



**Operationalising the notion of a restorative school community:
A case study in a socio-economically deprived area.**

being a thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of

Philosophy

in the University of Hull

by

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September 2020

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible but for the continued and skilful encouragement of my supervisors, Professor Gerry Johnstone and Dr Lisa Jones. Dr Lisa Jones' advice was invaluable in planning and executing the empirical component of my research. She provided patient, generous feedback which greatly enhanced the quality of my thesis. I always looked forward to our conversations regarding the state of education during our supervision meetings. Professor Gerry Johnstone's expertise in the field of restorative justice, and criminal law more widely, has been a huge inspiration to me, professionally and academically. His tutelage and mentorship have made the process an enjoyable and developmental experience. I have had the great fortune of studying with him at undergraduate, masters and now doctoral level and have benefitted greatly at every stage of higher education from his unparalleled wisdom.

I am also indebted to Professor Catherine Montgomery whose advice was instrumental in the early framing of my research and members of the FBLP Postgraduate community at the University of Hull, particularly: Professor Richard Barnes and Professor Mike Whitehouse.

On a personal level, I wish to extend thanks to Jon and Cathy for their friendship, continued belief, and unwavering support. Lynne for her reassurance. To Ray and Shirley for making this possible and Nicola and Matthew for their guidance during my formative years. Also, to Poppy, Ruby, and Isabel as this group would be incomplete without you.

Finally, thank you to Peter and Lorraine, for everything.

Abstract

In recent years, schools have increasingly begun to opt for an alternative to traditional school punishments: restorative practices. As the practices developed, proponents began to posit that to unlock the true potential of restorative approaches, community involvement was key (this mirrors the opinion of those promoting restorative justice in the criminal system).

However, despite this central role for community in the restorative literature, many theorists argue that community involvement is inhibited due to lack of consistent theoretical definition. Additionally, another criticism is that whilst restorative practices are promoted as an effective response to wrongdoing in schools, much of the research has been undertaken in schools where the circumstances are conducive to the deployment of the practices, with amenable staff and a motivated Senior Management Team.

My empirical research deviates from these favourable conditions and instead, was undertaken in a school located on one of the most socio-economically deprived estates in the UK. School leaders reported the significant behavioural and social challenges they faced on a consistent basis. Their decision to implement restorative practices was primarily as a salve to mitigate serious challenge and a self-defined chaotic atmosphere brought about by a comprehensive change of management structure and ethos, high rates of staff turnover and historically high levels of violent, prejudicial and dangerous behaviour of students.

Through intensive participant and non-participant observation and thirty-three semi-structured interviews with participants involved in all aspects of the school (Senior Management, teachers, students and members of the wider community) my research provides an insight into this school's use of restorative practices. What emerges from this research is the narrative of a wider community perceived by some participants to be apathetic and disengaged. It exposes the times where the approach of the school and its community contrasts or conflicts and the external factors that impede the school's ability to utilise restorative approaches. However, this research also indicates the importance of individual relationships of trust between staff and students and how these relationships can exist as a substitute for an absent wider community. It reports the influence and necessity of key school pastoral staff in delivering a small-scale, informal restorative agenda and concludes with the notion that restorative approaches are both feasible and desirable in schools of this type.

Contents

Acknowledgements.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Contents.....	iii
Abbreviations/Glossary.....	viii
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Researcher’s Rationale.....	1
1.2 Research Focus.....	1
1.3 Approaches to Discipline in Schools: Setting the Scene.....	2
1.4 Restorative Approaches in Schools.....	5
1.5 The Evolution of Restorative Practices: Whole School Restorative Approaches.....	6
1.6 The International Development of Restorative Justice.....	7
1.7 Restorative Justice: Applications in Schools	9
1.7.1 Comparing Restorative Approaches and Traditional School Sanctions	9
1.8 The Role of Community.....	10
1.8.1 Community in Restorative Justice	10
1.9 The Focus of This Research	15
1.9.1 Exploring a key theme in the literature.....	15
1.10 The Structure of this Thesis.....	16
Chapter 2 Literature Review: Restorative Justice, Restorative Practices.....	18
2.1 Tracing Restorative Justice Processes.....	21
2.2 Restorative Justice: A Personalised View of Crime?	23
2.3 The Growth and International Position of Restorative Justice.....	23
2.4 Theoretical Criticisms of Restorative Justice	25
2.5 The Development of Restorative Justice (Practices) in Schools.....	27
2.6 An International Overview of Restorative Practices	30
2.7 Comparing Restorative Justice and Restorative Practice.....	31
2.8 Criticisms of Restorative Practices in Schools.....	32
Chapter 3 Literature Review: The Restorative Community	34

3.1	The General Rationale for Community Inclusion in Restorative Justice.....	34
3.2	Defining Community.....	36
3.2.1	General Community Definitions	37
3.2.2	Communities of Care and the Geographic Community	37
3.3	Defining the Restorative School Community	40
3.3.1	Whole-School Definitions of Restorative Community.....	40
3.3.2	Individualised School Community Definitions.....	41
3.4	Theoretical Views of Community.....	42
3.5	An Alternative View of Community: Community as Networks?.....	45
3.6	Virtual Communities.....	49
3.7	The Theoretical Benefits of Community Involvement	50
3.8	Disadvantages of Community Involvement	54
3.9	Defining Community in This Study	56
Chapter 4	Research Design and Methodology	58
4.1	Qualitative Research.....	59
4.2	Theoretical Underpinnings/Epistemology	62
4.3	Case Study Research.....	63
4.4	Methods	65
4.4.1	Interviews.....	65
4.4.2	Observation	68
4.4.3	Participant Observation.....	69
4.4.4	Non-Participant Observation	71
4.5	Choosing the Site.....	72
4.6	Access/Gatekeepers	73
4.7	Participant Selection/Sampling.....	74
4.7.1	Interviews.....	74
4.7.2	Purposive Sampling within the Strata	76
4.7.3	Observation Sampling.....	77
4.8	Saturation.....	77

4.9	Data Collection	78
4.9.1	Interviews and Questions	78
4.9.2	Participant Observations	80
4.9.3	Non-Participant Observation	81
4.10	Research Positionality	81
4.11	Data Analysis and Interpretation	82
4.12	Trustworthiness/Validity	85
4.13	Ethics	86
4.13.1	Consent	86
4.13.2	Transparency	88
4.13.3	Right to Withdraw	88
4.13.4	Harm to Participants.....	88
4.13.5	Professional Issues for Staff Participants	88
4.13.6	Time.....	89
4.13.7	Privacy	89
4.13.8	Data Storage.....	89
4.13.9	Safeguarding the Researcher.....	90
Chapter 5 Findings: Tracing the Development of Pioneer Academy: Context and Challenge		91
5.1	Geographic Location and Socio-Economic Status	94
5.2	Post 2014 – Transition: Becoming Pioneer Academy.....	95
5.3	2014 – 15: Post-Takeover – Context and Challenges:	96
5.3.1	The Initial Challenges: Ethos change and Behavioural Issues	96
5.3.2	A Focus on Socio-Economic Deprivation	99
5.3.3	The School Culture versus the Estate Culture	101
5.4	The Initial Desire to Implement Restorative Practices	104
5.4.1	Models of Implementation and Initial Practical Restorative Approaches at Pioneer	106
Chapter 6 Findings: Community, Relationships, and Barriers.....		109
6.1	How Participants Define their ‘Restorative Community’	109

6.1.1	A Lack of Defined Community?	109
6.1.2	The Perceived Importance of Relationships.....	114
6.2	Why Involve the Restorative Community?	118
6.2.1	Community as a Tool to Engage Important Stakeholders.....	118
6.2.2	Empowering the Internal Community.....	121
6.2.3	Managing Behaviour	126
6.3	The Practical Involvement of the Restorative Community	129
6.3.1	The Informal Role of the Restorative Community.	129
6.3.2	Community Involvement in Formal Restorative Practices	131
6.4	Exploring the Benefits of the Restorative Community.....	135
6.4.1	Does the Restorative Community improve the behaviour of students?.....	136
6.4.2	Building Trust	138
6.4.3	The use of Restorative Practices as a Diversionary Tool	141
6.5	Exploring the Barriers to Community Involvement.....	145
6.5.1	Apathy.....	146
6.5.2	Suspicion	150
6.5.3	Practical Impediments to Engagement	152
6.5.4	Disadvantages of Community Engagement	153
6.5.5	Student Perceptions of Restorative Practices	156
6.5.6	External Pressures.....	157
6.6	Restorative Practices and Community: Fragmented and Ambiguous?.....	158
Chapter 7 Discussion: The Definition of and Barriers to Community at Pioneer Academy		159
7.1	Understanding the Pioneer Academy Community	159
7.1.1	Is There a Right way to Implement Restorative Practices?.....	163
7.1.2	Can ‘Whole School’ Ever Be Achieved, is it as important as the literature would have us believe?.....	168
7.2	What is the theoretical rationale for the inclusion of the ‘restorative community’?.....	169
7.2.1	Changing Behaviour	170
7.2.2	Meeting Student’s Additional Needs	171

7.2.3	Inclusion of the Secondary Stakeholders	173
7.3	The Practical Involvement of the Restorative Community	176
7.4	The Benefits of Involving the Restorative Community.....	178
7.5	The Challenges to Operationalising Community in the School	181
7.5.1	Barriers to Inclusion	182
7.6	Summary	195
Chapter 8 Conclusions: The importance of relationships and the impact of an absent		
community.....		
		197
8.1	Communities and Relationships.....	198
8.2	Rationale and Role of the Community	202
8.3	Barriers.....	203
8.4	Practical Applications.....	206
8.5	Contribution to Knowledge.....	207
8.6	The Feasibility and Desirability of Restorative Approaches in Schools	209
8.6.1	Exploring Early Perceptions of Restorative Practices against the Outcomes of my Study	209
8.6.2	Feasibility and Desirability of Restorative Approaches in Schools: Generally...	211
8.7	Limitations of the Research	213
8.8	Opportunities for Further Research.....	213
Reference list / Bibliography.....		215
Appendix 1 Staff/Student Interview Participants: Roles and Responsibilities		I
Appendix 2 Information Sheet For Parents.....		VII
Appendix 3 Parental Consent Letter		IX
Appendix 4 Semi-Structured Questions: Staff		XI
Appendix 5 Information Sheet: Students.....		XIII
Appendix 6 Semi-Structured Questions: Students.....		XV
Appendix 7 Ethical Approval		XVI
Appendix 8 Types of Restorative Process		XVII

Abbreviations/Glossary

ATL – Association of Teachers and Lecturers: This ATL was a trade union, primarily concerned with the rights of teachers in education. In 2017 they merged with another large education trade union, the National Union of Teachers to form the National Education Union.

DFE – Department for Education: This is a department for the government which is responsible for child protection and education. They put forward policy and legislation relating to schools and the education system in England.

DFES – Department for Education and Skills: The Department for Education is responsible for children’s services and education, including early years, schools, higher and further education policy, apprenticeships, and wider skills in England.

FGC – Family Group Conference: A formal restorative process which will usually involve the victim, offender, and members of the wider community. The process is often used to foster reconciliation and restoration of all participants.

FRP – Full Restorative Practice: Pioneer Academy’s variation on the restorative Family Group Conference

FSM – Free School Meals: Students may receive free or subsidised school meals if they meet specific criterion. Free School Meals are used as a mechanism to measure economic deprivation within school localities.

GCSE – General Certificate in Secondary Education: These are end of stage examinations taken by 15 – 16-year-old students confirming the end of their mandated period of education.

Whilst the end of mandatory education, training or employment in the UK was recently raised to 18 years old, GCSEs are taken by every student who attends secondary education in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

NEET – Not in education, employment, or training.

OFSTED – The Office for Standards in Education: This is a non-ministerial branch of the UK government which reports to Parliament. They undertake inspections of schools and set standards for education which schools are expected to adhere to.

PCSO – Police Community Support Officer: A member of the police force who do not have the same powers of arrest or detention as those with full police officer status. PCSOs often provide community support to specific areas and do outreach work in schools.

PHSE – Personal, Health and Social Education: Is a planned programme of learning with the purpose of nurturing students’ social and moral comprehension.

VOM – Victim Offender Mediation: A restorative process in which the victim and the person who harmed them will meet to discuss a programme of restoration.

Chapter 1 Introduction

This thesis will explore a novel approach some schools are adopting to tackle disruptive behaviour and to promote a positive ethos amongst school members and the school's wider community: a restorative approach. The study will look at how one secondary school in an area that suffers high rates of socio-economic deprivation adopted and employed restorative practices with a specific focus on the theme of community. The following chapter will set out the context of this study, tracing the emergence of restorative justice. It will examine traditional responses to disruptive behaviour, the development of restorative practices as an alternative to the traditional responses, before concluding with a concise summary of the purpose of this research.

1.1 Researcher's Rationale

My desire to undertake this research is motivated by two things. The first is my professional role: I am employed as a member of the Senior Management Team and a teacher at a school which shares a number of similarities with my research school. It has high rates of socio-economic poverty, problems with behaviour management and external pressures which influence in-school practice. I have experience of different educational institutions (as an employee and a student), therefore I am aware that schools are unique entities which may react differently to any attempt to introduce novel practices or processes.

The second motivating factor is my master's degree dissertation, a mixed-method empirical study into general perceptions of restorative justice amongst secondary school students. Whilst undertaking that research, I began to form the foundations of this research. I noted that, often, when I was examining and exploring the literature of restorative practices in schools, much of the practical investigation done to that point focussed on schools with favourable conditions for implementation. Also, several advocates for restorative justice were promoting the notion that these approaches could be utilised in all types of schools. Consequently, an exploration of restorative practices, particularly the notion of community, in a secondary school which did not necessarily possess the same advantageous infrastructure as those researched so far, was something I felt deserved examination and was something that would offer a novel contribution to our understanding of restorative practices.

1.2 Research Focus

To explore restorative practices and community as perceived by school stakeholders, I am guided by the following research questions:

1. How is the restorative community defined in the secondary school setting?

2. What is the rationale for the inclusion of the restorative community?
3. How is the restorative community involved practically, what role does it undertake?
4. What impact does the involvement of the restorative community have, are there any benefits?
5. What are the challenges or drawbacks in involving the restorative community in the school?

1.3 Approaches to Discipline in Schools: Setting the Scene

Tackling the disruptive behaviour of students is a problem faced by all schools. In 2013 a report by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL, 2013) on the impact of bad behaviour found that 62% of their 844 members felt that they encountered increased emotional, mental and behavioural issues and that these issues impacted negatively on the teacher's work. The same year, a report by Weaving and Aston (2013) supported these findings, noting that bad behaviour of students was on the increase and posed a substantial disruptive impact on schooling and, subsequently, student achievement. These studies are reinforced by findings from the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) (the education inspectorate and quality assurer in the United Kingdom) who found that pupils were missing out on the equivalent of 30 days teaching a year due to disruptive behaviour in the classroom (OFSTED, 2016). Alongside the academic impact of bad behaviour, studies have shown that negative behaviour in the classroom has a causal impact on student's mental health and well-being (Chamberlain et al., 2010; Green et al., 2010; Hoare et al., 2011). Over a quarter of students have experienced bullying and disrupted learning due to the behaviour of others (DFES, 2003; OFSTED, 2006), similar statistics have been identified in other countries (Artinopoulou, 2010b).

Bad behaviour in schools is not a novel issue. Successive UK governments have all attempted to implement educational changes in order to mitigate its impact, compelled by statistics, research and public opinion. Moser (1994) stated that hundreds of thousands of young people in Britain are disadvantaged for life due to their unacceptable educational experiences (he refers to the disruption of student's education through the misbehaviour of other students which has a negative impact on their ability to achieve). In 2010 David Cameron, the then Prime Minister of the United Kingdom admitted that 17,000 assaults on teachers represented a 'regrettably typical year' (Cameron, 2010). The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) found that, globally, disruptive pupil behaviour in classrooms was the factor most cited by Head Teachers as their primary cause for concern (TIMSS, 2016).

The modern understanding of the term bad behaviour can encompass a spectrum of meaning, depending on one's location or subjective interpretation. Bennet (2012) defines bad behaviour, generally, as 'behaviour that is distracting to oneself or to others, or the teacher. Ranging from insulting behaviour to that which endangers the safety of those around us' (2012: 22). Conversely, he describes good behaviour not as the absence of bad behaviour, but instead, as 'aiming towards student's flourishing as scholars and human beings' (2012: 23). Williams (2018) offers specific examples of bad behaviour. Over 90% of her research population (consisting of teachers and parents of school children) identified bad behaviour as: 'taking drugs, physically attacking a teacher, smoking or drinking and physically attacking another pupil' (2018: 19). Williams stratifies types of behaviour on grounds of seriousness and the disruption that the behaviour causes. In her view, examples of serious behaviour constitute conduct such as mocking other students and teachers, vandalism, truanting and swearing. In her opinion, less serious (or low-level) disruptive behaviour includes things such as: arriving late for lessons, leaving lessons without permission, talking over a teacher, chewing gum, listening to music, or using a phone and non-completion of work (Artinopoulou, 2007).

Traditionally, schools possessed a range of responses to bad behaviour. Travers (1980) documents the violent history of corporal punishment in schools. In Victorian schools several tools were employed to promote good behaviour. Travers notes the more extreme examples of these: the cane, leather belts and in one specific instance, overnight imprisonment in gibbet-style hanging cages used to quell the recalcitrance of Lancastrian school-goers. Throughout the early to mid-1900s we see similar instances of corporal punishment being exacted upon students in schools, caning or being hit with a slipper were included amongst the menagerie of punitive responses employed by teachers during this period (Cubberley, 1919; Johnson, 1925; Good, 1956). Practices such as these were outlawed in the UK in provisions under the Education Act 1986 (this legislation was heavily influenced by a decision in the European Court of Human Rights, decided four years before the implementation of the act). The effect of the decision, and subsequent legislation was that corporal punishment should only be used when parental consent had been sought. This initial prohibition only extended to state-schools until 1999 when an amendment to the School and Standards Framework Bill enacted a blanket ban on all forms of corporal punishment in all schools in the UK. The Liberal Democrat Education Spokesman, Don Foster noted 'it is clear that corporal punishment is something wrong in principle, it is barbaric and inhumane' (BBC, 1998).

However, since the abolition of corporal punishment in schools, its potential reintroduction has featured frequently in the news. In 2008 a piece of research done by the Times Educational Supplement (TES) found that of the 6,112 teachers they questioned, 22% of

secondary school teachers favoured its reinstatement. When questioned, those in favour of the reintroduction justified their view on the deterrent effect that, they argued, came with the threat of corporal punishment and, conversely, the disempowerment they felt by not having it as part of their behavioural toolkit (Bloom, 2008). Despite a subsequent resurgence of the discussion during the EU referendum (TES, 2017) the abolition of corporal punishment looks to be secured, for now.

In the absence of physical punishment, schools are directed to the government-signposted array of sanctions as identified on the Department for Education (DFE) website. The DFE sets out the responses which schools may utilise when students do not follow the rules (in order of severity from least to most serious): ‘a telling-off, a letter home, removal from a class or group, confiscating something inappropriate for school e.g., a mobile phone or MP3 player, or detentions’ (DFE, 2019). In addition, the guidance gives schoolteachers the powers to use reasonable force in restraining pupils who may be a danger to themselves or others. For the most serious incidents and breaches of appropriate conduct, schools have the power to exclude students. This can be done on either a fixed-term basis (usually a week or fortnight) or, permanently. Permanent exclusions are usually the result of drug-taking, racist abuse, or substantial violent episodes (DFE, 2019). Schools are left to decide at which point they would institute punishments and the types of behaviours which it would qualify. The Government expects each school to produce a ‘Behaviour Policy’ which would inform important stakeholders of the school’s expectations and the consequences for rule breaking.

However, despite these instructions offered by the government, schools still struggle with managing poor behaviour (The Conversation, 2016; Unison, 2016; Independent, 2018; Williams, 2018). Schools began to look outward and over the past ten years there has been a substantial growth in behavioural gurus and professional development packages advertised as the solution to tackling bad behaviour in schools.

The use of behavioural experts has grown, particularly over the last five years. In 2015, a small group of Headteachers obtained government legitimacy when they were instructed (by then) School Minister, Nick Gibb to train teachers to ‘tackle poor behaviour’. This group of behavioural experts was led by DFE behaviour adviser, Tom Bennet. The Minister’s programme promised to empower teachers to regulate their classrooms, employ research-driven processes which would reduce poor behaviour and lead to a higher standard of education in the country (Schools Week, 2015). Whilst the efficacy of this initiative is uncertain, experts were in the headlines once again in February 2020 when Schools Minister Gavin Williamson appointed a new set of behaviour gurus, again led by Tom Bennet and

supported by a 10-million-pound funding package. The remit of the group was to instruct small groups of hub schools to 'curb unruly behaviour and prevent disruption in the classroom' (TES, 2020). This initiative was supported by teachers' unions including the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT), the second largest teaching union in the country. The acting Chief Secretary, Chris Keates said: 'utilising experts may ensure that schools can identify ways to support each other, maintaining and improving pupil discipline' (DFE, 2020).

In addition to the number of individual experts offering their services to improve pupil behaviour in schools, organisations have emerged which offer training packages to meet the same goal. Those schools who deem it necessary can now purchase bespoke training programmes advertised as solutions to poorly behaving students. The TES Institute offer a continued professional development programme with a 10-hour total completion time for school leaders, they promise that by the end of the programme teachers will gain confidence to tackle some of the most common problems, including lateness, low-level disruption and major confrontations (TES Institute, 2019). Parkes Education, another package provider, advertises programmes of varying lengths and intensity. The packages range from short one-hour post-school training sessions to intensive full-day staff training programmes (Parkes Education, 2019).

These packages promise a solution to the problems that schools report they are facing with students who do not adhere to the rules. The packages identified above seek to maximise the efficacy of the sanctions stipulated by the DFE: removal from class, detentions, and exclusions. In the TES package, notable modules include 'maximising deterrents and rewards, implementing consequences and sanctions and using sanctions to best effect' (TES Institute, 2019).

1.4 Restorative Approaches in Schools

In recent years schools have increasingly begun to opt for a new approach to behaviour management (Hopkins, 2004; Guardian, 2017). This new approach involves a restorative approach to disciplinary problems in schools. Promoted as an alternative to the proliferation of policies and practices recommending punitive responses to student misconduct (Sellman, Cremin, McCluskey, 2014) restorative practices have been increasingly employed by schools, particularly over the past ten years (DFE, 2015). Whilst there may be no overarching definition of what constitutes a restorative practice (Fronius, et al., 2017) there are various themes which are representative of the type of practice which would come under the banner head 'restorative'. Passarella (2017) notes that restorative practices usually include ongoing

communication across the school and that there are opportunities to produce accountability, community safety, reductions of school and police contact with students and a reversal of the negative effects of traditional school discipline (Ashley and Burke, 2009; Petrosino, Gukenburg and Fronius, 2012; Rumberger and Losen, 2017).

A straighter forward definition is offered by Morrison (2013) who states the purpose of restorative practices is to bring together young people in conflict and resolve the dispute. She states that by bringing young people together to address the roots of the harm, usually through a process of mediation whereby each participant looks at the cause of the disruptive behaviour and the associated harms created by it, restorative practice affords everyone involved the opportunity to look at who has been affected, who is obliged to make amends and how those involved may contribute to the reparation (Cremin, 2007; McCluskey et al., 2008; Hendry, 2009; Sellman, 2011). Restorative approaches can also refer to a system of responses to disruptive behaviour that can be employed by schools to avoid or ameliorate instances which damage relationships between students at the school, for example, they have been used to alleviate bullying, racially motivated violence and other forms of disruptive behaviour. There is also an emphasis on positive relationships amongst all members of the school community.

Another benefit of the process is described by Vaandering: restorative practices as giving participants an opportunity to look at who has been harmed and what can be done to make it right (Vaandering, 2010; Morrison and Vaandering, 2012). A common theme, shared in these definitions, is the role for the wider community, the focus of which will be a central aspect of this research.

1.5 The Evolution of Restorative Practices: Whole School Restorative Approaches

As the theory of restorative practice developed practitioners and scholars began to articulate how restorative practices could and should be integrated into the day-to-day processes of the whole school. It was proposed that the ethos of the entire school should be based on restorative processes. This position stated by Hopkins (2004) requires the cooperation of the whole-school community. In 2004 Hopkins theorised on the potential of a 'whole-school' approach to restorative practice. She recognised that this would require an institutional shift that should be more gradual than revolutionary (Mahaffey and Newton, 2008) but that such a shift was justified and necessary to unlock the potential of restorative approaches. She argued that teachers should be trained to participate in restorative conversations with students and

school leaders should develop and implement an ethos that promotes values of respect, empowerment, tolerance, integrity, and congruence (Hopkins, 2004).

A whole-school community approach can include preventative and reactive strategies to conflict (Kane et al., 2009) that prioritise inclusion and application of the core restorative principles such as ensuring the involvement of all harmed parties, consultation and meeting the needs of everyone impacted. One difference between a whole-school theory of restorative practice and the others advocated for in the literature is that every school member should be involved in the practice.

Since the introduction of this theory, several studies have taken place which support Hopkins' initial assertions that a whole-school approach is the most effective form of restorative practices in schools. Research done by Cameron and Thorsborne (2001) found that a whole-school approach can improve the atmosphere in schools and create a more positive, inclusive, and harmonious school community. Their respondents felt that the process of consultation ensured a cohesive community and better relationships with teachers and other students. Macready (2009) stated that by involving all members of the school community you can create general learning opportunities for all students, giving students a chance to reflect on their behaviour, problem solve, correct mistakes and consider alternative behaviours which may be more appropriate in the future. Morrison (2002) supports this notion, she observes that whole-school restorative practices allow the incorporation of a sense of accountability and the chance to learn and reflect. Wachtel and McCold (2003) remark that a whole-school approach to restorative practices can allow schools and students to build foundations of acceptable behaviour that create respectful cultures and a system of fair-process and procedural clarity.

In addition to the constructive attributes of a whole-school approach, Elliot (2011) focusses on the relational benefits. He remarks that through adopting a whole-school ethos a school can move from being rule-based to relationship based. Consequently, they can prevent conflicts from occurring between students and staff proactively (Hopkins, 2004; Bitel, 2005; Mahaffey and Newton, 2008).

1.6 The International Development of Restorative Justice

Restorative justice programmes now exist internationally, and, as we have seen with the experience in the United Kingdom, these processes which exist in the criminal justice system are beginning to cross-pollinate into the education system.

There are instances of restorative justice practices taking place on nearly every continent. These processes have been granted legitimacy through promotion by supra-national bodies.

During the Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, the Vienna Declaration on Crime and Justice: Meeting the Challenges of the Twenty First Century (2000) encouraged the use of restorative justice programmes to meet the needs of victims, offenders, communities and all of the parties, amongst the member states (Vienna Declaration on Crime and Justice, 2000).

Following this, in 2002 the UN Economic and Social Council proposed a resolution with the intention that member states would begin to implement restorative justice programmes which draw from the set of Basic Principles in the Use of Restorative Justice in Criminal Matters (Sia, 2015). In addition to this, in 2005 the Eleventh UN Council encouraged member states to further develop policies and guidelines promoting the use of restorative practices.

In terms of practices taking place in individual countries, there are restorative peer mediation programmes taking place in Uganda, Barangay community peace-keeping committees in the Philippines which undertake restorative-themed conflict resolution schemes primarily aimed at neighbour disputes. The Czech Republic has a number of pro-social, pre-trial processes aimed at resolving crime related conflict. In Canada, sentencing circles inspired by aboriginal practices have replaced some court processes for certain minor offences, for example, vandalism, minor theft, and inter-community conflict. Certain South African communities employ local knowledge of disputants to undertake peace keeping programmes (there are some examples of this in Zwelethemba), in addition to this, the Ubuntu courts (such as the Gacaca tribunals in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide) are informed by traditional restorative approaches. The USA has an ever-increasing number of restorative justice programmes such as those in Pennsylvania, Minnesota, and Montana. The programmes primarily focus on crime diversion and draw on the capital of the community to undertake semi-formal conferencing and mediation with a focus on the impact of low-level criminal offences.

The website: RestorativeJustice¹ catalogues and tracks international examples of restorative justice initiatives. According to the site, there are restorative child welfare programmes operating in the Middle East, indigenous restorative operations in the Pacific (these are primarily focussed on managing in-school conflict). In the USA, First Nation restorative programmes act as an alternative to the traditional court processes. There are various inner-community conflict solutions in Latin America as a response to gang warfare and substantial

¹ www.restorativejustice.org

inter-community violence. Juvenile justice programmes in Asia, prison diversion restorative programmes in Africa to tackle prison overcrowding and government initiated restorative initiatives in Northern Ireland and Eastern Europe (Restorativejustice.org, 2013).

The proliferation of restorative justice programmes taking root on an international scale has led to a development of similar practices in schools. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Asia Pacific Network for International Education and Values Education (APNIEVE) through the Victorian Association for Restorative Justice and the Association of School's Councils in Victoria has been promoting the usage and transference of restorative justice practices in Australian classrooms. In Brazil, the UNESCO office Brasilia is advancing youth restorative justice programmes in schools with a view to preventing the criminalisation of South American students and involvement in community violence. The UNESCO Associated Schools Programme (ASPNet) encourages restorative practices programmes in schools on a global scale.

Morrison (2000) writes that restorative conferencing is being deployed extensively in schools in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the US, the UK, and other parts of Western and Central Europe. There are even some pilot programmes in South East Asia. She also concedes that there are probably more that are not even being tracked, as is the informal nature of many of these practices.

1.7 Restorative Justice: Applications in Schools

1.7.1 Comparing Restorative Approaches and Traditional School Sanctions

Advocates of restorative practices often explore the distinctions between restorative approaches and traditional school sanctions. Hendry (2009) states that one value of restorative approaches is that they enable relationship building between: students and other students, and students and teachers. According to Hendry, these positive relationships cannot be as easily encouraged in schools that exist with a climate of rules, sanctions, and rewards.

Another divergence between restorative practices and traditional sanctions is articulated by Costello, Wachtel and Wachtel (2009) who refer to the reparative and proactive attributes of restorative approaches. They state that traditional sanctions do little-else than punish the surface behaviour of students. Restorative practices allow for an exploration of, and remedy for, factors behind the behaviour.

Skinns (2009) notes the democratising function of restorative practices. He states that students may feel empowered and engaged as they are given a voice and can contribute to restorative practices, where they are often bystanders in traditional processes. He recognises

the lasting impact that this can have and argues that by participating in the processes students and teachers gain the ability to manage any future issues that may occur, they may no longer need to rely on the arbitrary punishments meted out by authority, which, he posits, pursue conformity over resolution. He argues that schools do not employ traditional sanctions because they work, but simply because they represent a customary way of approaching bad behaviour, he sees them as an easy way out. Detentions, he reflects, do little else than teach students that they should wish to avoid future detentions, they do not teach students the value of their conduct or the impact of their behaviour.

Another difference between traditional sanctions and restorative practices is the role and participation of the community. This is seen by some to be of central importance to the restorative discourse, as Sawin and Zehr note: 'most restorative justice advocates see some role for the community in the process (2007:51).

1.8 The Role of Community

1.8.1 Community in Restorative Justice

The role of the community was first explored in the field of restorative justice (the precursor to restorative practices that explores an alternative response to criminal wrongdoing). Howard Zehr, the grandfather of restorative justice professed a simple justification for the role of community in restorative processes, noting that crime is a violation of people and relationships between community members (Zehr, 1990). This departs from the normative understanding of crime where illegitimate behaviour is seen as an action against the state, rather than the victim (Harris, 1991). McCold (1995) supports Zehr's proposition - he recognises that crime impacts the community, family members and even the family members of the victim who all have needs directly related to the crime. Walgrave (2003) concurs: 'a community is more directly victimised by a crime than is the state', (2003: 322).

The empowerment and operationalisation of the community is a central theme in restorative justice (Zehr, 1990). This theoretical position is justified on the notion that if conflict is born within the community, that it would be pragmatic to return the conflict to the community as they/it would have the necessary capital with which to respond to it. If we are to assume, as Walgrave (2003) does, that community is a place of commonality with shared understanding and customs, then the community may provide an appropriate context where a victim and offender can meet to solve their needs.

However, it is stated that community should not only be an entity with the power to impact restorative processes beneficially. It may also be the case that communities can derive a

benefit from involvement in restorative practice. Cayley (1998) states that community involvement in conflict can ensure that offenders are less dangerous, money-sapping criminal justice processes can be avoided. Those funds can be directed to more constructive projects and restorative processes can encourage communities to come closer together (1998:188).

Perhaps the most convincing argument in favour of community involvement (or at least state exclusion) in the criminal justice process is articulated by Nils Christie. Christie re envisions conflicts that may occur between people or communities, as property. He states that those involved in conflict are barred from obtaining various beneficial opportunities by the state-ownership of conflict. The professionalisation of conflict by state agencies means victims and offenders and their wider community lose opportunities for activity and involvement, opportunities for norm clarification and lastly, the opportunity to challenge misconceptions. By intervening and stealing conflict the state moratorium on conflict excludes individuals from matters that of 'immediate importance to them' (Christie, 2003: 39), not only do they reduce the opportunity for involvement, but they also inflict a double harm on victims, who have suffered an injury and are then excluded from participating in their own resolution. The second opportunity, that of norm-clarification, is stolen as the state sets the agenda regarding what is relevant in a case, Christie argues that this is to the detriment of the process and its participants. Finally, in his discussion of challenging misconceptions, Christie argues that the state does not afford offenders the opportunity to explain their actions, nor does it afford victims to report their harm. It grants those affected no chance to ask why them? A question Christie sees as imperative to the satisfaction of victims in the justice process.

The community plays an equally important role in restorative practices in schools. Noddings (2015) argues that we should not see schools as a production line of workers for society – their function is more integral than that. She notes that outside of the family, children will spend most of their time at school and therefore, the school needs to be a centre of 'stability, continuity and community'. Pranis and Boyes-Watson (2015) expand on this idea, noting that schools can be seen as societies in microcosm, not only having their own internal set of community norms but also acting as an important hub of community within their own geographic wider-communities.

Persisting with this theme of schools as micro communities, Carruthers (2013) reflects on the similarity of the punitive structures that exist within the criminal justice system and how a school responds to wrongdoing. He states that both, traditionally, operate a deterrence-based, punitive approach to wrongdoing and both neglect the involvement of their wider community in the pursuance of the authoritarian punitive dynamic. As a result, Morrison (202)

argues that the same criticisms of stolen conflict levelled at the criminal justice system have applicability to schools.

Pranis (2013) comments that it is important that if there is conflict in schools, the response must include the wider-school community, particularly those who feel unjustly treated, or impacted by the wrongdoing. She states that only by involving those who feel impacted by an event or issue will we repair and return to positive relationships amongst all school community members. Therefore, punishments that exclude all but those directly affected do little to solve the community impact that wrongdoing can have. Pranis and Boyes-Watson (2015) state that community involvement in schools is perhaps even more important than in the criminal justice system. This is because, unlike in the criminal justice system, where a victim and offender may only encounter each other in the formal criminal process, the students involved in conflict may have to return to class the next day and sit next to each other. Therefore, if these students, or their friends in the class, do not believe in, or feel involved in the resolution of any conflict there is no way there can be a return to a positive and healthy school culture (2015: 756).

The prominence placed on the role of the community in restorative paradigms by theorists such as Christie (1977), Braithwaite (2002) and others naturally leads to some interesting questions. Earlier in the chapter we explored the question: why community? However, there are still several questions left unanswered. For example: who is the restorative community and how are the community boundaries drawn? What are the needs of the community and what expectations and responsibilities do restorative practices impose upon it? Lastly, what might the potential drawbacks of community involvement be? Restorative theorists and practitioners spend a substantial amount of time extolling the benefits of community involvement often without recourse to any potentially negative aspects.

Whilst these questions will be explored later in the thesis in greater detail, for clarity, a short overview is merited. When trying to establish a definition of community in restorative justice, we are confronted with an abundance of varying perspectives. Harris (1989) recognised the need for a working definition of community which practitioners could draw from. The definitions that we will explore range from precise and articulated views of community to theoretical or subjective perspectives. This variance can be seen in the contrasting views of Mika (1992) who states that community should be defined according to the geographic group in which a person lives and or works, the spatial boundaries which people are located ensure a tight community of concern, specialised knowledge and effective support mechanisms for restorative practices. Whereas Peachey (1992) proposed that community should be defined by looking at who has experienced the conflict. He commented that there is no a priori

definition of a restorative community, instead, the community involved should be based on certain factors. Examples of these are, in his opinion: the level of harm done, the relationship between the disputants, the aggregation represented, and that in each instance of conflict, the community response and involvement should be proportionate to the level of harm that occurred.

Schiff (2003) offers an alternative definition stating that in the restorative paradigm the community is anyone who feels connected emotionally, physically or in other ways to the victim(s), offender(s), or the event itself. McCold (1995) refers to another potential definition of a restorative community. This is taken from the Random House College Dictionary (Stein, 1979) which states that a community is a social group of any size whose members reside in a specific location, share government and have a common cultural and historic heritage (this idea of cultural heritage is compatible with the work of O'Mahony and Doak (2017) who state that community responses to crime draw from indigenous, traditional practices). McCold supports his more general assertions on community by noting that there is also a variance of community that includes those people who individuals form a personal connection with (Braithwaite (2002) would refer to this as the community of care). McCold (2004) recognises this as a type of local, informal community, but one that is very important to relational potential of restorative justice.

Where some restorative scholars attempt to define community, others focus on the problems associated with defining community. Stark (1987) states that the lack of a working definition of community could be a causal factor in increasing criminal conflict. Christie (1977) refers to the problem of killed communities and neighbourhoods from which there is no community capital to draw from (Green, 2014). Lastly, Braithwaite (2002) a prominent writer on the reintegrative potential of community, comments on the lack of a traditional, affirming and controlling geographic community which has been fragmented due to the impact of globalisation and the fact that individuals no longer need to be tethered to the place they were born.

The second question of community looks at the needs and responsibilities of the community to and from its members. Firstly, it is important to focus on the needs that the community may have. Mackey (1990) and Zehr (1990) both state that a community needs safety. Knopp (1992) expands on this idea, noting that it is important that the community is perceived as being safe as an entity, but also that individuals within the community feel safe. Gehm (1992) argues that one way to encourage the feeling of community safety is to involve them in anything that may disrupt their feeling of safety. Gehm (1994) builds on this idea, noting that

safety is derived from empowerment and encouraging community members to take 'responsibility for their own regulation' (1994: 4-5). Cordella (1991) summarises the needs of community, stating that when conflict occurs within a community, all community members require reconciliation and that if there is no reconciliation, there is alienation of community members and alienation does not resolve conflict, it simply hides it.

In terms of responsibility McCold (1995) argues that restorative practices impose responsibility on the community to share responsibility for providing restoration. Instead of investing the obligation to a vicarious agency such as the criminal justice system, the community should be charged with the resolution of their own issues. Moore (1994) states that if a community wants a perpetrator to behave better, they shoulder the responsibility for enabling them to behave better. Marshall (1992) supports these ideas, he notes that when a community can aid in the restoration of those in conflict it is to everyone's benefit that they do so as they are best placed to provide a platform for reconciliation and restoration. This reintegrative notion of community is famously articulated by Braithwaite (2002).

Lastly, Mika (1992) a prolific writer on the topic argues that the community has an obligation to use restorative practices as an educational tool. The community should look to reaffirm the importance of individual members and the role that they have in ensuring the holistic development of the community through their positive actions (Prothrow-Stith, 1991).

In summary, Mackey (1994) states that to ensure the safety of community members, the community must utilise its resources, both cultural and material to enhance the position of individuals within the community and take care of them. Harris states that the community responsibility for restoration is a job for all community members (Harris, 1991:93).

We should also explore some of the potential disadvantages in involving the restorative community. Daly (2005) argues that the restorative community is no longer impactful due to a change in social practices and looser social bonds. She purports that meso-social forces that were operative social controllers in pre-modern societies are no longer as effective in modern societies. As a result, the blanket delivery of restorative justice is only ever likely to achieve modest or patchy results in today's society (Bottoms, 2003).

