of participating in RP, teachers appear to learn more about their colleagues, to discover how they were similar, and to open up with each other. These findings align with the research of Sarason (1974) that described a psychological sense of community as "the perception of similarity to others, an acknowledged interdependence with others, and a willingness to maintain this interdependence by giving to or doing for others what one expects from them" (p. 157).

The third level, "self," refers to how individuals conceptualize their importance within the community. A sense of self can be represented through teachers' enhanced sense of being valued and appreciated for their contributions to their team. While the data relating to this level were not as extensive as for the other two levels, findings suggest that teachers' recognition of mattering to their grade-level teams and their perceptions of

personal significance on their campus appear to increase. A possible explanation for the limited data related to the teachers' conception of self could be that the use of RP promotes an enhanced focus on connections with other teachers and a sense of belonging in their community. As a result, the teachers' conceptualization of self-importance is not as evident which indirectly suggests that they are more interested in the collective purposes of the community. Furthermore, their identities as members of the community illustrate an increased sense of altruism. This description of self is in concert with the research of McMillan and Chavis (1986) that also defined a sense of community as including the "feeling that members matter to one another and the group" (p. 9).

STUDY LIMITATIONS

This research project was conducted as a case study at a south Texas elementary school in an urban setting; therefore, the generalizability and transferability of the findings are limited, and the results may or may not be applicable in other school contexts. It is also important to note that the professional experiences, teaching assignments, and certification requirements of elementary school teachers can be uniquely different from those of middle and high school teachers. As a result, the ways in which the study's participants conceptualized their sense of connectedness and community may vary from secondary teachers' perspectives.

The findings are further limited due to the initial RP implementation stage at the campus when the data for this study was collected. Since the school is still in the early stages of RP integration, the teachers' levels of proficiency and competency are still

developing. Lastly, the study's findings attempted to capture the participants' perceptions through an open-ended interview. Therefore, the findings only reflect the information gathered in the individual interviews which were confirmed by member checking after the completed interviews and by the collected documents. However, based on the findings, certain implications for practice and further research are warranted.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

For the use of RP to positively contribute to the teachers' sense of connectedness and community, there are certain aspects of RP that need to be in place for its successful implementation. For instance, it is important to provide teachers with an opportunity to engage in circles with each other during the initial and ongoing RP trainings. During the trainings, teachers should be given the chance to connect and build community with each other so that bonds are strengthened among the teaching staff and so that teachers become competent in community-building protocols. The connections built during those initial training circles should be reinforced in the ongoing grade-level circles throughout the school year and be carried over to future interactions among teachers within their campus community.

Campus leaders should also provide time and opportunities for teachers to participate in community-building circles with each other during the school year. Teachers working on different grade-levels or teaching different subjects often do not have the time to interact with each other, so providing multiple opportunities for teachers to meet and talk with each other in circles can be valuable in cultivating stronger

121

connections across the campus and in creating a more sustainable school-wide community. Moreover, school leaders must strive to schedule opportunities for teachers to engage in circles so that they are able to build stronger relationships within their working communities.

Additionally, teachers should have access to both the restorative protocols and the support they need to use them in challenging situations. As suggested by this study, when teachers use RP with their fellow teachers and stakeholders, they are more likely to engage in difficult conversations. While the use of RP is unlikely to successfully resolve every conflict, it provides teachers a safe process to use with each other to navigate through conversations that might otherwise be avoided.

Lastly, it is important for administrators and counselors to also engage in RP with teachers. Through participating in ongoing circles with teachers, members of the administrative team may reinforce a sense of connectedness and community among adults, form stronger relational bonds with teachers, enable more collaborative decision-making, and enhance communication among the campus' staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Teachers have expressed the need for collegial working relationships that are both positive and trusting (Boyd et al., 2011). Without these types of positive relationships, teachers can become alienated from their work (Martinez et al., 2016). In an effort to combat teacher alienation (Martinez et al., 2016) and to mitigate the isolated work conditions that teachers cite as a reason for leaving the profession (Neason, 2014), this

study explored how RP contributes to elementary school teachers' sense of connectedness and community on their campus. The study only focused on teachers in a single, urban elementary school that was in the initial stages of RP implementation. The demographic composition of students was 71% Hispanic, 9% African-American, 15% White, and 5% other and the percentage of students identified as economically disadvantaged was 67%. As a result, further research may be conducted to gain a holistic understanding of how the use of RP could affect the experiences of teachers at the middle and high school levels and in schools with different demographic and economic student compositions. Since the experiences of teachers working at different campuses can vary greatly, it would be beneficial to understand how RP influences teacher connectedness and community in other school settings.