She also argues that informal community justice can lead to uncertainty or procedural unfairness for community members. Citing Daly (2003) she notes that participants in the criminal justice system will understand their role in the criminal justice system. However, those involved in informal restorative processes may be the victim of a number of things:

varying degrees of competency in convening restorative processes, arbitrariness, capriciousness and ineptitude to name but a few (2003: 10).

Willis (2016) argues that restorative practices reinforce inequality and doubly victimise participants. According to Sen (2006), not all communities are egalitarian entities where all members enjoy the same status. Research shows that there is a wide variance in access to power and resources within the community, therefore, if these differences are not managed effectively or sensitively the communities may become reinforcers of unfair power, not conduits for resolution of conflict.

1.9 The Focus of This Research

1.9.1 Exploring a key theme in the literature

As O'Mahony and Doak (2017) state 'one of the challenges for restorative justice concerns how to operationalise the vexed notion of community in practical settings' (2017: 37)². They note that the communities who are expected to participate in restorative justice processes may not actually exist, or if they do exist, that people may be excluded from restorative events (as they refer to them) because they are not part of the right community, or not part of a community at all. One way, they argue, to mitigate or avoid these problems is by keeping a narrow definition of community in restorative justice, which pertains only to those who form a community of care. A community of care may involve social workers, neighbours, family members or community representatives. However, they also note that empirical research focussing on the participation of these communities of care in restorative events shows a low uptake and involvement. They state that often, communities in restorative events may be made up of a small number of 'repeat players' (2017:37). Green (2014) refers to the problem of an unresponsive or disinterested community (in the context of community policing). Reflecting this, my research will provide an in-depth study of how one school encountered and responded to a similar challenge. The challenge of engaging and operationalising its community. This issue was pronounced since school leaders reported a disengaged community with whom they had a problematic relationship. In addition to this, contextual factors, which I refer to in the next paragraph, also played a role in the dynamic between the school and its community.

² See also: Gavrielides (2005; 2007) for a discussion of practical and theoretical approaches to restorative justice.

Additionally, it will trace a school's attempts to implement and utilise a restorative approach and their justifications for doing so. Also, the research will provide an insight into the practical factors that can impede implementation, such as: the impact of external policy change from government, internal pressures to secure exam results and maintain national academic benchmarks, reliance on a support structure (parents and a wider community) which may not be present or may possess different values than those held by the school and the increasing commodification of schooling.

Developing further insight into these themes will enhance our understanding of restorative approaches more generally. If, as the research shows, restorative practices are gaining prominence in schools then developing an understanding of restorative practices across as diverse a range of schools and contexts is important. It will aid practitioners, support, and enhance additional research and offer perspective and insight into a key restorative theme.

This research takes place in one of the most materially deprived localities in the country, in a school that had experienced a turbulent preceding six years. The school faced several challenges: low exam results, students substantial and severe behavioural problems sometimes verging on the criminal, a higher-than-average proportion of students who possess additional needs, such as special educational needs, attention deficit disorder, single-parent families/fostered children and those whose care is the responsibility of the local authority, a low rating by the government education standards authority (OFSTED), a lack of engagement with key stakeholders, low rates of staff morale and an antagonistic relationship with its local network. Within its proximate community the data indicates that most families relied on government intervention to live.

1.10 The Structure of this Thesis

This thesis contains eight chapters, the next two chapters provide a theoretical understanding of restorative justice, restorative practices, and the role of community. Chapter two specifically focusses on the development of restorative practices as an evolution of systems originally proposed for use in the criminal justice arena. This is important as the theory of restorative practice retains many of the same themes which underpin restorative justice theory: reparation for victim and offender, the role of community and use as an alternative to traditional, established practices. In addition, Chapter two also explores the promotion of restorative practice internationally before finally exploring some key criticisms of restorative practices in schools.

Chapter three provides an overview of the central theme in this research, community. It begins with a look at general community definitions, this is useful as the concept of community is often subjectively defined or contested. After this, I state how community has been characterized and viewed within restorative justice/practice literature.

Chapter four presents an overview of the research methods used to conduct the study. The design of the research, methodological choices and justifications, ethical considerations, and a discussion of positionality in research.

Chapters five and six report the empirical findings of my research. Chapter five provides key contextual information which enables the understanding of the school, the systems that exist within the school and an indication of how the school viewed by the community. Chapter six addresses the substantive research questions, focussing on the themes of community, how it employed practically, and how this is perceived by participants before finally exploring some barriers to the implementation of restorative practices and the restorative community.

Chapter seven focusses on a discussion of the key themes which emerge from my empirical findings and explore the relationship between my findings and the literature.

Chapter eight is the concluding chapter; it emphasises the main findings from my research and looks at the contribution my research has made to the general body of literature on restorative practices in education. It concludes by outlining the limitations of this study and opportunities for further research.

Chapter 2 Literature Review: Restorative Justice, Restorative Practices

This chapter will provide an overview of the literature on restorative justice and restorative practices. It will trace the development of a system initially envisaged for use in the criminal justice system (restorative justice) and how these processes were adapted for use in schools (restorative practices). It will also set the scene for a deeper exploration of the restorative community in Chapter 3 by looking at the role envisioned for community in each system.

Restorative Justice: An Overview

Understanding the emergence of restorative justice is useful in that many of the themes and desired outcomes of restorative practices can be traced their development from restorative justice. As restorative practices are also a more recent phenomenon, many of the discussions around the parameters of these themes and outcomes have taken place more comprehensively and deeply in the restorative justice literature, than in the embryonic literature on restorative practices.

Proponents of restorative justice posit a fundamentally new way of looking at criminal and troublesome behaviour (Johnstone, 2011). Providing an effective definition of restorative justice which accurately reflects the diversity and nuance is not an easy task (McCold, 2000; Gavrielides, 2008). This is due, in part, because of the way restorative justice has evolved and promulgated over a period forty years since the early restorative programmes (Peachey, 2013). Johnstone (2002) notes there is now an abundance of literature explaining, describing, evaluating, advocating, and criticising restorative justice. I will set out this chapter by exploring the initial proposals of restorative justice by its early pioneers, then examine how the processes have developed to a stage where restorative justice is truly an international phenomenon (Sia, 2013).

Restorative justice processes emerged as a response to perceived failings in the criminal justice system (Zehr, 2013). Some argue that the modern response to crime as we understand it, is not the only or best response to criminal wrongdoing (Bianchi, 1994). So, what, for those who make this criticism, is the modern response to criminal conduct? The modern response (if it is possible to identify and apprehend the perpetrator) is a judicial process in which, after a crime is committed, the offender is arrested, a trial takes place, if found guilty, a predetermined punishment is imposed which has been calculated by the state to reflect the seriousness of the offence (Johnstone, 2011). Proponents of restorative justice argue that this method is unsatisfactory for several reasons. They note, firstly, the absence of the victim in the process

(Zehr, 1990; Angel, 2005; Braithwaite, 2003), and state that in modern criminal justice processes, the victim is either ignored (Ptacek, 2009) or disempowered by the professionals (Wright, 1996; Strang, 2002; Zehr and Mika, 2003). For example, lawyers who tell the victim's story in court and juries/judges who decide the validity of the victim's claim (Christie, 1977). Proponents of restorative justice argue that this treatment of the victim is effectively, secondary victimisation, where the impact of the crime is exacerbated (Miers, 2001; Dignan, 2005; Johnstone, 2011). The role of the victim is integral in restorative justice processes and some research shows that restorative justice processes are 'positively received by victims' (Green, 2007; 177) and victims should be given the opportunity to discuss the harm that the crime has caused them (Baker, 1994). The victim-focussed nature of restorative justice is defended by Zehr (2005) who states that in restorative justice, the restitution or reparation of harm supersedes the need to punish offenders. (Although there is debate about whether restorative justice should be perceived as an alternative to punishment or an alternative punishment see: Daly, 2000; Duff, 2000; Johnstone and Van Ness, 2002).

Proponents of restorative justice also argue that judicial punishment does not communicate to the offender the impact of their wrongdoing, nor does it give them the opportunity to make amends (Christie, 1977; Gorringer, 1996; Zehr, 2005). They argue, that, for example: prison incubates further criminality in offenders leading them to reoffend, and that by placing offenders within a community that could help to rehabilitate them, the rates of reoffending would likely reduce (Daly and Immarigeon, 1998; Braithwaite, 1989; Miers et al., 2001).

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly for this research, proponents of restorative justice state that currently, modern criminal justice processes neglect or ignore the potential hidden in the community (Pranis, 2001; Zehr, 2005). They state that much like the victim, the community often remains silent, passive, and uninvolved (Johnstone, 2002). It is argued by some that the community has been side-lined to the role of a spectator. The consignment of community to a peripheral role arguably began in the late 18th century. With perceived rising rates of criminality, it was contended by the state apparatus of the time that there was a need to construct centralised administrative structures for the uniform deployment of criminal punishment. Garland (1990) notes that this instigated the move away from criminal punishment exacted through local authority structures to a professionalisation of justice administered by an overarching criminal bureaucracy. He refers to the purpose of these centralised frameworks, stating that they were not to reflect community sentiment or wishes, but instead, to deploy objectively and dispassionately ('sine ira ac studio' (1990: 183)) the task of punishment. He goes on to assert that a consequence of excluding the public from participating in the criminal process is potential public misinformation about the purpose and

impact of punishment. It also means that the public may be hampered/prevented in providing the necessary after-care role when/if the offenders are released from prison as this is now also subject to overarching administrative control. Advocates of restorative justice promote the involvement of the community for several reasons. Firstly, the community is an additional harmed party in crime (Ross, 1996). Whilst victims suffer from the immediate impact of a criminal act, the crime occurs within a community which includes, the victim, their relatives, and the wider community all of whom are disrupted by criminal conduct (Braithwaite, 1989; Latimer 2001; Maxwell and Morris, 2001; McGarrell, 2001; Karp et al., 2002; Van Ness and Strong, 2006). Secondly, the community can help regulate conduct and prevent criminality (Cayley, 1998). Offenders can be reintegrated into a community which cares about them, supports them and constructs opportunities to help them repair the harm they have caused (McCold, 1996; Pranis, 1998; Daly, 2001) but also, one that communicates the impact of the wrongdoing to the offender (Clear and Karp, 1999). With a view to reducing reoffending (Cayley, 1998; Braithwaite, 1989; Norrie, 1999).

Wright (2010) attempts to define these elements of restorative justice succinctly, stating restorative justice is:

‘A process whereby parties with a stake in a specific offence collectively resolve how to deal with the aftermath of the offence and the implications for the future’ (1999: 5).

This is similar to the definition provided by Zehr (2005) who states that restorative justice brings together all those who have a stake in an offence to try and put things right (Tonry, 1995; Sherman, 2003). Instead of focussing on judicial punishment as the desired or effective outcome of a criminal process (Daly, 2000; McCold, 2000), both definitions of restorative justice instead repurpose criminality as an opportunity to look at: Who has been hurt? What needs do they have? How can we restore them and meet their needs? (Umbreit and Armour, 2010).

Proponents of restorative justice argue that victims, offenders and affected stakeholders would achieve a benefit from undertaking restorative processes as an alternative to, or in tandem with traditional criminal justice processes (Duff, 1992; Walgrave, 2003). Examples of restorative processes are group conferences. These are similar to a criminal trial but with the opportunity for each affected member to speak and express the harm they suffered and a chance for the offender to begin the reparative process and without the judicial formalities. Small forms of mediation (Victim Offender Mediation) aimed at resolving conflict. Family

Group Conferences. Letters between victims and offenders. Victim empathy and awareness courses for offenders. Diversion schemes. Also, a number of informal, one to one processes that may take place (Gulliver, 1979; Raye and Roberts, 2007)

2.1 Tracing Restorative Justice Processes

Modern restorative justice practices can be traced back to the Kitchener Experiments in Ontario, Canada during the 1970s. Described as the 'fore runner of programmes that bring together convicted offenders in face-to-face meetings with their victims' (Peachey, 2003: 75). The Kitchener Experiment involved two youths convicted of vandalism. Instead of serving a prison sentence, they were issued with a reparative order from the courts which compelled them to repair the harm they had caused. This reparation took place symbolically (through an apology) and materially, by repairing the damage they had committed (Barnett, 1977; Yantzi and Worth, 1977). This was the first recognised example of a Victim-Offender Reconciliation Project, or VORP (Yantzi and Worth, 1977; Umbreit, Vos et al., (2005). This case was significant as it became symbolic of core restorative themes such as de professionalisation of criminal conduct (Bender, 1985), the need for offenders to 'make things right (Peachey, 2003) and the promotion of restitution over punishment (Hudson and Galway, 1977; Zehr, 2005).

Post-Kitchener saw the development of VOMs or Victim-Offender Mediation programmes (Van Ness and Strong, 2003). The goal of VOMs was stated by Umbreit as 'providing a conflict resolution process which is fair by the victim and offender' (1988: 85). During the 1970s and 80s the use of VOMs spread across the globe, from Canada to the USA, Norway, Finland, and England (Coates and Gehm, 1985; Hughes and Schneider, 1989). The VOM process is described on the website of the Centre for Justice and Reconciliation³. VOMs involve an accused or convicted person meeting with a victim and an impartial mediator. They provide an opportunity for the victim and offender to create their own approach to achieving justice. Often this will include constructing a programme or plan for the offender to repair the harm caused to the victim. The process is voluntary (albeit there are some questions about free choice when participation by a potential offender is employed as an alternative to a criminal justice process) and the outcomes must be agreed by both parties. Proponents of VOMs state that they produce high satisfaction rates amongst participants, high restitution completion rates, reduce fear amongst victims and lower rates of recidivism (Centre for Justice and Reconciliation, 2019).

³ <http://pficjr.org>

Family Group Conferences (FGCs) share many similar objectives those ascribed to restorative justice, and therefore, whilst not necessarily being initially intentioned as a restorative practice (Van Ness and Strong, 2007) are now frequently included under the umbrella of restorative justice approaches (Morris, 2002). Family Group Conferences are similar to VOMs in that the victim and offender are invited to participate in a process in the aftermath of a crime. However, FGCs differ from VOMs in that there are a number of additional participants, for example, the offender and victim's family, youth advocates (if requested), social workers, anyone in the extended family and representatives from the community (McElrea, 1994; Smull, Wachtel and Wachtel, 2012). FGCs are rooted in indigenous traditional Maori practices. One examples of this is the Maori concept: 'whanau' or extended family, which recognises that family members should take 'responsibility for dealing with their own' (McElrea, 1994: 4). This idea is supported by the work of Merkel-Holguin, Nixon and Burford (2003) who state that FGCs engage and empower families (Rush, 2006) to make decisions and plans for their own family members which have longer lasting impact, improved family functioning and reduce the interaction with criminal professionals ensuring stronger bonds within the family with which to manage issues. The first FGCs took place in the Pacific during the 1990s (Roberts and Masters, 1999). Initially employed by the New Zealand government as a response to a spike in youth crime attributed to failures in youth policy and the disaffection of the Maori population (Morris and Maxwell, 1998). Enabled by provisions in the Children, Young Persons and Families Act 1989 (particularly, s.208(a) diversion from formal criminal process), Morris states that the FGCs have been successful in curbing the youth justice problems of New Zealand and reducing the number of youth offenders (2004).

Circles are another type of restorative justice process. According to Pranis (2005) they allow people to tell stories and offer their own perspectives within a group. They are used to resolve conflict, make decisions, and develop relationships amongst other things (International Institute for Restorative Practices, 2019). Circles are used heavily in organisational and community settings, for example, in schools and the workplace (Charney, 1992; Mosely, 1993; Nonaka, 1993; Mirsky, 2007, 2011; Wachtel, 2012). These, like FGCs in New Zealand, also have roots in traditional aboriginal practices, in the case of circles, it is the traditional peace-making practices of North American First Nation Communities (Gavrielides and Winterdyk, 2011; Van Ness and Strong, 2013). Participants in the circle will include the victim and offender (or harmer/harmed party in restorative practices) and members of the community with a facilitator who, together, will decide the appropriate course of action for the offender to make amends (Lilles, 2002; Mirsky, 2004). They may operate sequentially, where everyone gets a chance to speak, or freely structured circles where anyone can participate without a set order

of conversation (Costello, Wachtel and Wachtel, 2012). Sometimes circles will be oriented around a particular problem to solve, other times they may be more free form and give an opportunity for people to speak generally and build relationships (Bush and Folger, 2004; Costello, Wachtel and Wachtel, 2010).

2.2 Restorative Justice: A Personalised View of Crime?

This section will draw heavily on the work of Zehr and Mika (1998) and their view of the role for restorative justice.

As we have seen, proponents of restorative justice state that a crime should not be viewed as an action against the state, or a breach of some overarching statutory principle, but instead a violation of people and relationships (Zehr and Mika, 1998; Achilles and Zehr, 2001; Herman, 2004). The centrality of 'relationships and the individual' in restorative justice requires further exploration as does the notion that victims are most affected by crime and therefore should be acknowledged in any response to crime. In addition to the focus on the victim, advocates of restorative justice also note that secondary participants, such as the family members, witnesses and members of the community are also impacted and have needs that must be met (McCold, 2000; Macrae and Zehr, 2004). They declare that we must include victims, offenders, and the community as they are all important to the restorative process (Kane et al., 1996).

Restorative advocates purport that when the State undertakes these roles (supportive, accusatory, meditative) it denies the opportunity for the community to be involved and to restore the breakdown of relationships that crime causes (Christie, 1977). In any process, they say, the safety and needs of the victim should be prioritised, as should the active participation of groups who can meet the needs of victims (and offenders) to help make things right (Wachtel, 2004).

They focus heavily on the role of the community, stating that the community has certain responsibilities (Putnam, 2000). It has a responsibility to help and support victims, ensure peace amongst other community members who may be disrupted by crime (Zehr, 1990), create conditions to improve relationships amongst community members and to create a greater harmony within the community overall (Moore, 1994; Bazemore and Schiff, 2004).

2.3 The Growth and International Position of Restorative Justice

Over the past thirty years there has been a surge in the number of articles, research programmes and efficacy-measuring projects in the field of restorative justice (London, 2011). Outcomes of these projects have, mostly, stated that restorative justice can be effective in reducing reoffending, making victims happier and feel more included, engaging and

empowering communities, saving money by reducing rates of reoffending and providing a better alternative to the justice system. The alternative they propose, they argue, is based on needs rather than arbitrary desires to punish (Van Ness, 1993; McCold, 1996; Marshall, 1998; Braithwaite, 1989; Morris and Gelsthorpe; 2000; Reynolds, 2000).

Restorative justice is now a global phenomenon with international applicability. In 2003 a Home Office report examined the use of restorative justice in over twenty countries involving thousands of individual restorative programmes (Home Office, 2003). This has since grown substantially, in 2019 the Centre for Justice and Reconciliation has identified and collated research on restorative justice programmes in over one hundred countries across six continents. Sia (2013) effectively summarises the international development of restorative justice. In Africa, he cites the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee convened in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide, there have also been a number of restorative youth programmes and inter-community justice panels (Clark, 2010; Schimmel, 2012; Ephgrave, 2015; Cole, 2018). In Asia there are restorative programmes targeting juvenile justice and bringing together divided societies (Chen and Ge, 2006; Shen and Antonopoulos, 2015; Qin, 2015; Berti, 2016). In Europe, restorative justice has been used as an alternative process to tackle paramilitary violence in Northern Ireland and for juvenile justice and justice reform in Eastern Europe (Smith, 2011; McGrattan, 2012; Wiese, 2012; Widowson, 2013; Gruodyte, 2015; Dragne, 2015). In Latin America, restorative justice has been employed to combat community violence, civil war, and used to create a culture of peace (Viaene, 2010; Salm, 2012; Sanchez, 2012; Arraiza, 2015). North America and Canada operate a number of restorative processes including school, child welfare and prison reform systems (Goulet, 2006; Bohland, 2011; Stanton, 2013; Baldwin and Rukus, 2014). The Middle East uses restorative child welfare and juvenile justice systems (Arrigo, 2009; Wardak, 2012; Ghosn and Khoury, 2013) and in the Pacific, restorative justice programmes draw on indigenous practices to address crime, school discipline and many other forms of community conflict (Wiese, 2012; Moore, 2013; Becroft; 2015; Brookbanks, 2015).

In the UK restorative justice has gained increasing legitimacy. In 2010 a green paper 'Breaking the Cycle' promoted the potential use of restorative justice. Two years later as the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (bill) was going through the legislative process in Parliament, members of the House of Lords attempted to introduce restorative-themed provisions into the prospective legislation. Notably, Lord Ponsonby and Lord Woolf who promoted victim-oriented and youth rehabilitation sections into the law. Although the LAPSO Bill was eventually passed without any mention of restorative justice, the seeds had been sown. A victory for its advocates came in 2013 with the passing of the Criminal Courts Act

which empowered courts to defer sentencing to allow for restorative justice programmes. This does not constitute the comprehensive endorsement we have seen in New Zealand, Australia, or Northern Ireland, but for proponents of restorative justice in the UK it is a substantial development in that direction (Cavadino, Dignan and Mair, 2013).

2.4 Theoretical Criticisms of Restorative Justice

However, restorative justice is not without criticism. As Johnstone (2011) notes: there are grounds for questioning the feasibility and desirability of restorative justice.

The first of these criticisms is the idea of principled sentencing (Von Hirsch and Ashworth, 1998). Principled sentencing is the notion that for each offence there is a stated, proportionate remedy (often punitive) stipulated by legislation or common law. The sanctions are usually publicised, or accessible through research, so that everyone is aware or can be aware of the sanctions and therefore will be aware of the potential outcome if an offence is committed. If found guilty of an offence, the courts will assign the appropriate sentence, guided by legislation and the judicial standards guidance. For example, anyone guilty of the offence of actual bodily harm can expect a sentence of up to five years in prison if they are found guilty. However, Johnstone (2011) states that there is a lack of guidance as to the punitive maximums or minimums of restorative justice processes. The lack of any overarching procedural guidance, or objective standards could be problematic, as it could lead to idiosyncratic remedies (Braithwaite, 1989). Consequently, two people may commit harmful actions, but dependent on the response of the victim and community, receive two different outcomes, one may be treated leniently at the insistence of the victim, the other more harshly. Whilst this is consistent with the maxims of restorative justice (a process which is oriented toward victim satisfaction and restoring harm caused by crime (Zehr, 2005)), it could lead to accusations of unfairness, arbitrariness, or inconsistency with the principles of natural justice.

Another limitation of restorative justice according to Johnstone (2002) and discussed by Daly (2005) is the narrow framing which some proponents have imposed on restorative justice. Restorative justice is proposed as an alternative to criminal justice on the basis that it can 'reduce rates of reoffending and increase victim satisfaction' (2005: 2). These programme evaluations have dominated the restorative justice research agenda. Johnstone argues that restorative justice is not a technique or programme to bring about change, but is instead, 'a fundamental change in our manner of viewing and responding to criminal acts' (2011: 5).

There are also concerns about the rights of suspects and offenders in restorative justice (Johnstone, 2002). The concern relates that the suspect may become an instrument for the

satisfaction of the victim, their rights overlooked. To be found guilty of a criminal offence, the defendant must commit the physical element of the offence (actus reus: guilty act) whilst possessing the appropriate guilty mind (mens rea). There are procedural safeguards imposed in criminal trials to ensure the rights of offenders are maintained and protected and the process is as fair as it possibly can be (an example of a right is the presumption of innocence where a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty by the prosecution). A court process must take place with an independent judge, submissions from both sides, the defendant will be represented by their solicitor/barrister and the state by a representative from the Crown Prosecution Service or an outsourced barrister. These will be heard by a lay jury or a group of Magistrates (lay judges who hear cases concerning minor offences). Guilt may only be found if the decision-makers (Magistrates or jury) are 'sure' of the guilt of the defendant (surety has replaced the previous direction that the court must find guilt 'beyond a reasonable doubt' – this change made on the basis that a jury will find this direction simpler to apply and understand). These safeguards protect the offender, and perhaps, more generally, the integrity of the process (Hart, 2013). However, Johnstone (2004) states that these same processes may not be followed in restorative justice. Offenders can be directed to restorative justice when they admit to committing offence after being arrested (this admission on arrest may fall short of meeting the necessary standard of proof for guilt in a criminal trial). From this point, they are treated as though they are guilty of the full offence and move through the restorative process with this assumed. Sometimes they may be coerced into a restorative process through threat of prosecution (Johnstone, 2011). The admission may take place without the accused having access to legal representation and they do not usually receive legal representation through the restorative process. Braithwaite (1989) offers examples of processes in New Zealand where guilt is assumed when the defendant admits to the commission of the offence (the actus reus) and only later during the restorative process is their mindset during the commission of the offence (mens rea) explored. This contradicts a fundamental concept in criminal law, the necessary requirement that the defendant possesses both elements to be guilty of an offence.

Lastly, and pertinently for this thesis, a criticism of restorative justice is the importance placed on the role of the community. A core theme of restorative justice is that conflict should be returned to the community as there are many benefits in doing so (Christie, 1977). However, such an approach may present an idealised, homogenous view of community, community may be seen as an egalitarian social group with no hierarchies or internal power dynamics. Johnstone notes that this might not always be the case and that communities can possess social arrangement based on acquired authority (2011: 25). By returning conflict to the

community, we may be exposing the victim or offender to unfairness (Weisberg, 2003; Pavlich, 2004). This is noted in the work of Cayley (1998) who gives examples of community restorative justice being used for serious sexual abuse offences. The restorative community which handled the case was patriarchal and as a result, these objectively serious offences were treated as misdemeanours. Johnstone states that sometimes, the neutrality and externality of the courts can be a benefit as the processes will not be mired in subjective, local power dynamics (2011).

As we have seen so far in this chapter, restorative justice has grown in prominence and practice over the last thirty years. Whilst, in the UK at least, it is not a true alternative to criminal justice, as envisioned by some early proponents, the degree of penetration it has achieved is notable. In the next section, we will look at how this development of restorative justice has led to offshoots in other fields of practice, most prominently in this thesis: schools.

2.5 The Development of Restorative Justice (Practices) in Schools

The rest of this chapter will be dedicated to the development of restorative practices in schools, emerging from the work originating in the criminal justice sphere, to an identifiable and legitimate practice in itself. I will, as I have in the first half of this chapter, refer to the national and international development of restorative practices and the criticisms that have arisen as the practices have been more widely applied.

After restorative justice began to gain traction in the field of criminal justice, the potential of restorative-themed approaches to solve other problems involving wrongdoing or harmful behaviour started to be explored in the UK (Johnstone, 2011). Often these explorations involved looking at restorative approaches where people were misbehaving, but to criminalise the behaviour would be inappropriate. Johnstone (2002) identifies some examples of these developments. Restorative processes began to operate in care homes, for sporting misconduct, neighbourly dispute, matrimonial issues, children protection matters, workplace misconduct, and in schools.

Operating in a theoretical parallel with the literature on restorative justice, proponents of restorative practices state that there is a more beneficial way to manage conflict in schools than by employing traditional school punishments such as detentions, suspensions and expulsions (Morrison, 2003; Hopkins, 2004). Like restorative justice, the number of programmes has grown exponentially and restorative practices (the name for restorative justice programmes in schools) are now their own international phenomenon (Sia, 2013). Whilst this thesis will focus on restorative practices in the UK, like restorative justice, many of

the themes are common regardless of international application and can be applied most school settings worldwide (Morrison, 2006). Restorative practices involve the use of different terminology, to those employed in restorative justice, terms such as 'offender' and 'victim' are deemed inappropriate for use in schools. Sellman, Cremin and McLuskey (2013) instead promote the use of terms such as 'harmed party' or 'harmer' arguing that these are more appropriate and less judicial. Notwithstanding these semantic choices, the themes are the same, both restorative justice and practice are predicated on the 'restorative' notion that when conflict occurs, everyone involved in the conflict should be involved in its resolution and that conflict is a product of the community and should be managed by that community (Morrison, 2005). Restorative practices are said to improve school attainment, attendance, create a happier and stronger school community, with fewer behavioural incidents, fewer detentions, suspensions, and exclusions (Morrison, 2003; Hopkins, 2004; Kane et al., 2007; McCluskey, 2008).

Firstly, I will explore the transition from restorative justice in the criminal system to restorative practices in schools. Initially, restorative school projects (in the UK, at least) operated medially between the criminal justice system and behaviour programmes in schools (Hopkins, 2004). The first restorative processes in schools were targeted at early crime prevention (Johnstone, 2011). Wright (2010) referred to the use of restorative practices to divert young people away from criminality as: halting the school to prison pipeline. The Youth Justice Board (a non-departmental public body responsible for overseeing the youth justice system in England and Wales) funded a series of restorative justice schemes in which a police officer was placed in schools to reduce criminality and anti-social behaviour amongst students. This police officer worked with students and teachers to create restorative-themed programmes to divert young people from criminality (Davey, 2005; Johnstone, 2011). Where students were performing criminal acts, rather than resort to a formal justice process, there would be informal restorative programmes within the school. Examples of the behaviours these programmes sought to combat were as follows: 'fights, violent bullying, minor theft, vandalism of school property and extortion of pocket money' (Sia, 2013: 19). These instances of conflict were instead managed in school by the school community, through mentoring and mediation programmes. A similar narrative is seen in the implementation of restorative practices in Australia. Margaret Thorsborne, a school counsellor at the time, adopted a community conferencing model utilised by the police in New South Wales to facilitate a conference between students involved in a serious assault at a school dance (Morrison, 2007). Cameron and Thorsborne (2001) noted the need for a non-punitive intervention to serious misconduct to increase empathy and lower impulsivity (in bullying). The reported success of these criminal

divergence programmes led to a wider scale deployment of restorative practices (Johnstone, 2011). More schools began to see the promise of restorative practices (Kane et al., 2009; Howard, 2009) with a range of approaches adopted in the UK and elsewhere (Claassen, 1995). Restorative approaches were said to reduce suspensions and exclusions of students and allow schools to build strategies to address 'disaffection, behavioural difficulties and violence ... and restore good relationships' McCluskey, Kane, Lloyd et al., (2013: 142). Research by Kane et al., (2007) found that restorative practices had the potential to reduce playground incidents, discipline referrals and had a positive impact on relationships in school.

Again, after these reported successes in the UK and internationally proponents of the theory began to state that restorative practices had greater potential beyond that of a behaviour management tool, and that to achieve the greatest benefit a 'whole-school' restorative approach was required (Hopkins, 2004).

Champions of whole school restorative practices made a distinction between proactive and reactive responses to wrongdoing in schools. They argued that the restorative practices pre-2000 was reactive (harm occurs, and restorative practices are used to respond to that harm) (Hopkins, 2004). Whereas Kane et al., (2007) state that a whole-school approach is one which uses both proactive and reactive restorative practices. A whole-school approach is reactive to conflict that has already occurred and is a proactive approach which seeks the full integration of restorative practices into the day-to-day life of the school (Hopkins, 2004). This extends the definition of restorative practices in schools, beyond that of a behaviour management tool, to one of child development (Porter, 2001; Kohn, 2005). A continuum of restorativeness was created by the Restorative Justice Consortium to typify or define what restorative practices in schools are (2005). They argued that restorative practices in schools are value-based, these values are empowerment, respect, honest, engagement, healing, restoration, personal accountability amongst all school participants. A whole-school approach is one based on these values.

Morrison and Vaandering (2012) note that a whole school approach operates on three levels. Primary, secondary, and tertiary. Primary level interventions are directed at the whole-school community. A restorative ethos is established, and all members of the school community use restorative language to enhance relationships, restorative circles are a good example of primary level restorative practices. Restorative circles give people opportunities to sit down together, tell stories to each other and offer their own perspectives on matters (Pranis, 2005). Circles can be used for conflict resolution, information exchange and relationship development (Mosley, 1993). Secondary practices target individuals or groups of individuals, they take place

after conflict has occurred. An example of a secondary practice would be mediation. Lastly, tertiary practices are used to respond to the most serious conflicts. At this level, practices are targeted at rebuilding relationships often through conferences involving the families and stakeholders of the parties in conflict. Conferences are large scale restorative meetings where conflict is discussed, and participants explore the conflict and implement a restorative process to address the harm (Holma, 2009). To implement these three levels across the whole school, there must be investment from the entire school community (Hopkins, 2004; Elliot, 2011).

Blood (2005) also proffers a model of whole-school restorative practices. She also states that there are levels to restorative practices in schools, the first level of restorative practice which builds the social and emotional capacity of the school through proactive practice. The second level, which looks at proactive responses to minor conflict in the school and the last tier which looks at response to serious wrongdoing and restoring relationships. As we can see, there is a strong connection between the system of restorative practice proposed by Blood and that of Morrison and Vaandering (2012).

2.6 An International Overview of Restorative Practices

Like restorative justice, restorative practices are a global phenomenon. This is particularly true in the USA, UK, and the Pacific (Morrison, 2003). Whilst the international growth of restorative practices was alluded to in the introduction of the thesis, I will now explore them in greater depth. Restorative practices are employed on six out of the seven continents (Cremin, Sellman and McCluskey, 2013).

In Canada, the Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities promotes the use of restorative approaches to improve attendance of students, the grades they achieve and ensure that staff, students, and their parents enjoy a caring school community. In Brazil, the Port Alegre Youth Justice System works with schools to provide restorative divergence programmes for young people potentially susceptible to crime (Sia, 2013).

Many consider New Zealand to be a world-leader in restorative practices (Carruthers, 2013). The Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1989 led to the introduction of Family Group Conferencing in schools. This in turn led to further legislation promoting restorative practices, in 1990 the Suspension Reduction Initiative led to twenty-four New Zealand schools adopting conferencing programmes. Research in 2007 by Buckley and Maxwell found five common examples of restorative practice taking place in New Zealand schools. These were: 1) The restorative chat, a conversation using the 'Who has been harmed? What can we do to meet the needs of the harmed party?' questions referred to by Zehr (2005) earlier in this

chapter (Carruthers, 2013: 28). 2) The restorative classroom, this was a space in which an open dialogue took place about how to manage conflict between students. 3) Restorative mini conferences for use in more serious conflict, there would be representatives from the school community and parents included in these conferences where the harm would be discussed and a plan put in place for restoration of the harmed party (Gavrielides, 2012) (although, Buckley (2007) notes that these programmes suffered from a lack of funding and as a consequence, schools had to suspend students rather than conference). 4) A diversionary procedure, similar to the programme we saw in the UK by the Youth Justice Board, this was employed where the behaviour of students errs into the criminal. Conferences were used rather than a formal criminal trial and a programme of reparation involving community work was often used. 5) A formal family group conference involving all community members, the family of the parties in conflict where all participants would be given an opportunity to discuss the conflict and make amends. (Buckley and Maxwell, 2007).

In the USA restorative practices have been employed to combat the perceived inefficacy of zero-tolerance disciplinary policies employed in schools during the 1980s and 1990s (Losen, 2014). They have been used to challenge disproportionalities in school exclusions where students from ethnic minority backgrounds were more likely to be excluded on their first offence (Gregory, Clawson, Davis and Gerewitz, 2016). Stinchcomb, Bazemore and Riestenberg (2006) state that RP has been adopted in the US to mitigate uneven enforcement of exclusions where the rules on the type of conduct that could get a student excluded from school differed substantially from school to school so greatly it became prejudicial depending on the area the student was from. There are now major restorative hubs in Oakland (Baker, 2009), Colorado (Armour, 2013), Philadelphia (Lewis, 2009), Minnesota (McMorris, Beckman, Shea, Baumgartney and Eggert, 2013) and Pennsylvania (Wachtel, 2014).

In the UK we have already discussed the early adoption of restorative practices in schools, but this has since gained further legitimacy through government policy (Gov, 2019) and research reporting the efficacy of restorative practices in reducing misbehaviour in schools and promoting attainment and attendance (McCold, 2007). The Department for Education gave whole-school restorative practices the highest rating of effectiveness for preventing bullying (Anti-Bullying Alliance, 2017).

2.7 Comparing Restorative Justice and Restorative Practice

This thesis will offer a theoretical distinction between the two systems: restorative justice and restorative practices. Restorative Justice is often associated with processes attached to the criminal justice system, whereas, as will be discussed below, restorative practices are

approaches more often referred to in social spaces, schools or care homes, for example. Whilst this may be a purely semantic distinction, it is a necessary one to specify the context in which the restorative approach is taking place. Prominent writers on restorative practices in schools such as Morrison (2013) and Hopkins (2004) have advocated for the exclusion of judicial style language (for example, offender and victim) in the discourse relating to restorative practices in schools, deeming it circumstantially inappropriate. Therefore, differentiating the systems by using specific terminology will add clarity to this thesis. This distinction between restorative justice and restorative practices is articulated by the Centre for Restorative Practices who note that restorative justice is an alternative to using punishment to manage misbehaviour, most commonly referred to in criminal justice systems. Whereas restorative practices in schools are based on restorative justice principles but used to build community and making schools safer (Centre for Restorative Practices, 2021). Where restorative justice is oriented around the need to reduce reoffending, satisfy victims and posit questions about our normative responses to criminal offending, restorative practices have a number of purposes in schools. Some see them as a behavioural tool, in that they can be used to reduce misbehaviour and improve outcomes (Morrison, 2013). Others see restorative practices as transformative mechanisms in schools, allowing leaders and staff to reimagine the purpose of punishment, responses to misbehaviour and the relational dynamic which exists between staff and students (Morrison 2007).

2.8 Criticisms of Restorative Practices in Schools

This sub-chapter will explore some criticisms of restorative practices in schools.

The first criticism levelled at restorative practices, articulated by Roche (2003) is that restorative practices appropriate processes that are taking place in the school anyway. They reframe pre-existing school techniques and label them 'restorative'. Discussions with students in conflict (restorative conversations), pastoral meetings in tutor groups, drawing in the wider community where students have been involved in conflict are examples of restorative practices we have seen in this chapter, teachers argue that these were happening in schools prior to the emergence of restorative practices. The question then becomes, what is distinctive about restorative practices in schools, if we adopt a whole school understanding of the approach?

Another criticism of restorative practices in schools is that they could be perceived as a soft option, or that teachers may feel disempowered by their introduction. Skinns et al., (2009) undertook research of restorative practices in Bristol schools. They found that some teachers questioned the lack of imposing sanctions in restorative practices. They also felt disempowered

stating: 'the children were in charge' (2009: 31). Due to this, some staff were unwilling to engage with the restorative practices as they felt that the introduction of restorative practices would disrupt the learning environment in which they could punish when they felt it was appropriate (Cremin, 2013).

Proponents of restorative practices (like proponents of restorative justice) state the restorative process is benefitted by the involvement of the community. However, Cremin (2013) notes a problem with this view. She argues that the community is not defined in the literature. Instead of providing an accurate, contextual definition of a community which can be employed to benefit the restorative practices, the term 'school community' is used, in which all members of the school automatically become included in the definition of community. Cremin states that this may not reflect how the members of this supposed community view themselves. She cites the idea of reintegrative shaming and asks, how can we reintegrate students into a community they do not feel integrated into in the first place? (2013: 119). Gilbourn and Mirza (2000) state that the exclusionary processes of schooling (excluded students who misbehave, for example) reproduce social inequality as those student who don't feel integrated into the community are usually also deprived of 'familial stability and economic wealth' at home (Alexander, 2009). Citing work by Debarbieux (2013) in France on the disengagement of youth from poor inner-city areas, Cremin states, this lack of community involvement and engagement provides a 'real challenge for restorative approaches that are grounded in ideas of moral and just communities' (2013: 120) and that without the participant of a community, it's difficult to see how many of the restorative practices proposed by the literature will work.

As I have shown so far, restorative justice, and latterly, restorative practices, have become a legitimate alternative to the practices in the criminal justice system, and to traditional punishments in schools and have a growing national and international legitimacy. As the practice evolves, so must the research and, a focus on schools which, as of yet are under-researched (such as the one in which I have undertaken my research) should add value to our general understanding of the topic and its applicability.

Chapter 3 Literature Review: The Restorative Community

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a general overview of the literature on community. Firstly, I will be exploring how the concept of community features in the discourse of restorative justice and how the role of community is portrayed in the literature. After this I will explore writings which examine the concept of community in broader terms. This chapter will provide an insight into the diverse ways in which community is defined and operationalised within the restorative canon. I will explore general community definitions and then more specialised understandings of community specific to the use of restorative practices in schools. My intention is that this chapter will provide a strong theoretical basis which will allow for a greater understanding of how my findings correlate with, and deviate from, the body of literature explored below.

3.1 The General Rationale for Community Inclusion in Restorative Justice

The literature on restorative justice and practice proposes an important role for the community (Christie, 1977; Braithwaite, 1989). This definition and its operation vary depending on the restorative approach or process (Braithwaite, 1998). However, in much of the writing on restorative justice, engagement with the community is seen as central to achieving the outcomes of the restorative process whatever the desired outcome may be (Marshall, 1999; Zehr and Mika, 2003; Walgrave, 2003; Koen, 2007).

For example, Umbreit (1994: 162) states:

‘The basic principles of restorative justice require a fundamental shift in the power related to who controls and owns crime in society, a shift from the state to the individual citizen and the local communities’.

For many writers on restorative justice, engaging the community is essential to the success of the restorative intervention (Wright, 2000; Crawford and Clear 2001). The justification for this assertion is that they argue many crimes are usually between people who belong to the same community (Christie, 1977; Johnstone, 2004). Inter-community violence or conflict is much more prevalent as community members encounter each other more frequently (Clear, 2001). Proponents of restorative justice consequently state that wrongdoing by community members can be managed most effectively by the members of that community and not by state actors or professionals who may have less understanding of the community context or culture (Christie, 1977; Mackey, 1990). For example, Bazemore and Schiff argue that a novel and effective mechanism for responding to criminal activity would be to ‘build local citizen and neighbourhood efficacy to respond to crime ... in ways that create safer, more peaceful and more just community environments’. (2005: 4). In pursuing this approach there is less a focus

on the ways in which we may punish for the sake of punishment or proportionate in reference to harm done and instead a concentration on how we can best encourage the offender to take responsibility for their actions. In addition to this, it is important to make offenders accountable to repair the harm they have caused through informal community processes which can effectively communicate the impact of the offender's actions to them (Braithwaite, 1989).

Furthermore, it is argued by supporters of community restorative justice that much of our current infrastructure and response to crime is based on a reactionary model in which an offence is committed, and the state responds to the offence. Barajas, (1995) and research done by the National Institute of Justice (1998) focus on how community restorative justice may be utilised to prevent crime proactively. They say that by engaging the community and through developing interpersonal relationships with a strong adherence to a shared set of norms and values, the community regulates itself and as a result, crime is either self-policed or does not occur at all. The democratising effect of this process is that people feel that they are contributing to common goals and there is greater community cohesion (Ashworth, 1993). This theory is supported by work done by Messmer and Otto (1992) who state that crime should be viewed as social conflict and that the origin of social conflict is related to the conditions of a particular community. Strategies that are most effective, in their opinion, to combat social conflict are those that are socially inclusive. Therefore, strategies which include the local community and seek reparation over punishment will be more effective in achieving a reduction in criminality as it would be seen as less something which needs outsider intervention and more of a social concern resultant of causal and relational conditions of delinquency.

Currently, the argument of some proponents of restorative justice is that the criminal justice system steals conflict (Christie, 1977). This position is predicated on the idea that by seeing crime as an action against society, in which an offender is arrested, taken to the appropriate court as necessitated by the severity of the offence, tried and then either sentenced or acquitted, it removes the opportunity for those directly involved in crime to learn from an incident. They argue that the victim is peripheral to the process and rarely consulted and that the secondary victims of the offence (for example, the families of the offender and victim or the community within which the offender may reside) are not included. Christie states (1977: 12):

'much of our trouble stems from killed neighbourhoods or killed local communities. How can we thrust towards neighbourhoods a task that presupposes they highly alive? I have no really good arguments only two weak

ones. First it is not quite that bad, the death is not complete. Secondly, on the major ideas behind the formation 'Conflicts as property' is that it is neighbourhood property. It is not private. It belongs to the system. It is intended as a vitaliser for neighbourhoods.'

Bazemore and Schiff (2005) and Zehr (1990) argue that by ignoring the community in the process it may result in increased recidivism amongst offenders and the weakening of community bonds between community members. Involvement of the community also corresponds with certain core themes of restorative justice. For example: the creation of 'obligations to make things right' Zehr (1990:181). Zehr imposes an obligation on community members to aid the victim and offender in repairing the harm created by crime. Artinopoulou (2010a; 2013) comments that the increase in community-based restorative justice could be traced to the shift from formal social control due to perceived inefficacies in crime reduction. This theme is also discussed by Van Ness and Strong (1997) who argue the community has a role in enabling those involved in crime to heal the 'wounds' created by criminal wrongdoing and prevent reoffending through practices of restorative justice. Barajas (1995) argues that crime can provide an opportunity for norm clarification within a community and inform the operative moral framework which underpins community interaction. He explains that when all community members are involved in the response to criminal conduct, from this, a standard of acceptable behaviour amongst community members emerges which everyone in the community is then aware of and, hopefully, adheres to. The absence of community may have negative consequences, for example, Stark (1987) stated that where there is a lack of a sense of 'community', it can increase levels of criminality within inner cities and therefore create cultures of criminality within those areas.

3.2 Defining Community

An important focus in this research is how a restorative community is defined. If it is accepted that restorative approaches are benefitted by community involvement (Braithwaite, 1989; Johnstone and Van Ness, 2007) a community must be identifiable and present (Rossner, 2011; 2013). The importance of defining the 'community' is extolled by Harris who states: 'there is an imperative to specify clearly what we mean by community and why it should be involved' (1989: 35). Sometimes, as we will see, the community is referred to without specific definition, and this can detract from our understanding of the restorative process (Willis, 2016). After exploring definitions of community, I will then consider the emerging body of literature which states that community engagement may not be as beneficial as initially envisaged (Pranis, 2005; Johnstone, 2011).

Despite the central position of community in restorative justice, Walgrave (2003) notes that it is often left to the instincts of practitioners as to what or who the community is in restorative justice. Willis (2016) states that this is unsatisfactory as 'determining how community is understood is instrumental to the form that restorative justice will ultimately take' (2016: 169). To enhance the understanding of how community is conceptualised in restorative justice/practices literature I will offer various definitions of community as envisaged by prominent contributors to the field.

3.2.1 General Community Definitions

There are a number of different definitions proffered by restorative theorists. Reflecting on these is useful for examining the type of community which may be present in my research site.

A general understanding of community is offered by Zehr (1990) who states that in restorative justice, community is defined by its context. The community will often include the people who are involved in a conflict, they become de facto included members of the community and should subsequently be involved in any restorative process. This is a view supported by Peachey, (1992) who stated: 'concepts are directly relevant to the harms suffered in the course of everyday life and routine conflict and where the event it is not classified as a crime (1992: 552). This view of community is constructed on relationships of injury, need and responsibility (Mackey, 1990). Also, the understanding that crime causes harm, the harm needs to be repaired and creates a burden on parties affected by crime, or who cause crime, to repair the harm. In this proposition of community, whoever is involved in that process could fall into the defined 'community' (McCold, 1994). One disadvantage of such an approach is that the understanding of community differs from crime to crime, and there is very little continuity between restorative processes, beyond that of the victim and offender (McCold and Wachtel, 1998).

3.2.2 Communities of Care and the Geographic Community

Willis (2016) defined three distinct, but interlinking definitions of community. She said that the term 'community' in restorative literature can be understood in three ways: 'the community of care', the 'geographic community' and 'the dangers of community', (2016: 174).

3.2.2.1 Communities of Care

The community of care contains people to whom the victim and offender share relationships, it may include family members, trusted adults or anyone with whom the victim shares an interpersonal relationship (Braithwaite, 1989; Morris and Young, 2000; Morris and Maxwell, 2001; Robinson and Shapland, 2008). This is a relational view of community, in that, there is a link or tie between the victim and the other members of the community. In the next

subheading, drawing from Willis' (2016) work, this will be contrasted with a community-of-place or geographic understanding of community. The community of care model has significant tradition in sociological theory, for example, in Hillery's (1995) study of community, most communities were identifiable by the existence of social relationships. Gilbert and Settles (2007) examined the role that significant stakeholders may have in reducing youth deviance and drug abuse. They did this using strong relational bonds which were employed to counsel young people away from drugs.

In the restorative context, a famous proponent of the 'communities of care' model is Braithwaite (1989) who argued that shaming is most effective when it is reintegrative, done by a caring, interesting and involved community who can effectively communicate the wrongdoing to the offender, whilst retaining a sense of potential to do better. For reintegrative shaming to be employed effectively, Braithwaite contends that it necessary to exploit or utilise the moral bond that the offender may have with their community and utilise said bond to communicate to the offender that their actions are not permissible. Braithwaite said that it is communitarian societies with interpersonal and interdependent relationships which can most effectively deliver reintegrative shaming. The reason for this is that victims of communities of care are most able to support the shaming process and the offenders, communities of care ensure that respectful reintegration takes place (Braithwaite, 2003). The definition of communities of care becomes important later on in this thesis, as I will report, arguably, the types of communities in the research site could be typified as communities of care, or at least, communities predicated on interdependent relationships.

Work done by Rossner (2013) supports Braithwaite's assertion. She found that restorative conferences in which the communities of care were participatory were the most effective in achieving the outcomes of having 'emotional turning points' (2013: 75). She also said that the presence of the communities of care are particularly beneficial for the victims, allowing them to communicate the harm that they had suffered (Rossner, 2011). Where there was minimal participation of the communities of care, the conferences lacked effectiveness. As stated in Willis (2016: 3) states: 'the most successful conferences had on average two supporters present, preferably on both sides, whereas the least successful conferences lacked such a community of care presence, particularly on the victims' side'.

3.2.2.2 Geographic Community

Another way of defining 'community' in restorative justice is through the model of the geographic community, or a community of place. This is something explored in the writings of

McCold and Wachtel (1998) and is a prominent theme in criminological and sociological literature (Wilson and Kelling, 1982; Cohen, 2001; Power, 2007).

A geographic community or a community of place is usually one that members subscribe to inadvertently and are included simply by virtue of it being the place they reside (Wright, 1996; Dignam, 2002). What may then happen is that the geographic community becomes a representation or manifestation of the norms and values of its community members. Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls (1997) called this collective efficacy. Collective efficacy implies the actions and willingness of the community to intervene when actions of community members may be unacceptable to the community en masse. These ideas have prominence in restorative justice literature. For example, Bazemore and Schiff (2005) state that crime is a result of the breakdown of relationships and the lack of defined and communicated social norms and values also by the breach of community trust. The use of restorative justice and community inclusion can offer a function of moral affirmation. There may be additional benefits for participants, for example, Bazemore states that by being involved in restorative processes, participants may develop skills which can be utilised in the wider community, these skills relate to the ability of individuals to handle potential conflict in a more effective manner.

Bazemore and Schiff (2005) also argue that the use of volunteers (usually community members) as impartial arbitrators offers benefits to the restorative processes. Not only by 'encouraging job growth and training for members of the community' (Bazemore and O'Brien, 2002: 36) but also due to the fact that community members may have a personal understanding of the nature and circumstances of the conflict and will be able to understand the conflict within its context. Alongside this notion of the understanding of context, employing the community of a place may also have a benefit in constructing or building a sense of community. Christie (1977) notes that community intervention in criminal matters may be difficult due to killed communities (areas where the sense of community no longer exists), or a lack of community presence with which to manage the conflict and meet the needs of the victims and offenders. Bazemore (2005), Bazemore and O'Brien (2005) and Cohen (2001) all state that through deploying volunteers within the community, social capital (securing benefits by being a member of a group (Portes, 1998; Kurki, 2003)) and connection may be built amongst community members and a greater sense of community may result.

The idea of community of place has been criticised by McCold (2004) who like Strang (2004) prefers an understanding of community predicated on care or involvement. McCold (2004) states that if we extend the boundaries of community of place too widely, we may start to encounter volunteers, or participants who have no direct involvement in the crime. He also

notes that geographic communities are only impacted by crime indirectly, therefore their need for restoration is not as substantial as those immediately affected (victim, offender, directly impacted community).

Whilst some of the literature relating to restorative practices in schools employs an operational definition of community based on place (Willis, 2016). It is my view that, particularly in terms of my empirical work, this definition lacks nuance, or adequately defined boundaries. Consequently, when I attempted to adopt a community definition based on place, there were always outliers who 'should' have been involved in the community, but for whatever reason did not feel included in such a definition.

3.3 Defining the Restorative School Community

Whilst general community definitions are important in providing a scaffold with which to interpret my findings, the restorative school community, as I will go on to indicate in this sub-chapter, is often defined in a specific way. It is defined in tandem with, or in isolation of, the general community definitions I have explored so far.

The same difficulties in defining the restorative justice community are encountered when trying to define a community in restorative practices in schools. Again, like restorative justice, the community is seen as providing a useful function in restorative practices by helping harmed parties, reducing misbehaviour and satisfying stakeholders (Hopkins, 2004; Morrison, 2006) but the literature is often unclear as to who is included in our understanding of the 'restorative community' in schools. Whilst the concepts of communities of care and geographic community are equally applicable to schools, there is also a view that the school in itself is a community (Avery, Johnson and Johnson, 1999; Bickmore, 2001; 2002; Hopkins, 2004; Morrison, 2007; Vaandering, 2009). This is often referred to as the 'Whole-School' ideation of community commonly articulated by Hopkins (2004).

3.3.1 Whole-School Definitions of Restorative Community

The notion of a whole-school restorative community, where every member of the internal school community and any external stakeholders are afforded automatic inclusion in the term is, theoretically, a sound one. It is often seen in educational literature that a school community should include a role for parents of children, or those who live in close proximity to the school building. This theory justified on the grounds of proximity in either space or relationship.

This notion can be seen in the work of Amstutz and Mullet et al., (2005) who offer specific definitional guidance, expounding on Hopkins' idea of whole-school restorative practice,

stating that a community in a school is one in which: 'every student, administrator and staff member is a valued member of the school community' (2005: 26).

Hopkins refers to this model of community inclusion as the 'restorative jigsaw' (2004: 38). In viewing a school community this way, she explores how individualised practices taking place in school can be pieced together to form a jigsaw, or a whole-school picture. It is argued that a whole-school restorative community is one which can best achieve the goals of restorative practice. This notion is justified on the grounds that when there is a congruent restorative message, which everyone can adhere to, it is best for everyone. Hopkins also refers to the idea that a restorative approach may engender skill-building amongst community members, they can form and maintain effective relationships, that behaviour improves as a consequence of these stronger bonds of relationship and that all stakeholders are happier and feel more included in a whole-school system. To achieve this, she claims that all those linked to a school community must ask themselves 'Is everything that we do here informed by this ethos, these values and a philosophy which gives central importance to building, maintaining and, where necessary, repairing relationships and community?' (2004: 38). Hopkins' vision of a whole-school restorative community has been seen to be effective in a number of small-scale case studies, particularly when trialled in a number of Minnesota Primary Schools (Morrison, 2007).

The school leaders in my research, inspired by the theoretical impact of whole-school restorative practices, were starting to orient their practice with a view to achieving a whole-school restorative conception of community with a view to achieving the benefits stated in the literature.

3.3.2 Individualised School Community Definitions

McCluskey (2018) offers a more atomised view of community in which the restorative community in a school comprises a group of individuals with varying needs and expectations of the restorative process. This idea (supported by Morrison and Vaandering (2012)) notes that community construction and inclusive practice is an important role of the restorative process in schools. However, there are other roles that can complement or conflict with community building practices, these are: promotion of academic attainment, to allow students to form their own identity in tandem with, or separate of their school community identity and ensuring the safety of all community members. Schools must do this 'with a backdrop of dimensions of inequality and power imbalances present within most schools' (McCluskey, 2018: 7). In this view of community, community status is impliedly and automatically bestowed upon any student who attends the school or staff member employed there. Whether this is an effective and practical view of community remains to be seen.

3.4 Theoretical Views of Community

The ambiguity of the term 'community' in restorative justice may be served by an exploration of relevant general community literature. Community literature provides a number of variants of community not discussed in the restorative literature (for example, virtual communities or communities as networks) which could be helpful for understanding how restorative communities may be defined or constructed.

Community can encompass a variety of different yet sometimes interlinking concepts. Community theory combines feelings of belonging, similarity and difference, inclusion and exclusion, place and time, processes such as modernisation, and has been considered as both a social and spatial phenomenon (Bell and Newby 1971; Cater and Jones, 1989; Crow and Allen, 1994; Silk, 1999; Johnston, 2000; Delanty, 2003; Clark, 2007).

Early theories on community sought to explore the distinction between community and society. Modern communities were defined as operating as an alternative society and as a normative conception of society; community was sometimes seen as an idealised form of society (Delanty, 2003). In the 19th century the pervading thought on society was that it had entered a period of uncertainty and disquiet. Sociologist Max Weber sought to define the community as an alternative to society. A sanctuary from the problems of society and a more individualised and focussed alternative whereby people could find belonging and shared value systems constructed according to smaller-scale morality. This is represented in the famous work by Tönnies on *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* in which (despite difficulty with precise translation) *Gemeinschaft* is the representation of community, concerned with the socially constructed views of individual community members who share interdependent and interpersonal relationships (familial ties being an appropriate example) and *Gesellschaft*, the representation of the relationship of the individual to wider society, usually an impersonal relationship contradicted with the interpersonal of the *Gemeinschaft*. Tönnies argues that the two concepts are both a construction of human will and representation of social relationships. He states, 'the relationship itself, and also the resulting association, is conceived of either as real and organic life – this is the essential characteristic of the *Gemeinschaft* (community); or as imagined and mechanical structure – this is the concept of *Gesellschaft*' (1963: 33).

Communities have been said to exist on the basis of certain shared characteristics, for example 'ethnicity, religion, class or politics, they may be large, or small, thin or thick attachments may underline them, they can be locally based or globally organised, affirmative or subversive in relation to established order, they may be traditional, modern or even postmodern' (Delanty, 2003: 7). Community may be seen as a shared identity as exhibited by common social

interaction (Barth, 1969) or community may be self-defined and constructed by the members of the community (Cohen, 1985). In schools, any of these definitions could provide an adequate representation of the view of community. It is likely that schools will share a surface identity which is shared amongst members. However, within my research, it was certainly the case that community identity was self-defined by the members, this led to a lack of clarity regarding what exactly the community was in the school.

Delanty (2003) explores three different interpretations of the term community. The first is a socio/spatial variant explored in sociological and geographic literature. This example defines communities as small groups, for example, neighbourhoods. In this definition people are members of the community by virtue of where they live. This traditional imagining of community has faced criticism due recent technological developments and globalisation.

His second envisaging of community refers to the anthropological understanding of the term. People who subscribe to this definition see community as having 'identity'. This socio-political variant concerns communitarianism or citizenship (Green, 2002). This theory defines community not according to the place in which the community exists but as a construction of the values that underpin the community, community is something that can be belonged to. Selznick (1992) described community as 'a variable aspect of group experience' (1992:358).

For example: Cater and Jones (1989) argue that communities based on local identity and area may be represent:

'a socially interactive space inhabited by a close network of households, most of whom are known to one another and who, to a high degree participate in common social activities, exchange information, engage in mutual aid and support and are conscious of a common identity, a belonging together' (1989: 169).

In Cater and Jones' imagining the community is a representation of civic communitarianism.

As discussed above community members may exhibit shared characteristics, norms, or values. Community may also be defined by those who are excluded from the community due to an apparent lack of shared identity or subscription to the correct norms and values as defined by the community members. For example, Le Bon (1895) influenced many radical right politicians with his view of the 'national community' that promoted the idea of exclusivity and belonging a theory employed by dictators such as Hitler and Mussolini to the detriment of those who did not belong.

Finally, Delanty (2010) explores a prominent theme in community research, the fall of community. It is said that due to globalisation and increased social mobility traditional views

of community no longer provide appropriate mechanisms for definition. Delanty argues that such problems are only appropriate for notions of community based on the idea of place. He argues that with changes in the way we communicate (for example as a result of technological changes which mean that distance no longer precludes the ability to stay in contact) that community may still be in existence, even though it may be 'geographically dispersed'. (Eade, 1997; Delanty; 2003; Clark, 2007). A significant body of research related to the fall of community relates to the fall of 'urban communities' more specifically, the city.

Delanty calls these new forms of community that are not subject to spatial proximity: communication communities. The members of communication communities are not simply members of one community but a multitude of overlapping and interlinked communities with different bonds and obligations attached to each. These communication communities, he argues, should be viewed as a network. He says 'community today is abstract and lacks visibility and unity, more an imagined condition than a symbolically shaped reality based on fixed reference points' (Delanty, 2003: 188). Support for this theory is the idea that communities based on territorial design are no longer appropriate. For example, Clarke (2007) wrote 'the weakening of the social bonds in and to a bounded space has contributed to the popularity of academic-oriented community studies since the 1960s' (2007: 5). The connotations of weakening bonds are a prominent theme in community research. For example, in studies by Larsen et al., (2005) and Urry (2000) the lack of a geographic community has led to the development of networked communities which no longer are anchored to a specific geographic area. The result of this is that people may be members of disparate and diffused communities globally and locally. However, Clarke (2007) argues that despite new mechanisms for communication and the advent of cheaper travel, all of which can mean that community no longer has a geographic imperative there is still in many cases a predominant spatial element associated with community and belongingness. He gives a number of examples proposing the importance of space. One example is that of the social locale, he states:

'... and of course, some people, in some places, still communicate with others in their immediate social locale. In particular, home-based women involved for example in childcare, or social groups such as the elderly, young people, or the poor, may all have locally situated networks'. (Clarke, 2007: 6).

This sociologically influenced view of community sees a larger community built-up of several sub-networks. As noted by Delanty (2003):

'In effect, community was seen as pertaining to relatively small groups, such as neighbourhoods, based on mutual interdependence and common forms of life. These communities might be quite small, perhaps extending over a few blocks but were held to be the foundation for a sense of belonging based on shared

experiences, a common language, kinship ties and above all inhabiting a common spatial life-world.' (2003: 892).

The themes of community within current literature indicate a departure from large-scale community structures such as the city. Instead, generalised communities encompassing a number of diverse groups all living under the yolk of a single community identity has given way to the development of small-scale communities all with a distinct personality and culture. These have been identified in a number of ways, and labelled 'communication-communities', 'sub-communities' 'communities relevant to a spatial area'. However, perhaps the most interesting view of community for the purposes of this research is the idea of 'networked communities'.

We can see these themes within the restorative literature, for example, Braithwaite (1989) would likely agree that a thick community is most effective in reintegrating offenders post-wrongdoing, the fall of the community is discussed by Christie (1997) when he writes on 'killed communities'. However, concepts such as communication communities have not yet permeated the restorative literature. Albeit, within the recent Coronavirus pandemic, we did begin to see the emergence of 'online or virtual circles' (Adams and Wachtel, 2020) prompted by the need to find alternative mechanisms to work and educate.

3.5 An Alternative View of Community: Community as Networks?

As we have seen, a criticism of community is that traditional views of community are no longer appropriate due to globalisation and a more individualistic society.

In response to this, new theories on community were developed which did not rely on the need for a fixed-point, or communities of space. These network communities were defined by relationships and common activity. Fragmented communities, again, do not feature comprehensively within the wider restorative literature, but could offer interest as a way of exploring a modern understanding of community.

For example, Wellman (1979) wrote:

'The utility of the network perspective is that it does not take as its starting point putative solidarities – local or kin – nor does it seek primarily to find and explain the persistence of solidarity sentiments' (Wellman, 1979: 1203).

This idea is affirmed by the work of Bulmer (1985):

'A major virtue of shifting the emphasis from the study of 'community' to the study of the primary group – whether made up of neighbours, friends or kin – is that it gets away from the metaphysical problem of community. The study of

neighbours, for example, indeed focuses upon the social relationships of geographical propinquity and certainly the term 'neighbour' needs careful definition ... but it does not involve the reification of a geographical or structural entity that has proved so problematic in the case of 'community'.' (1985; 434).

Many theorists have recognised the problem of attaching a community to a space, as it may be more appropriate to view communities as a number of interlinked groups which people may enter into and out of depending on the role of that group of people in their life. This plays a dominant role in the literature. This network framing has been applied to a number of social situations to explain the change of social phenomenon and the devolution of certain community types.

For example, the network perspective has been useful in understanding so-called 'urban-communities'. Weber (1958) wrote of the prominent role of the city in empowering and engaging communities. The sense of belongingness derived from being a member of a city meant that inhabitants could benefit from a series of interconnecting social relations (Delanty, 2003). It gave them autonomy from the state and allowed them to form closer interpersonal communities that would encourage trade and compromise. As the state developed a more prominent role, the city as a community entity became less prominent in the everyday lives of its members. People became less aligned to space and became more loyal to networks. It was no longer the case that people were a part of a singular community, rather that they would share similarities and allegiances with a number of different networks. These can be referred to as social networks. Social networks can be defined in two ways according to Wilmott (1986). One definition of social network can be restricted simply to the number of people a person knows. It does not take account of the quality or extent of that relationship; it is simply based on a numerical sum. The other definition refers to the number of people that a person knows and how many of those people know each other. Often this is classified as a net. How significantly each of those component 'net' members effectively impact on each other can lead to further categorisation. For example, a close-knit social network would be one in which the members interact frequently and there is a high level of interdependence, whereas a loose-knit community would be one in which the members interact infrequently and there is little dependence on each other.

This idea of 'closeness' within communities becomes a prominent theme in the literature on communities and has ramifications for our understanding of the topic. Granovetter (1973; 1984) has explored the themes of strength of social networks he stated:

'the crucial variable [affecting the structure of a social network] is that of whether one's friends tend to know one another ('close-knit' networks) or not (loose knit networks).' (Barnes, 1969; Tilly, 1969).

Epstein points out, those with whom one interacts most intensely and most regularly and who are therefore also likely come to know one another' the 'effective network'; 'the remainder constitute the 'extended network' (Epstein, 1969:110)

The social network view presents a view of the community in which there is a reason behind the groups and spaces that people engage with. Instead of being chaotic or imposed, networks are instead organised structures which members can belong to depending on their particular needs at that time (Scott, 2000). A social network view sees community as 'networked individuals'. As discussed by Wellman (2001):

'we find community in networks, not groups ... In networked societies: boundaries are permeable, interactions are with diverse others, connections switch between multiple networks and hierarchies can be flatter and recursive ... Communities are far flung, loosely bounded, sparsely knit, and fragmentary. Most people operate in multiple, thinly connected partial communities as they deal with networks of kin, neighbours and friends, workmates and organisational ties, rather than fitting into the same group as those around them, each person has his/her own personal community' (Wellman, 2001; p222, cited in Larsen et al., 2005).

This theory of community has evolved with the fragmentation of society as discussed earlier. Without the presupposed necessary attachment to space or geography the theory of social networks allows for the recognition of the diverse and not always delineated social groups in which people can engage with. This ability to access networks depending on the needs of a particular individual and time is called networked individualism. This 'networked individualism' (Wellman, 2001; 2) allows people to switch between networks should the need arise.

Recent research on the 'small-world' hypotheses (Watts, 2003) states that the approaches the community such as the 'social network' approach can best represent certain new types of community that have come into existence. For example, Granovetter (1973) and his research on 'weak ties' noted that it is less likely that people live in recognisable and individual isolated communities in which there is little integration or communication with other communities. Currently, it is more likely that people live within a number of smaller communities linked together by individuals and organisations that engage with multiple communities. The benefit of these weak ties is that people have access to greater opportunity, as they are able to access different networks dependent on need. People are less dependent on individuals to whom they have a strong community relationship. Granovetter (1973; 1983) stated that how strong

or weak a community tie is can be defined by 'a combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy and the reciprocal services which characterise a tie' (1973: 1361). Weak ties, usually resultant of a reliance of services or the need to access different communities can encourage stronger integration with a number of disparate and diverse communities, whereas communities predicated on strong social bonds are usually more insular and therefore less capable of encouraging greater diversity within community structures. The work done by Granovetter has diverse applicability, especially in the context of poorer people. For example, in his 1983 research Granovetter found that poorer people rely heavily on strong community bonds. This has a potentially detrimental effect on their social and economic position (Lomnitz, 1977; Stack, 1994).

For example, studies by Suttles (1968) and Gans (1962, 1983) view community as something that is distinct to the locality of the area. In Whyte's study on Italian Communities in Boston it was seen that the strength of the community ties and the preservation of their community structure meant that they were unable to receive benefits such as new bridges or community rejuvenation from their local government department as they did not have the requisite weak ties which would enable them to open a discourse.

However, Granovetter (1983) does state that strong ties do have a function. Whilst it may be the case that weak community ties can open up opportunities for greater resource accrument or the ability to move between communities to source important information outside one's own social circle, the weakness of the bonds means that people within these communities often cannot be relied on for social or moral aid. He states:

'weak ties provide people with access to information about resources beyond those available in their own social circle; but strong ties have greater motivation to be of assistance and are typically more easily available' (1983: 209).

In relation to the literature, we can see a number of distinct themes emerge. It is no longer the case that community is a defined structure with a concrete set of norms and values that all community members understand and accept. It is now more likely that due to a myriad of factors including but not limited to, globalisation, technological advancement, and the need for weaker community structures to include diversity and diffusion, that the understanding of community has changed significantly. Community can now be understood as a series of networks, how closely-knit the network is dependent on the interactions of the people within said network. The research indicates that networks with weaker ties are more able to engage with other networks for the benefit of the network members. Those networks which have stronger ties are less capable of inter network interaction and as a result become insular.

Whilst this would indicate strong bonds with the other members of the network, the research indicates that this has led to a lesser ability of the members of the network to access social and economic benefits. These features could be of interest to restorative writers in exploring new ways of envisioning a restorative community. Whilst the understandings of community as place or communities of care do offer general conceptions of community, the fact that this understanding is so general means that we lose important specificity which may help a reader understand the nuance of community relationships more effectively, especially in more modern contexts.

3.6 Virtual Communities

With the developments in community literature stating community can no longer be tethered to some physical space, interesting developments have been made in the understanding of the 'virtual' community or technological communities (Castells, 1996; 2000; 2001; Cairncross, 2001). Wellman (2001) stated that the most interesting developments of community in recent times have been related to technological change. Schools are aware of these developments and use them to communicate with their communities. For example, my research school utilised Twitter to try and engage with community members who they felt were difficult to reach practically.

The advent of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and other forms of new interactive media means that networks can be developed worldwide. This poses interesting questions for viewing these networks according to traditional views of the community. New media may allow individuals from different countries to converse and interact as friends; they may provide new mechanisms for communication with geographic neighbours. The impact of the 'virtual community' has resulted in the formation of new types of relationships between members of communities. For example:

'Networks are built by the choices and strategies of social actors, be it individuals, families or social groups. Thus, the major transformation of sociability in complex societies took place with the substitution of networks for spatial communities as major form of sociability'. (Delanty, 2003: 177).

The rise of the 'virtual community' has meant that communities are even less tied to a physical space. Instead, communities may now be seen as revolving around the individual due to the fact that interaction in the virtual community is not based on any particular place but based on person-to-person communication. When the research was undertaken in respect of this topic there was not the prevalence of internet communication nor the myriad of devices and mechanisms in which people could engage the virtual community. Research by Wellman (2001) cites a Microsoft messaging service – a service which is now all-but defunct but paved

way for numerous forms of software which enable these sorts of communication. Talking services such as MSN have been replaced by video calling, with Skype being used for business calls and or enabling families to communicate face to face over long distances. Additionally, when the research was done, Wellman (2001) noted that these forms of virtual communication were only available to the affluent. Painting a picture of the 'computer consultant in Silicon Valley' (2001:241). Also, Hine and Mitchell (2001), Hodgson and Turner (2003) and Kenyon et al., (2002) comment on the digital divide which exists between those who have the means to access devices which enable virtual communication and those who do not. They argue that access to devices is no longer dependent on wealth or privilege. Most young people will own a device capable of some form of virtual communication – a recent study by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (2015) found that young people (aged 18 – 24) were using their smart phones every other minute of the day.

However, research has also suggested that despite the increase in use of mobile forms of technology, this has not necessarily meant that face to face interaction is now obsolete or redundant. Theorists argue that communication between community members now has a quality variable. In which face to face communication is seen as a higher form of communication than that of mobile or virtual communication (Cairncross, 2001). This is particularly predominant for certain groups of people, for example, the elderly or very young, those in the immediate community locale, those without the mechanisms for virtual communication, those whose networks remain attached to place and those who live together in a physical space, even if within that space, there is access to other forms of mobile technology.

The purpose of this chapter was to explore new forms of community which are beginning to emerge. Due to the advent of new technologies, we are developing novel ways to form community bonds, which may not have even been considered even ten years ago. Now, our community may consist of a network of global stakeholders enabled through internet communication and instant video conferencing. The impact of these new forms of community have not yet been discussed in detail in the general restorative literature. However, as we progress, we may begin to see virtual family conferencing, online victim-offender mediation, or e-restorative practices.

3.7 The Theoretical Benefits of Community Involvement

Johnstone (2011) states there are two primary rationales for community involvement in restorative justice processes. These are, firstly, that the community is the entity with the most power to influence the process (by encouraging the offender to repair the harm and to

prevent future reoffending by the offender). Secondly, by involving the community in the restorative process we can empower the community and build an ability in the community to self-regulate and construct mechanisms to manage subsequent conflict which may arise, or to avoid future conflict altogether.

Firstly, I will explore the role of the community in influencing the restorative justice processes. McCold (2004) notes that when a crime is committed, the community and offender owe a responsibility to the victim to ensure their needs are met. The justification for this is referred to by Marshall (1992) who states that if it is expected that the offender takes responsibility for a crime, this must be balanced with the community accepting responsibility for its role in an offence. He notes 'causes of crime lie as much in social arrangement as in the individual' (1992: 5). This is a departure from the normative view of crime which imposes blame on the individual (the offender). In Marshall's variant, crime is the responsibility of all members of the community and the offender is also the responsibility of the community. Mika (1992) supports the notion that the community can affect the reconciliation process beneficially, remarking that reconciliation and restitution of the victim and offender can be achieved through the nurturing presence of the community. Knopp (1991) claims that re-education programmes for offenders can be delivered through the support of the community. The purpose of these education programmes is to discourage recidivistic behaviour of the offender. He cites the example of the Safer Society Program which looks to deter potential offensive behaviour in young men.

A famous exploration of the community as an influencer is promoted by Braithwaite in his book *'Crime, Shame and Reintegration'* (1989). In which he discusses the potential of 'reintegrative shaming' on crime reduction and how this function can be effectively employed by a supportive community. Braithwaite notes that in societies which possess strong community bonds, the effect of shaming harmful behaviour is potent in making offenders less likely to reoffend. He contrasts reintegrative shaming, in which the harmful conduct by an individual is condemned, but the individual is not ostracised, with stigmatising shaming. According to Braithwaite, stigmatising shaming (condemning the offender and their actions) has the effect of applying a deviant label to offenders which they feel unable to change. As consequence, they are more likely to see themselves as perpetually deviant and go on to reoffend. He argues that where there is a strong condemnation of crime within a community, people in the community are less likely to offend. He also notes that if there are high levels of interdependence between the community actors, the impact of those attachments can be used to effectively reintegrate offenders.

Secondly, I will explore the democratising, empowering functions of community. Sawin and Zehr (2007) state that conventional criminal justice is criticised on the basis that it fails to engage or empower those affected by crime. They declare that a purpose of restorative justice is to focus on the engagement and empowerment of those otherwise disempowered through traditional responses to crime. The candidates needing empowerment, according to Sawin and Zehr are, the victim and the community, as both are impacted directly by crime, but often forgotten through normal criminal practices. Northey (1992) notes that empowering communities is important as it allows them to re-establish the relationships where relationships have been broken, the victim should be given the opportunity to discuss the harm they have suffered so that they may feel empowered and restored (Herman, 1992).

Messmer and Otto (1992) state that empowerment of all parties is most effective when it is supported by all participants in the restorative community. This is important as McCold (1994) argues that empowerment should take place within the community, so that they can subsequently empower the victim and the offender. If there is a strong, empowered community, it will then be able to meet the needs of the individuals contained within the community.

Empowerment may also mean the ability of individuals or the community to manage their own conflict (Bush and Folger, 1994), or it could be the feeling of control regained, either by the victim or the community (Zehr, 1990). This sense of empowerment is a more constructive understanding of the term. If we create within individuals the opportunity to manage their own conflict, there will be less reliance on external, perhaps State, apparatuses and therefore, higher individual satisfaction (Wachtel, 2001).

Christie (1977) focuses heavily on the notion of community empowerment, in his work '*Conflicts as Property*' a summary of which is worthy of inclusion in this literature review. Partly as it focuses on the concept of returning criminal conduct to the community, but also, because Christie refers substantially to the importance of the victim and offender within the community. Whilst some of this content may not be as relevant to the empowerment focus, it is important for the total understanding of Christie's theory. He commented that when State agencies administer the responses to criminal wrongdoing, they remove the opportunity for communities to manage their own conflict. This monopolisation of conflict by the State agencies removes various opportunities for those involved in the conflict. Christie sees this from various perspectives. On one level, he asserts that through professionalising crime states remove the chance for 'activity and participation' at a societal level (1977: 7). By removing the chance for involvement in conflict he contends that States remove the opportunity to engage

people in matters that are of obvious importance to them. He recognises that of those who are not involved where they may wish to be, the victim is hit the hardest. Christie maintains that when the case is described in court it is the prosecution that argues de facto on the behalf of the victim, instead of the victim being allowed to put forward their own case.

In addition, Christie sees conflict as an opportunity for 'norm-clarification'. The learning opportunities that conflict presents for us all. Substantial discussions about the role of law and its value are missed opportunities when the State agencies monopolise conflict. Instead of asking why questions or seeking to adapt the mechanisms of the law to suit individual cases, we see a blind application of legal justification on procedural grounds and custom. He recognises that surely the most appropriate outcome in the aftermath of an action should be left to the parties to compromise on. The best outcome for Christie in this instance is one which both parties are happy with.

Lastly, he describes an individual specific loss to the victim. That is the chance for victims to cure anxiety and misconceptions about crime and criminals – Christie realises the subsequent impact that this has for society more generally. To paraphrase, there are consequences for both offenders and victims after a crime has been committed. The victim possesses needs which should be addressed. These also vary depending on the type of crime they have been a victim of. However, there are some general needs that most victims will possess. There is usually a need to understand why they were the victim of a crime and what about their personal characteristics led to them being targeted. There is most likely a desire to, on some level, know the offender as this will inform the latter concern. There may be humiliation and a need to actively describe the impact that a crime has had. Primarily, Christie says that there is a need for 'reason' (1977: 8). That is the need to avoid additional harm to the victim.

Christie does not restrict his focus simply to the victim, but also examines how the criminal process can impact on the offender. He recognises that attempting to alter our view to address the needs of the offender can be somewhat problematic. Stating that the system currently seeks to mete out guilt and punishment to offenders rather than recognising the issues which may underpin the offences they have committed. This can be done, he contends, through the meeting of offenders and victims and to see crime as an action which requires restitution, rather than simple punishment. Christie puts forward the case for offender involvement: 'The offender gets a possibility to change his position from being a listener in a discussion ... into a participant discussion of how he can make it good again' (1977: 9).

The role of community has a number of additional number of benefits not considered by Christie at the time. For example, Maruna (2011) and Rossner (2013) argued the potential for

improving social solidarity through community involvement. This intertwines with the work of Christie on the social value of reinvesting crime into communities and the work done by Braithwaite on reintegrative shaming which views criminality in very practical terms. If we reintegrate offenders into the community there is a potential to manage them, avoid the recurrence of the types of actions that led to the problem in the first instance and support the victims. In these supportive communities based on the care of the individuals we can increase social bonds and social capital (Tyler et al., 2007).

In terms of impact, one aspect of community involvement is the potential impact that community involvement can have on recidivism. Christie recognised this potential. He said that whilst reduction of recidivism need not necessarily be the main aim of community involvement and that even without proof of community involvement reducing reoffending rates the theory would still be valuable, he imagined the positive impact that community involvement could have.