It is further recommended that others investigate how RP influences the experiences of administrators. Through an additional study focusing on administrators' connections with teachers, a more comprehensive understanding can be obtained of how the use of RP contributes to a campus' connectivity and community as a whole.

Lastly, researchers could extend this case study to explore the teachers' sense of connectedness and community after the campus had fully implemented RP. Such study could illuminate how the use of RP over an extended period of time would contribute to a campus' sense of connectivity, community, and culture.

CONCLUSION

While there are many issues confronting educational leaders, the problems associated with teacher isolation and dissatisfaction with workplace conditions have important implications for school systems attempting to provide their students with equitable access to a stable teaching force. While district leaders cannot directly address every aspect impacting a school's community, leaders can take actions to positively influence their campuses' climate and culture. This study has found that RP is a promising approach to enhance a work environment that may be conducive to address some of the concerns that teachers have identified as leading to high attrition rates.

By teachers' participation in RP and using protocols that have been traditionally used to increase student connectedness and community, this study found that similar outcomes could be achieved for teachers and stakeholders. When campus or district leaders adopt and promote restorative systems that give teachers the tools to become more relationally connected and to resolve conflicts in healthier ways, teachers may build better relationships, communicate more effectively, solve problems more productively, and develop stronger bonds to their campus. There are many complicated factors that lead to teachers' dissatisfaction and their decisions to leave the educational profession; however, the use of RP to strengthen the teachers' relational connectedness and sense of community can provide educational leaders with strategies to create a healthier school culture in order to provide all students with equitable access to the experienced teachers needed to sustain high levels of achievement.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: INDIVIDUAL TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1) Can you tell me about yourself (background and experiences in education)?

2) Tell me about an experience from either your current or a previous campus that describes what a positive school community would look or feel like.

3) Tell me about an experience(s) when you have participated in the use of restorative practices and/or circles with other teachers. Feel free to use any experiences from either the campus RD training sessions or from any other time during the school year?

4) Tell me about an experience(s) from when you have participated in the use of restorative practices and/or circles with a counselor or an administrator. Feel free to use any experiences from either the campus RD training sessions or from any other time during the school year?

5) Tell me about how the experiences you shared influenced your thinking about your school and/or other teachers on your campus? And why?

6) Tell me about what has been the most rewarding part of participating in circles with other teachers on your campus?

7) Tell me about what has been the most difficult or challenging part of participating in circles with other teachers on your campus? How did you handle that difficulty or what did you do about it?

8) Share a story that illustrates how your experiences using circles with other teachers during the school year or during the campus RD training has affected you?

9) Are there any other comments you would like add or share?

APPENDIX B: ADMINISTRATOR & COUNSELOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you tell me about yourself (background and experiences in education)?

2. Tell me about an experience from either your current or a previous campus that describes what a positive school community would look or feel like from a teacher's perceptive.

3. Tell me about an observation you made about the behavior, actions, or reactions of teachers who have participated in the use of restorative practices and/or circles with other teachers. Feel free to use any experiences from either the campus RD training sessions or from any other time during the school year?

4. Have you seen a change among the teachers using RP with each other during either the RP training or during the school year.

5. Describe what you have observed being the most rewarding part for teachers participating in circles with other teachers?

6. Describe what you have observed being most difficult or challenging part for teachers participating in circles with other teachers? How have you observed the teachers handling the difficulty or challenge?

7. Share a story that illustrates the extent to which, from your perspective, the use of circles with other teachers during the school year or the campus RD training has influenced teachers on your campus?