Another aspect of community worthy of exploration is the notion that the community can be an indirect victim of crime. Schiff (2007) notes that when a crime is committed, there are people with a direct role/impact such as the victim and the offender, but there are also secondary victims who form part of the group of additional parties requiring restoration, these people may be family members of the victim and offender, witnesses who were involved in the offence, or simply, the community that has been disrupted by crime. She refers to this as a violation of norms and standards or collective living. It is therefore a rationale, that, as the community is a secondary victim in crime that the community also requires restoration and should therefore be involved in any process which could achieve that (Clear and Karp, 2000).

3.8 Disadvantages of Community Involvement

Whilst I have already referred to disadvantages of community involvement in the overview of restorative justice in the previous chapter, I will now explore these in greater detail. I will draw heavily on the work by Willis (2016) who has provided an effective and interesting insight into some notional disadvantages of and barriers to community involvement. Drawing together work done by other prominent writers in the field.

Walgrave (2008) states that the desire for community involvement in restorative justice is a misguided search. Firstly, he notes that even though community may be an attractive alternative to the criminal just system, the practical community cannot be 'delimited' (2008: 76-77). There is a lack of clarity about which community we should engage with (if this is even possible). In court processes the processes are clearly designated and defined. Willis (2016)

notes that, often when offering the community as replacement of State institutions, the outcomes have not been positive. She cites Weisberg (2003) who refers to the deinstitutionalisation of mental asylums in the USA. The hospitals were replaced by a programme of informal community support. It transpired this community did not actually exist and as a result there was a total lack of any provision for mentally ill people who were left to reside in 'disadvantaged ghettos' (Willis, 2016: 176). Braithwaite (1989) notes that a lack of definition of community is answered by using the communities of care concept. He argues that everyone has a pool of supportive individuals they can draw from. However, this notion has also been rebutted, as subsequent questions have then been asked about the ability of 'communities of care' to make rules within a community, or enforce accepted norms (Crawford and Clear, 2001; Umbreit, Vos et al., 2004).

An additional issue of community involvement is inconsistency/ambiguity of community approach and the potential unfairness that may result (McCold, 2000). I have discussed this in the overview of restorative justice in the previous chapter under the idea of principled sentencing, but I will now refer to it with greater specificity. I noted that principled sentencing is the idea that there is a proportionate remedy to an offence, and that, in traditional criminal justice processes, this sentence will be applied to meet a statutory or precedent-based standard, depending on the offence for which the defendant is convicted. Ashworth (1986; 1993) writes that there is no safeguarding for inconsistent application of outcomes in restorative justice where the resolution of an offence is left to the community. The community may adopt a differentiated approach to the offences based on the level of harm to the victim, the wishes or desires of the victim, and a myriad of other factors for which generalisable approaches may not be construed. This subjectivity over objectivity may result in discrimination of participants on grounds of race, gender, class, or status within the community, which would have negative consequences for the fairness of the processes (Willis, 2016).

Another problem of community involvement is the power imbalance that may exist within a community which can impact on the fair treatment of individuals in restorative processes. Weisberg (2003) states that, whilst we would ideally like to envisage communities as egalitarian spaces, free from internal conflict, this is not always, or even often the case. There are hierarchical structures which exist in communities which can 'subsume the voices of the minority' and lead to the 'exclusion of outsiders' Willis (2016: 177). This raises questions about the procedural fairness of potential community-led responses to crime and calls into question the practical legitimacy of these processes. Especially when they are not supported by the system of checks and balances that exist in the criminal system. For example, appeals and

enforceable statutory guidelines which ensure a level of equanimity in practice (Johnstone, 2011). There is also the issue of individuals rights being sacrificed for an overall community gain which is a risk when presenting communities as internally homogenous (Crawford, 1999, 2002; Putnam, 2001). This idea also reflects another issue in community involvement, that community is often depicted as providing an overwhelmingly positive function, presupposing the homogeneity referred to by Putnam and Crawford. However, as Abel notes; that whilst community is an essential ingredient of social life, it can also be controlling, oppressive and degrading, just as it can be elevating, and fulfilling (1995).

Finally, Willis (2016) refers to the criticism of involving communities of place. She states that whilst viewing community as a spatial entity can provide some benefits. There are other negative aspects of communities of place. By providing a community definition focussed solely on place, it negates the experiential, or shared moral aspects of community. Just because people live in the same place, that does not mean there is commonality or links between the norms and values they hold, their perceptions of right and wrong or a representation of the diverse interests located within a community (Crawford, 1994; Ashworth, 2001). Instead, there may be a group of individuals whose only link is the geographic space. As a consequence, if this community is involved practically in restorative justice processes there will be a randomness to the participation of community that renders the potential values of community involvement (knowledge of victim and offender, knowledge of context of crime, solving the harm felt by the community) benign (Crawford, 1999; Crawford and Clear, 2001; Moulton, 2003; Souza and Dhimi, 2008).

In this chapter I have explored an overview of community and have provided an outline of the literature pertinent to my research questions. In summary, we can see that there are problems defining the term 'community' in restorative justice and that definitions vary depending on the theorist. I have also summarised the theoretical benefits of community in both restorative justice and practice and lastly, examined some of the potential negative aspects of community involvement in restorative justice. The focus of this chapter was to provide a theoretical underpinning to my research questions, from which, I can then explore my own findings in the light of this literature.

3.9 Defining Community in This Study

When attempting to define the restorative 'community' in my study, I faced the same initial difficulties as seen in the literature. 'Community' may vary depending on the expectations and intent of those seeking to implement restorative practices. It can also be contingent on which theoretical position one takes (for example, a preference as to a proactive or reactive model of

restorative practice). I did also not wish to presuppose the existence of any form of community in my research site, nor did I want to impose any definition upon my participants which may not have already been present. The exploratory nature of my research meant that I wished to simply ascertain which form of 'community' existed in my research site. It was indicated to me, in conversations with school leaders that the desired community model was a 'whole-school' restorative community as discussed in chapter 3.3.1. Through the course of my research, it was identified that their vision of the whole school community included the school and its direct participants, for example: staff, students and leaders and another key stakeholder, parents. When undertaking any restorative process, it was contended by leaders that there should be a space for all these participants as was there intent.

Chapter 4 Research Design and Methodology

The purpose of this research was to explore a key theme in restorative practices: the restorative community. My aims were to explore how restorative practices were being used at the school and what role the community played in these. The following research questions provided the scaffold for this research. As Glaser and Strauss state that 'research questions are important as they guide the research (both the design of it and the doing of it)' (1967: 43):

1. How is the restorative community defined in the secondary school setting?
2. What is the rationale for the inclusion of the restorative community?
3. How is the restorative community involved practically, what role does it undertake?
4. What impact does the involvement of the restorative community have, are there any benefits?
5. What are the challenges or drawbacks in involving the restorative community in the school?

To answer these questions, I undertook an empirical study of one school which had decided to implement restorative practices as part of its behaviour policy. This school was interesting as it was located in a socio-economically deprived area which posed additional challenges. Also, due to the institutional change that had taken place with turnover of management and staff, the school had not yet fully defined their approach to restorative practices and were struggling in how to construct and orient the relational dynamic between itself and its community. I will be undertaking a deeper focus of the school's community in the next chapter.

In interviews with the school's key stakeholders (school leaders, teachers, support staff, students, and parents) and accessible members of the wider community I asked questions with the intention of exploring their subjective definitions of their restorative community. These questions initially looked at a number of perceptions such as: what role restorative practices played in their school lives, what the benefits of restorative practices were according to my participants and the disadvantages or negatives of restorative practices.

The school recruited students from an area that suffers high levels of socio-economic poverty. This was an important contextual factor and informed many of my conversations with students and staff. Often the students' experience of education was informed by their upbringing, for example, if parents had a negative experience with school, this could be reflected in the attitude of their children. Staff participants referred often to the 'estate' (the area proximate

to the school) and the social and cultural norms which required unpicking and exploring that originated from the 'estate'. Staff reported the experience of the students at the school was different to that of most children, often the children would be primary carers to parents or siblings, they may have to work to support their family, have one or no parents to support them and/or they could be in local authority care. Other staff mentioned that I would find it difficult to permeate an untrusting student group, wary of outsiders.

As the empirical research developed, I gained increased access to the site and participants. I was able to walk the corridors and speak to students and staff informally. I became better informed about the culture and customs of the school, the things the participants deemed important and an understanding of schooling and the role of restorative practice in this individual school. Also, I started to see how the dynamics between students and staff operated. The points of conflict and where the school sought to use restorative practices. From this I gained an insight into the specific models of restorative practices the school employed and how the students responded to these and perceived them.

The following chapter will document my methodological choices and my approach to research. Initially, I will explore how my design choices were informed by my research site. In the latter part of the chapter, I will discuss the methodologies I employed with detailed reference to the specific methods I utilised and a reflection of how these were implemented in my fieldwork.

4.1 Qualitative Research

When planning my empirical work, I considered several design approaches. However, I was guided by the need to represent the views of my participants in the most authentic and rich way possible and in a way that was relevant and accurate (Gough et al., 2003). My research consisted of an exploration into an important theme, emerging from a body of research: the restorative community in restorative practices. I wanted to, in part, establish how my participants viewed their community and the role it played in restorative practices but also explore generally the role of restorative practices in this specific school context. As my research questions developed, I chose to adopt a qualitative data approach. Stake (1995) states that qualitative research methods allow for exploration and deep meaning and what Geertz (1973) calls 'deep description', of social settings and of individuals. My interview questions were formed around 'how' and 'what' propositions such as: what is the role of the community? What are the benefits? What are the drawbacks and disadvantages? How is the restorative community engaged and for what purpose? The interview questions were framed in such a way to elicit extended responses from my participants which would expose their

experience and opinions of restorative practices and the community (Seidman, 1991; Patton, 2002; Marecek, 2003).

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998) a qualitative approach allows for the exploration of a phenomenon. Specifically, how the research participants may perceive that phenomenon. Qualitative approaches focus on lived experiences of participants within a social setting and how the phenomenon studied informs or impacts on that experience (Jones, Torres and Armino, 2006; Braun and Clarke, 2013). Again, this research is driven by the experiences of my participants. The exploration of restorative practices in the school was benefitted by a deep understanding of how they have experienced them and to represent my participants' views of the term, I wanted to understand and was interested in how their views were formed (Kvale, 1996). Focussing on participant experience led to some interesting deep descriptions of the site which enhanced my research (Geertz, 1973; Seidman, 1991; Kvale, 2006). One notable example was the resource centre manager describing in detail, the 'febrile nature' of the building and the ever-present threat of violence that he felt walking the corridors, understanding the fear that he expressed, walking the corridors provides important contextual information in understanding why the school turned to a restorative approach. Understanding these lived experiences (Bryman, 2015) of my participant's also enabled me to research the phenomenon from their different perspectives. Leaders, teachers and students all had a different interaction with restorative practices, leaders stated that they were motivated by a desire to improve the whole-school, teachers and pastoral staff professed a diverse range of experience with restorative practices, some positive and some negative and student response was even more diverse, some favouring a restorative approach and others seeing it as an easy option. This is supported by the work of Maxwell (1994) who writes that qualitative methods allow researchers to understand people and perspectives that are lost when adopting a quantitative data collection approach. This has led to the idea that qualitative data allows researchers to see through the eyes of the people studied, particularly when they may have differing experiences of the phenomenon (Jones, 2002). For my research, it was useful to represent my participants' views and then see how their experiences could be compared with the expected outcomes of restorative practices as defined within the body of the wider restorative literature.

When I discussed the potential of undertaking research in the setting, the Headteacher remarked on the difficulty I would have in getting the students to participate in the research. He said that the students who attended the school were insular and wary of outsiders (this is supported by comments made by the Assistant Headteacher for Safeguarding in Chapter 5). I decided that there was a value in, as far as possible within my research timeframe, immersing

myself in the world of the participants. In doing so, I hoped that I would be able to mitigate the potential wariness and mistrust that could be fostered by potential research participants.

Krauss (2005) states the fact that many aspects of the social world are 'infused with personal meaning' (2005: 1) and that a function of qualitative research is the ability to view a phenomenon within its context and immerse oneself in the culture and allow the questions to emerge through the study. The immersion that I undertook is reflected in my interviews with the students. Because of my approach I was able to understand the teachers they spoke about, their points of reference and be sensitive to the relational dynamics which informed their interactions with friends. My decision to use an approach which allowed for this level of involvement is supported by Merriam who states that qualitative approaches enable 'understand(ing) how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds and what meaning they attribute to their experiences' (2009: 5).

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) state that qualitative research methods emphasise the qualities of entities, processes and meanings that could not be experimentally examined or measured (if measurable at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency. This is supported by Lofland and Lofland (1996) who argue that face to face interaction provides an effective mechanism to understand the words of another human being. They argue that this allows the researcher to generate data but also to understand the information that sits behind the responses and to understand the social world from which the information is derived and constructed. Kaplan (2015) stated that not only did she wish to emphasise the world view of her participants but also to focus on understanding their everyday lives in their own terms and that utilising a qualitative approach was an effective mechanism in which to do this. This notion of understanding the relationship between social actors and the social world was important in this study. When staff spoke negatively of restorative practices it was often because they did not feel a clear training programme was in place. Additionally, when the wider community did not see a function for restorative approaches it was often stated by participants that they did not know the purpose for the meeting they were called to, in one case, the parent believed they had been brought into the academy to be castigated for the poor behaviour of their child.

Qualitative methods also place emphasis on the role of the researcher in the study (Creswell, 2005). The researcher is both the gatherer and interpreter of the findings. As a researcher, I am aware of my preconceptions that I bring to my fieldwork, these preconceptions will be discussed in further detail in the research positionality component of this chapter.

Overall, the rationale for a qualitative approach was to represent the views of my research participants as authentically as possible as it was important to explore my participant's views of their own restorative community, enhancing the understanding of the theme in this particular context. The research site had a multi-layered structure which required exploration to understand how the restorative approaches functioned across the entire school. In addition, the setting was substantially informed by its context and cohort. Reflecting the views of my participants, in the detail necessary was best achieved through a qualitative model (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

4.2 Theoretical Underpinnings/Epistemology

The epistemology of this research was Constructivism. According to Bryman 'Constructivism challenges the suggestion that categories such as organisation and culture are pre given' (2015: 33). This research is informed by the perceptions of my research participants and their understanding of restorative practices and their view of community. These interpretations were subjective to the person providing them. Crotty (1998) defines Constructivism as an approach which emphasises that people subjectively construct different meanings and have different perceptions, even when experiencing the same event. Constructivism propositions that knowledge is not discovered but constructed by individual based on their experiences (Fosnot, 1996; Crotty, 1998; Hendry, Frommer and Walker, 1998). This theoretical position is of particular use when undertaking research in schools (Fosnot, 1996; Palinscar, 1998; Gillani, 2003).

Constructivism is a valid philosophical framework for this research as the meaning derived from my research was founded within my research participants. For example, the way participants perceived and engaged with restorative practices and the community and what they thought the role of restorative practices should be in the school. It promoted exploring the lived experiences of participants (Jones, Torres and Arminio, 2006). Whilst all participants expressed their perspective on the same phenomenon (restorative practices and community) their approach to, and perception of the phenomenon was specific to them (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997). Each participant constructed a different understanding of the phenomenon and even when the meanings had some narrative or thematic similarity (for example, often participants shared the view that there was a benefit to restorative practices), there was still subjective differences in the way these perceptions were justified by my participants (some thought they were beneficial for students, others felt they affirmed the behavioural message of the school). A Constructivist paradigm is suitable when attempting to understand the meanings that individuals hold about the phenomenon being studied and the perceptions and

experiences of individuals within research (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997; Jones, 2002; Jones, Torres and Arminio, 2006).

According to Merriam (2002) and Crotty (1998) Constructivist approaches favour an inductive (or in my case, iterative) research approach where the preconceived notions of researchers are kept to a minimum and instead, the perceptions of participants are explored using open-ended questions.

4.3 Case Study Research

Qualitative case study research was the chosen methodology for this study. In the following section I will define the rationale for this approach and case study research suited my empirical work. Initially I will examine the background of case-study research and then establish how these attributes were of benefit to my research.

The 'case' in my research was a single secondary school which used restorative practices as an approach to behaviour management, this was stipulated in their behaviour policy (a document on the school's website provides information on the conduct of the school). This research was deeply case-driven, whilst the research questions were formed in draft prior to entering the setting, much of the early research was iterative (Stake, 1995). My iterative process is as follows: I possessed a number of ideas and preconceptions informed by the literature of restorative practices in schools, but I did not want to be held hostage to them. My research focussed on how the school studied implemented the theories of restorative practices and to what end and with what level of success. As such I wanted to ensure that my exploration of the case study was as deep as possible in the research timeframe. I entered the setting with some generic research questions which formed a skeleton for my inquiry but as my research progressed a number of additional factors emerged which informed wider questions. For example, prior to entering the site I was unaware of the practical impediments that the wider community faced when trying to engage with the school (parents said that they couldn't get in due to childcare, there was a high proportion of single-parent or no-parent families, again, a high proportion of fostered students). These were just a small number of practical matters that I could only be aware of after the research began, but which, in tandem with other matters such as apathy and disengagement became an interesting factor in my research. After being made aware of this during an interview, I was able to focus on the topic in subsequent interviews and this formed a discussion point during my analysis chapter.

Yin (2003; 2009) argued that case study research is suited to situations where the researcher has little control over the events researched or little is known about the phenomenon studied.

Where it is difficult to separate the phenomenon from the case then employing a case study approach will be appropriate. Stake (1995) describes case study research as a strategy of inquiry where the researcher explores an in-depth programme, event, activity or one or more individuals. My research was looking at the phenomenon of community in restorative practices, looking at my participants' perception of the theme and exploring the role of restorative practices within the case. As stated in the previous chapter, depth was required to explore the different inter-relational dynamics in the setting.

Punch, describing case study research notes:

'The basic idea is that one case will be studied in detail using whatever methods seem appropriate. While there may be a variety of specific purposes the general objective is to develop and full an understanding of that case as is possible' (1998: 150)

For my study, developing a deep understanding of the case was integral to understanding how my participants formed their perceptions. Definitions of 'community' were heavily influenced by the relationships between the members of the school. The relationship the school had with its wider community was informed by things that occurred prior to the research. In the two years before my research the school had initiated policies which caused friction with its community. There was a pre-existing antagonism which required unpicking. I had to view the setting framed within these wider contextual factors as they had an impact for my research and the relational dynamics that I sought to explore. Additionally, the development of restorative practices at the school could not be viewed in isolation, it was a process that had taken place over (at least) two years. Some of the staff had experienced this change, others had not. Some students interviewed had been at the school for five years and experienced the transition to restorative practices, for others it was all they ever knew of the school. I wanted a holistic insight into the views of my participants reflecting their understanding of their context and according to Cohen and Thomas (2009) and Yin (2003) a deep case study provides such a function.

When constructing my initial case study design, I was guided by Yin's (2009) five components of effective case study design. These are: 1, Research Questions, 2 Propositions or Purpose of Study 3, Unit Analysis, 4, logic that links data to propositions and 5, criteria for interpreting findings.

The research questions for this case study were general enough to allow for participants to ascribe their own meaning but provided a skeleton for discussion and points of inquiry. They focussed on how and what propositions. For example: How is the restorative community

defined? What is the role of the restorative community? What are the benefits of the restorative community? What are the disadvantages of engaging the restorative community? They posit two lines of enquiry, looking at definitions of community and perceptions of the restorative community and restorative practices.

The second element is defining the purpose of the study. The purpose of this study was to explore a prominent theme in restorative literature, the community. This is a term with a significant amount of theoretical association, and I wanted to explore this practically. Additionally, it looked at education and restorative practices and perceptions of school members, again, with a practical focus.

The third element looks at the unit analysis, Yin (2009) stated that the unit of analysis is the area of focus that a case study analyses. In this research the case to be studied is the perception of stakeholders in a secondary school.

The fourth element requires data to be connected to propositions or questions. As my data collection progressed, I had to look at how the themes which emerged answered my research questions - did the information I gather answer my research questions?

The fifth and last aspect of case study research is to interpret findings. Once I had established the patterns that emerged, it was then necessary to look at the interaction between my findings and the wider body of research that my initial research questions developed from.

4.4 Methods

The following sub-chapter will provide a theoretical justification for the methods I employed to collect participant responses. A substantial proportion of my data collection was done through semi-structured interviews with the staff members, students, and wider-community actors. However, this was supported by some participant observation to develop a more holistic overview of the school and its context.

4.4.1 Interviews

My primary research method was semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in the school (leaders, staff, and students) and members of the school's wider community (Patton, 2002; Braun and Clarke, 2013). In the next chapter, which will focus on the empirical process of my research, I will introduce the specific numbers of my research population and profiles of the respondents interviewed. The interviews were supported by participant and non-participant observations. Yin (2009) notes that case-study research benefits from having multiple sources of evidence. Therefore, when researchers are undertaking case-study

research they should adopt multiple methods to gather their data. This idea is endorsed by Stake (2008) who posits that triangulation of data through multiple methods allows for richer and more representative data.

When forming my interview strategy, I was mindful of Kvale's criteria for a successful interview (Kvale, 1996). According to Kvale, a successful interviewer is knowledgeable, structured, clear, gentle, sensitive, open, steers respondents, critical, remembers detail and clarifies if needed. Bryman (2015) adds two additional attributes good interviewers should possess, he feels they should be balanced and ethically sensitive. Interviews gave me the opportunity to develop a nuanced strategy which could be adapted dependent on the type of participant interviewed.

This was a very useful guide for my research as it afforded me a structure to approach interviews that could be responsive to the different interview groups I planned to question and develop my own personal interview style (Braun and Clarke, 2013). My interview participants varied in age and status. Some were young students, others Senior Leaders, staff members, some young and relatively inexperienced, other heads of department, and then there were members of the community.

Whilst I will discuss the practical undertaking of the interviews later, in terms of justifying my design I feel a practical reflection is useful. In my interviews I found that the staff were more comfortable with my seeking clarification of their responses, I could ask them to elaborate and they were able to do so more confidently, and they could be relied upon to do the majority of the talking. The student respondents required additional scene-setting, I needed to describe the research, its purpose, the fact that they would not be tested on any of the material and had to them provide them with more encouragement to respond, I also had to be more understanding when they deviated from the research topic and allow them more breaks. This flexibility of approach enabled by interviews is noted in the work of Rubin and Rubin who state that interviews allow the researcher to be 'on target while hanging loose' (1995: 42) this responsive and reactive approach was useful in allowing me to collect my data as it allowed me to treat participants as individuals with their own needs and preferences.

When interviewing members of the wider community I was less able to be as critical of their statements. I was heavily reliant on their good will to participate. Also, I had less time to spend with them for interviews and therefore less time to develop relationships of trust to adopt my method. The time spent was curtailed by practical factors, they had to go to work, they needed to return to childcare responsibilities or were unwilling to give up more of their time. I attempted to overcome this by researching the context of my interviews before they took place, finding out as much as possible about the parent, the age of their child and any

information regarding their pre-existing relationship with the school. This process was aided by the gatekeeper, who I will discuss in detail later in this chapter. The use of this pre-existing information was useful as the interview could then be dedicated to information that was pertinent to the research.

Silverman comments that interview studies are useful to 'find out how a particular group of people perceive things' (2017: 282). Patton states 'the purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone else's mind. We interview people to find out from them those things we can't observe' (1987: 196). This research was driven by the perspectives of my participants. The literature expressed a narrative expressing the potential role for community in restorative practices. I wanted to explore my participants' experience of restorative practices in schools and their views. Whilst the literature may posit certain functions of restorative practices, how did my participants perceive them? Did they see them as useful? Did they employ them? Under what circumstances? Could they tell me about an experience of restorative practices? How effective were the restorative practices in their opinion?

Interviews also allowed me to develop stronger relationships of trust with my participants. For example, Hammesley and Atkinson (2007) state that research groups can often be fearful of researcher's motivations and be wary of engaging with the researcher. As stated in the qualitative subsection the Headteacher noted that the students at the school were suspicious of outside visitors. Consequently, before speaking to them, it was necessary to dispel a number of myths, I was not there to tell them off, I was not employed by the school, I was not going to use the information from the interviews to incriminate them in any way and that they did not have to speak to me. This technique is seen in work by Oakley (1981) and Reinharz (1992). In interviews with staff, I faced the same difficulties. Whilst leaders spoke mostly unencumbered in interviews – (for example the Headteacher remarked that this was the most anyone had enticed him to speak). Staff participants were not as forthcoming. One staff member asked if he should consult with his Union Representative (when asked why he may need to do that, the staff member wondered if the interview was linked to performance management and the way he handled behaviour in his class). Another participant gave only closed responses to some questions, employing one-word answers and watch-checking body language. In a later informal interaction, I asked him why he behaved like that in his interview, he said that he had a very busy morning and that he did not have the time to devote to the interview. However, in other interviews I was able to develop a positive rapport with my interviewees. For staff respondents, once I had dispelled any worries about the way the data would be used (through explanation of my role in the school, the purpose of their responses, how the responses would be used and that they were granted anonymity and the information

would not be shared with school leaders) the conversations became less closed-off and participants were willing to speak at greater length (Braun and Clarke (2013), particularly 2013: 87 on 'Building Rapport'). Merriam (2009) notes that interviews allow researchers to develop relationships of trust and rapport. My experience was reflected this, without the opportunity to dispel those preconceptions I would not have had the depth of response from my participants.

In interviews with staff, I was also benefited by an effective and useful gatekeeper who helped organise my interview participants and my role as an educator in a similar school. Both components will be explored later in this chapter.

As I have already alluded to, my interviews with students suffered the same initial trust barriers but had the added influence of a potential power imbalance (Russell, 1999). The interviews were heavily dependent on how participants were feeling that day, whether they had a good lesson, if they had breakfast that morning, or an argument with their family members. Also, other factors could influence the proceedings, for example, the person who brought them to the interview. If it was a staff member they liked, the students came in happier and more engaged, if they thought they were being punished, they were initially closed-off. However, as students became more aware and accepting of my presence in the school (this was fostered primarily through informal interactions during my participant/non-participant observation methods) this allowed for an easier interaction with students. The power factor was only initially problematic in student interviews and often could be mitigated through having a normal chat with participants about things other than the research prior to beginning the actual questioning process (Braun and Clarke, 2013). I was also benefitted by the body of research on undertaking research with vulnerable people (Thomas, 1995; Willott, 1998; Docherty and Sandelowski, 1999; Eder and Fingerson, 2002).

4.4.2 Observation

The second method employed in this research was observation, both participant and non-participant observation. As a data collection technique observation permits the study of people in their natural environment and gives an insight into the life of others, through their own point of view (Spradley, 1980; Williamson, 2000; Baker, 2006). Becker and Geer (1960) define participant observation as 'an activity in which the observer participates in the daily life of people under study, observing things that happen, listening to what is said and questioning people' (1960: 133). Observation played an important function in my research as both a data collection technique and an opportunity to construct and develop relationships within my

research site. It allowed me to develop a complex cultural understanding of my participants and the school, enabling an authenticity which benefitted my research.

The two forms of observation I employed in this research were participant and unobtrusive observation (unobtrusive observation is a form of non-participant observation where the observer is present at the setting but does not engage or intervene (Gorman and Clayton, 2005). I will discuss the rationale for each approach below.

4.4.3 Participant Observation

Participant observation is a process where the researcher immerses themselves within a research setting, listens and engages in conversation, interviews participants and develops an understanding of the culture of the group and people's behaviour in their culture (Bryman, 2015). According to Guest, Namey, and Mitchell (2013), there are three key elements of participant observation. The first is to get into the location of the human experience you want to study. Whilst access and the detail of my observations will be discussed in more detail in the second part of this chapter, I will note that all my participant observation took place within my research site, the school. This formed the important context for my research and informed my participant's responses. The second element is the need to build rapport with participants. Bernard (2000) notes that successful participant observers can build trust with their participants. As has already been stated in subsection 4.4.1: Interviews, this was very important in my research. Particularly when observing restorative meetings with parents. Parents were usually asked to attend meetings when their child have been involved in a behavioural incident. The parents I met were usually experiencing a range of emotions, anger, worry and shame, sometimes parents would be feeling all three. When I spoke to them, they were obviously in a heightened emotional state, I felt it was necessary to be calm, and sensitive with a view to building rapport and to try and mitigate their distress. I was mindful of the guidance of Braun and Clarke (2013) who state that when researching participants in distress it is necessary to allow them to explore their distress, not necessarily halt your research but ensure that the process is an empathetic one, they note: 'don't stop ... at the merest hint of tears; in our experience people are usually happy to continue the interview after taking a moment to collect themselves' (2013: 88). The third and final aspect according to the literature is that the researcher must immerse themselves in the research setting for a long enough time (this will be guided by the research and the type of phenomenon being researched). Over the course of a two-year period, I spent over four weeks in total in the setting, observing, and asking questions. This gave me a strong perspective and understanding of my research focus and enabled me to answer my research questions.

A strength of participant observation according to Guest, Namey and Michell (2013) is the confirmatory component of participant observation. They state that through observing a setting, information from interviews and data gathered through other research methods can be contextualised and verified. My participant observation focussed primarily on witnessing and participating in restorative meetings and in informal interactions throughout the school with staff and students. During interviews staff participants explained why they introduced restorative practices. This gave me an overview of their thought processes. I also had the opportunity to witness and participate in practical restorative practices and examine the behaviours of the participants, which was useful to understand the processes (Martin and Bateson, 1986). The conversations that took place after the restorative conferences had an immediacy which encouraged an authentic response from participants (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). Their recollections were not blurred by time or a desire to obfuscate, this idea is supported by Bernard (2000) who states that participant observation can reduce the problem of reactivity or adjustments being made by those who are questioned. He states that participant observation allows the right question to be asked and ensures that the questions posed reflect the experience of the participants. They are more sensible, posed in common terms to all involved without jargon and can employ a local vernacular.

Additionally, as participant observations are subjective (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Patton, 2002) participant observation can allow for an intimate study of the setting, and a deep exploration of the subjective perceptions as they emerge from the context within which they are constructed. The directness of contact between researcher and participant is offered in a way that other research methods cannot replicate (Guest, Namey and Mitchell, 2013). This deep exploration of the important theme was beneficial for my research, as was being able to explore definitions of community and how they were practically involved in the context of the school.

I will now explore some theoretical controversies concerning the use of participant observation as a research technique.

The first of these is the ethical implication for participant observers. Spradley (1980) counsels researchers on ensuring that the welfare of all participants should be protected where possible. I ensured that my research participants were as informed as reasonably necessary about my research intentions. I also made them aware about how the information they provided would be used and the rights they enjoyed in respect of that information, such as the right to retrospectively refuse consent or edit (Bryman, 2015).

Another issue for participant observation research is the external validity and generalisability of the data generated. Data is valid, according to Johnson (1997) when it is credible, trustworthy, and defensible. Chatman (1992) states that, to be valid, participant observation data must reflect a true and accurate depiction of the phenomenon. It should not be a selective report of the data the researcher hoped they would receive from their participants. Whilst I was mindful of these concerns, my study was benefitted by being a true and accurate representation of my participants' views. I had no vested interest or preconceived hypothesis that I needed to meet, therefore misrepresenting my participants' views would have been to the detriment of my research and antithetical to the process.

In terms of the criticism of generalisability, I refer to Johnson's (1997) statement that whilst the views of individual participants may not be replicated as the data would reflect their individual perceptions, the methods and processes upon which the research is constructed could be replicated in future studies to study similar phenomenon. Johnson (1997) formulates a number of aspects which could be generalised from a participant observation study, these are: the number of people in the study, 'the selection criteria, the researcher's relationship with participants, methods of data collection and the data analysis techniques' (1997: 290).

Another potential drawback of participant observation is the accusation of bias that can be levelled at a researcher who becomes too close to their research participants so is unwilling to be critical or report on aspects of the data which could portray participants in a negative way (Bryman, 2015). Mills, Durepos and Wiebe (2010) note that it is necessary to maintain appropriate distance (spatial and relational) from the participants, something that I managed to achieve in my own research through constant reflection on my own positionality and reassessment of my research focus. I had to be mindful of my own preconceptions about restorative practices, the school, the participants, and the wider community. This constant reflection required an understanding of my own preconceptions, also I had to be mindful of potentially hidden or covert biases that may exist as I undertook my empirical research.

4.4.4 Non-Participant Observation

The second data collection approach I employed was non-participant observation. Pearsall (1970) describes non-participant observation as the research equivalent of eavesdropping with a purpose or, as Gold (1958) describes it: observation with limited interaction with the people observed. My non-participant observation involved simply being in and around the school. Observing behaviour, visiting, and observing lessons, viewing the interactions between teachers and students, shadowing members of the pastoral team and generally being present in the building. Whilst non-participation observation is not usually the sole research method

employed (Bernard, 2000) it can be effective when used in tandem with other data collection methods such as interviews (Liu and Maitlins, 2010). For my research, it was particularly useful in exploring the dynamics that existed between the people in the school, viewing them in their natural environment. It also allowed me an insight into the information that I gathered in my interviews and a more holistic overview of my research setting generally.

4.5 Choosing the Site

I will now outline how I chose the site for my fieldwork. Choosing an appropriate research site was an important factor in the research as the empirical findings would relate directly to my case (Stake, 1995).

I am employed as an Assistant Headteacher in a secondary school in the North of England. The school I work in is in a socio-economically deprived catchment area. As a result of my experience in this school, doing my research in a similar type of school was of interest to me and partly for my own practice, but also to develop the understanding of the field more generally. It was a necessary requirement for my study that the school I researched was using restorative practices. After identifying potential research sites, by collating together all the secondary schools in the region I analysed the behaviour policies on the school's websites to examine if they were using restorative practices. Once I had identified the schools using restorative practices, I contacted each school to explore the potential of researching there and the way in which they implemented restorative practices.

I made the decision to focus on one school as it met all the predetermined criteria, access would not be problematic, and I felt that a deep understanding of one site would be more advantageous than studying multiple sites and not having the opportunity to engage with the detail as much as I felt necessary. My research site was a secondary school located in a similar catchment area to the school in which I work. The school had over nine hundred students aged between eleven to sixteen and there were over one hundred and fifty members of staff working at the school. Predominantly these were teachers who delivered the academic curriculum, they were supported by pastoral and administrative staff who did not teach as part of their role. The school was located on a housing estate in one of the most socio-economically impoverished wards in the city according to government statistics (this is explored in greater detail in Chapter 5). It faced many of the same challenges as my school. The schools reported low attendance and punctuality rates, low levels of academic attainment, a higher-than-average proportion of students who were registered as receiving free school meals, who spoke English as a second language, were in local authority care, had some form of Special Educational Needs or who came from a single-parent or foster family. On the school's

website it made explicit reference to the use of restorative practices and restorative meetings. According to the school's behaviour policy restorative meetings and practices would be used when students disrupted the learning of other students, were disrespectful to the public or anyone within the school and that they would be attended by members of the school's wider community.

The OFSTED judgement the school received the year before I began my fieldwork stated that the school had extremely low standards of behaviour and posed a risk to student welfare. Over the five years that the school had been opened it had undergone three changes in management. The latest change was a takeover by a Multi-Academy Trust. The school I work in was also a part of this Multi Academy Trust. This made gaining access to the school and a potential research group more straightforward. I had no direct relationship with anyone at the school, the schools were separate entities joined by an administrative organisation. However, through the Trust I was able to negotiate initial access into the research site, this process will be discussed in the next subchapter.

4.6 Access/Gatekeepers

In this sub-chapter I will focus on how my research was benefited by an effective gatekeeper and the importance of the gatekeeper in my empirical work.

An initial meeting regarding access took place with the Chief Executive Officer of the Multi-Academy Trust. At this meeting I had to provide a rough outline of my research, what I wanted to explore and the timeframe during which I hoped to be at the school, I sent a confirmatory email indicating these aspects and providing an indicative overview of my research. After a short-discussion I was granted access to the research site and a meeting was arranged with the Headteacher of the school. In this meeting I outline the practical elements of my research in more detail, proposed an interview structure and provided an indicative plan of who I would like to speak to and why. The Headteacher of the school was extremely helpful and organised a gatekeeper who he empowered to help me with my research. In both meetings, no impediments were imposed on any aspect of my research. Both the Executive Head and School Headteacher found my research to be potentially beneficial for the school staff in terms of understanding and reflecting on their own practice (Creswell, 2005; Silverman, 2017).

Gatekeepers control access to the site and can be invaluable in smoothing the way for researchers and organising access to the site and participants (Lavrakas, 2008; Bryman, 2015). My research was benefited by an organised and helpful gatekeeper (Yin, 2009). My gatekeeper had been employed at the Academy since it opened five years earlier and had

experience of working in schools in the area for over twenty years. All the staff I spoke to referred to him in positive terms, he was perceived by staff as trustworthy and had access to all the systems and knowledge of how to use them. This had a positive impact on my research in two ways. Firstly, he was able to access the Senior Leadership Team's calendars and found common times where they were available and I was free to interview them, he organised the interviews for me and notified the members of the Senior Team. Similarly, he had access to all the teacher's and student's timetables and was able to do the same for them. Secondly, due to the pre-existing goodwill that he had with staff and students, he would prepare participants prior to the interviews explaining the general aspects of my research role and assuage any concerns or suspicions that they may have about participating (Polit et al., 2001; Mandel, 2003). Additionally, he was very helpful in directing me toward additional opportunities for research. For example, letting me know when parental engagement evenings were and introducing me to potential participants who he felt would offer an interesting insight to my research (Cormack, 2000; Polit and Beck, 2004).

4.7 Participant Selection/Sampling

This sub-chapter will explore my participant selection approach. At this point in the research, I had made the decision that my fieldwork would take place within one single case study school. I wanted a deep exploration of a single site (Geertz, 1973; Merriam, 2002; Kalof et al., 2008). The next step in my research was to establish the research participants within this single site. Qualitative samples tend to be small in terms of the number of participants, directed at gathering deep data from participants (Sandelowski, 1995; 2001; Morse, 2000; Patton, 2002). This is important when the primary research model is interviews, as in-depth interviews can take a long time to undertake, analyse and transcribe (Bryman, 2015). In this subchapter I will firstly discuss my approach to sampling for my interviews, then examine my approach for my observations as these were the two research methods used.

4.7.1 Interviews

According to Braun and Clarke (2013) where the majority of data in research is collected through interviews, an average sample size should be between fifteen to thirty interviews, there may be deviation depending on the research focus and the number of participants which may be accessed (Morse, 2000; Gough and Conner, 2006). Terry and Braun (2011) state when the research question is broader, there may be a need for additional participants. In my research, I wanted to explore the perceptions of the whole-school community, this desire was driven, in part, by two factors. Firstly, the restorative literature which promotes the 'whole-school' implementation of restorative practices (Hopkins, 2004). If restorative practice is a whole-school approach, then it was necessary to explore the whole-school perceptions of it.

Also, to develop a deep and authentic understanding of the school, it was important to hear from as many different perspectives within the school as possible (Katz, 2015; Becker, 2017). I identified four types of group participants, the Senior Leadership Team, the staff group, comprising, teachers, administrators, pastoral staff, caretakers, the students, and then wider community members. Understanding the perception of each group contributed to the research as I was obtaining different perspectives of the phenomenon (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Fine and Hallet, 2014). The Senior Leadership Team made the initial decision to implement restorative practices, I wanted to understand why they decided to do that, how they felt it was working, did it meet their expectations? The staff at the school were more practically involved in the delivery of restorative practices, they would be the people attending meetings, working with students and were on the front-line of the delivery in that respect, understanding their perceptions gave a practical view of the processes. The students and wider community were the group impacted by the implementation, understanding their perspective was integral, did they gain satisfaction from the restorative practices, who or what did they perceive as the ‘restorative community’?

In this research stratified purposive sampling was employed (Bryman, 2015). Stratification sampling refers to a sampling technique used where there is a diversity of different groups included in a research sample (Sandelowski, 1995). It is useful when the participants in each group may experience the phenomenon in a different way and allows for the exploration of the subjective experience within each stratum. The different strata in this research were:

- The Senior Leadership Team
- Staff Members (Teaching and non-teaching staff, pastoral heads, administrative staff).
- Students
- Members of the Wider Community

Stratifying my sample was necessary as different questions were being posed to the different groups (Bryman, 2015). Also, the people in the groups had a different perception of restorative practices relative to their strata. Whilst there was some crossover (some Senior Leaders also taught occasionally); I went with their dominant status in the building (as they perceived it). The table below identifies my overall research population:

Role	Number of Participants
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Senior Leadership Team	6
Teaching/Non-Teaching Staff	8
Students	13
Parents and Wider Community Members	6
Total	33

Whilst the total number of interviews was higher than the average expected number (Braun and Clarke, 2013) I wanted to ensure that I had a large enough sample to achieve data saturation (Bryman, 2015). Also, I believed that it was still practicable to transcribe and analyse the data. Once I began to hear the same themes from my research participants and the same perspectives being shared as I had heard in previous interviews saturation was achieved.

4.7.2 Purposive Sampling within the Strata

A purposive sample is not randomly generated, it is structured to enable the research questions to be answered (Bryman, 2015). The aim of purposive sampling is to generate insight, in-depth analysis, and rich information (Patton, 2002; Glaser and Strauss, 2013). The sampling of the groups within the strata was done purposely. I sampled the groups deliberately (Maxwell, 2005). It was necessary to deliberately sample the groups as there were a number of practical factors in the school that I had to work around, for example, students undertaking assessments or staff who were teaching key groups. There was an equitable split between staff and student respondents. I was able to speak to every member of the Senior Leadership Team, this was useful as they have the managerial responsibility for the school and oversee all operational matters, this gave me a lot of important contextual information about the school and its relationship with the community. The interviews with the Senior Leaders also provided me with a baseline understanding about the reasons for implementation of restorative practices which was beneficial when I interviewed the staff/student/wider community participants (Silverman, 2017). Teachers were purposively sampled according to their role, I wanted to speak to a mixture of department heads, class teachers, pastoral leads, and administrative staff. Again, this was motivated by a desire to achieve a deep understanding of the site (Geertz, 1973) and the different ways in which the phenomenon studied was perceived by participants. When sampling teachers I had to be mindful of their teaching commitments, often there were lessons that could not be disrupted (for example, Year Eleven lessons where students were about to take exams), these practical

matters had to be accounted for and avoided. Student participants were recruited across all year groups. Often some groups could not be disrupted (if students were taking assessments or if Year Eleven students were in core subjects, for example: English and Maths). Access to parents and the wider community was more difficult. I had to rely on my gatekeeper and make the most informal discussions with parents at events (such as the parents' evening) to organise interviews with this group (Bryman, 2015).

4.7.3 Observation Sampling

I relied on opportunistic sampling for my participant observations (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Opportunistic sampling is 'capitalising on opportunities to collect data from individuals, contact with whom is unforeseen but they may provide data relevant to the question (Bryman, 2015: 419). Some of my research could not be planned in advanced. For example, I attended four restorative meetings, these meetings were organised because of an event taking place in the school which was outside of my control and unforeseeable at the time of organising my research. It was important that I was proactive in seeking out opportunities and using my gatekeeper to make me aware of any restorative meetings that were organised so I could attend (Gilbert, 2001).

Similarly, for my non-participant observations, there was no predetermined sample. I just capitalised on opportunities that I was made aware of, for example, the parents' evening that I attended came as a result of my gatekeeper organising for me to attend (Gilbert, 2001; Lichterman and Reed, 2015).

In total, I participated in four formal restorative meetings and 15 pastoral meetings which took place between members of the pastoral team and students. In addition to attending parents' evenings, standing at the bus stop talking to community members informally I did over fifteen hours of non-participant observation and spent over four weeks in total within the research site.

4.8 Saturation

Data saturation is the point at which no new or emergent theories emerge from data collection (Bryman, 2016). Strauss and Corbin (2008) note that saturation occurs when the category of research is well-developed and validated. I was guided by the work of Braun and Clarke (2013) and Bowen (2008) who stated that data collection can end once the researcher has collected enough information to obtain a truthful and complete picture of the study. I feel my approach and sampling choices aimed for this and that I achieved it.

4.9 Data Collection

I have explored the theoretical rationale for my data collection approaches earlier in this chapter. I will now discuss how the research was executed.

4.9.1 Interviews and Questions

I drafted two series of interview questions, one aimed at staff participants and one at students. The questions were slightly different for each group due to the different ways the groups interacted with the restorative practices (Seidman, 1991).

I planned for my interviews to take around thirty to forty minutes in total. Most interviews took around this time, only one took much longer (an hour and fifteen minutes) and one was much shorter (10 minutes). My indicative interview plan is set out in the table below:

Interview Plan

Timing (Indicative)	Content	Purpose
5 – 10 Minutes	<p>Initial Chat</p> <p>Participants will be informed about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to anonymity • Safeguarding Matters • Right to withdraw consent • Ensure Staff/External participants have contact details • Students know to contact Assistant Headteacher: Safeguarding or Pastoral Lead if concerns are present. <p>General questions/pleasantries.</p>	<p>The purpose of this section was to build rapport with participants, discuss matters other than the research (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009) and go through the procedural aspects involved in research.</p>
20 – 30 Minutes	Primary Data Collection	<p>The interview, with questions stated in Appendices 4 (Staff) and 6mm (Students)</p>
5 – 10 Minutes	<p>Summing up/ clarification of any information provided in the research. Right to withdraw.</p>	<p>In this section, I could discuss any information provided by my participants that I needed further clarification on, whilst this could be done during interviews, if I didn't want to</p>

		interrupt the flow of interviews, I designated time at the end for this purpose.
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In both cases (interviews with staff and students) I used a semi-structured approach with open-ended questions (Merriam, 2002). This was done to encourage deep responses from my participants (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). The questions were drafted several times. Drafts were necessary to remove closed questions and opportunities for shallow responses. Also, I wanted the questions to have a narrative structure (Holstein and Gubrium, 2001). I structured the questions so that the interviews began with more thematic and open questions at the start, with more specific questions at the end (Creswell, 2005; Silverman, 2017). In my initial pilot interviews, done with colleagues, I also explored tonality and tried to make my questions as unambiguous as possible (Smith, 1995). As discussed in the Participant Selection subchapter (4.7), my interview participants reflected the range of roles within the school (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004; Roulston, 2010).

Questions for Senior Leaders and staff were more direct than with students. I was able to question them and probe into the meaning behind their answers more easily than I could with students, they were more able to elaborate on something that was pertinent to my research. The questions explored their perceptions of community, how they utilised restorative practices and whether they achieved the aims set out when they decided to use restorative approaches. I wanted these questions to provide as comprehensive an overview of restorative practices at the school as I could as I thought this necessary for the research.

With students, I explored more thematic questions and gave them more scope for developing their answers (Silverman, 2017). I approached the student interviews with a looser framework so that I could use more time to build rapport and trust within the interview (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009).

I had some concerns that the students I chose to interview would be reluctant to participate (the Headteacher warned me this would be the case) (Adler and Adler, 2002 discuss strategies for reluctant research participants). However, I did not experience any difficulty in that respect during my interviews. When I spoke to students, I was surprised by how effusive they had been in their responses. In the aftermath of some interviews, I undertook a short reflection with participants, I asked a number of students why they were so forthcoming. One said that she was excited to be asked her opinion about something, another said that he found it 'a laugh' and another said he found the topic interesting. I do believe that the time at the

beginning of the interviews to build rapport was important in the success of the interviews (Johnson-Bailey, 1999).

All interviews took place within the school, in a neutral setting in the Library, the space was open and comfortable chairs were sourced. I chose this setting for several reasons. Firstly, because this was convenient for participants, secondly because it was an atmosphere where they were at ease, third because it was a visible space with lots of windows (for safeguarding reasons discussed in a later chapter) (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2005; Silverman, 2017).

Interviews were recorded using the voice recording software on my phone and a lapel microphone to make sure that there was clarity in the recording (Pachter, 2008). This was useful as I could transfer the audio files directly to my computer and delete them from my phone. The microphone was essential as sometimes student participants could speak softly or quietly, and a good quality microphone meant that this was picked up in the audio files. Whilst participants were speaking, I tried to minimise the number of notes I was making in my notebook as I wanted to maintain eye contact and focus (Kvale, 2006), but if there was something that I wanted to revisit at the end, or explore in greater detail, I would make a note as a point of interest for later.

4.9.2 Participant Observations

My participant observation involved attending formal restorative meetings between staff, students and parents and behavioural meetings, usually between staff and students. These meetings provided me with a practical insight into the delivery of restorative approaches at the school (Bryman, 2015). After the meeting I was able to speak to parents and students directly, prompt them to reflect on the meeting that had taken place, discuss the process and their perceptions of it and their overall judgement as to whether the meeting achieved its aims. This was useful as it provided an authenticity to the findings (Silverman, 2017) by having participants directly report their perceptions straight after the event. When observing restorative practices, it was useful to look at who attended the meetings, the spatial layout, objects, and artefacts that was used and linguistic behaviours of participants (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984; Seidman, 1998). These points of interest were noted down and reflected upon after the meeting with the participants.

My questions directly related to the nature of the meeting, but the focus was primarily on the experience of the participants during the meeting and their reflections of it.

Observations were recorded using the same audio approach as with my interviews. I was also able to make more comprehensive notes as I was not directly involved in the restorative meetings (Al-Yateem, 2012).

4.9.3 Non-Participant Observation

My non-participant observation involved being present within the school, walking the corridors, usually at break and lunchtimes and after school (Liu and Maitlis, 2010). I was also given the opportunity to visit lessons and attend parent and carer events. I made field notes and wrote these up at the end of each day, with potential additional research questions or how I could use my observations to enhance the information about the context of the site.

4.10 Research Positionality

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary research tool, the collector and interpreter of the data. Therefore, it is important to be aware of any preconceptions or biases that are brought to the research and that may impact the findings (Creswell, 2005).

These biases do not have to have a negative influence, for example, Peshkin (1998) states that interesting research can result from the interaction of a researcher's own personal qualities/opinions combined with the data they collect. I will state my own positionality in this research and explore my own preconceptions and biases that could have occurred as a result. Tamale (1996) states that it is important for us to recognise our own attitudes and preconceptions that we may have about our research. Creswell (2017) states that qualitative researchers can be defined as having insider or outsider status to their research group (or on occasion, they may possess elements of both) (Mullings, 1999; Merriam, 2002; Buckle and Dwyer, 2009; Innes, 2009). Creswell (2017) states that an insider is a researcher who shares a group status with his population and an outsider does not.

Reflecting on my own status, my parents were both teachers and I have been a teacher for over eight years and worked in schools for ten. For the last five years I have been employed as part of a large Senior Leadership Team in a school that shares many of the same circumstances as my research site. My school is in a socio-economically deprived area, has high rates of absence and truancy and struggles academically versus the national average. Therefore, I believe that I approach this research with a qualified 'insider' status (Bryman, 2015; Silverman, 2017). My insider status is qualified in that whilst I have experience working in schools, I had to be mindful of reporting the perceptions of my participant's accurately, and not my estimation of their response. The work of Fay (1996) was useful in this respect. Fay states that having an insider status can be an advantage to researchers, when they recognise that

'knowing an experience is more than having it, knowing implies being able to identify and explain the experience' (Fay, 1996:20). It is also important to reflect on other considerations surrounding the notion of my positionality. For example, whilst I have worked in schools similar to the one in which I did my research, my own experience of school as a student was substantially different. I attended school in a less socio-economically deprived area, with fewer students, located in a small town. My experience of being a student was different to the students I am doing my research with, also, my upbringing and conception of school is mostly different from the parents who participated in my research. Therefore, whilst I may possess an insider status in terms of working in leadership and schools in this context, I do not possess the same social background as the students and their parents due to differences in class, age and upbringing, in that respect I am an outsider.

Some aspects of my qualified insider status were beneficial, it enabled me to build rapport and trust with my participants in interviews. My status also gave me a basic understanding of how schools function and because I work in a school located in a similar geographic area, I was aware of many of the colloquialisms or frames of reference used by my participants (Crean, 2018).

However, I was mindful of imposing my own meaning on the data (Bryman, 2015). I built in opportunities to explore meaning with my participants after interviews (as indicated my interview plan). At the end of each interview, I could use the last ten minutes to clarify anything that needed explanation (Creswell, 2017). Where possible, I followed up with participants when I included information from interviews in my final findings chapter that I had any concerns about the meaning, or the wording could be construed as ambiguous (Naples, 2003). This was a simple process for staff as I was able to contact them at the site, for students I utilised the gatekeeper, however for wider community members this was not always possible. In each instance I had to represent the views of my participants as authentically as possible, realising that I cannot be wholly objective about my data but that I should seek to minimise my impact (Mills, 1943; Gramsci, 1971). At all times I was guided by Buckle and Dwyer's (2009) good practice for researchers, they state that when interpreting participant data researchers should be 'open, authentic, honest and committed to accurately and adequately representing their experience' (2009: 59).

4.11 Data Analysis and Interpretation

This subchapter will focus on my approach to data analysis and interpretation and examine how I made sense of the large collection of data I amassed during interviews and through my observations and interviews.

I will start with my approach to data analysis. Strauss and Corbin (1994) state that qualitative research studies are a constant interplay between data collection and data analysis and that, for most researchers, analysis can be an iterative process that begins after the first interview (Silverman, 2017). My data analysis was an ongoing process of refinement and reduction where I sought to emphasise the aspects of my data collection germane to my overarching research focus (Creswell, 2017).

My approach to data analyses was loosely based on Creswell's (2017) approach to analysing qualitative data. I feel this suited my research process and approach. I will address the steps Creswell outlines and discuss my actions at each stage.

Step one is the organisation and preparation of the data for analysis. All my interviews and participant observations were recorded and were stored on my computer and in the cloud (this will be discussed in the data storage component of the ethics section in this chapter). I transcribed my interviews and restorative meeting audio files by hand. My field notes from my non-participant observations were collated in chronological order. I retained the audio files and listened to them multiple times alongside the re reading of the transcripts. I did this as transcripts do not effectively indicate aspects such as tonality or explain the way in which things are said (Sacks, 1987; Silverman, 2017). Atkinson and Heritage (1984) note that audio recordings can reveal previously un noted features in the conversation.

Step two is to read and look at all the data. Through re reading the data I was able to further establish connections that may not have been as overt during the initial interviews and develop an understanding as to the divergences and similarities between the accounts of my respondents (Esenburg, 2002). Braun and Clarke (2013) refer to this process as data familiarisation which requires 'more than reading but reading words analytically and critically: thinking about what the data means' (2013: 204). Whilst reading through my transcripts I started to explore the way in which the responses of my participants were pertinent in answering my overall research questions. I started the initial process of coding, by looking at the potential codes which I could employ that would cover the themes emerging from the data. Initial codes included things such as: relationships, absence of community, fragmentation, and apathy (Silverman, 2017).

Step three is the beginning of the coding process. Creswell (2017) notes that this is the point where data should be chunked, and a code should be given to each chunk relating to an appropriate theme. Coding is an individual process and can be done electronically or through notes in the margins of the data (Rossman and Rallis, 2012). I opted for a colour coding where a colour represented a specific code. This provided a simpler and more accessible form in my

opinion. The initial codes were generated from the reading in step two. I constructed the codes around my research questions. Themes emerged from my participants which provided points for discussion. For example, relationships became an important theme as it featured in responses from many of my participants. This became a useful focus for establishing my participant's understanding of community for Question 1 of my research questions.

I employed a complete coding approach, this is where any information which could be potentially relevant to the research question is coded (Braun and Clarke, 2013). I did this as I felt it benefited me in ensuring that any pertinent information was included. Potter and Weatherell (1987) state that it is good practice to code as inclusively as possible.

Step Four states that the researcher should use the codes to develop a description and themes. Context and culture play an important role in this research. Therefore, I wanted to provide an accurate depiction of the research context. The codes for the description of the site were separated from the codes for information that referred to my main research themes. The information in these codes formed the basis of an introductory section in my findings chapter. I developed themes from my analysis of the chapter and clustered codes under the appropriate themes (Bryman, 2015). This step was useful for reducing my data. I had gathered a large amount of data so therefore I needed to make decision about the chunks of information that would best answer my research questions and provide my focus (Silverman, 2017). This thematic approach allowed me to restrict my data to the themes that directly informed my research questions and provided a clearer focus for my research (Gibbs, 2007).

Step five is representing the description and themes. The data chunked from my transcripts was organised into narrative passages that provided useful or pertinent information which answered my research questions.

Step Six looks at the interpretation of the research. Interpretation draws together information from the literature, experience of the researcher and findings from participants, but essentially looks at what was learned during the research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). I was aware that throughout the process my professional experience was a factor in my understanding and interpretation of my findings. As I have stated previously, I sought to mitigate the impact of my own interpretation and make sure that my research was as close a reflection of the views of my participants as possible.

4.12 Trustworthiness/Validity

Validity refers to the approaches taken to ensure the research findings have credibility (Creswell, 2017). There are two aspects of credibility in qualitative research according to Creswell and Miller (2000). These are: qualitative validity and qualitative reliability.

Qualitative validity is based on determining the accuracy of the research and how trustworthy it is (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2011). There are eight strategies that researchers can employ to increase qualitative validity. Often researchers will employ some, but not all these strategies (Creswell, 2017). I will now explore the strategies I adopted to ensure my research was credible.

The first strategy I employed was triangulation, this is where multiple sources of data are used to confirm findings (Merriam, 2002; Prasad, 2005; Yin, 2009). In this research I employed two main research strategies, my primary data collection approach, semi-structured interviews, supported through participant and non-participant observations. I was able to check the themes which emerged in my interviews through my observations in the setting and vice versa.

Member checking is an approach which involves sending draft final descriptions back to participants so that they can check them for accuracy. This may often involve a final interview with participants (Merriam, 2002). It was always practical to re interview participants as every interview had a subsequent impact on the school day and the education of the students. Therefore, I undertook member checking in alternative ways. Where I planned to include information from participants in my final draft, I contacted participants to check my interpretation and understanding. Sometimes this was not possible, as with wider community members so I had to rely on other mechanisms to ensure validity.

Creswell (2017) states that using a thick, rich description to convey full findings increases the validity. This is supported by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Merriam (2002). Providing a rich description of my site and my participants was beneficial for my case study research. Developing a full depiction of the site provided important contextual information for my readers and was beneficial to the overall research.

To increase validity, any potential research bias must be clarified. In this previous chapter, I discussed my positionality and the status which I brought to my research. I stated that whilst objectivity is not always possible (Braun and Clarke, 2013), I was mindful of my biases and sought to mitigate them. Also, I discussed how my role benefitted the research and increased

its validity by allowing me to develop a rich description by building rapport and trust with participants which resulted in more open interviews (Silverman, 2017).

Creswell (2017) states that another way in which trustworthiness of the data can be enhanced is by spending a prolonged time in the field. He states this adds credibility to the narrative account. I spent over four weeks in my setting. I feel this gave me a good understanding of the site and my participants.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that research can be less valid when the researcher selectively chooses data to suit their conclusions and does not include any negative or discrepant information. My research was not explicitly bound by any preconceived hypotheses. My research instead was enhanced by an accurate and truthful depiction of my participants' views.

Finally, Yin (2009) and Gibbs (2007) state that a qualitative researcher should check transcripts and codes for accuracy. I had to be mindful of this when transcribing my interviews, sometimes my participants would speak informally or use slang and some participants spoke with heavy accents which could lead to a difficulty interpreting the words they spoke. Fortunately, as I am aware of the colloquialisms of the area, I was able to recognise them in transcript and document them authentically.

4.13 Ethics

Zeni (2009) states that ethical factors should be prioritised by any research done with human participants. Therefore, it is necessary for me to explore the potential ethical implications of my research and the balance between undertaking my research effectively and ensuring that any harm or inconvenience to my participants was mitigated.

My ethical approach was structured around the British Educational Research Association's (BERA) (2018) ethical guidelines for educational research. They set out a structure for educational research which focuses on the responsibility of the researcher to their research participants. The guidance focuses on the following aspects: consent to participate, transparency, the right of participants to withdraw from the research, harm to participants and the researcher, privacy, and disclosure.

4.13.1 Consent

Firstly, I will discuss consent. I approached consent on two levels, institutional consent, and individual consent. Institutional consent was obtained firstly from the Chief Executive Officer after a meeting outlining the research process. I then obtained specific consent from the

Headteacher to undertake research in the school. Once this overarching consent had been received, I then focussed on choosing and gaining consent from my individual participants. I wanted to interview staff and students. Prior to approaching individuals, I identified and worked with people who staff, and students could go to if they had any concerns about any information they had provided during the interviews. These identified members of staff could then contact me for rectification. This was important, particularly for students as I would not be able to provide them with my contact details as this would be in contravention of the school's safeguarding policy where adults should not share their personal information with students, even if this is a legitimate professional email address (such as my University email address). This also protects the researcher (I will discuss this later in the subchapter).

The two points of contact identified for staff were:

- The Gatekeeper
- The Headteacher

The two points of contact for students were:

- The Assistant Vice Principal for Safeguarding
- The Pastoral Team

I negotiated consent with the staff participants through the gatekeeper at the setting. I provided them with an information sheet which informed them of my research purpose, focus and process. Prior to the interview I gave all staff the opportunity to withdraw consent (Field and Morse, 1992; Kvale, 1996). All staff received my email address should they wish to revoke consent, they had any opportunity prior to the submission of my first draft (this indicative date was communicated to them at the time).

A similar process was followed with students, however, with one important addition. Parent/guardian/carer consent was also requested. Letters were sent home with potential student participants (Appendix 3) outlining the purpose of the research, information about the topic, my role, and a draft copy of the indicative research questions (Munhall, 1988). Positive consent was required, and students had to return a signed slip from parents indicating assent. Similarly, to the interviews with the staff, consent was obtained at the start and end of every interview. If students had any concerns, they were directed to the pastoral team member or the AH: Safeguarding. No students expressed any concerns during the meeting.

4.13.2 Transparency

I was open and honest with all my participants regarding how the information they provided would be used and the purpose of my research. There was no conflict-of-interest present in my research.

4.13.3 Right to Withdraw

The guidance states that all participants should have the right to withdraw at any stage. My participants were fully aware of this right. Additionally, I gave all participants the right to redact or edit any aspect of their response they were not happy with (Bryman, 2015). Whilst no participants exercised their right to withdraw, one participant did ask for something they had said to be omitted from the final transcript and not included in the thesis. They contacted me on the phone to ask about the possibility of removing a specific comment they had made. The comment was made about a colleague that could have been interpreted as a criticism. They were worried that if said criticism was published it could be traced back to them. Their comment was removed from the transcript as per their wishes. This was the only time a staff member asked to withdraw a comment made.

The same process was followed for community members. I gave them my contact details in case, for any reason, they wanted to follow up on anything. I also directed them to the designates in the school in case they had any concerns about the process. No one revoked consent or amended their response.

For students, the process was slightly more difficult as I could not provide them with my contact details. I asked the third party designates (pastoral head and AH: Safeguarding) to relay any concerns to me. No concerns were raised by student participants.

4.13.4 Harm to Participants

I had to be mindful of the potential harm caused by my research. I shall address these harms individually and discuss how I attempted to mitigate them:

4.13.5 Professional Issues for Staff Participants

I was aware that staff who gave interviews could have been putting themselves in a difficult position if they had stated something which was perceived negatively by their employer. For example: criticising a colleague or the school. To mitigate this, I gave all participants anonymity, where possible and also gave them a right to reflect post interview and before the research was submitted, if they reflected and wished to rescind any aspect of their response, I gave them this opportunity.

4.13.6 Time

When researching in schools, you may be disrupting the work of the staff and the education of the students, therefore I had to be mindful of the time I took to interview my participants. The interviews were relatively short, usually lasting around thirty to forty minutes. All participants were happy to sacrifice their time to participate and often participants stated they were excited to contribute to the research (Smith, 1999). BERA (2018) also notes that the rights of the individuals in the research can and should be balanced against the wider social benefit the research may provide for the public understanding of a topic.

4.13.7 Privacy

I granted all participants anonymity. However, this blanket provision had to be qualified in two ways.

Firstly, a motivated individual, drawing together all the information from my thesis could infer the identity of the institution. Secondly, where there was a safeguarding matter, expressed in the responses of staff or students, anonymity could not be granted and the appropriate safeguarding procedures of the site had to be followed (Patton, 1990).

In the preamble of the interview, participants were made aware of these factors to ensure they were fully informed about how their right to anonymity was a qualified one (Munhall, 1988).

4.13.8 Data Storage

All data was collected on a single laptop that was password protected. Information on this device was automatically uploaded to Google Drive. Google Drive is a password protected cloud storage facility that exists on the internet. Cloud storage is an online storage area that keeps an online copy of a file in an electronic space. This is advantageous when compared to storing data on physical devices as physical devices may be lost or broken. Having two sites for the device, both of which were protected ensured there was less risk to a data breach. There have been concerns about the susceptibility of cloud services to breaches by unauthorised people (StorageCraft, 2019). However, to mitigate this risk, I used two-factor authentication on my account, this meant that anyone who wished to gain access would not only have to know the password to the account, but they would also need a code that changes every thirty seconds which can only be accessed through my phone, protected by facial recognition software.

4.13.9 Safeguarding the Researcher

It was important for me to safeguard my own welfare when undertaking research. This is particularly important when doing research in schools. I had to be aware of the safeguarding protocols at the site and that if a staff member or student made a declaration which could imply or state some abuse, neglect, harassment or any other matter that may negatively impact on their welfare I knew the processes to follow. Fortunately, I am aware of the relevant legislative provisions targeted at safeguarding people in schools and have delivered training to teaching providers on the topic.

To safeguard myself, I made sure that all interviews took place in a visible space close to the safeguarding office with a member of staff in an adjoining room.

Only one safeguarding matter arose, it was a statement made by a student about a member of staff, implying some impropriety. I followed the safeguarding processes, alerted the Head of Safeguarding and was happy to find out that it was a misunderstanding (Field and Morse, 1992).

This chapter explored my design and methodological choices which allowed me to execute my empirical work. As always, there was a balance between achieving my research outcomes and safeguarding my participants. I believe that this strategy allowed me to secure interesting and informative data which will be referred to in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 5 Findings: Tracing the Development of Pioneer Academy: Context and Challenge

This is the first of two chapters in which I will present the findings from my empirical work. This chapter will provide an insight into the culture and context of the Academy as expressed by my research respondents. In the introduction to this chapter, I will firstly reiterate the research questions which will provide a structure in which I will present my findings and the themes which emerged during the process of data analysis (the discussion of these themes will primarily take place in the next chapter, but it is important to be mindful of these questions across both chapters). These will be included as subheadings to the core research questions. My overarching research questions were:

1. How is the restorative community defined in the secondary school setting?
2. What is the rationale for the inclusion of the restorative community?
3. How is the restorative community involved practically, what role does it undertake?
4. What impact does the involvement of the restorative community have, are there any benefits?
5. What are the challenges or drawbacks in involving the restorative community in the school?

At this point I will also restate my research participants from the figure expressed in the methodology chapter, I will also state the roles/pseudonyms of participants to make reading my findings a simpler process:

Participant Breakdown

Role	Number of Participants
Senior Leadership Team	6 Ed: Headteacher Karen: Assistant Headteacher: Safeguarding Tom: Assistant Headteacher: Behaviour Rob: Assistant Headteacher: Curriculum and data.

	<p>David: Assistant Headteacher: Student Experiences</p> <p>Emma: Assistant Headteacher: Teaching and Learning</p>
Teaching/Non-Teaching Staff	<p>8</p> <p>Gemma: Head of English Dept (and teacher)</p> <p>Steve: Head of Science (and teacher)</p> <p>Harry and Anne: Two Pastoral Heads of House (and teachers)</p> <p>Jean and Naz: Two Assistant Heads of House (non-teaching)</p> <p>Pete: PHSE Teacher</p> <p>Phil: Learning Resource Centre Manager (non-teaching)</p>
Students	<p>13</p> <p>Alex (Year 11 – Male)</p> <p>Simon (Year 11 – Male)</p> <p>Zak (Year 11 Male)</p> <p>James (Year 10 Male)</p> <p>Adrian (Year 9 Male)</p> <p>Jordan (Year 7 Male)</p> <p>Lucie (Year 11 Female)</p> <p>Sarah (Year 11 Female)</p> <p>Eleanor (Year 10 Female)</p> <p>Phoebe (Year 10 Female)</p> <p>Hannah (Year 9 Female)</p>

	Emma (Year 8 Female) Keera (Year 7 Female)
Parents and Wider Community Members	6 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Noah (Parent: Male)• Matt (Parent: Male)• Tim (Parent: Male)• Nicholas (Parent: Male)• Lynne (Parent: Female)• Cath (Parent: Female)
Total	33

(For more detail on staff and student participants see: Appendix 1).

When I explore the important themes emerging in the findings, I will deal with each research group individually, to avoid confusion as to the status of each participant and to give a clear coherence and readability to the chapter. I will then synthesise any connections between the findings at the end of the chapter. The information included in this chapter is derived from the semi-structured interviews with my research participants and, where appropriate, is supported by data obtained during my participant and non-participant observation.

This chapter will primarily focus on important contextual information which informs both my findings chapters. Understanding the context of my research site is key to understanding my research, the staff participants reflected that responding to the specific needs of the children, was an important factor in their decision to implement restorative practices. In addition to this, understanding the socio-economic status of the community is important in exploring themes which emerge from my research, for example, the practical factors which preclude community engagement brought about due to a lack of two-parent families, or the need to pursue employment and finances over engagement with the school. The context also provides insight as to why the school found it difficult to engage with its community for other reasons, for example, the lack of interest some community members showed regarding the academic progression of their children. In this chapter, I will look at the management restructuring which took place 2 years before my research in the school began, an initial exploration of the

dynamic and interaction between the school and its community and the socio-economic deprivation which permeates the area in which the school is located before finally exploring the initial decision to use restorative practices and some of the causal factors which motivated this decision by the Senior Leadership Team. I will initially start by providing an oversight as to the geographic context and social deprivation of the location before transitioning to an exploration of the school.

5.1 Geographic Location and Socio-Economic Status

As previously mentioned, the school is situated in one of the most socio-economically deprived areas in the country. Such a status can be ascertained from multiple data sources defining and measuring relative deprivation in England. To solidify the contention of this work that this area is one of significant poverty, I will explore an array of data to justify this assertion. Beginning with the English Indices of Deprivation (IOD).

The IOD is a report generated by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government which aims to examine local measures of deprivation in England. It explores a number of elements that can be calculated to derive a deprivation factor based on geographic location, these include income, employment, health and deprivation, education skills and training, crime, barriers to housing and services and living environment deprivation. Within these overarching terms we can identify some individual components of calculating deprivation, for example: those on government income support (in its various forms), high unemployment rates, low life-expectancy, progression to higher education and main-school academic outcomes, recorded crimes – particularly violent offences, homelessness and household overcrowding and poor housing conditions. Based on these considerations the report explores the relative deprivation levels of 32,844 neighbourhoods. Located within a larger report is the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), this is ‘the official measure of relative deprivation in England’ (IOD2019, 2019: 2). The latest iteration of the report, published in 2019, found that my research site was located in a ‘local authority with the highest proportions of neighbourhoods amongst the most deprived in England’. The report also notes that the 2019 data set is largely unchanged from the IMD2015. A deeper analysis of the report elucidated that, in actuality, my research site has been an area of high deprivation for at least the last twenty years, indicating a cycle of deprivation that has persisted over a significant duration (IOD2019, 2019). Not only was my research site located in a geographic area that is rated as one of the top five most deprived local authorities in the country (out of 317 total across England), within that geographic location, my research site was placed on one of the most deprived wards within that area.

The findings from the IOD are supported by Census data from 2018. Over seventy percent of the residents live in social housing, a third of households are in what is described as ‘fuel poverty’, and fifty percent of children are living in child poverty compared to what was then the national average of seventeen percent. The rates of those who are unemployed, and those seeking unemployment benefits are double the national average with around 35% of residents in the community claiming benefits, well-above the national average of 10.7%.

Lastly, it is useful to consult the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) data. This measure (also located within the IMD report) measures the proportion of all children aged 0 – 15 living in income deprived families. There are two measures, the first is a score, denoting total poverty measure based on factors which produces a rank. The localities are defined according to postcode data. IDACI explores similar factors to those included in the IDM, but specifically, the impact of deprivation on children. According to FFTLAB – a group of education data specialists, IDACI utilised in tandem with data on the proportion of students eligible for free school meals, can be used to compare deprivation at local levels (FFTLAB, 2019). The IDACI score for my research postcode was a ‘one’, denoting significant poverty.

As an addendum to the above, in October 2020 it was commented that the Coronavirus pandemic is likely to further entrench the deprivation suffered by young people in areas like my research site. A report from Bristol University and FFTLAB (2020) found that my research site had some of the lowest percentages of students engaging in online education. In addition to this, a report by the Nuffield Foundation (2020) found that those students from poorer families were least likely to be engaging in remote education. There are many causal factors stated in the report, but significant contributors are: a lack of practical resources, insufficient space to work, lack of internet access and poor provision from the schools.

What is evident from the statistics is that my school is located in an area of high deprivation, this aspect will inform much of my research moving forward and will be significant for my findings as a factor in the data.

5.2 Post 2014 – Transition: Becoming Pioneer Academy

In 2014 Pioneer Academy received the lowest possible judgement from OFSTED (the national school inspectorate) a 4, requiring special measures. A school placed into special measures is one which ‘fails to give its students an acceptable standard of education’ and ‘there is no indication that the management team can secure improvement’ (OFSTED, 2014: 37). The report from OFSTED stated a number of headline aspects of the school’s provision which the inspectors deemed to be inadequate. For example: the report stated that the quality of

teaching and learning was inadequate, that the school leaders had no strong plans in place to secure improvement of the school, that the academic progress of students was well below the national expected standard, behaviour and safety was inadequate, the number of students excluded for either a fixed-term or permanently was too high (well above the national average). In addition to this, the report noted a number of specific safeguarding and behavioural issues, for example: 'some students will deem certain areas of the building to be unsafe because people go there to smoke' (OFSTED, 2014). When inspecting the school, the inspectors encountered 'students assaulting each other ... chairs being thrown around classrooms ... high levels of bullying, cyberbullying, prejudicially motivated bullying ... and racism'.

The judgement from OFSTED led to the resignation of the Headteacher (2 weeks after the judgement was submitted) and the departure of a number of members from the Senior Leadership of the School. Following this, a request was made by the Department for Education for support from a local Multi-Academy Trust (The Olympus Trust). In my interview with the Headteacher he noted that this support from the Trust was initially envisioned as a short-term solution to provide strategic guidance and oversight. However, in 2015 this secondment was made permanent and Pioneer Academy was formally subsumed into The Olympus Trust. According to the Headteacher Ed, this formal changeover led to a substantial institutional change, there was new Senior Leadership structure, retaining one member of the old Senior Leadership from the predecessor regime (AH: Behaviour) Tom, new external appointees (AH: Curriculum and Data, Rob, AH: Teaching and Learning, Emma) and permanent employment posts for members of the central trust (AH: Safeguarding, Karen and AH: Student Experiences David). In addition to this, over the course of a four-month period, there was a 27% turnover in staff. With new appointees to Head of Department posts, central teaching posts and pastoral roles. All the Assistant Heads of House/Administrative Posts were retained.

In the next section, I will outline the initial challenges the SLT/Staff reported facing during the early transition. In doing so, I will explore some contextual aspects of my findings that inform what was observed during the research.

5.3 2014 – 15: Post-Takeover – Context and Challenges:

5.3.1 The Initial Challenges: Ethos change and Behavioural Issues

Upon initially taking over the school, the participants in the Senior Leadership Team reflected on a school in disarray. Whilst it is possible to glean this picture from the OFSTED report, the shared description gives an insight into their perception of the school at that time. The Headteacher, Ed stated that when they first arrived at the school, there was not one particular

challenge, but a series of major challenges which, in his opinion, all required immediate attention. He described the school as being “at rock bottom”, referring to it as one of the lowest attaining schools in the country with no whole-school approach to behaviour, no ethos, and staff at the point of exasperation. This notion was supported by the Assistant Headteacher (AH): Safeguarding, Karen who described the school as a “zoo” noting: “There were glue sticks flying all over the classroom, it was a complete back to basics” The AH: Behaviour Tom, simply stated that it was “chaotic, there were no consequences, children didn’t listen and didn’t care”. Finally, the AH: Student Experience, David, described the lack of systems in place, he said that “Nobody knew what they were doing, it felt like we were a liberating army”. He went on to describe the initial interventions that were required, “It required a large amount of time that had to be spent sitting down with parents, staff members and lots of whole-school assemblies”. The Headteacher, Ed commented that the immediate challenge was behaviour, he described a lawless atmosphere in the building and the perception amongst students that there were no rules, the effect of this was that, in his opinion, the school was an unsafe place to be.

These initial perceptions are supported by staff members who were already working at the school and saw the transition from the old regime to the new. For example, the Learning Resource Centre Manager Phil, who had been employed at the previous school for two years noted the “febrile” atmosphere that permeated the corridors. He reflected that violence was a daily occurrence at the school, describing it as “lawless”. Phil also explained:

“You would often have a number of physical fights in the corridors ... I remember this group of Year 9 girls, charged up about something, walking around the corridors looking for another boy or girl who has wronged them in some way. This often happened, kids would just come out of lessons to settle a score that may have happened during lunch.”

The early challenges were commented on by many of the members of staff during their interviews. The Head of English, Gemma noted: “The communication skills weren’t there for students during that initial time, their standard of spoken English was so low, so many of them weren’t capable of dealing with disagreements, other than to ramp it up”. This is supported by the Geography Teacher and Head of House, Harry who said that “Every day you came to work ready to battle, there was always something, fighting, swearing, doing a runner, it was every day”. Steve, a Science teacher spoke of a different type of challenge the school faced:

“There had been an influx of students who did not have English as a first language, there was absolutely no provision for them in place, they were forgotten about, there was also a lot of xenophobia in the school which meant a lot of conflict between these kids and the kids off the estate.”

At both levels, Senior Leaders and staff depict that early transition period as a time of challenge. Many of the challenges described pertained to the behavioural incidents that were referenced in the OFSTED report. It became apparent in my interviews that challenging these issues became a priority for staff and they were looking for an approach to do this.

To garner an alternative perspective, I wanted to see how the students perceived this time and how their observations of the school during that period interacted with those of the staff. The staff were undivided in their conclusions; however, this was not the case with students. There was a divergence of opinion about the school and the context during those times. Some spoke of the behavioural challenges and other participants perceived the school as fine, and a good place to be. For these interviews I had to primarily focus on student respondents in Years 10 and 11 as they were in the school during the transition phase. Initially, the responses of interview participants conformed to the information emanating from the staff interviews. Year 11 student, Zak said: “General rowdiness was quite a common thing here, I suppose”, I asked for any specific incidents and he replied: “I remember one fight between two boys, a few tables got turned over in the dining hall, a big crowd appeared and when the teachers tried to stop it, people started shouting at them”.

Phoebe, a Year 10 girl said: “Bad stuff used to happen a lot at the start when they took over, I was in the low sets and people would swear at teachers, it got better though”. This is supported by Simon, a Year 11 boy, he commented: “People used to just sit in there in the lessons on their mobile phones or throw rulers or stuff at them”. The “them” he was referring to, were the teachers.

Many of the comments made by the students reference the negative behaviour of students during that early period of transition and the difficulty that the staff had in managing the students. However, it is worth including a statement made in an interview which did not conform to this narrative. Lucie, a Year 11 girl was asked about the early transition and what it was like. She responded:

“We got loads of new teachers and it was hard settling, I don’t think people were that bad, me and my mates just didn’t like English we didn’t want to be in there, and those first changes, I didn’t want to get to know loads of new people, we used to do fun stuff called project-learning and we used to have parties all the time. The changes were alright in the end, but it was hard at first and they came in telling us not to do stuff that was okay before.”