8. Are there any other comments you would like add or share?

APPENDIX C: CAMPUS INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT PLANS

Campus Instructional Improvement Plan: 17-18

Board Goals	Target Areas	Performance Objectives / Strategies	Measurable Evaluation Criteria	Timeline	Responsible Person(s)	Cost / Resources
2, 3, 5	Discipline Management	Improve student discipline, reduce bullying and build community through the implementation of: • Restorative Discipline (RD) training—Tier I-- in August (2 days) for 1st, 3rd, 5th, and specials teachers • Restorative Discipline training—Tier II—in August (1 day) for Kinder, 2nd, and 4th grade teachers who have already completed Tier I training • Restorative practices in Kinder-5th grade (supported by NEISD Restorative Discipline Coordinator) • regular follow-up meetings/training by Restorative Discipline Coordinator for RD grade levels • respect agreements in all K-5th grade classrooms • Foundations positive behavior supports framework • quarterly staff development on behavior interventions and positive behavior supports • a guidance program with anti-bullying lessons • Peer Mediation and Peace Peer Assistance Leadership and Service (PALS) • Leader in Me Framework	Reduce office referrals by 25% 100% of students will participate in anti-bullying programs and practices	August 2017-June 2018	Teachers, Foundations team, Lighthouse Team and Admin	

Campus Instructional Improvement Plan 18-19

Board Goals	Target Areas	Measurable Evaluation Criteria (Summative)	Performance Objectives / Strategies	Formative Check Point(s)	Timeline / Responsible Person(s)	Cost / Resources
2, 3, 5	Discipline Management	Reduce office referrals by 10% 100% of students will participate in anti-bullying programs and practices	Improve student discipline, reduce bullying and build community through the implementation of: • Restorative practices in Kinder-5th grade (supported by NEISD Restorative Discipline Coordinator) • regular follow-up meetings/training by Restorative Discipline Coordinator for all grade levels • respect agreements in all K-5th grade classrooms • Foundations positive behavior supports framework • quarterly staff development on behavior interventions and positive behavior supports • a guidance program with anti-bullying lessons • Peer Mediation and Peace Peer Assistance Leadership and Service (PALS) • Leader in Me Framework	**Check Point** Dec Feb **June Summative**	August 2018 – June 2019 Teachers, Foundations team, Lighthouse Team and Admin	$1000 Local Funds

127

<u>Issues we identified to work on</u>
- Communication

<u>Positive things the team identified in our first circle in October</u>
- The team helped the new teacher on the grade level to successfully integrate into the team
- Team members are open to help each other
- The team is great at sharing with each other
- The team is consistent with its planning
- The team members love when the team is working hard and together as a team

<u>Things that the team wanted to improve from our first circle in October</u>
- We want to be sure that we speak respectfully to each other
- We wanted to be sure that we bring issues to the team rather than to just one or two individuals on the team
- It was important that we value the opinion of others
- We needed to improve how we communicated as a team

<u>Suggestions that were made for how we could improve communication</u>
- When there is an issue, bring it directly to the individual or to the team…no clicks or gossip
- Make decisions together as a "we"
- Be honest to each other and don't assume others know
- Treat each other with respect

<u>Follow-up Circle – 11/9/17</u>
- The team mentioned that they had seen improvement in the team communication and functioning
- The team has had conversations that were good
  - Work still needed to be done to be sure that everyone was being informed about everything that was going on
- We recognized that it was everyone's responsibility to communicate, not just one member of the team
- We decided to presume that other team members were acting with good intentions
- We decided that it was important to have an agenda for each team meeting so that everything was addressed
- We recognized that it was important to extend grace to each other because no one is perfect and we are all doing our best.

Follow-up Circle – 12/13/17
- The team mentioned that things were going well and that grade-level chair was doing a good job with the reminders
- There were improvements in talking about issues as a team
- We were going to add something to the agenda to stop the meeting a few minutes early to be sure that everything had been taken care of
- After the planning was finished, the team was going to ensure that all of the copies were done as a team

Follow-up Circle – 3/8/18
- The team shared some things that the team was doing well:
  - The team does a good job of sharing ideas with each other
  - The team for the most part enjoys each other
  - Everyone on the team loves students, they let each other vent about how their day is going
  - The team does a good job of sharing
  - They can talk to anyone on the team when they need to
- The team asked that I bring up the issue of campus norms with the administrative team
- We discussed team norms
  - There was general agreement that we wanted to look more at the team norms
  - I am going to type them up and send them to the team to look at and make any adjustments/suggestions
  - We will discuss the norms when we get back from spring break

References

Amstutz, L., & Mullet, J. (2014). *The little book of restorative discipline for schools.*
New York, NY: Good Books.