I will discuss one of the changes implemented (the decision to implement restorative practices) in much greater detail in the next chapter. However, it is interesting to note that whilst some of the students (for example, Zak, Simon and Phoebe) desired change at the school, some students, Lucie being an example, but also Eleanor (Year 10) and James (Year 10) expressed some apprehension about the new systems, often preferring the approach of the previous regime. James spoke of feeling disrupted, having to get to know new people, which he didn’t particularly like, and Eleanor said that the behaviour really didn’t get much better in those early stages, it was just “found out more”.

5.3.2 A Focus on Socio-Economic Deprivation

One of the major challenges the SLT note, and a very important contextual factor in this research, was the socio-economic deprivation of the area. The estate on which the school is built is one of the most economically deprived in the country. The number of students eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) is over 40%. This is significantly higher than the national average (12%). Eligibility for FSM is a strong indicative measure of socio-economic deprivation (Department for Work and Pensions, 2013; SchoolsWeek, 2016).

The themes of deprivation were discussed by a number of my respondents and provide an insight into the context of the school. They fall into two separate categories, primarily referred to by staff. Economic deprivation, indicating the lack of resources that families on the estate had access to, and social deprivation, which staff respondents felt impacted on the aspirations of students. I will explore these elements separately, starting with economic deprivation. The AH: Safeguarding, Karen spoke at length about the cultural and contextual factors which informed the behaviours and backgrounds of the students and the wider-Pioneer community. She argued that instead of placing a priority on their academic education, instead students and their support networks focussed on obtaining the “essentials” a word she used to describe things that cover primary needs such as food or housing. She said that forty-five students had to be provided with food packages to take home, as they were not receiving an evening meal

regularly. She stated: 'You look at families, where's the priority? Something on your feet, they're not looking at five a day⁴, but they've got something to eat, even if it costs 99p from the chippy⁵'.

These types of responses were common from the Senior Leaders at the School. For example, The AH: Curriculum and Data, Rob noted the socio-economic poverty of the site:

"We've got so many kids who don't have the basics, the stuff you'd expect them to have. We provide the uniform, pens, pencils. I've had to send an Assistant Head of House to the shops to buy a shirt for a kid who got wet and we didn't have any lost property."

David, AH: Student Experience corroborated the above:

"This one kid, the bottom of his shoe was hanging off, I told him he needed to get it sorted before tomorrow otherwise he might hurt himself or whatever, he came back the next day, same shoes. We got him some more, I asked him if his Mum had seen them, he said yeah."

The staff also spoke at length about their understanding of the socio-economic difficulties faced by families on the estate and the students. For example, Naz, an Assistant Head of House commented:

"We've got kids walking to school, in November, when it's chucking it down⁶ the lads are there in their polo tops and the lasses are wearing short skirts, they haven't even got a coat at home"

Pete, a teacher of PHSE who has worked in schools in the area for over fifteen years commented on this topic. He noted that for many students in the area, they do not know

⁴ 'Five a day' in this instance refers to nutritional guidelines from the NHS on people consuming, broadly, five pieces of fruit, or portions of vegetables a day.

⁵ 'Chippy' refers to a Fish and Chip Takeaway

⁶ Raining heavily

where they are going to sleep on a night, where their next meal may be coming from, he stated the poverty of the area rendered “all aspects of schooling as trivial”. As a response to these issues, the school had introduced a breakfast club, organised by one of the Assistant Heads of House, Jean. The purpose of this club was to provide students with free breakfasts in the morning. Jean referred to her intention of organising the club in an interview: “Some parents don’t have the financial, you know, money to give them breakfast in the morning, some kids get one meal in the day.” I wondered how many students are likely to only get one meal a day at the school, she responded: “I just know it’s a lot, loads in my House, probably over a hundred, here we know they get breakfast and lunch, that’s important”. She also referred to the impact of the breakfast initiative: “Beyond the good thing of em’ having a meal in them in the day, it’s also, there’s less behaviour in the morning”. Jean was referring to a longer conversation we had about connection the school had drawn between the free breakfast initiative and a reduction in early morning behavioural incidents that the pastoral staff had identified.

In every interview with staff members, they viewed the socio-economic deprivation of students as an impediment to academic and/or social development (as highlighted in the information provided by the teacher of PHSE, AH: Safeguarding to name two examples of this). However, this theme was not viewed in the same way by student participants. Students, overall, did not necessarily see themselves as disadvantaged by their context. Adrian (Year 9) did mention in the interview that he received free school meals, and he knew that meant that the family were (as he described it) “too poor” to pay for his dinner, but he did say that “most of my friends get it anyway, so it never bothered me”. I asked Keera (Year 7) what she liked about the school and she said, “They give us loads of nice pens that I can take home, because I don’t have them at home, I now have loads of colours I can use there”.

5.3.3 The School Culture versus the Estate Culture

It also became apparent during some interviews with staff, that they viewed the school and the estate as possessing two different cultures with their own relative norms, values and expected behaviours. There was a standard expected of students which may differ from that permissible on the estate. Staff recognised this led to identity confusion amongst students, where they behave in ways that would be deemed appropriate or favourable on the estate but contravened the school rules and therefore, they got in trouble. This idea initially appeared during an interview with Karen, the AH: Safeguarding, but was identified in subsequent interviews with other staff participants. Karen noted:

“There’s different laws and norms ... and then you expect them to, just like, hang that up on the coat peg and follow a completely different thing, and the two things are gonna impact because soon, someone oversteps the boundary. But they have to know, this is our rules, this is our castle, and this is the situation. But, the kids have to be really sophisticated to come in and accept that and do it”

We discussed this idea at length in the interview, she said that the messages that students receive from home, and those they receive in school, would sometimes coalesce but may conflict. For example, she noted the ways that students are taught to respond to aggression:

“We have a no hands on someone policy, and then you ring the parent, and they’ll say, I’ve told them if someone looks at you funny, you clump⁷ him first and hit him and make it a good one. That’s where restorative practices come in really well”

The information begins to highlight the impact of contradicting statements coming from home and the messages of the school. These ideas were explored by other staff participants, for example: Harry (A Head of House) he said that the students possess an in-school identity where they could focus on school and then what he described as an “estate-identity”. When I asked him what he meant by this term, he reflected that conditions on the estate made students become “self-interested, out for yourself and your family and no one else”. This idea was supported by Naz, an Assistant Head of House who noted in an interview that the students were “survival based” – he commented: “There is a law of the jungle and charity begins at home ... you have to be survival based”. The contradictions between in school and outside of school was also referred to by Anne, a Head of House, she said:

“They’ve [the students] got to go back on the estate in our uniform on a night ... they’ve got to survive in a culture where there isn’t someone on duty to help them. We’ve had kids who come in with black eyes, who get kicked out and have to live with grandparents, who can’t be with Dad, who

⁷ Hit, use violence against.

we have to tell the police if Dad shows up because there's an order⁸ against him ... they've got a lot to deal with".

The PHSE teacher, Pete supported this idea, he summarised: "many of our students have problems and experience which means that schooling is the least of their worries, there's parental abuse, neglect, criminal behaviour of parents that all has an impact on students".

The staff painted a picture of the influence of the estate. I wanted to explore how students perceived these issues. Where the topic was referred to in my interviews with students, they corroborated much of the information provided by staff. For example, Keera (Year 7) stated that she had to walk to school as the car had gone and "Mum doesn't have work at the moment", Sarah (Year 11) commented that Mum had told her to get a job when she leaves school, as even though Sarah had planned to go to College, her mum had told her that a job was more important for her. James (Year 10) had been told that he could not attend after school revision as he had to take his little brother home and cook him tea as his Mum had to work late. I asked him how he felt about this and he said: "It was annoying as my teacher told me off in English the day after as I wasn't at revision and he said that I should have been". My interpretation of the student responses was that they did not explore the underlying cultural difficulties that were apparent on the estate, but sometimes did find it difficult existing in contradicting dynamics, where there were different expectations placed on them by home and by school. For example, Lucie (Year 11) when I asked if she ever got in trouble, or if she had been called into any meetings told me that she had "loads of late checks", late checks are truancy marks which, if a student gets too many, can result in a meeting with parents to explore the cause of the lateness. She said this particularly annoyed her as it was not her fault and that she had to take her little brother to primary school in the morning because her Mum told her to (it transpired in further discussion that her mum started work very early in the morning and that Lucie also had to prepare breakfast for her little brother). She understood that she had to be on time, and she did comment "Who am I going to listen to, my Head of House or my Mum, it's easy really isn't it".

I will explore this idea of the conflict between the expectations and culture of home and the estate and those imposed by the school in the next chapter albeit, it may be worthwhile at this point to reflect briefly on this conflict. On one level, the responses from staff participants may

⁸ Child protection order which restricts a parent's access to the child outside specific court mandated periods of contact.

could be perceived as evidence of a conflict between the culture of school and home, however, this they may also refer to a larger, normative conflict. There is a friction between priorities of the school and the difficulties that students from a socio-economically deprived area face, having to prioritise their academic/scholastic progression with the immediate needs of the family. Lateness, in this instance, is not a product of intentional misbehaviour, more the necessity imposed by the need of family members to work, and provide, in this instance, it may be argued that there is a conflict between the values of the school and the realities of poverty.

5.4 The Initial Desire to Implement Restorative Practices

I will conclude this chapter by undertaking a brief exploration of the decision made, by the Senior Leadership Team to implement restorative practices in the school. Whilst the specific details of restorative practices and how they are practically deployed in the Academy will be explored in more detail in the next chapter, I feel it is beneficial to establish a basic understanding of the initial intent during the period of transition and allow for a better comprehension of the details which follow in the next chapter.

As I have already stated earlier in this chapter, Ed, the Headteacher of the school saw behaviour as a key challenge when he took over the running of the school (evidenced by OFSTED reports and initial staff meetings). He stated that in his opinion, the school required an approach which: “Met the individual needs of the students.” He also noted:

“You also need to get your discipline system correct ... you need a team focussing on behaviour and a team on teaching and learning, these systems underpin the ethos of the school. Our behaviour ethos needs to include relationships, positivity and making things right when they go wrong. When we took over there was no accountability, and we needed that, in all areas of the school.”

The Headteacher placed an importance on a system that could foster resolution, as he stated that this was something that had been missing in the previous school’s system. He said that under the old regime, there was no follow-up meetings after a student was placed in isolation, or when they were excluded, the reintegrative meetings were often perfunctory exercises which didn’t look at a reintegration plan for students once their exclusionary period had come to an end. He stated this explicitly during an interview:

“It was important that the system let students reflect on the consequences of things and how they can be done differently, getting them to actually think about things and how they had gone wrong, rather than a system purely based on punishment”.

The need for a system which promoted relationships, instead of punishment was also discussed by the AH: Behaviour, Tom. He commented that “Simply telling these kids off doesn’t work, there was a palpable need for these kids to have someone to talk to, someone they could trust”. David, AH: Student Experience agreed, he noted: “We needed something that could instil in these kids that they are worth something, because we have a massive issue with low self-esteem, but we also need consequences and I think proper restorative practices have that.” When prompted as to what “proper restorative practices were” in his opinion, David stated:

“Proper restorative practices are about empathy, in my view, taking responsibility and thinking about it and trying to make it right. That’s where restorative practices make a difference for our kids, they’re often self-interested and restoratives can get them to think about others.”

All Senior Leaders agreed about the use of restorative practices. Their pursuit of ‘restoratives’ as they were known in the building was initially driven by the need to build relationships between staff and students and students and to encourage or construct an atmosphere of trust. In discussions outside of the interviews, the Headteacher stated that a failure of the previous regime, in his opinion, was that their system was based on rigid application of traditional punishments, my notes refer to a comment he made “You only have to look at their stats, detentions, exclusions through the roof”. This comment related to the large number of detentions and exclusions is supported by similar information in the OFSTED report. He also stated that when he had initial meetings with staff, during the transition, many of them commented that reliance on traditional punishment was a causal reason as to the large number of behavioural problems at the school.

My interviews with staff also supported this assertion. Jean, an Assistant Head of House commented:

“Detentions just don’t work with these kids, we have them here, but usually for the kids who need to cool down. To solve stuff, we need restoratives. Look at these two who’ve fallen out [she refers to two children who we have been discussing – they’ve had an argument and a fight resulted] it goes back to reflecting on ourselves, how could I have dealt with this differently? We find it repetitive, but it’s life skills isn’t it?”

The Learning Resource Centre Manager, Phil also commented on where he felt the previous regime failed: “the organisation of a school like this needs to focus on relationships [the previous Head] didn’t do this, she expected them to behave well.” He went on to note that because the previous Head’s experience was primarily in “wealthy schools, she was ill-equipped to deal with the challenges posed in the school”, concluding: “It wasn’t going to work here”.

Early in the transitional period, Tom, the AH: Behaviour, adapted the behaviour policy to include the use of restorative practices, alongside in addition to traditional sanctions. The policy stated:

“19.13: Where appropriate, students who disrupt the learning of others, or act inappropriately to members of staff or the public, will be expected to attend restorative practice meetings. For serious offences, including physical violence and racism, restorative meetings will be attended by the Academy’s PCSO link. Students may be required to write formal letters of apology.”

Whilst this provision does not necessarily refer to a whole-school restorative practice approach, it was the beginning of the deployment of restorative practices which would become more embedded and wide-ranging as the processes at Pioneer became more established.

5.4.1 Models of Implementation and Initial Practical Restorative Approaches at Pioneer

The early practical implementation of restorative approaches at Pioneer was not informed by any overarching theoretical or epistemological position. Instead, it was a problem-solving exercise with an intent to mitigate some of the issues discussed in the previous sub-chapter. Initially, the programme was designed and managed by the AVP: Behaviour, Tom as a piece of professional development. He possessed some experience in the delivery of restorative practices during employment at a previous school. He organised and constructed a diversionary behaviour system whereby if students had contravened school rules, instead of

following a traditional pathway (detention, suspension, exclusion), they would be directed to a restorative alternate. The school relied on the use of a 'remove' function, an isolation room which teachers would send students to if a student's behaviour became (in their view) unmanageable in the class. It was an initial desire to reduce instances of students sent to the 'remove' room and replace this with a restorative process.

When discussing the planning for the restorative model with him, he articulated the stages of implementation that led them to their current state. Initially, discussions took place amongst Senior Leaders regarding the purpose and desired outcomes of the restorative implementation. It was agreed that they hoped to achieve the following:

- Reduced instances of bad behaviour.
- Enhanced engagement with the schools wider community, for example parents – (a whole-school approach, in his words).
- Less serious disruption to the learning taking place in lessons.
- A calmer atmosphere generally.
- Higher academic achievement and student satisfaction.

To achieve the above, a programme of staff training was constructed with information disseminated in twilight training evenings. This included mandatory, whole-school professional development sessions over a three-month period with twelve sessions undertaken in total. The pastoral received an enhanced training programme organised by an alternative provision centre⁹ located in the city.

The view was that the use of restorative practice would be introduced initially with a view to quelling behaviour problems. Once this was embedded, the school would begin to implement some of the more proactive aspects of restorative approaches, for example, the use of restorative language and more formal restorative interventions such as FGCs. They found that the early implementation of reactive approaches was beneficial - leading to a reduced instance of students requiring a 'remove' or period of isolation. The use of the pastoral team, in delivering and tracking the restorative interventions was said to be a success, particularly in the stages of early implementation.

⁹ Alternative provision is a term used for education arranged (usually by a local authority) for students who cannot access mainstream education (usually because of exclusion or illness).

The practices evolved into the variant of restorative practices we see in the research, a system that includes informal and formal types of restorative approach. Ranging from small-scale restorative intervention such as pastoral meetings, restorative conversations and questioning to more formal examples such as family group conferences and FRPs.

As we have seen in this chapter, staff and students report facing a number of challenges. It is argued by staff, that these challenges are made more complex by the socio-economic context and impactful external factors. The desire to implement restorative practices was motivated, in part, by a desire to meet the needs of students, but also as a strategy to challenge the high levels of bad behaviour in the school at that time. In the next chapter, I will document the primary findings of the research, as they relate to my research questions. This will involve exploring the role and function of the restorative community, and in doing so, view in greater detail the impact of restorative practices at the school, both positive and negative. Many of the themes in this chapter will be revisited as context is a key factor in my study.

Chapter 6 Findings: Community, Relationships, and Barriers.

This chapter will report what I discovered through my research. My primary interview approach was semi-structured interviews with members of the Senior Leadership Team, staff members, students, and representatives of the wider school community groups. Throughout the research, I will often refer to this latter group as the 'wider-community' as this was the nomenclature employed by some of my research participants (primarily the Senior Leaders), when referring to, substantially parents, but sometimes, other actors with whom the school would work. This information will be supported by findings from my participant/non-participant observation. I will explore the important themes emerging from the participant's feedback at every level. This feedback will be used to present my findings to the research questions stated at the outset of the previous chapter.

The reportage of this chapter will be organised around the important themes which emerged during the empirical work. Within each question, I have assigned appropriate themes, and these will form the content within each overarching research questions.

6.1 How Participants Define their 'Restorative Community'

Initially, I set out to develop an understanding of how my participants viewed/typified or defined their own 'restorative community' in the school. As explored in the literature, there are a number of theoretical propositions for defining the community in restorative practices in schools (for example: the school as community theory as presented in Willis (2016), Braithwaite's 'Communities of Care' (1989) and McCold (2004) who discussed 'Community as Place'). In addition to these examples of community definitions, there are also some writers in the field who present community as having no precise definition, or that it shouldn't be defined (Braithwaite, 1998; McCold, 2004; Cossins, 2008). In establishing the views of my participant's, I hoped to gain insight into their view of community, as this would inform later questions about how the community is involved in restorative practices, the benefits of this involvement and any disadvantages that involving the community created.

6.1.1 A Lack of Defined Community?

My initial findings supported the idea expressed in the literature that community was a difficult concept to accurately define. Whilst my participants stated that there were some common traits assigned to the notion of community (relationships, was often used interchangeably with the term community), many respondents struggled to accurately define the term, or how the community functioned within the school. Only the Senior Leadership Team possessed a definitive, cohesive understanding of the term.

The Senior Leader's understanding of community was similar to the impression of viewing the whole school as its own self-regulating community as discussed by Willis (2016). Their macro-scale envisioning of community posited that the school, the Senior Leaders, staff, students, and wider community were part of the 'school community'. As the Headteacher, Ed noted:

"Underneath all of the practices we employ, we have the need to benefit the whole-school community, and that includes, staff, students and parents, they all have a stake in the school and are affected by the decisions that we make."

This holistic view of community builds on the idea that the school has an impact beyond the confines of the school campus and that it cannot operate in isolation from parents and the wider community (Costello et al., 2009; Wachtel and Wachtel, 2009). This view was shared by the AH: Student Experience, David, who stated: "Schools could be quite insular, you can forget that the decisions that we take in this building have a wider impact, we have to serve our wider community who has needs and wants". The AH: Behaviour, Tom agreed. He said that:

"We have to be aware that when the kids go home, our impact can't end, the things that happen in the day, the kids take home with them, so we have a duty to ensure that our provision goes home with them too."

Emma (AH: Teaching and Learning) and Rob (AH: Curriculum and Data) based their similar views of community on the perceived errors of the previous Headteacher who they both said ignored and neglected the wider community in her practice. Rob noted that "Winning hearts and minds in the early period was a real key thing. We had to get the buy in from everyone". He justified this on the following grounds: "I got a sense that once you got the community on side, they would defend you to the hilt and then we could really start to help the kids by providing the same message at school as at home". Tom (AH: Behaviour), again referring to community, offered the following benefit to an overarching community definition: "You've got someone who can come in, to have those necessary restorative meetings, it's not as powerful if it's just a teacher and two kids, that's what they expect at school", there was also a reputational component to involving the wider community. The Headteacher noted that

“We’ve actively worked with our wider community, we want to be an important hub, not a shameful aspect, now they [the wider community] recognise that we will do something about it if something goes on outside the school and they can come to us.”

Finally, the AH: Safeguarding, Karen spoke of a partnership that must exist between the school and its wider community. She referred to the shared interests that each group would have, the welfare of the children, academic and personal growth. She stated: “By nature the education process is a partnership of community”.

There is a clear rationale for wider-community inclusion as defined by the Senior Leaders at the Academy, they expressed the need for a sense of belonging amongst all stakeholders in the school and needed to combat what they perceived to be a negative perception of the previous Headteacher. However, as I will refer to later in this chapter, their perception of community, does not always match the perception of the other school members. Whilst they defined their community as overarching and inclusive of staff, students, and the wider community (parents), my findings will show that other groups in the school did not believe this to be the case. That is not to say that they were not striving for such provision, their desired intent was evidently a whole-school community with buy-in from all those who had a stake in the school. However, it could be argued that it was perhaps not achieved at this point. They perceived that they were making inroads into developing greater levels of cohesion between the school and community and saw a benefit in that approach as I will explore later in this chapter. However, most of staff at the school did not share the same understanding of community as promoted by the Senior Leaders. Three out of eight staff member interviews (Gemma, Head of English, Steve, Head of Science and Anne a Head of House) proffered a definition of community which was aligned to that given by Senior Leaders. Two other staff members provided alternative definitions of community, or in three out of eight cases, no definition at all. Phil, the Resource Centre Manager, defined the school community in a more restrictive way than the other staff members referred to so far: “I think the community of a school, particularly when talking about the restorative community, is mainly the students with teachers or non-teaching staff, as that’s where the relationships are, we don’t see the Senior Leaders much” He also mentioned the fact that often, even the school itself is not a cohesive community: “We’re very different to the teachers, they have their own priorities, they’re quite distant, I just want to be a stable influence for the kids”. Jean, An Assistant Head of House stated a similar proposition: “I don’t reckon you can think of community in school as a really big thing, because when we’re

in here, we have to live the day to day. Parents send them in, and we have to deal with their needs, whatever they are". Naz, another Assistant Head of House, affirmed this message: "I don't think the community of school and outside the school are together, because sometimes when we bring the wider community in, it makes things worse."

The understanding of the term 'community' between Senior Leaders and staff was confused and sometimes contradictory. Some Senior Leaders and staff felt that the school should be considered a community unto itself, where they recognised the existence of a wider community but sought to exclude it from the defined restorative community. There were also those staff who envisioned a micro-scale community predicated on individual relationships. This conflict of definition is reminiscent of the current debate ongoing in restorative literature (Johnstone, 2002; McCold, 2004; Cossins, 2008), where there is not one operative and functional definition of community, but instead, several definitions which suit a particular theory or purpose of restorative practice envisioned by the writer (Sen, 2006). Attempting to define the 'restorative community' becomes even more confused when exploring how students perceive their restorative community.

Students reported no consistent definition of the restorative community. Eight out of thirteen stated that they were unaware of any wider community, restorative or otherwise and instead saw school and home life as two very separate entities. Ten out of thirteen, when questioned about community, defined their community as those people immediately proximate to them in any given instance. For example, Simon a Year 11 student stated: "There's no mixing, you just hang around with a small group of friends, that's your community here, you don't need to involve yourself with anyone else". I asked him whether he thought the school itself could be seen as or described as a community, he replied: "Not really, a community is something you want to be a part of. Most of the days, I don't want to come here, it doesn't mean much to be a Pioneer student at all". Hannah, a Year 9 student also referred with a similarly closed view of community "Home is where you go to relax, school is something you've got to do to have a good future, you don't have to do schoolwork at home". Both these responses, in different ways, show a separation of two distinctive entities, school and home. In addition, they represent the first instance of students disavowing themselves of the automatic community identity prescribed to them by the Senior Leaders and some teachers.

Lucie, a Year 11 student, provided another interesting insight into community identity, namely, those students who may be assigned membership of the school community, but do not wish to participate. She refers to her boyfriend's experience of school:

“He definitely didn’t feel part of a community, or see here as a community, because he said that even though the Headteacher was nice to him, he hated everyone else, and that he didn’t fit in the learning environment, he wanted more manual work, so when he was permanently excluded, he was happy, he said he needed a different environment to the school”.

The disengagement these students felt is impacted on their own perception of community. The inability to define community was shared by Jordan (Year 7) and Emma (Year 8) who both attested to a feeling of separation from the school. However, that is not to say they did not feel part of a type of community. For example, Simon referred to his “Small group of friends,” Lucie (Year 11) commented on the very positive relationship she had with her Head of House and Sarah (Year 11) her English teacher. It became apparent that whilst the students did not envisage community in the same way as the teachers, there were operative dynamics which stylistically resembled community which existed within the school. This idea was articulated by Alex a Year 11 boy, who provided his own perspective of community in the school which is representative of the subtleties of community at student level:

“In the context of this school, the community changes, because there’s a different relationship when you have different people. So, like, the community at lunch isn’t the community of the English class. At lunch I go with these people and joke about this. Community isn’t a static monolith, it changes throughout the day, depending on what you need or who you want to be with”.

Students did not see themselves as part of a community but did have people within the school with whom they shared strong bonds or relationships. Some might argue that this is reminiscent of a form of ‘care community’ promoted by Braithwaite (Braithwaite, 2002; Zehr, 2002). However, where communities of care are often predetermined through the presence of interpersonal relationships, the students did not view their relationships in such a dominant fashion, their relationships were not predetermined, they were chosen. Students also did not see themselves as part of one operative, immovable community, but a pluralism of communities with whom they would engage dependent on their need or preference at that time. As such, the communities of care model, whilst perhaps the most applicable of the

community types I have explored thus far to the student experience does not reflect the nuance of the student narrative they expressed in interviews.

Taking account of the outcomes of the first theme, my findings can be summarised accordingly: there was no comprehensive, agreed upon definition of the 'restorative community' it differed according to the status of the participant. What can be said is that each definition of community reflects a relative and personal understanding of community depending on what they hoped to get out of it. The Senior Leaders desired an umbrella approach that could meet the needs of all stakeholders, the staff and students preferred to work on a more operational, small-scale notion of community which was beneficial for their day-to-day existence at the school. Whilst there was no definition of community, through this process of questioning one thing became apparent. There was a consensus amongst participants that 'relationships' were key at the school.

6.1.2 The Perceived Importance of Relationships

When discussing the 'restorative community' the term relationship was employed synonymously with the term 'community' by many of my participants. Relationships and their functions have an important role in restorative practices, particularly in education (Karp, 2001; Pranis, 2005; Morrison, 2007; Riestenberg, 2012; Wadhwa, 2016). When they spoke of community, many of my participants viewed community as a way of describing or viewing individualised relationships which existed within the school. This hinted at a focus on a less overarching, more personal, relational forms of community similar to those described by Hendry (2009) and Hopkins (2004). The importance of relationships was highlighted by the Headteacher, Ed:

"In schools like ours, often it's less about a community feel, as that might not be possible, but instead, it's about relationships. That's what it boils down to in the end. So that might, that's the common theme between every student, if you've got positive relationships between those students or staff members, and it may be different for each staff and student: that's what a community should be."

Most Senior Leaders and staff members prioritised the need to develop good relationships with the students, often when promoting this view, they sought to emphasise the context of the students as a driving motivator. They emphasised there was something specifically about students from a socio-economically deprived context that necessitated the building of strong

bonds, more so than in affluent schools. Often staff justified this opinion on the basis that students would lack those strong bonds or relationships elsewhere in their lives. We have already seen, Karen, the AH: Safeguarding refer to this in the previous chapter, but it was also emphasised by Tom, AH: Behaviour who stated: “Our kids, they need those relationships, they may not have them at home, we might have to play the role of their parent, or they older brother, but really, the magic formula is the relationships, that’s key to everything.” Karen concurred, she referred to the need to build trust with students who in her view, find it hard to trust: “The kids are naturally closed-off to authority figures, maybe through bad experience or whatever, but they want someone they can talk to, and trust, and to break down the barriers – break into the tribe.” These ideas were summarised by Rob, the AH: Curriculum and Data, who referred to similar examples as stated by Tom and Karen:

“These kids need parents in school, they don’t really like the school much, they place trust in individuals, they work for you or learn for you or listen to you, not the role, the person, it can be the only way to get through to them.”

The Senior Leaders articulated a view of community in which relationships provided a key function and referred to the context as a rationale for this view. Ed, the Headteacher opined that there was an overarching community dynamic, involving leaders, staff, students and parents, and the relationships between the different actors formed the structure of the whole-school community. However, this notion was not shared by many staff at the school who instead sought to focus on the notion that a sense of community was derived purely from strong, individual relationships. This view was paramount in the perceptions of the pastoral leads, the Heads of House and Assistant House. Whilst this may be expected as they have more time than other staff to cultivate those relationships, their insights provided an understanding as to how they utilised those relationships. Naz, an Assistant Head of House referred to the benefits of building good relationships with students, he stated: “You can get through to them [the students], when they know you and like you, they start suspicious and you can break that shell, then they listen to you and know that you’re trying to do the best for them”. He stated that this can be impactful when trying to guide students, or offer advice, he gave examples of conversations that he had that week, helping students find part-time work, arguments with friends, or conflict at home, noting: “it’s only because I had that relationship that they would listen to me”. Jean’s response affirmed this idea “It’s the heart and soul of the school [good relationships with students] you’ve got to have that, and that’s what makes us work so well

with the kids". Harry, a Head of House, referred to his experience of how strong relationships with students can beneficially affect the restorative practices he had been involved in:

"They start with all these barriers and suspicion, 'No, I'm not doing that', 'Why am I even here, et cetera', it's only when they know you, and they know you're trying to help them, will they engage. If they suspect you're out to get them, they're not even turning up to that meeting, they're going to hop the fence, anything other than being confronted. You've got to tell them, 'Trust me, I've not done you over previously, come to this because we need to find a solution to get you back on the straight and narrow and into the classroom' it's that important."

As I have shown above some of the staff saw relationships as a way to operationalise the restorative practices, or as providing a function, such as a way to communicate their message on good behaviour through forming interdependent bonds with students. Others saw them as a way to build trust and to get through to the students, but most, if not all participants saw them as a necessity in breaking down preconceptions of suspicion and barriers that, according to their responses, the students came into school with.

In my interviews with students, they placed a similar emphasis and importance on the role of relationships in the school, they also put forward additional benefits that they recognised. Simon, Jordan, Phoebe and Emma specifically referred to the importance of relationships to their academic attainment, noting that they worked a lot harder for those teachers with whom they had an affinity. Simon (Year 11) had previously discussed the disengagement he felt with the school, even he stated that whilst he did not like the school as an organisation, or entity, he worked hard for, liked and confided in his Drama teacher. He commented: "If she doesn't engage you, you don't do your best performance, she is passionate and wants you to do well, and I get that." Emma, a Year 8 student stated, "Our teachers, well, some of them, go really far to help us, when they do more it makes them seem like they care". Alex, another Year 11 stated that "Because English was a fun lesson, and because there was a good, relaxed atmosphere and everyone got on well with the teacher, you weren't afraid to get it wrong, like you were in Art."

Whilst this provides an insight into one function of relationships according to the students: the causal affiliation of strong relationships and academic attainment, students were more expressive in describing the benefit of relationships in increasing their sense of belonging in

the school. They refer to relationships with staff members in a myriad of ways, sometimes in a restorative, behaviour altering way, other times as provision of what they deemed necessary emotional support and sometimes as compensatory for the absence of parents. In terms of the utility of relationships to change behaviour, James (Year 10) commented:

“Sometimes, there’s just people you can’t talk to about stuff, but Mr Smith, he’s a hero. He’s the reason I’m still here at this school. I made the great decision [sarcasm] to elbow the Headteacher in the face, a teacher I guess saw something in me, he got me a meeting and an apology rather than a permanent exclusion ... but yeah, he saved my entire education because he liked me as a person”.

I spoke to Mr Smith about this after the interview with James. He told me that the incident did happen, and that James had been fighting with another boy. The Headteacher broke the fight up and went to pick James up off the floor, at which point, trying to escape, James had elbowed The Headteacher on the chest. He also said that James was not a bad student and deserved a second chance, so he petitioned on James’ behalf. The importance of this relationship to James was evident in his interview, he noted during his interview that this was a teacher who would go the extra mile for him, and the teacher had his respect and admiration as a result.

In addition to these larger scale interventions, students also referred to the fact that they appreciated the ongoing, informal conversations that staff would engage them with. Most students who spoke about this referred to how it made them feel more like individuals within the school and that they felt more important and engaged as a result. For example, Eleanor, a Year 10 said: “Miss Smith would often ask me how I was doing at work and home and Mr Smith would pick on my school picture as a laugh ... it made me feel included and that they knew who I was, and that was mega important to me”. Keera (Year 7) said: “I was adopted by the Headteacher, this means I always have someone to go to if I have problems”.

In summary, barring the perception of the Senior Leaders, participants mostly stated that there was no formal understanding of a ‘restorative community’ in the school. At least not a definition which was singularly or communally applied. However, in the space of community, all participants placed substantial importance on the value and impact of strong relationships. Where there was no one community, there were a number of micro scale social bonds which

were deployed to achieve a variety of impacts within the school, according to staff members and students.

6.2 Why Involve the Restorative Community?

The first question focussed on the definition of the restorative community according to the participants. I found that there was an absence of a general overarching community, but that the participants did note the existence of restorative-style micro-communities based on positive relationships they had with individuals. From this, I sought to explore how these micro communities were deployed in the school and for what purpose? In this sub-chapter I will focus on the rationale participants in involving the restorative community in their practice and explore the impact of these decisions on students. I will focus on three key themes which emerged from my data, these are: 1) Community as a tool to engage wider-stakeholders (parents), 2) Community as empowerment and finally, 3) Community as a tool used by the school to improve behaviour.

6.2.1 Community as a Tool to Engage Important Stakeholders

Senior Leaders stated that it was a priority to engage the wider-community in the school, and one way they felt this was possible, was through engaging parents in the practices ongoing at the school, particularly, when there had been misbehaviour or other rule-breaking incidents. However, other staff reported that this was not an easy or seamless process.

Pioneer Senior Leaders felt that during the transition from old regime to new the wider community (parents) were disengaged and did not wish to involve themselves in the school. The Headteacher, Ed, noted that this was due to an antagonistic relationship with the previous Headteacher and therefore, initially, they hoped they could make some positive breakthroughs in this aspect. Whilst I will break wider-community engagement down in greater detail during my presentation of 6.5: Barriers, there is some cross-over in the data provided by participants. The school leaders (particularly the Headteacher and AH: Behaviour) reported in interviews that they wanted to form more cohesive relationships with parents, they stipulated several reasons for this. One justification was that they felt greater communication with parents would improve behaviour of students by providing external support from parents and a combined front with a consistent message from home and school about following the school rules (Claassen and Claassen, 2008; Hendry, 2009; Holtham, 2009; Boyes-Watson and Pranis, 2015). Another was that it met an important OFSTED measure and lastly, particularly the AH: Safeguarding, Karen argued, that parental engagement was necessary as she claimed that having knowledge of the external aspects of a student's life was useful in providing the appropriate support and care for students on an individualised basis. Additionally, the Senior

Leaders considered parents to be key stakeholders who should be involved in any aspect of their child's life, particularly those aspects that might have negative consequences for home (Porter, 2001; Bitel, 2005; Blood and Thorsborne, 2006; Morrison, 2007; Sellman, Cremin and McCluskey, 2013). However, the Senior Leaders were also of the consensus that the wider community was disengaged. Ed, The Headteacher reflected on this and noted that the disengagement became more apparent when the school sought to discuss student behaviour with parents. He stated: "There was this idea that everything happens in the school is our problem and that everything happens at the home is theirs, but we know that's not the case." I asked him to develop that idea, as I felt it required further disentangling:

"Things that happen here, arguments, missed homework, conflicts, these have an impact at home, the parents have a stake in this, many of our kids live next to each other, if they have a bust up¹⁰ here, that's not going to finish at the school gates, that's going to spill over. But trying to explain this to parents is not easy".

This notion of parents as stakeholders is an important one for the school (and the restorative literature (Christie, 1977; Braithwaite, 1998)). The view of the wider community as stakeholder was specifically referenced by the AH: Behaviour, Tom. In this interview, on discussing why engagement with the wider community is important, he referred to parents as an "important stakeholder," he went on to give an example of the factors they sought to overcome through parental engagement:

"We have this conjoined impact on each other, yesterday I had this issue brought to me, two kids arguing on Facebook all night, they come in, first thing that happens, smash, fight, I got Karen involved as one of them was LAC (Looked after child), she rang Dad, he knew all about it".

In a follow-up interview with Karen, I asked her about this incident, she stated that when she called Dad, not only was he aware about the situation with his child and the other student, according to Karen's response, the father had told his child to "Sort him out" she went on to

¹⁰ Argument

say: “this is the problem we have, mixed messages, he’s telling the kid to fight back, we’re telling them to talk it out, it’s hard”. David, the AH: Student Experience reflected on this issue of mixed messages:

“The worst thing you can do is look like you’re criticising someone’s family, we’ve had situations where a member of staff has said to kids, “were you dragged up” and parents call up raging¹¹, but we’ve got the things we’ve got to do, we can’t have kids scrapping¹²”.

The desire of the school to engage their community as they were reciprocal stakeholders in the welfare of the children was key. They also recognised the impact of things that behaviour in school does have repercussions in the home. The leaders admitted that engagement with parents was not as successful as they had hoped, and this is something that I will discuss later in this chapter. When I discussed the idea of parental engagement with staff, they noted many of the same themes are emerged in discussions with Senior Leaders. For example, Harry, a Head of House stated: “parents here are really unwilling to get involved, lots of call-screening, lots of “too busy”, “busy that day” and the like”, however, unlike in discussions with the Senior Leaders, he did note some positive breakthroughs in parental engagement, “We do have pockets of success and that has a real impact, we have some parents who have a lot of insecurities about their children, they find it positive they can pick up the phone.” Anne, another Head of House spoke of another success, where parental engagement had been used to support a student:

“We had this kid, the parents were at the end of their tether, he was causing havoc at home, havoc here, but I met with his mum, we went through a plan for him, he didn’t instantly get better, but she was so thankful, I think just to talk”.

¹¹ Angry

¹² Fighting

Jean provided her summary of the state of parental engagement at the school: “Some parents do shut up shop¹³, but it’s our job to show them we’re there to work with them, to provide restorative solution for them, and some do appreciate it”.

I wanted to understand why disengagement was so pervasive for parents in the views of the Senior Leaders and staff. I felt the best approach was to discuss this with the parents directly (whilst I will provide a much more comprehensive insight later in this chapter but feel this is an appropriate interval at which to introduce the discussion). Obtaining interviews with parents who are disengaged provides an immediate practical difficulty, but it there were some breakthroughs. Nicholas (Parent) who had a child in Year 11 explained to me his apprehension with engaging.

“You just know that when you get that phone call, it’s “Oh, what’s he done now.” You come in, sit there, and it’s like, “yeah, I know – I’m trying to get him to sort it too, you should see what he’s like at home”, I’ve had 4 years of this, it can be like a broken record at times”.

This provides one example of why parents were disengaged; I will refer to a number of others when exploring the final research question at the end of this chapter. Whilst the Senior Leaders and staff wanted to engage the wider community to build a more cohesive relationship, and because they felt that it would result in better relationships between the school and students, they had not been successful in achieving either of these aims. Participants noted there remained a separation between the school and its wider community.

6.2.2 Empowering the Internal Community

Another theme which emerged in discussions with the staff participants was the need to empower the community to manage its own conflict (Cameron and Thorsborne, 2001; Bush and Folger, 2004; Cremin, 2007; Cowie and Jennifer, 2008; Salmivalli, 2010). Some staff in the school felt that students were incapable of effectively managing their own conflict, resorting to violence, or running away, instead of facing up to difficult situations. They hoped that by involving the students in discussions about their behaviour, in restorative conferences, and by making them responsible when they broke the rules, that students may develop their own conflict-resolution skills (Wachtel and McCold, 2002; Thompson and Smith, 2011). Tom, AH:

¹³ Disengage

Behaviour was the first Senior Leader to refer to this: “It would be easy to stick kids in detention, but that would be the easy option. These kids, often don’t know how to handle their emotions, someone shouts at them, they’re shouting back, same thing with violence.” During the interview, he articulated the case for involving students in the process: “That’s what restoratives have been great for, get two kids, sit them down with their HOH, they solve their own issue, with support. That’s a skill that will stay with them forever.” Tom’s response highlighted a wider perception amongst Senior Leaders that the students felt that the inability of students to manage their own conflict led to escalation and more serious incidents, which, if could be managed differently, and deescalated, would be healthier for everyone involved. Emma, AH: Teaching and Learning referred to this: “Many students can’t handle facing up to things, they’d prefer to run off, but when we get the right support and preparation, the kids can do it, they can even apologise and accept blame.” The Headteacher had referred to external agencies the school had instructed to build these skills in students: “We’ve got counsellors coming in, enrichment, mentoring, mental health counsellors, conflict resolution specialists, alternative provision helpers, anything we can to support the skill-development of the kids.”

The Senior Team reported success in building these skills with students, Karen, AH: Safeguarding referred to a successful strategy she had utilised to empower the students:

“I recount stories of getting kicked out of Sixth Form for being a gob on a stick¹⁴, I always tell them how many times I’ve cocked up¹⁵ in my life and get them to think, you can be in a better position than me. I get them to learn from their mistakes and they’re really coming along with it, they trust me and say, “She’s alright her,” we’ve got the kids wanting to do better, and part of that is building these conflict skills, but they need that personal support from someone they like.”

The notion of empowering students to manage their own conflict with support from trusted individuals is also represented in the responses from staff participants. The information provided by Heads of House and Assistant Heads of House is particularly enlightening as they were the staff members most often involved in the restorative meetings (as the pastoral leads

¹⁴ Overly opinionated to the point of annoyance/disruption.

¹⁵ Made mistakes.

and the members of staff who have the most direct contact with the students). Jean, an Assistant Head of House observed the need to teach students to self-reflect about their behaviour: “My role is about problem solving, we need to get students to reflect on themselves,” I asked her if she had any particular examples of this, she replied:

“Loads, it’s daily, they come in saying all sorts “I hate that effing teacher,” an “I’m going to knock so and so out”, after ten minutes, they’re having a cup of tea, and a chat about their brother who plays rugby, then we get on to their behaviour and I get the chance to tell them “Yeah, he shouldn’t have said that, but you did call him a so and so”, next thing you know, they’re apologising, and they make that decision.”

Jean also referred to the important of the relationships she had formed in getting students to self-reflect, “They know me, it’s Jean, I’m not out to get them and they know I want to do my best by them”. Building on this idea, I asked Jean how long this behavioural change lasted, was there a longer impact of the skill-development,

“It lasts until they get riled¹⁶ up again, but there is a difference, the next time they come in and go, “I know it’s my fault Jean, I just need ten minutes and I’ll apologise, yeah?”, then they might apologise without even seeing me the next time, building life skills”.

I observed eight of these restorative meetings between students and their Assistant Heads of House, a common sequence of events, similar to those expressed by Jean emerged. Students would arrive or be brought to the Head of House’s office. Often, they would be distressed or angry. The Head of House or Assistant Head of House would engage in a conversation with them, similar to the one described by Jean, and they would calm down, some students took longer than others, for some, five minutes was enough, Jean reported the longest was a few hours. In all the meetings I witnessed, the students would arrive, usually with one of two tempers, the first: they would absolve themselves of all blame, the second: they would recognise their part, but seek to mitigate it. After further discussion with the pastoral lead, a

¹⁶ Angry

series of events would be clearly ascertained and the students would, steadily, state a more balanced view of the event. From this, an action plan was constructed with space for meetings and follow-up meetings. If the issue stemmed from a conflict with another student, a meeting was arranged, and restorative practices were used. If it was a staff member and a student, an immediate restorative process took place at the end of the lesson between the student and the staff member. Jean noted that immediacy was key “The longer these things lasted, the more likely something extra would go wrong.”

Empowerment is an important topic in the wider-restorative literature and the utility of restorative practices to empower is widely discussed (Coates and Gehm, 1985; Braithwaite, 1995; Daly, 2002; Barton 2003; MacCoun, 2005; Cook, 2006; Cossins, 2008; Richards, 2011). In this school, empowerment referred to, primarily, teaching students to manage their own conflict. The reports from Senior Leaders and staff note that this is something that had been implemented successfully in the school and recognised the role of the restorative community in aiding this.

However, I did want to explore student perceptions of empowerment. Whilst many students referred to the role of the House Teams in helping them if they had an issue, or if they had been arguing with friends, two students, Sarah (Year 11) and Phoebe (Year 10) spoke of the concept of empowerment specifically. Initially, the questions were innocuous, I asked Sarah about her time at the school, but her response was wide-ranging and encompassed various pertinent elements.

“During school, particularly in the early years, I was a proper troublemaker, I was always getting kicked out of lessons, I had, like, 300 negative logs¹⁷. I just couldn’t keep my mouth shut; I was on the verge of getting perm exed¹⁸, my Mum was doing her last one with me, she’d properly given up and [Head of House] told me I was going to get kicked out if I didn’t sort it. It was [Assistant Head of House] who saved me on that one. She would arrange these talks with the teachers that I’d been getting kicked out of, and even though I didn’t want to speak to them, she would make me. It was proper awks [awkward], but that meant I could go back into maths or whatever. I would still get kicked out sometimes, but she would help me

¹⁷ Behavioural logs, incidents tracked on a central system which tally a student’s rule breaking.

¹⁸ Permanently excluded; expelled.

again. I'm still loud, but I don't get in trouble as much, she taught me the countdown to ten things, it did work."

Phoebe, a Year 10 student described an incident where she had a falling out with a group of her friends, after this she said that a lot of them started posting unpleasant material on social media about her: "I went and saw [Assistant Head of House] she said about us all sitting down, but I didn't want to, because there were lots of them. But she said she'd help me through it, and she did." I asked her what happened at the meeting:

"I said that they were making me depressed. The issue sort of got sorted, we weren't friends after, but they said sort and now I think I can at least see them, it also gave me a bit of confidence, because I stood up to them".

The responses from these two students note the importance of empowering the students according to the staff at the school. Staff recognised that whilst these victories may be short-lived, or not always permanently effective, the students did see a value in it and were developing keener skills, potentially as a consequence.

The theme of empowerment was also a discussion point during my interviews with parents. Notably, I spoke to Matt (Parent) about this topic. In brief, the parent's son attended the school and was in Year 10. He had a history of getting in trouble, but after being mentored by his Assistant Head of House, he had experienced a turnaround:

*"He was up to all sorts, I'd get calls saying he's been fighting again, or said something to a teacher, or bunked off¹⁹, he did everything, it was always someone else's fault. A teacher who's a d**khead, someone else started it, he'd have every excuse, he started getting this support from [Assistant Head of House], and it's worked absolute bloody wonders, now he still gets in bother, but when he comes home, it's "Yeah, I did this but [Assistant Head of House] helped me out and I got it sorted". He's sometimes like a*

¹⁹ Truanted

different kid, in a good way. [Assistant Head of House] has done a top job with him”.

In two other interviews with Noah (Parent) and Lynne (Parent) they expressed the impact of the relationships with the House Teams. They noted that even though their children had not completely changed, and there were still occasional instances of rule-breaking or bad behaviour, they did want to behave better and were more expressive about what they had done and how they had to make it right.

The interview participants referred to above note the importance of conflict-resolution skills for students and the function of the House Team in helping build these skills and mentoring students in the practical aspects of these skills. We can also see from the response from parents, this skill-building had a wider impact, where students would take the skills they learned in school and deploy them at home becoming more expressive individuals.

6.2.3 Managing Behaviour

Senior Leaders expressed the view that a community-oriented response was necessary to solve, what they perceived as, significant behavioural problems at the school. In the previous chapter I discussed the immediate issues the school faced with students fighting, in-classroom disruption and threats to the safety of students and staff. This was, unsurprisingly, a key focus for Senior Leaders and one which they sought to challenge immediately during the takeover. They also reported a need reduce the numbers of detentions and exclusions as these resulted in negative behaviour statistics, that the school had to report to the government. Ed, the Headteacher specifically referred to this:

“We had to look at it strategically, what had gone wrong before and what we knew. We knew that if we went on as we were, it wasn’t good for anyone, kids were getting hurt, parents were furious, kids were getting expelled and their futures were ruined and, on another level, we would get killed by OFSTED if our stats looked like they did during those early days, we had to improve. We needed a back-to-basics approach using relationships and community.”

Tom, AH: Behaviour also referred to the need to tackle behaviour: “We knew that these types of kids responded to people, we put a lot of funding into the pastoral team, our team is much bigger than most schools and this has had an impact, stats are down”. Karen, AH:

Safeguarding, spoke of her strategies for tackling behaviour and how relationships and community were foundational to such an approach:

“The kids were fighting, I picked this lad who was six-foot four, and said, “Right, get in my office,”. I said to him “I’m not backing down, together we’re finding a way so you’re going to follow the rules, non-negotiable, because I want you to do well”. They need that relationship with you, and the boundaries”.

David, AH: Student Experience provided another insight as to how behaviour was tackled through restorative practices, and the importance of a supportive community. Specifically, he referred to the use of restorative practices as a diversionary tool to avoid permanent exclusions of students. He stated: “sometimes, you only get that restorative conversation at the point of exclusion, I’ve had meetings with students, parents and the Assistant Head of House, they need that important person there.” I wanted to explore the role of this “important person” in greater detail. I asked David the role this person provided:

“Our kids need an advocate, from a young age so many of them are told, “You’re rubbish, you won’t be successful, it won’t be for you,” so when or if they get in trouble, it’s always like, “I told you so”, it’s like they’re living up to expectations, or lack of expectations. This is why the House Teams are so brill. They provide that net; they catch these kids before they fall off the edge and try to bring them back. They build the trust and the relationship.”

Challenging behaviour was of key importance to the Senior Leaders, and the capacity of restorative practices to provide this function is well-stated in the literature (Skiba et al., 2002; McCluskey et al., 2008; Hendry, 2009; Skinns, Du Rose and Hough, 2009), whilst this intention was present in the ethos of the Senior Leaders, they reported awareness that any restorative strategy to improve behaviour required investment from the staff.

The views of the Senior Leaders were supported by many of the staff I interviewed. I will focus on how teaching staff perceived the impact of the restorative community in responding to what the schools recognised as bad behaviour. Pete, the teacher of PHSE referred to the preconceptions that students may have of themselves, the value of this input was exploring what he perceived to be a source of the bad behaviour the Senior Leaders had referred to:

“They think we go to a bad school, in a bad area”, it’s hard for them, it’s like they’re acting up to it, they need the anchors who can tell them, “okay, if that’s the case, we’ll show them, we’ll show the people who say this is a bad school and a bad area” and help them get there.”

As a result of this external perception of the school, Pete said that bad behaviour reflected an unfortunate, and often, unfair: “self-fulfilling prophecy”, the students are told they’re from a bad area so they respond accordingly, he noted that boosting self-esteem amongst the students, or undertaking a process that could engender self-esteem was necessary to tackle the causal factors of the bad behaviour.

Gemma, The Head of English referenced a similar principle: “Our kids don’t do well with criticism, they can’t handle it. They need stability, good behaviour must be maximised and rewarded, like Pavlov. They know who’s in it for them and who they can trust.” I asked Gemma, how this was achieved, if it was, within the school, she responded: “Shouting, detentions, doesn’t work, they need care, inclusion and the knowledge that whatever they do, we won’t give up on them.”

Both staff referred to their perceived understanding of the psychological impact that the context of the school wrought. Pete contended that they used restorative practices due these “causal factors”: “the restoratives work more effectively than detentions, our kids need to know, they need to be part of the process, okay, the area may not be London, but you can do better, you can get out of it, that’s the message”.

The information provided by Senior Leaders and staff was confirmed in interviews with the students, particularly, the responses from Sarah and Phoebe, earlier in this chapter. The students often referred to their favourite teacher and the support that teacher had provided in a difficult time. These tether points, or relationships, were foundational in students wanting to do better, according to what they were divulging in their interviews. Likewise, where the relationships did not exist, as I have already stated, students would disengage and not seek to do well. This is shown in Alex’s response regarding the difference between the English class and the Art class.

Even though many participants referred to the inclusion of the community beneficially, there are a number of factors which they argued compromised the delivery of these systems. I will go into greater detail later in this chapter, however, as these factors pertain to the information I have just mentioned, I will briefly refer to them here. Firstly, as the school experienced a reduction in funding in later years, they had to reduce the number of pastoral staff they employed, therefore restricting the impact of the reintegrative model that they had

developed. Also, as external academic performance pressures mounted, the school adopted a more reactionary, punitive approach. The Headteacher reported favouring the immediate impact of detention and exclusion, over longer term, developmental restorative processes that they had spoken of here. Again, this will require a longer exploration which will take place later in this chapter.

6.3 The Practical Involvement of the Restorative Community

Although participants had conflicting definitions of the 'restorative community'. Participants had reported the feeling or sense of community, albeit a personal one, specific to them and their needs. Senior leaders described the implementation of two types of restorative practice, formal restorative practices, and informal restorative practices. In this section, I will describe each variant and provide information from participants about the role of the 'restorative community' in each type. When I refer to the 'restorative community' in this section, I am usually referring to the pastoral lead, a Head of House or Assistant Head of House, and occasionally, of parental involvement, which I will specify when it occurs.

6.3.1 The Informal Role of the Restorative Community.

In this section, I will introduce the types of restorative practice used by the school and explore their utility. Informal restorative practices were the province of the House Teams, once again, because of the relationships they had formed with the students, and the link they provided between students and teachers, they were the staff members who most often undertook this role. House Teams would use the terms 'Informal Restorative Practices' and 'Restorative Conversations' interchangeably. Naz, an Assistant Head of House described the restorative conversation process to me. He said that the House Teams would monitor the electronic behaviour log throughout the day, if an incident occurred with a student in their House, it would be their responsibility to find that student, or go and collect them from a lesson, if necessary. The level of intervention they employed would depend on the student who had caused the incident and what they knew of them (he gave the example of students who would require a "boost-up" if something had gone wrong in class). It would also depend on the severity of the misbehaviour. The practice employed would range from a brief chat to ascertain how the student was doing and whether they needed any support to impromptu restorative meetings with students and teachers. A Head of House, Harry referred to an example of the latter: "Sometimes, off the cuff we have to play the mediator role to facilitate the student and teacher sitting down, and both getting their points across, hopefully an end goal both parties are happy and can move forward". I asked him to provide me with an example of the sort of event which may lead to this intervention:

“We had an incident like that on Friday with a young lady who had, at the end of lunch, become quite excitable and she had got close to a member of staff’s personal space, he challenged her, and she reacted strongly”.

I asked Harry to outline the process that would follow from such an incident.

*“If a staff and student had gotten into conflict, so in this case she told him to “F*** off” and said a number of other things to him that were unacceptable, we take a statement from the student and staff member and what comes next is a series of restorative questions; we try to put the emphasis on the students reflecting on their own behaviour. For example: “What could you have done to make that situation better? What do we need to do next to sort this?” Only after this do we get the student and staff member together and get the student to lead the restorative.”*

As explained by Harry, the Head of House or Assistant Head of House plays a central meditative or facilitatory role with an emphasis of reliance on the pre-existing relationships that these pastoral workers had developed with students. Anne, the other Head of House interviewed also described the de-escalatory function of informal restorative processes at the school. She noted that when behaviour is escalated, for example, by contacting parents, or undertaking a more formal restorative process, the disruption to the school-day and the education of the child becomes more considerable, also students are more likely to disengage, fearing the severity of the response.

I witnessed two restorative conversations taking place. It was notable that in one of the two conversations, the students were given a choice as to whether they wanted to engage in a formal restorative process or if they wanted to opt for what was described as a “short chat to sort it all out”. I did note that this could be perceived as giving the student a choice, or it could be coercive. I asked the student their reason for opting for the less formal avenue, their response was that they trusted the Assistant Head of House to do the best for them so listened to her.

The roles for participants in these informal restorative processes were described as “supportive” or “facilitating”. However, in my observations, the House Leaders often took a larger, pronounced role in the restorative conversations. They stated that without this

approach students would not be able to construct their own opportunities for restoration, only the more confident and capable students could do so, and the conversations I witnessed did not apparently involve students possessing these attributes, according to participants.

The school leaders placed a substantial value on these restorative conversations, it is notable that they did circumvent more formal behaviour sanctions, such as restorative meetings, or detentions/exclusions. Also, the students I spoke to, did find them to be mostly useful. Additionally, it did achieve the goal of the staff, that the students were back into the classroom much more quickly than with a longer, drawn out process.

6.3.2 Community Involvement in Formal Restorative Practices

This section will focus on the involvement of the restorative community in formal restorative practices (FRP). FRPs were used when a more serious incident took place and necessitated convoking a full restorative meeting. This meeting had a similar structure to the Family Group Conferences and Victim Offender Mediation systems referred to in the literature review (Consendine, 1999; Thorsborne and Vinegrad, 2002; Buckley and Maxwell, 2007). The meeting would include a member of the Senior Leadership Team (usually the AH: Behaviour, Tom or AH: Safeguarding, Karen), representatives from the House Teams who would have direct knowledge of the event that led to the meeting, but were also there to support the students, the students, usually those directly involved in the incident (for example, the harmer/harmed), and parents/caregivers/family members or a representative from social services. If the incident was sufficiently serious, a Police Community Support Officer could attend, but this had not yet happened.

Karen, the AH: Safeguarding advocated the use of FRP in the school, particularly, the beneficial influence of the House Team on proceedings. She also argued that FRPs did not suffer the disadvantages of informal restorative practices:

“Without the Head of House and Assistant Heads, these processes just don’t work. We see the restoratives done badly, but proper restoratives, the actual, kosher, real stuff, I think it needs to be a formal thing. Because I think they’re going into it, they need to realise this isn’t just a shake hands and get through it thing, this is as serious as an exclusion”.

I asked her to clarify what she considered to be a “proper restorative meeting,”. She stated: “a proper meeting with a proper agenda, a proper process where everyone agrees and is honest,

not looking at your shoes, a real change in behaviour". Karen also argued that informal practices did not achieve this, she referred to informal approaches as "Those Head of House lunchtime office meetings, lunchtime scraps and chats, they may be restorative, but not proper restorative, that makes the kids consider their actions that day, we're talking longer term change with scaffolded community support in FRPs". I also discussed FRPs with Tom, the AH: Behaviour, he viewed FRPs in a slightly different way, focussing on how the FRPs were practically undertaken:

"In many ways it's about taking the behaviour out of the classroom environment, trying to separate the student from the issue. They need the familiar faces to help them through, and to see the consequences of their action, the kids who's maybe hurt. He's got to meet that person and look them in the eye, and that's hard for anyone. But we can't gang up on them, or punish them to death, we've got to look forward."

In both instances, the Senior Leaders referred to the need to couple the practice with support, particularly from the "familial faces", or the House Teams and the importance of this in the delivery of formal restorative practices. This same notion was shared by other staff participants. For example, in the interview with Jean, the Assistant Head of House, I asked her how the processes were coordinated and what her role was in the approach, she responded in detail:

"Well, if it's been violence, the child who has got hit, he speaks first, to tell his side of the story, usually from his statement that we got him to write once he'd been hit. Then the child who has hit them or called them names, will speak, we all [The House Team] have to listen as we all have responsibility to look after them after the meeting to do the restoratives. We give them that friendly link. Mum or Dad or social are there to help, but we also want to keep them aware. A lot of times parents aren't there, so I'm stand-in Mum, or older sister as I like to think."

I went back to Tom to further discuss the role of parents/social workers/older siblings in the process, as this was not something he had focussed on in our initial interview. I spoke to him

about this information Jean had provided and the supportive function she assigned to parents. Tom offered a slightly different view:

“Some parents do [support], but a lot of the time, it’s more that we get a lot of parents who want an action or outcome, if their kid has been hit, they want something on the other side for the other kid. We have to show them we’re doing something. The House Team supports the kids, with parents, it’s about pleasing them most often.”

Staff reported the role of community as having two functions. The first was to support all participants in the process as they were going through it, and to provide the specialist contextual information that may have led to the misbehaviour. The second was the aftercare, post-meeting where the House Teams supported the restoration of the participants.

I wanted to explore if the narrative claimed by staff was shared by the students. I spoke to Sarah (Year 11) and Jordan (Year 7) who had participated in formal restorative meetings previously. I first asked Jordan (Year 7) what led to his involvement in FRP: “We were in science, and I burned the corner of [student’s] pencil case on the burner, and I hid his pens all over the room, then pretended it wasn’t me until someone doxxed²⁰ me in”. I asked him about the subsequent restorative meeting that took place:

“I had to sit there because [Assistant Head of House] asked me to, and he was there so I thought it would be okay, but he cried about his pencil case, which was sad, but also a bit funny, so it was hard not to laugh, but I did feel sorry for him. In the meeting, his Dad said I should buy him another, but I didn’t have any money, so my Head of House said the school would pay for it, but I would have to look after the iguanas as payback, which I did.”

In reflecting on the meeting, he commented: “It was better than a detention, I did get to say how it wasn’t all my fault and that [student] told me to do it. I hated those iguanas though. I only went to the meeting for [Assistant Head of House].” I asked him if his dad attended: “No,

²⁰ Reported him to a teacher

he thought he would end up paying for it as he had to before with a window, and he said he didn't want to".

Sarah also discussed her experience of FRPs: "I hated them, you sat there for an hour while someone told you the bad stuff you did, I know what I did, I was there. I couldn't stand them." I queried why, if she hated them so much, did she attend even though she had admitted previously that she was constantly truanting during that period? "Usually because [Head of House] asked me to, he'd said "It won't get better for ignoring it. He'd been alright with me, so I didn't want to let him down or him to hate me as well".

The discussions with students reflected a mixed perception of FRPs, however, it was clear that the roles of the Heads of House and Assistant Heads of House were key in getting the students to engage with the meetings and provide the continued support after the meetings and students valued this.

I attended three Formal Restorative Practices to observe. I hoped that it would provide me with an opportunity to speak to parents and garner their opinion about the meetings. However, this opportunity was limited as even though seven parents were scheduled to attend over the course of the three meetings, in the end, only two did. I was able to conduct interviews with Parents 5 (Lynne) and 6 (Cath) at two separate FRPs. Lynne's (Parent) son had received aggressive messages on social media from different students at the school, and Cath's (Parent) daughter had been verbally abusive to a teacher. I asked Lynne (Parent) how she perceived the FRP process:

"It was alright, I suppose, I just don't think that the other kid will have learned their lesson from it, we sat down for an hour and forty-five minutes and we haven't really got anything, so they won't slag him off on snapchat anymore or shout at him, I think they've got away with it a bit."

I asked her if she felt the meeting had achieved the desired aims. She responded: "I don't really know, I guess if he's happier, then yeah, but I'll have to ask him later."

Cath (Parent) professed a different view; she was very happy with how the meeting was conducted and thanked the staff for the opportunity to discuss matters:

“I can’t handle her, she’s like this at home, swears at me, shouts, always moody, I just needed someone to get through to her, because I can’t. She really liked her Assistant Head of House, who’s great. She [Assistant Head of House] calls me to keep me up to date, but I just have to keep quiet in these things, because, if I say something, she does the opposite”.

In another instance, I was able to observe an FRP working effectively. A student had been found selling cigarettes on the school premises (the school were aware of the problem in a secluded area at the back of the main school building where students would meet to smoke and trade cigarettes and had attempted, unsuccessfully, to shut it down by placing a member of staff on duty there. Unfortunately, the students would meet to trade and smoke before the staff member arrived on duty (this was discussed during the meeting). The meeting was organised as the girl in question had been found with a lighter after a bag search undertaken by the Head of House. According to the policy of the school, this was an offensive weapon and could lead to a permanent exclusion if the school chose to enforce its behaviour policy literally. What ensued was a prolonged restorative conversation between staff and parents, where the Mum who attended in support of her daughter discussed the implications of smoking (a family member had suffered and died from lung cancer). The meeting was also attended by the school nurse who offered consultation function to enable the girl to stop smoking.

My observations of the FRPs were that they structured to operate in a similar way to the FGCs or VOMs as explored in the literature review, or at least that was the intention of the staff members at the school (Van Ness and Strong, 2006). There was a circle of participants who would take turns in discussing what had occurred and the latter half of the meeting was dedicated to forming an action plan about how it would be appropriate to move forward (Pranis, Stuart and Wedge, 2003). The Head of House or Assistant Head of House took a central role in encouraging discussions and the senior leader often remained impassive. I was surprised by the lack of parental support at the meetings, as the staff had previously stated to me one function of the meeting was to encourage parental support in the school, however, this did become an ongoing theme throughout the research.

6.4 Exploring the Benefits of the Restorative Community

In this section I will provide the findings from my participants about their perceived benefits of involving the restorative community at the school. When analysing the data, three important themes emerged in relation to this question. 1) The impact of the restorative community in improving misbehaviour at the school. 2) The role of the restorative community in building

trust with its community and 3) The restorative community providing a diversionary approach for students.

6.4.1 Does the Restorative Community improve the behaviour of students?

In the previous chapter, I referred to my participant's views on behaviour during the takeover period (Chapter 5) in which they viewed behaviour as an important aspect of the school which required attention. According to the Headteacher, the decision to use restorative practices was driven, in part, by the need to meet these behavioural challenges. It was reported by participants, that, as the restorative practices became embedded within the school, Senior Leaders and staff began to experience an impact, they referred to this in their interview responses. The Headteacher, Ed summarised these developments: "After taking over in 2015 and making the decision to use restorative practices, it took a few months to get staff trained, some were resistant, but we got the ethos due to the House Team". I asked him what he perceived were the benefits of restorative practices during that early period:

"We had some fight back, from the staff who said they should be able to manage behaviour how they wanted, but most were on board. I think the impact was a lot of individual change, a kid who, without that support or those relationships, slips between the cracks and ends up newspapers for nicking²¹ or worse."

Tom, the AH: Behaviour also praised the initial impact of restorative practices at the school. He began:

"Let's be under no illusion, it was expensive, all that money into the House Teams, but it paid off, detentions were down to 12% overall from nearly 42% the month previously. Fixed-term exclusions from thirty-seven in total to four and zero total permanent exclusions, this was in just a few months and we managed to maintain that for a long-time".

I asked Tom whether these the statistics reflected an improvement in student behaviour or the fact that by recording an incident as having a restorative alternative process, the school could

²¹ Stealing; theft.

avoid potentially damaging reports of negative behaviour statistics. Essentially, I wanted to know if there a change in behaviour caused by restorative practice, or was this statistical obfuscation? “No, he responded, I wouldn’t agree with that, I don’t think it’s about that one instance because we can see it more widely across the school, learners are happier, more engaged kids who want to do better.”

The two respondents above referred to the statistical impact as a method of recognising a quantifiable behavioural improvement of students. David: AH Student Experience, alternatively, referred to his perceived change in student attitude: “Everything seemed a bit more open, more on board, we had this motto, “Believe, achieve, succeed”, it was like this was possible and that we were working as a partnership rather than a separate group of adults and children.” He summarised “It just felt like we were banging our heads together less.”

There was a greater variance of perception in the value of restorative practices amongst staff participants. Pete, the PHSE teacher perceived the function of restorative practice and the role of the community in it as positive. He referred specifically to the improvement of behaviour at the school: “Pupil behaviour has improved remarkably, there are no unreachable groups as there once was. Restorative practices have allowed us to build a stress-free environment for all concerned where there is mutual respect between staff and students and, often, parents.” I asked him whether he had seen a change in the behaviour in his classroom: “I’ve been doing this for a long time ... I would say, yes I have, it’s not that there’s no longer bad behaviour, you’ve just got a way to manage it, you have a process to follow.”

However, the views of Steve, The Head of Science, conflicted with the Pete’s view. He argued that restorative practices “disempowered” staff and that it was effectively “de-professionalising”. He stated: “Teachers teach and build relationships naturally; I don’t need a check sheet for that.” The “check-sheet” Steve referred to here was a pro-forma of questions that staff were provided with to guide restorative conversations. He also noted: that he became frustrated during the transition to restorative practices as it was “soft, woolly and without sanctions”. He gave the example of a girl who had been, in his view, disrespectful to him during a lesson, “I kick her out, she comes back at the end with [Head of House] and I have to sit there and listen to her say sorry, knowing she didn’t mean it, that’s not support of colleagues.” I wanted to know if he saw any positives in the restorative approach. He conceded that some it appealed to some students, particularly those who were difficult to engage.

Mostly, the staff did perceive that restorative practices had a positive influence on promoting good behaviour at the school, this notion does correspond with the restorative practice

literature (Hopkins, 2004; Bitel, 2005; Buckley, 2007; Morrison, 2007; Wachtel, 2016). I remain apprehensive about the relationship between restorative practices and measurable behaviour statistics, due to the ease of exploitation and avoidance of reporting unfavourable data.

The views of students on the inclusion of the restorative community on student behaviour have already been noted in this chapter, it was reported that restorative practices effected a positive influence on student behaviour. For example, the responses from Sarah (Year 11) and James (Year 10) referred to the importance of community and relationships in improving their behaviour at school. Adrian (Year 9) referred to his experience in this regard: "I used to sit in detentions, and sometimes still do when things are very bad, and you're in there, you don't learn anything. I don't even mean in subjects, like, it doesn't teach you what you've done wrong." I asked him if his experience of restorative practice was any different: "Sort of, not the meeting someone, but your Head of House is supposed to be your school friend, and you don't want them to get fed up with you, so it makes you want to try harder to be better."

The conclusions drawn from this were that many participants felt that restorative practices led to an improvement in behaviour and integral to this was the impact of relationships between staff and students (Morrison, 2000; Drewery, 2004). In late 2015 the school received a second OFSTED visit, albeit there had only been just over a year to embed the practice, the impact of restorative practices was commented on by the inspectors. They noted:

"The structured programme for pupils who need more support to improve their behaviour is judged 'good'. Pupils are out of lessons for a short period of time to work on their coping skills. The impact is monitored, and pupils are reintegrated back quickly into lessons."

This passage in the OFSTED report described a restorative conversation undertaken with the Head of House, this received individual praise within the report and was recognised as established good practice by the inspectors. Whilst I will revisit the OFSTED report later in this chapter, this passage does reflect the impact of the restorative conversations and corroborates the inferences of staff respondents noting the impact of the restorative community on improving behaviour in the school.

6.4.2 Building Trust

In this section I will explore the theme of trust building constructed within and by the restorative community. It is important to clarify that there were two groups the Senior

Leaders wanted to form stronger cohesive bonds with, the internal community (students) and the external community or wider community as it was sometimes referred to (parents). I will initially explore the role of the restorative community in building trust with students.

6.4.2.1 Students

As previously stated in Chapter Seven, the staff perceived that the students were reluctant to trust them. Karen (AH: Safeguarding) referred to this in detail, as did Harry (Head of House). Karen reflected on her initial perceptions of the students and desire to build trust on her first day “When I first walked in, they didn’t know me and I didn’t know them, but you can sense them, they’re sounding you out, “Who are you?”, “What do you want?”.” She recounted a restorative conversation she undertook with a student:

“This was the first time I saw restorative practices as being able to build trust, he had been in the middle of an explosion, kicking out, scratching, telling the staff he’d get his brother to come and get them, all sorts, we get him in my office, and he just comes out with it “My dad died a year ago today,” just immediately spilling his guts, we had a massive chat, and he is right as rain²² with me since.”

She had previously described the need to break into the “tribe” as she referred to it. She referenced similar thematic when speaking about the incident above, “It’s a tribal thing, amongst him and the other boys, I was alright with his crew after that, he trusted me enough because I spoke to him and listened.” Naz, an Assistant Head of House also spoke about the role of relationships in building trust, specifically when undertaking restorative practices. He stated that “Without trust, we can’t do our job, trust is the difference between the kid thinking they’re being shouted at and being helped.” I asked him why, in his opinion, restorative approaches were useful in building trust, he responded: “It’s something as small as having a conversation, these kids are so used to being spoken at, when you talk with them, all sorts appear. They think, “What, someone cares about my opinion?” It’s like a shock to them”. Jean, the other Assistant Head of House also referred to this role of trust building:

²² On good terms, has a positive relationship.

“If the kids trust you, they’ll go to war with you, with these kids, you lose it [trust] quickly and gain it slowly. If it’s gone, you might never get it back. Sticking a kid in after school [detention] just tells them you’ve given up on them. Talking to them builds their importance.”

The responses from staff indicate that students were initially apprehensive about trusting them. The causality of this differed according to individual participants. Naz and Jean argued that it symptomatic of their contextual upbringing, students had learned from parents or homelife to distrust adults. Gemma, Head of English offered a similar view: “Many of our kids have been let down, parents have left them, they’ve not had the experience of life they’ve seen in TV or films.” I am not sure the extent to which this experience will be general to that of all students at the school, however, staff did note this impact of the backdrop of parental influence. Although Phil the Resource Centre Manager proffered an alternative view. One not based on the impact of homelife, but instead, he posited a connection between schooling and a negative influence on student self-esteem: “Students are now just told to pass their exams, some of our kids are not meeting their target, but that doesn’t mean they’re not doing their best, that’s got to impact on self-esteem and the ability to trust”. Whilst these barriers to trust were impactful in the school, staff did express the utility of relationships and techniques of forming relationships to combat the trust issue. From my observations, many staff and students possessed strong bonds affirming the statements above. In terms of Phil’s assessment of the schooling process, I think the school did start to experience a difficulty in trying to forge a positive experience for students, whilst ensuring good exam results, albeit this will be the focus later in this chapter.

Whilst a discussion of student perception of ‘trust’ took place earlier in this chapter there is an avenue I have not yet described, student experience of building trust through restorative practices. James (Year 10) and Sarah (Year 11) had both stated that they would not have participated in the Formal Restorative Process (FRP) but for the request of their House Leaders. Adrian (Year 9) and Hannah (Year 9) both referred to knowing that if something goes wrong, you can have a conversation, and not just be shouted at. Both stated that this enhanced their enjoyment of school. Hannah noted; “it’s like having an in-school Mum, you can ask them if you’re worried or need help.” Adrian professed a described experience: “Everyone always needs someone at some point and learning is a part of it, but you can’t learn well if you’re not feeling okay, the [Head of House] helps in that”.

There was a reciprocity of trust between the staff and students I had interviewed and what I perceived as genuineness amongst participants in their relationships. Some participants (Karen and Naz, for example) specifically described restorative practices as trust-building, whereas other participants affirmed the benefit of trust in aiding the restorative process (Wachtel and McCold, 2002; Zins et al., 2004). Many staff saw these outcomes as a direct benefit of the restorative process.

6.4.2.2 Trust and the Wider Community

The Headteacher noted that the school found it difficult to forge a trusting relationship with its wider community (parents). He argued that there were a few potential reasons for this, firstly, the historic antipathy between the school and parents that was inherited from the previous regime. He also recognised that sometimes, the interests and priorities of the school would conflict with those of the parents. I will explore the second aspect of his perspective during the discussion of barriers to community involvement later in this chapter. Despite these perceived obstacles, there were occasions where he explained that the school was able to form a relationship of trust with parents. The examples he gave were when there had been a major issue and the school had handled it in an overtly effective way, or the work that they did initially during the takeover. He stated that with other members of staff, the school leaders went into the neighbourhood and introduced themselves to the residents. His intention of doing this was to create greater levels of interaction and build those relationships. He argued that whilst this was initially effective, that as they could not maintain this level of engagement, these relationships disintegrated in a short period of time. The Head of House, Harry referred to parents who would seek to maintain contact with the school so they could check-in and monitor their child's welfare. Also, those who had developed a good working relationship with the House Teams through phone contact or through FRPs.

It was apparent throughout the research that despite these apertures of success the Senior Leaders perceived, the relationship between the school and parents remained distant.

6.4.3 The use of Restorative Practices as a Diversionary Tool

In this section I will explore the final benefit of the restorative community as discussed by my participants. I will focus on the potential of the restorative community in diverting young people away from potential difficulties in later life, this was first brought up in my interview with the Headteacher, Ed and is often described as a disruption to the 'school to prison pipeline' (Skiba et al., 2002; Mirsky, 2007; Lewis, 2009; Wright, 2010; Wachtel, 2016). In Ed's interpretation of the theory the diversionary tactic employed by the school would sometimes be a disruption to criminality, but often it would be diverting them away from what the adults

in the school deemed to be an inappropriate or unfulfilling life. He reflected that if students were excluded from the school their chances at obtaining a place at another, different school, would be difficult: "If we exclude, I mean, where do they go? We have a reputation as a difficult school, with difficult kids, so an exclusion from us is not going to be viewed positively by others." He also noted that, often, if they did have to exclude a student, the usual destination for that student would be to an alternative provision centre. He commented that such a decision would be tantamount to putting the students onto a very precarious pathway where "criminality, being NEET²³ or something else undesirable becomes a very real prospect, there are stories of these kids coming through, but they can be few and far between".

The AH: Behaviour, Tom spoke of a similar concern that he held:

"Sometimes we are the difference between a productive life, a good job, a wage a House and what might be a pretty unhappy or unfulfilling life and we need to give these kids the chance that they deserve. If they do something bad, don't kick out²⁴, reintegrate or support".

Tom referred to this experience of times where it had not worked, referring to one student who he had taught the year before who had been arrested for a serious assault. He noted: "Stories like that drive you on, you don't want to see another one of those, you look at them [the students] and think, "It could be any one of you" so you come to work to prevent that". I questioned whether it was duplicitous that the school should profess to placing importance on reintegration whilst having exclusion as a recognisable and applicable outcome as per the school's behaviour policy. He responded, "It's not ideal that we have it, and in a perfect world we wouldn't, we do everything we can not to use it, but we have to look at a whole-benefit. If one is disrupting many, that's unfair too."

The responses evidenced above reflect a perceived need amongst participants to provide a divergent alternative for students who may otherwise be excluded which was reflected in the opinion of a number of staff I interviewed. I did want to explore how the restorative community was practically involved in these diversionary processes. Again, most participants referred to the importance of relationships. For example, Pete, the PHSE teacher noted:

²³ NEET is an abbreviation for not in education, employment, or training.

²⁴ Exclude

“these kids have already been shouted at a lot, they need positivity and good tutor support”. Gemma, Head of English agreed and stated something of a similar tone: “We’ve all got stories of people we’ve taught who’ve done time²⁵, in the school we have kids with siblings or parents in jail, we need to be the positive role models for them.” Anne, a Head of House gave an example:

“A boy in my House, two out of three brothers in prison for the same armed robbery, no dad. It’s a miracle he’s here, but he loves his PE teacher and if he gets into anything, we get her involved, she sits down, bang, three weeks with maybe two logs. He could even go to Uni at this rate, first in his family”.

It was evident in the responses from staff that they believed that relationships had resulted in more positive futures for students through avoiding the more severe punishments, for example: exclusions. Whilst this provided an insight into the perception of staff, I felt that to triangulate this information, the perceptions of students would be useful.

Many of the students I spoke to did not refer to the role of restorative practices, or the community as a way of securing a more productive or beneficial post-school life. Most simply reported that they had not really thought about it in any detail. Some said that building communication skills would be helpful. However, Lucie (Year 11) and James (Year 10) did share their perceptions on the notion of restorative practices and the community as a way of avoiding exclusions and the staff perception of a more productive life resulting from this.

Lucie had already described the incident where her boyfriend was excluded from the school. She said that the relationship between being excluded and having a less advantageous experience in life did not correlate with her boyfriend’s experience. She argued:

“If anything, getting kicked out was better for him, he hated school and even though he had good relationships with some teachers, they didn’t protect him from exclusion. If anything, he’s doing much better doing a job he loves, not getting told off and he’s on his way to a future that he wants

²⁵ Imprisoned

that's better for him. I don't think it's right to say everyone should be in school, it's what works for them and that works for him".

Lucie's response provided an interesting counterpoint to the perspectives given by staff up to that point and is one that I will return to later in this chapter and subsequently, in the discussion chapter. Whilst it is perhaps, engrained or natural to see exclusion as a negative, and she understood that position, she also expressed that this was not always the case and gave an example of a time where it had resulted in a positive outcome. James, however, provided a contrasting view to that offered by Lucie. I will initially refer to the context of James' contribution and then reference the quote in a mostly un-edited form. I believe that despite the quote being extensive, the whole record is necessary to accurately reflect the message:

"I got into this huge fight with this really big lad who used to walk behind me, grab me and lift me off the floor and then not let me down. When I got into the fight, obviously I was losing because he was massive, and I'm not. So, I'm on the floor. Then I was picked off the floor by the Headteacher to restrain me from carrying on, but I didn't know it was the Headteacher. Thinking it was the big lad I decided to elbow him in the face, which seemed like a good idea at the time. Obviously, it wasn't. Next thing I know, I'm in the office thinking, "Okay, that's me being a manual labourer then, make money in a normal way, who needs biology, chem and maths to earn money", things didn't look good to be fair."