Armour, M. (2013). *Ed White Middle School restorative discipline evaluation:*
Implementation and impact, 2012/2013, sixth grade. Retrieved October 1, 2017,
from https://irjrd.org/restorative-discipline-in-schools/restorative-discipline-
resources

Armour, M. (2016). Restorative practices: Righting the wrongs of exclusionary school
discipline. *University of Richmond Law Review, 50*(3), 999-1037.

Armour, M., & Todic, J. (2016). *Restorative practices at a charter K-3 elementary*
school: First year of implementation. Retrieved October 1, 2017, from
https://irjrd.org/restorative-discipline-in-schools/restorative-discipline-resources

Ary, D., Jacobs, L., Sorensen, C., & Razavieh, A. (2010). *Introduction to research in*
education (8th ed). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Borman, G. D., & Dowling, N. M. (2008). Teacher attrition and retention: A meta-
analytic and narrative review of the research. *Review of Educational Research*,
78(3), 367–409. http://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308321455

Bowen, G. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative*
Research Journal. *9*(2), 27-40.

Boyd, D., Grossman, P., Ing, M., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2011). The

   Influence of school administrators on teacher retention decisions. *American*

   Educational Research Journal, *48*(2), 303-333. doi:10.3102/0002831210380788

Canrinus, E., Helms-Lorenz, M., Beijaard, D., Buitink, J., & Hofman, A., (2012). Self-

   efficacy, job satisfaction, motivation and commitment: Exploring the

   relationships between indicators of teachers' professional identity. *European*

   Journal of Psychology of Education. 27(1) 115-132.

Claassen, R., & Claassen, R. (2008). *Discipline that restores.* North Charleston, SC:

   Booksurge Publishing.

Collins, R. (2004). *Interaction Ritual Chains*, Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Cox, E. (1995). *A Truly Civil Society*. ABC Boyer Lectures. Sydney: ABC Books.

Curry, M. (2008). Critical friends groups: The possibilities and limitations embedded in

   teacher professional communities aimed at instructional improvement and school

   reform. *Teachers College Record*, 110, 733–774.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2015). Self-Determination Theory A2 - Wright, James D. In

   International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences (2nd Edition) (pp.

   486–491). Oxford, England: Elsevier. Retrieved October 1, 2017, from

   http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780080970868260364

Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (2011). *The sage handbook of qualitative research.* Thousand

   Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

Furman, G. C. (1998). Postmodernism and community in schools: Unraveling the

   paradox. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 34(3), 298-328.

Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In Denzin,

    N. & Lincoln, Y. Eds. *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 105-117).

    Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hayes, D. & Signh, A. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry in clinical and educational settings.*

    New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Haynes, M. (2014). On the path to equity: Improving the effectiveness of beginning

    teachers. *Alliance for Excellent Education.* Retrieved July 1, 2016, from

    https://all4ed.org/wp- content/uploads/2014/07/PathToEquity.pdf

Ingersoll, R. (2002). The teacher shortage: A case of wrong diagnosis and wrong

    prescription. *NASSP Bulletin*, *86*(631), 16-31.

Ingersoll, R., & May, H. (2012). The magnitude, destinations and determinations of

    mathematics and science teacher turnover. *Educational Evaluation and Policy*

    Analysis, 34(4), 435-464.

Jason, L.S., Stevens, E., & Ram, D. (2015). Development of a three-factor psychological

    sense of community scale. *Journal of Community Psychology,* 43, 973-985.

Jason, L.A., Stevens, E., Ram, D., Miller, S.A., Beasley, C.R., & Gleason, K. (2016).

    Theories in the field of community psychology. *Global Journal of Community*

    Physiology Practice, 7(2), 1-27.

Kunc, N. (1992). The need to belong: Rediscovering Maslow's hierarchy of needs. In

    Villa, R., Thousand, J., Stainback, W., & Stainback, S. (Eds.) *Restructuring for*

    Caring & Effective Education. Baltimore: Brookes.

Libbey, H. (2004). Measuring student relationships to school: Attachment, bonding,

    connectedness, and engagement. *Journal of School Health, 74*(7), 274-283.

Martinez, A., Valdez, C., & Cariaga, S. (2016). Solidarity with the people: Organizing to

    disrupt teacher alienation. *Equity   & Excellence in Education 49*(3), 300-313.

    doi: 10.1080/10665684.2016.1194104

Maslow, A. (1970). *Motivation and personality*. New York: Harper & Row.

McMillan, D., & Chavis, D. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory.

    Journal of Community Psychology, 14, 6-23.

Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation.* San

    Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Morrison, B. (2005, March 4). Building safe and healthy school communities:

    Restorative Justice and responsive regulation. Retrieved October 28, 2017, from

    https://education.alberta.ca/media/1477190/au05_morrison.pdf

Morrison, B., Blood, P., & Thorsborne, M. (2005). Practicing restorative justice in school

    communities: The challenge of cultural change. Public Organizational Review: A

    Global Journal 5, 335-357.

Neason, A. (2014, July 18). *Half of teachers leave the job after five years. Here's what to

    do about it.* Retrieved October 1, 2017, from http://hechingerreport.org/half-

    teachers-leave-job-five-years-heres/

Ostermann, K. (2000). Students need for belonging in the school community. *Review of

    Educational Research.* 70, 3, 323-367. Retrieved October 1, 2017, from

    http//doi.jstor.org/stable/1170786

Peterson, N. A., Speer, P. W., & McMillan, D. W. (2008). Validation of a brief sense of community scale: Confirmation of the principal theory of sense of community. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 36(1), 61-73.

Pranis, K. (2014). *The little book of circle processes.* New York, NY: Good Books.

Ronfeldt, M., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2013). How teacher turnover harms student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, *50*(1), 4-36.

Sarason, S. B. (1974). *The psychological sense of community; prospects for a community psychology*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Solomon, D., Watson, M., Battistich, V., Schaps, E., & Delucchi, K. (1996). Creating classrooms that students experience as communities. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 24(6), 719-748.

Somers, P. (2016). Intro to qual. Unpublished document. Austin, TX.

Smith, S. (2013, February 19). *In one California school district, teachers help teachers get better*. Retrieved October 1, 2017, from http://hechingerreport.org/in-one-california-school-district-teachers-help-teachers-get-better

Texas Education Agency. (2017). 2016-17 Texas academic performance report. Retrieved from https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/cgi/sas/broker?_service=marykay&_year4=2017&year2=17&_debug=0&single=N&title=2017+Texas+Academic+Performance+Reports&_program=perfrept.perfmast.sas&prgopt=2017%2Ftapr%2Ftapr.sas&ptype=P&level=campus&search=campname&namenum=Harmony+Hills&campus=015910106

Thorsborne, M. (2015). Affect and script psychology in restorative practices, biology, and a theory of motivation. *Theory in Practice: Insights into What Works and Why*. Retrieved from http://ebook,proquest.com/lib/utax/detail.action?docid= 400705.

Thorsborne, M., & Blood, P. (2013). *Implementing restorative practices in schools: A practical guide to transforming school communities.* Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Tran, N. (2014, December 14). *What is self-determination theory of motivation*? [PDF] *Positive Psychology Program*. Retrieved November 15, 2016, from https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/self-determination-theory/

Van Maanen, J. (1979). Reclaiming qualitative methods for organizational research: A preface. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 24*(4), 520-526.

Wang, H., Hall, N, & Rahimi, S. (2015). Self-efficacy and casual attributions in teachers: Effects on burnout, job satisfaction, illness, and quitting intentions. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 47, 120-130.

Woodland, R. (2016). Evaluating PK-12 professional leaning communities: An improvement science perspective. *American Journal of Evaluation,* 37(4), 505-521.

Zhang, G., & Zeller, N. (2016). A longitudinal investigation of the relationship between teacher preparation and teacher retention. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, *43*(2), 73-92.

Zehr, H. (2002). *The little book of restorative justice*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books.