As I have noted previously, James was supported by his Head of House and was reintegrated into the school. In the interview, James discussed the influence of his teacher in the restorative meeting that resulted from this event and the impact that had on the decision that was made to allow him to stay in the school. What was interesting from James' statement was his knowledge of the impact that an exclusion could have on his life, this closely correlated with the responses from the staff in their interviews.

Overall, it was evident from my participants the imperative with which they viewed the diversionary influence of the restorative community. However, Lucie's contribution does necessitate reflection on the origins of these perceptions. For Lucie, exclusion, whilst not

initially a positive thing has been made, retrospectively, a positive incident for her boyfriend, allowing him to secure an appropriate pathway which meets his own needs.

We can see, evidenced by the views of my participants, that the community provides a beneficial function in restorative practices at the school. However, often this will be adapted to suit the relevant needs of the community members. There have been measurable successes in the use of restorative practices to tackle the behavioural issues the school faced (these were expressed by Senior Leaders in the previous chapter), we can see individual relationships of trust formed through the use of restorative practices, but that these have not yet been extended to engage parents and that, there is an imperative noted amongst staff, that something is required to alleviate the negative aspects of, as they perceive them, potentially dangerous traditional punishments, which I have noted a divergence in opinion of from students.

6.5 Exploring the Barriers to Community Involvement

The last question focusses on the information from participants reflecting what they considered to be the barriers to or disadvantages of the wider community (in this instance refers to parents) inclusion in the school and in the function of restorative practices. I will also report findings from participants where they had secured wider community involvement, but this had consequences which they deemed disadvantageous. I will split the themes for this section into two parts, firstly the barriers, then the disadvantages. In the barriers section, I will refer to four themes which emerged during the interviews: wider community apathy, suspicion and the practical factors which prevented wider community engagement, in this section, I will also explore the external factors which the school faced as a barrier to community engagement. In the second section, I will examine the disadvantages of community inclusion, as discussed by my participants, this will focus on the conflicting messages between the school and its wider community and the negative perception of students on community involvement. As with the other questions, I will report the findings in interviews from Senior Leaders, staff, students, and members of the wider community, I will also support information from interviews with findings from my observations.

The next three themes I will account will focus on the disengagement of the parental wider community. As I have already stated in this chapter, the school leaders felt there was a disconnect between the school and the parents (Crawford, 1994; 2002; Stubbs, 1997; Ashworth, 2001; Weisberg, 2003; Amstutz and Mullet 2005; Cook, 2006; Morrison, 2007; Willis, 2016). The school sought to combat this but, as I have shown, reported minimal success. In this section, I will explore the perceived reasons for this disengagement.

6.5.1 Apathy

Some Senior Leaders and staff at the school felt that they were burdened by an apathetic parental community who were disinterested in the academic progress and attitude of their children. Whilst apathy may seem somewhat of an imprecise and loaded term to describe the relationship between the school and some of its wider parental community, it accurately exemplifies the ways in which leaders and staff referred to their experience of the dynamic. They spoke (at different times) of a disconnected, unconcerned, indifferent, passive or detached community. Therefore, whilst care is needed when employing the term 'apathy', it effectively and concisely summarises the responses of my participants according to their experience. Many perceived a disregard by parents for the priorities of the school and, on occasion, the standard of education that their child received at the school. Whilst this is not a perception that I share, it was something which emerged in my empirical interviews. The perception of an apathetic wider community, perceived by staff, first emerged in discussions with the Headteacher, Ed. He noted: "A great many [parents] hold the view that the student is our problem and ours alone, it's the notion that, once they're through our doors, they can wash their hands of them," he commented that, the unwillingness of parents to take any interest in the child when they entered the school meant that when the parent received contact from the school, it would often be due to a negative event that required their attention. Karen, the AH: Safeguarding stated a similar perspective:

"Some of them [parents] genuinely don't want to know, I'm not saying it's laziness, sometimes it's, what's the word, giving up, it's not that they're not bothered, sometimes they don't engage because they're out of ideas of how to help the kids. So, you'll ring, and either they won't pick up, or you'll get, "Yeah, I know, Karen, but there's no point in me coming in because it won't do anything", it's negative, but I get their point."

The responses from Ed and Karen reflect an undercurrent of opinion amongst many staff, including the House Team. They commented that parents felt their responsibility to the children ended at the school gates and that anything that happened during school should be handled by the school. Staff expressly referred to a perceived apathy amongst their wider community members – the parents. However, Ed and Karen both reflected that this viewpoint of parents ignored, what was in their opinion, a key issue. They argued that many of these the issues created in-school, such as rule-breaking could be in-part a consequence of things that happened outside of the academy. Their position was; therefore, a conjoined school/parent

approach would be optimal. However, they commented that parental apathy meant that this was not possible.

David, the AH: Student Experience, provided a different perspective on the perceived parental apathy. One aspect of David's role was to oversee attendance data at the academy and calculate the number of students who were not attending. He referred to the fact that, in his role, he was reliant on parents to get their children ready for school and to ensure their regular attendance. However, he noted the challenges that he faced:

"We do all the late phone calls at about ten [am], I'll ring, and expect the parent to answer, but sometimes, the child does, I've had countless cases where I'll ring, the kid picks up and tells me that their Mum or Dad is still in bed. Sometimes it's because they work nights, but some of the time it's that, you know, they just don't see the point in school. A lot of our parents had their own bad experiences of school, so they're just not pushing their child to go."

The idea of apathy informed by the previous school experience of parents was also referred to by Jean, the Assistant Head of House. In our interview, we spoke about some of the difficulties she faced engaging with parents. She confessed that the school had a number of challenges, especially the attendance and behaviour of the students, but she argued that this was "learned behaviour", from parents. "It's learned from the previous life cycles of parents, they [the children] see this at home and don't get shown the importance of school so don't see it as important". I asked her what her approach was to try and engage the parents, she replied: "I'll ring, and I'll say, so he hasn't been here for three days, he's missed x, y and z. Usually get the same response, "Yes miss, promise he'll be there tomorrow" never usually is, they're just not on board."

Whilst this general understanding of apathy was interesting, I wanted to focus how it specifically related to the restorative practice at the school. I discussed this aspect with both Harry and Anne, the Heads of House involved in most of the restorative meetings at the school. I wanted to ascertain the following: what was the parental uptake? Why didn't they attend? And if they did not attend, what happened? In terms of the first question, Harry posited: "Probably less than fifty-percent attendance, if it's a one to one, they'll show, but if it's between two kids and two sets of parents, less likely". Anne stated similar statistics. When asked why parents did not attend, each participant focussed on a slightly different explanation.

Anne stated that there was a number of factors, but often, they just simply didn't want to; "I've even had a situation before where I've asked a student whose Dad wasn't there, and the Dad had told the student that the process was "pointless". Harry reiterated the rationale presented by the Headteacher, he said that parents did not feel responsible for what went on in school and were disinterested. In terms of the impact that parental absence had on the restorative meeting, Anne said "It doesn't really have much of an impact, often the student is forewarned or just doesn't expect Mum or Dad to turn up, instead they get support from the House Team".

The responses from the staff pose interesting questions about the role of the community (particularly a wider understanding of community) in restorative practices when the community display an unwillingness to engage, how can it be effective? How can the purported benefits of a restorative community approach be achieved in the absence of the community? Can it be combatted? I wanted to explore how the students perceived this concept of disengagement. Simon (Year 11), Phoebe (Year 10), James (Year 10), Emma (Year 8) and Sarah (Year 11) all referred to the minimal interaction their parents had with the school and, the lack of regard their parents had for what transpired at school. Phoebe noted: "My step-mum has come in for parents evening, but she tells me that she doesn't really want to, she's not too bothered what goes on, even on mock results day she didn't bother coming in". Simon referred to a similar theme "My parents didn't finish education or pursue anything academic, so they don't really get what I'm doing here", Emma stated: "Nothing actually happens when they come in, my Dad once said he was proud of me after parents' evening, but I don't think he knew why". James provided an effective summary of the responses from students:

"My Dad isn't involved in the school life unless it affects him. I try to use this to drive myself forward. They think the school doesn't deal with things; they blame the school for "not doing their job"."

There were some intersections between the views of Senior Leaders, staff and students relating to parental apathy. The notions of disengagement due to disregard, disengagement due to a lack of ability to understand were all discussed at every level of participant and provide an insight into the difficulties, as they perceived them, with wider community engagement. The Senior Leadership Team, particularly Ed argued that this apathetic response from parents was a product of the context. He argued that in schools in more affluent areas,

there is a greater level of parental-school engagement, but due to the socio-economic deprivation of the area, this was not present or effective for Pioneer.

I had the opportunity to observe this phenomenon directly. One evening, I attended a parental engagement night at the school. I wanted to explore some of the themes which had emerged during interviews that I have reported above. It was also useful for my research to observe the interactions between staff and parents and to witness the general atmosphere of the event. The school had provided catering for parents and had set out the tables in the dining hall, organised by year group. The event started at 17:30 and finished at 19:00, students were required to schedule appointments with their teachers and were given two weeks to do this. Emma, the AH: Teaching and Learning (who coordinated the event) assured me that it was going to be well-attended as there had been a record number of appointments made. If everyone who had made an appointment attended, the proposed figure of attendance would be 83%. However, the total turnout was 48%. This was slightly below average (usual attendance between 55-60%). The event did provide me an opportunity to speak to some parents between their academic meetings. I asked Tim (Parent) how he perceived his relationship with the school, he referred to the fact that he had a positive overall relationship with the school and that he was very happy with the standard of education his child was receiving, he had received exemplary reports throughout the evening. I was aware that, since this parent was engaged and willing to speak to me about their child's performance, this may not be representative of the general experience of many parents at the event (this supposition was confirmed by the AH: Teaching and Learning, Emma, who reflected at the end of the event that "you never see the parents you need to". When she stated this, she was commenting that those students who had negative reports, or for whom parental contact would be beneficial to discuss how best to approach their academic progress, did not attend.

What was noticeable, and unusual in my experience of Parents' Evenings, was that many of the students had attended without parents and were having their own meetings with teachers. Tom AH: Behaviour said that this was a regular occurrence at the school and that when parents did not attend, the students would attend without them. I spoke to six of the students who had attended without parents and sought to explore their reasoning. Some said that their parents were unable to attend due to work or care commitments. Two of the six provided some interesting responses, one replied "He's on the sofa at home, said he didn't want to miss the football", the other replied: "Don't know, he just said he didn't fancy it tonight." The students responded in a very factual way. I asked one of the students why they attended without their parents? She responded, "Well, I want to know how I'm doing." I was surprised by this response, but Karen, AH: Safeguarding assured me that it was quite normal.

Many school staff confessed that they had not developed a model of effective engagement with parents they described as apathetic. For the students I conversed with on the night, the attitude of their parents was accepted as the norm. School staff postulated that parents were disengaged due to experiential factors or disregard for the value of education. They argued that whilst apathy was one reason for the poor attendance of parents at the parent and carer evening, there were a number of other explanations for parental disengagement.

The issue of perceived parental apathy is a complex one to deconstruct. One must remember, much of the empirical data referring to 'apathy' is derived from interviews with staff members. Consequently, this research cannot, (and does not seek to) make an objective or informed judgement regarding the veracity of perceived 'apathy' and its existence. My research can only affirm that some staff and students had concluded that some parents reluctance to engage was due to a feeling apathy on matters pertaining to school. This component of the research does not seek to indicate that the conclusion of the staff was a valid one, or that there were no other factors that could have contributed to the disengagement of the wider community beyond that of a disregard or disengagement for the education of their child. I was concerned, when undertaking this research, that in exploring 'apathy' I could unintentionally impose a fault, or responsibility on parents in a pejorative manner. If that perception is adduced, it was not the resolution of this sub-chapter to do so. However, I do also believe, as stated in the introduction to this sub-chapter, that the perception of leaders, staff and some students, that parents did not want to engage, and there was no reason other than an unwillingness to engage, is an interesting aspect of this research, and it does have repercussions for how we explore the idea of restorative practices in schools.

6.5.2 Suspicion

Another theme expressed by some Senior Leaders and staff was that a minority of parents were suspicious of the motivations of the school (Daly, 2003; Willis, 2016). They argued that this suspicion led them to disengage. According to Ed: the Headteacher, parents were often unwilling to engage due to the apprehension that they would be blamed for the misbehaviour of their child. Rob, the AH: Curriculum and Data referred to this in his interview:

“Many of our parents were the kids who got told off when they were at school, so they already think of it negatively, when they get the phone call to come in, they think the same is going to happen again, but this time, they get the blame for their kids, so they just don't bother coming in.”

This theory was supported by Karen, AH: Safeguarding who noted: “Some parents were the kids who came to the school previously, so they’ve already got the bad memories of the place, the last thing they’re interested in is getting dragged to the Headteacher’s office.” Tom, AH: Behaviour had worked at the school prior to the takeover, he confirmed Karen’s assertion stating that they have second and third generation students at the school. He posited that this was due to the low migration rates from the estate, so these legacy families became more apparent as time went on and consequently, these negative perceptions of the school could become hereditary. Tom also noted that: “everyone knows another person from the estate, it’s very insular, so, if person A has had a bad experience and tells B, C and D it’s a web of people who have a negative view of you.”. In addition, Tom referenced the role of social media: “They are all on Facebook and Twitter so one parent will put something negative and then you’ve got a virtual pile-on by the online community, the negative perception can become city-wide”. This notion of virtual online communities was discussed by Harry, a Head of House:

“I’ve often had parents say to me, you don’t do anything about the kids here, I’ve seen it on Facebook, and it’s hard to challenge, because they rile²⁶ each other up on there. We have a situation where, instead of coming to use to get a matter sorted, they don’t come to us and just complain to each other on Facebook, building this idea that we’re not doing things properly.”

He noted that, accordingly, the message of the inefficacy of the school is shared amongst parents, and they will hear about negative things posted by parents at other schools. This can have a detrimental impact on the way a school is perceived amongst its community members and reduce student intake.

I wanted to explore how staff respondents viewed the impact of suspicion on the practical engagement of parents. I referred to this in my interview with Naz, an Assistant Head of House. He supported the claims made by other staff respondents, stating that sometimes parents would be reluctant to come into the school as they thought they would get blamed for the actions of their child. He did however note that he did not hear this from the parents directly, instead it was hearsay, communicated to him by students. He reported having one

²⁶ Aggravate

student explain to him “My Mum said she’s not going to come in because it’s your job to look after me when I’m here and she’s not having you sit there and tell her it’s her fault”.

Apart from the example referred to by Naz, above. Students did not really discuss the notion of parental disengagement due to suspicion. Where it was referred to, it would often be reportage of an event. For example, James’ example earlier in this chapter, where his Dad was unwilling to attend the restorative meeting as he was concerned, he would have to pay for the other student’s pencil case.

The theme of suspicion does correlate with the information provided throughout the findings chapter. Whilst my participants did not describe it as impactful as apathy was in terms of the disengagement of parents, it was viewed as an important, causal component.

6.5.3 Practical Impediments to Engagement

Another explanation for parental disengagement discussed by participants were the practical reasons that meant parents were unwilling or unable to engage. Examples of this are: work commitments, caring responsibilities for extended family members, childcare and language barriers. Ed, the Headteacher noted that sometimes a parent’s inability to attend meetings was not their fault. He explained that some parents wanted to participate but were unable to do so within the constraints of their job, or additional responsibilities. The AH: Student Experience, David gave the example of familial dynamics as a precluding factor: “A high percentage of students are from single-parent families and when you couple this with the need to work or look after children, they just don’t have the time to come in”. This idea was supported by Emma, AH: Teaching and Learning who referred to the specific impediment of work commitments.

“A lot of our families live on the poverty line, or below it. In jobs where they can’t dictate hours or terms and lots on zero hours contracts. If it’s a choice between coming into the school or working and earning money to put food on the table, it’s obvious”.

Karen spoke similarly about the lack of choice that many parents faced: “We’ve got carers looking after vulnerable family members, who can’t afford to get private care, it’s unrealistic to expect them to come in”.

When I spoke to the students who had attended the Parental Engagement evening (discussed earlier), four out of the six I spoke to referred to practical reasons why their parents did not attend, some cited work, others that parents were at home looking after younger siblings.

Another practical factor was a growing percentage of students from families who had migrated to the area from another country. Ed, the Headteacher noted some practical impediments the school faced in terms of engaging with these families: "Access to translators is minimal in the area, we've had Polish translators for Romanian students, it's not well-organised locally. If there's an issue with a student who speaks very little English, and their parents speak no English, we're sort of stuck." He said that the only solution that they had was to engage with siblings of the students who usually had a greater competency in English than the parents, but even this was problematic as relaying the information was not an effective model. At the time of my research, the school had found no effective mechanism to overcome this barrier.

School leaders and staff were more sympathetic to these barriers to community engagement, not apportioning blame on the community, instead, this disengagement was viewed as an unavoidable and regrettable consequence of the demographic which attended the school. Unlike apathy or suspicion, the school wanted to overcome it, but leaders felt impotent in challenging it. With apathy and suspicion, leaders reported that the onus was on parents to engage and felt that they had done all that was reasonable.

6.5.4 Disadvantages of Community Engagement

In addition to the barriers to community barriers to community engagement, some Senior Leaders and staff felt that engaging with the community provided a negative, or inadvisable proposition (Abel, 1995; Walgrave, 2003; Weisberg, 2003; Pavlich, 2005; Willis, 2016). In this section, I will explore two potential disadvantages of community engagement, the first occurs when the message that the school is seeking to impose conflicts with that of the wider parental community and the other was reported by students who felt that often in pursuing community involvement in restorative practices, their education was compromised.

Some school leaders expressed that one reason they sought to engage the wider parental community was that they felt support from parents would improve behaviour in the school and result in a more effective role for restorative practices. Ed, the Headteacher noted: "We wanted to create a consistent message of community, and that challenging responsibility was a whole-community, school and parents, job." Tom, AH: Behaviour referred to a similar objective:

“Getting parents onside was key, I wanted a message that everyone bought into, if a kid misbehaves, any action we take is supported by parents, they attend restorative meetings, and we have a cohesive approach supporting each other in the best interests of the students.”

However, he also expressed that the school had not been successful in this model, he stated that the parents initially had not been engaged in the process and that, when they do, their contribution may lead to problems. “Most of the time, they don’t do what we ask them to do in terms of supporting us.” I asked him to provide an example of a time where he felt this conflict occurred:

“We’ve got a student in Year 9, every maths lesson, clockwork, gets sent out. We’ve tried everything with him. I called home to work on an approach. I spoke to his Dad who said something like: “I hated maths and it hasn’t done me any harm”, so I’m stuck at this point, we’re saying maths is important and you’ve got to go, and Dad’s saying, No, don’t bother.”

Karen provided a non-academic example of where the messages of school and community conflict (I have referred to this quote earlier in the findings, but I feel that the pertinence to this theme justifies repetition). She said:

“It’s classic, isn’t it, we have the classic, no hands on, policy then you’ll ring parents, and they’ll say, well if someone looks at you funny, clump²⁷ them and make it a good one”.

Karen claimed that these conflicting messages add complexity to the relationship between the school and its parental community. She argued: “You can’t tell them not to listen to parents, but then we also have rules they have to abide by”.

²⁷ Punch or hit.

I wanted to explore how these conflicting messages complicated the jobs that staff had to do. I discussed this with Anne, a Head of House. She noted:

“It can be really complex, sometimes it’s to excuse things “My Mum says I don’t have to do PE,” or, “My Mum says I don’t have to go to that lesson because the teacher has it in for me”. You’ll ring the parents and tell them the kids do have to go to PE, and then you’ll get abuse. We don’t really have any solution to this, we it’s just an everyday challenge.”

Harry, the other Head of House interviewed referred to the impact of message conflict in restorative meetings. He noted an example of one occasion where parents were arguing during an FRP meeting. I asked him to describe the details:

“One student had been gambling with another, playing this game where you throw coins at a wall, closest wins. The kid goes home, tells his Dad, Dad’s not happy and says the student should give him the money back. We call an FRP to try and get some resolution. Dad’s sitting there, face like thunder²⁸, we give everyone a chance to talk at the start of the meeting, Dad takes the opportunity to have it out²⁹ with the other parent, claims he can’t bring up his kid well, we have to get Ed in to escort them both out.”

Instances such as the one described by Harry provide a problem for the role of community in restorative practices, particularly when the messages conflict, this poses interesting questions about the feasibility and desirability of community involvement particularly as school leaders reported that they have found no effective way to mitigate the impact of this.

The students I spoke to also referred to the difficulty they experienced when their parents were telling them to do one thing and the school another. I asked Zak (Year 11) about his experience in this regard. He said that whether he followed the school, or his parents, would depend on the seriousness of the message given, and that, parental authority would supersede that of the school, even if it got him in trouble at school. Phoebe (Year 10) provided

²⁸ Angry

²⁹ Argue

a specific example of this, she stated that a group of girls had been calling her names on Facebook, her Mum had told her to respond and call them names, as well: “So, I did have a go back and they reported me, and I got told off by [Head of House]. He said he didn’t care that my Mum told him to do it, so I got her to ring him and she went mad at him”.

These responses from students also reflect the difficulty they faced in the mixed messages they received. They were unaware of whose authority to follow and, as stated in the example above, had consequences for their experience of school.

6.5.5 Student Perceptions of Restorative Practices

One argument against the use of restorative practices in schools in the literature is that they can be more time consuming than traditional sanctions. In my research, this position was argued by some students who argued that they would favour the instant nature of traditional punishments over the more drawn out (as they perceived them), restorative processes. The students who referred to this were usually in the later stage of their education, coming up to examinations and they spoke about the in-class restorative approaches which meant that all students would have to discuss an instance of misbehaviour in a collaborative way and agree upon how it should be responded to. Alex (Year 11) criticised this approach, noting:

“Often, someone shouts out or says something stupid and we have to have a discussion, even a short one, about impact, it’s disruptive. The student who did the thing and the teacher could just discuss it, and we could get on with our work, or go out for break. I know disruption to lesson is, obviously, disruptive, but going on about it for ages is a disruption, too!”

Zak (Year 11) felt that traditional sanctions were a better alternative to restorative practices in that the impact was immediate, and the problem solved, usually with the students being sent out so they could not disrupt the lesson anymore. He said that, when a student left for a restorative conversation, there was a positive impact on the class, but that impact was broken when the student returned. Simon (Year 11) provided an individualised perspective on education, “they justify the restoratives on the fact we need to help each other out and we’re a community, but actually, when you sit exams, you’re an individual, and if the community is stopping me from doing my work, then that’s going to have an impact on my future”.

The students I spoke to felt that instead of providing a benefit to them, restorative practices and the need of teachers to involve them by virtue of their status as community members

provided a distraction to what they viewed as the primary purpose of education, to learn to pass exams. These students felt that their education should not be compromised to provide a benefit for other students who would not engage.

6.5.6 External Pressures

The final theme discussed by my participants does not fit neatly into either category, so I have included it as its own separate category. This theme requires, firstly, a brief introduction to some fundamental aspects of education in England. Year 11 students (aged 15-16) are required to sit final examinations which conclude their first period of mandatory study. These exams are known as GCSE (General Certificate in Secondary Education) and are used to ascertain a student's level of academic ability across a range of subjects, some of these subjects are mandated others are optional. For example, it is a requirement that all students must sit English and mathematics exams and a form of scientific assessment must take place. Then students will pick from several different options, history, geography, occasionally an additional language, physical education and some practical studies or vocational qualifications. These results are important for students in progressing on to their next stage of education or training but the results from these examinations are also a mechanism to judge school performance. A national picture of results is compiled by the Department for Education, and from this, expected average school performance statistics are generated. This is of importance for the core subjects (English and Maths). If schools perform under the national expected performance, this could potentially trigger an inspection from OFSTED (OFSTED, 2013). An inspection by OFSTED was a continuous fear for the Senior Leaders at the school and as a result, they placed a substantial percentage of the school's budget to fund additional revision sessions (known as 'Intervention') and pay for additional teaching staff. The Headteacher explained that, in the second year after taking over, the school suffered a substantial cut to funding. This posed a challenge for school leaders in managing the budget and providing a good standard of education to students. The AH: Behaviour, Tom had already given an insight into the significant funding commitment the school had undertaken in employing a larger-than-average pastoral team and the impact of the funding cuts on this area:

"If you had a blank cheque, we could do everything, but you've got a finite pot of money and you have to prioritise those things that put your head above the parapet, so instead of a specialised pastoral staff member, you pay intervention costs for staff, because that gets you the exam results."

As a result of the reduction in funding Tom explained that they had to cancel a planned expansion of the pastoral team and a greater investment into the restorative approaches. Also, that they had to move to a behaviour system which incorporated more traditional sanctions than it had done previously. This was because they did not have enough staff to undertake the staff-intensive restorative conversations. He posited it accordingly:

“Our restoratives are very one to one, but detentions could be one teacher to a class of fifteen, those ratios, when you’re talking about cost implication, become obvious”. He described the situation as “not ideal” but referred to it as “needs must” and concluded that, “a few more detentions on the statistics won’t look as bad as really bad results, so I hate to say it, but when your hands are tied, you have to go with the imperatives.”

The need to pursue exam results is a necessity for nearly every school in the country and Pioneer was not unique in its plight. It was interesting, however, that the staff felt that a compromise had to be drawn between the use of restorative practices and protecting results. I asked Tom that if the external pressure of chasing exam results did not exist, would he have felt that the money invested in restorative practices was a more efficacious way to spend it than additional intervention? This was the only question he refused to answer.

6.6 Restorative Practices and Community: Fragmented and Ambiguous?

In this chapter I was able to introduce responses from my participants that exposed some of the negative aspects of restorative practices or when restorative practices are desired but may be practicably unreachable. My participants reported varying levels of buy-in and belief in the restorative practices being used in Pioneer Academy. Some staff were engaged in the theory and practice of restorative approaches and reported using them to effectively meet the needs of students. Additionally, there was a place for community, albeit, often this role could not be realised due to other impacting factors, the impact of these factors meant that the school staff reported a fragmented relationship with the community and although, as I reported, some parents were grateful of their contact with the school, in other circumstances, they were not and actively sought to disengage. I will discuss these factors in the next chapter, relating them to the theory of restorative practice and when the experience of my participants sometimes deviated from the expectations promised by theory.

Chapter 7 Discussion: The Definition of and Barriers to Community at Pioneer Academy

This chapter will examine the findings of my empirical research and explore how they can be synthesised with the current understanding of restorative practices in schools. In general terms, the purpose of this research was to enhance the understanding of how restorative practices can be employed within a secondary school setting, specifically one located in an area of high socio-economic deprivation. As the research developed, the idea of community became central to the thesis. The school provided a context to researching community. Exploring whether the restorative community has some practical role and if it even exists.

When we examine my findings in tandem literature, a number of matters emerge. Sometimes there is complicity between restorative theory as extolled in the literature and the practice taking place in my research site. Many of the staff respondents argued that there was a substantial value in use of restorative practices, for a multitude of reasons. The Senior Leaders at the School were intent on employing a whole-school variant of restorative practices where the staff and students and the wider community (parents) were all participants in the restorative practices used in the school. However, this research also uncovers several context-specific barriers to the engagement of the community, impeding the implementation of whole-school restorative practices envisioned by the Senior Leaders. Whilst many of the barriers explored in my findings (practical factors, suspicion and disaffection – for example) are established concepts in educational research, there is minimal reference to them in the studies done so far on restorative practices in schools. This is interesting, as to engage a whole-school community, one would imagine that it would be important to be cognisant of these barriers and their impact.

For each of the research questions I will summarise the relevant literature and refer to the pertinent points in my findings to establish how my research corresponds with or deviates from theory.

7.1 Understanding the Pioneer Academy Community

Proponents of restorative practice extol the importance of the community, and some theorists such as Hopkins (2004) tether those benefits to the way in which community is constructed or viewed within a school. She states that for restorative practices to be successful, there must be commitment from the whole-school community, this idea is shared by the Restorative Justice Council who refer to the need for schools to engage with 'parents, pupils and the wider-community' (RJC, 2011). Morrison (2005) a prominent writer in the field of RP attempts a definition of 'community' as all stakeholders affected by things going on in the school. A

common theme in restorative practice (and justice) is the need to engage with a community and there is a significant body of literature concerning definitions of 'community' in restorative justice (Braithwaite, 1989; Green, 2014). However, it is also noted that many restorative programmes fail in defining what is meant by a 'restorative community'. McCold (1996) is critical of this, noting: many (restorative programmes) 'have not only failed to encourage wider community involvement, but have also failed to address seriously the issue of what role the community should play in the programme and how community participation is to be fostered' (1996: 90).

Prior to undertaking the research, it is widely stated in the literature that community is a contested concept (Braithwaite, 2003; Morrison, 2005). Therefore, it seemed useful to establish, in practice, how the community is constructed within my research school. If it is true and the efficacy of restorative practice is predicated on the involvement of a community (Thorsborne and Vinegrad, 2008), it was important to establish how the people in the school viewed their community as this could have ramifications for the role it would perform.

My interviews were structured to, initially at least, establish a definition of community. From this, subsequent questions could explore how this community operated within the school. The lack of an adequate definition of community in the literature (Braithwaite, 1996; Van Ness, 2002) was repeated in the responses of many of my research participants. Many participants, particularly the students, did not feel a sense of belonging to any overarching community form. Nearly all respondents (bar those in the senior management team) found it difficult to articulate what the 'restorative community' at the academy was. The Senior Leaders provided the most concise definition of a community form, they relied on the definition identified in the work of Willis (2016) in which the school is its own self-regulating community including students, teachers and parents. Albeit he provided limited evidence to support this definitional assertion and how it was practically involved. He justified his 'whole-school' definition of community in the following statement:

"Underneath all of the practices we employ, we have the need to benefit the whole-school community, and that includes, staff, students and parents, they all have a stake in the school and are affected by the decisions that we make."

- Ed (Headteacher).

The whole-school ideation of community was rebutted by teachers. Some teachers reported that they needed to create restorative communities within their classrooms but did not refer to the inclusion of the wider community, for example parents. Instead of seeing external stakeholders such as parents as part of the community, teachers often saw interaction with parents as an unwanted obligation. For example, if students misbehaved, many teachers acknowledged that they had to contact parents, but saw it as a component of their role, a box to be ticked, rather than pursuing any restorative rationale. They were mostly unaware of the restorative justifications for wider-community engagement, their primary motivation for community engagement stemmed from expected school practice as laid out in policy. The students did not respond to questions with a strong understanding of what it meant to be a part of a restorative community. Instead, they spoke informally about those teachers who they favoured or could speak to if they had a problem within the school, their view of community was concerned with individual relationships, or networks of people who they would rely on dependent on their need at the time. In direct contradiction to the idea of community, students often spoke more passionately about their disengagement with the community. Sometimes they would view being drawn into whole school matters as a control mechanism employed by the school – they felt they were being forced to be part of a group which they had no desire to be a part of. In this way, there was a transactional relationship between some students and the school. A ‘needs-must’ approach whereby students were aware that should they not attend there would be in-school punishments for non-attendance in addition to potential legal ramifications for their parents.

There are a number of potential reasons for this student disengagement, firstly and significantly, the school had undergone a comprehensive identity change. Many aspects of the school had changed, and some respondents reported a confusion in response to the change. Examples of the changes are things such as the uniform, the school creed, the school colours, the Headteacher and a substantial number of the Senior Leadership Team, the exterior of the building, the policies that governed the minutiae of daily interaction, the expectations and norms and values had all changed. These are strong community identifiers, some students reported it was like a completely different school. In addition, Pioneer did not have the opportunity to construct its own identity, instead had to adopt an already existing identity obtained from another school within a new Multi-Academy Trust. School leaders imported all the policies and practices which had been effective in other schools within the multi-academy trust and adopted them into Pioneer. In this instance it could be argued the difficulty in generating a community, stemmed not from trying to construct an entirely new identity but instead how the school could best embody and live up to one that was already formed. This

coupled with substantial staff turnover meant that forming any sort of identity beyond a surface level adherence to what it meant to be a member of that community was difficult for respondents. In my view this reflects a problem in adopting a restorative approach in schools such as the one in which my research took place. With the school in such a state of flux, it was difficult to construct an identity. The addition of new staff, with new approaches and novel ideas meant that a large amount of change took place in a relatively short time. The relational infrastructure required for community building (Daly, 2002; Pranis, 2005) was absent which led to difficulty in establishing the appropriate community. In interviews with students, they stated that they would often gravitate towards members of staff who were employed at Pioneer prior to the takeover (namely the Assistant Heads of House) or those members of staff with whom they had developed strong and functional relationships. The lack of overall community cohesion was supplanted by a surrogate individualised community based on personality and trust. This was because the students already had the pre-existing relationships to support them or could only form small-scale relationships with teachers.

Recognising these community identity issues the Senior Leaders in Pioneer acknowledged the need to, as one Senior Leader put it, “Win hearts and minds”. One way they sought to do this was by attempting to engage with their local community. This meant riding on buses with students, visiting the houses within the locality to make them aware of the change in management and liaising with local businesses to offer contact details and support. One pastoral assistant planned and executed a litter picking event supported by the local PCSOs all with a hope of engaging and building a sense of community within the school. The school leaders adopted new technologies such as Twitter and phone apps to create a connection with parents and open events which sought to engage all members of the wider school community, attempting to build a virtual community and connection between the school and its stakeholders. These new forms of ‘virtual community’ were referred to in the literature review and provide an interesting form of alternative community when physical interaction is more difficult or less convenient. The staff respondents stated in interviews that by finding new methods of technology to communicate with parents and making a greater effort to engage with their wider community they were able to assuage some of the concerns of the local community and the students within the school about their intentions in the takeover (albeit this was not a large-scale initiative). Some community members were appreciative of this. However, this was not a narrative shared by all. As I will go on to explore later in this chapter, despite some small-scale successes in integrating with the school’s wider community many school leaders still felt that the community was disengaged. The school staff gave examples of this: the low turnout at the parental engagement evening, the negative feedback given by

parents in the aftermath of the restorative meetings, or the instances in which parents were reluctant to engage due to some pre-existing and unchallenged suspicion about the motives held by the school.

7.1.1 Is There a Right way to Implement Restorative Practices?

Buckley and Maxwell's (2007) have constructed a guide to a successful implementation of a restorative approach with a community focus. They state a number of elements for effective implementation which were absent in the research site. Buckley and Maxwell (2007) argue that a successful whole-school approach requires the commitment of the whole-school community, the building of a restorative school through the use of inclusive language, several years of embedded change which allow for the evolution of restorative practices and the building of a community and ongoing training of staff members that promotes the development of school structures and support systems. Practically, many of these attributes were unattainable for Pioneer Academy. The institutional change that took place at the school meant that a cohesive community, with strong central relationships and a coherent restorative agenda was nearly impossible according to many respondents, at least in the short-term and some were of the opinion that longer-term embedding of restorative approaches was unlikely to ever be achieved. The AH: Student Experience for example, noted the flux and change they experiences, in staffing, demographics of students, parental inclusion. He felt that building consistency was nearly impossible. He argued that you could deliver a whole-school training package and know that it is embedded amongst staff properly and effectively, only for there to be a substantial staff turnover and a new addition of newly qualified teachers who would require retraining and the practice re-embedding. According to my respondents, the lack of continuity in the school is prohibitive for the necessities described by Buckley and Maxwell (2007). My findings contest the work of Buckley and Maxwell and many other prominent restorative theorists who argue a prescriptive, best-practice implementation model for restorative practices in schools. Despite operating an outcome-focussed model, my research site did implement restorative practices and they did so effectively. However, their implementation model was bound by the contextual factors which were so pervasive in the school. The school did not have years to implement a functional model of restorative practices, Senior Leaders reported adopting restorative practices to satiate a very immediate need, to promote good behaviour and to eliminate a dangerous atmosphere. Additionally, they argued that effectively training staff and imbuing staff with the opportunity to develop longer term relationship was nearly impossible – apart from for those staff who had already been at the academy a long time. As previously stated, there had been substantial staff turnover at the Academy, consequently, there was a lack of continuity or consistency in

practice. This led to a need to delineate clear responsibilities, pastoral staff would manage behavioural or emotional matters. Teachers would teach.

Additionally, the School Leaders needed to be sensitive to the socio-economic deprivation of the area and the impact of this on the relationship of the student with the school, they had to prioritise academic progression over interpersonal development. Where students attending other schools located in more affluent areas may be able to rely on parents to support their academic education at home, this was not the norm described by participants at Pioneer. All the academic education had to take place in the school, or often not at all. This led to a problematic dichotomy for School Leaders – any time afforded to whole-school practice, restorative questions, special training for staff and breakdown circles in classroom (to name but a few of the ideal practices identified in restorative literature) detracted from the time teaching core academic content which would enable students to pass exams and communicate to any external observer that the school was performing well generally.

Although, that is not to say that restorative practices involving a type of ‘community’ were not happening. Rather than envisaging any overarching structure instead the community was viewed by some student and pastoral respondents as a web of interconnected relationships (networks) which can be engaged with where a need arose. This perspective of community is similar to a number that I have explored in the literature. For example: McCold (2004) on interpersonal relationships, or Braithwaite (1999) and his exploration of shaming communities. The idea of networks built on individual connections informs another important theme in this research: relationships. The Headteacher was effusive on this point, he noted: ‘It’s less about a community feel, and more about relationships’, supported by Rob, AH: Curriculum and Data ‘... they [the children] place trust in individuals, you, not the role, the person, it can be the only way to get through to them’.

Similarly, Alex, the Y11 student respondent stated that they have different types of communities that they can rely upon depending on what outcome they are hoping to gain or what need they have. He spoke of an English Literature Lesson community, where he liked the teacher, therefore had a more relaxed relationship and he felt he could speak more openly. This atmosphere, he argued, promoted the development of relationships within the group and encouraged the group to resolve problems in the class as a group when they arose. He commented that when he had an issue in a wider academic or pastoral sense, he was able to refer it to his English teacher for resolution. However, he was disengaged with the Senior Leaders at the school, seeing them more as figures of fun. He knew that he could speak to his Head of House and Assistant Head of House if he had any issues and they would provide a

liaison from school to home. His parents felt engaged with the school, albeit they were often frustrated by the poor lines of communication and lack of clarity as to whom the person with the appropriate responsibility in any matter was.

On the face of it, this seems a semantic change, relationships have, in some articles, been used synonymously with the term community (Morrison, 2013). However, I contend that this is a departure from the normative thinking on restorative practices and the expected ways in which community is viewed (Braithwaite, 1998; Karp, 2001; McCold, 2004; Willis, 2016), particularly when considered against implementation guides promoted by Buckley and Maxwell (2007) and Hopkins (2004) above. In contexts such as the one in which Pioneer operates, it is problematic to envisage community as a whole-school or as an entire school community, participants expressed that there were too many dynamics in conflict, historic friction between community members which may date back to when they were at school, an inability of students to trust en-masse and a constant and impactful suspicion, endemic in the 'community' of the school. The deprivation statistics found in the Census data identify that many parents located on the estate were primarily located in low-paid jobs with a very low percentage of them having attended any form of additional education after school. In conversations, parents reported negative perceptions of school which subsequently informed their perspective of education generally. They saw a separation of the school and home and felt that they should not interact. Likewise, teachers and students expressed no desire to be part of a whole-school restorative community. They did not want to sit in circles to discuss harm, they wanted to get on with their work and go home (this contention was directly expressed by Zak, Year 11).

This does have implications for our understanding of restorative practices. For schools such as the research site, which do not have the infrastructure, organisation or whole-staff intent to deliver a whole-school restorative agenda, meeting the requirements to deliver a 'whole-school' approach to restorative practices may never be a viable prospect (this was certainly apparent during my research). However, there are still pockets of what we would generally typify as 'restorative communities' even if these are a microcosm within a microcosm. These practices were deployed effectively, as stated by my respondents. The AH: Safeguarding reflected on the imperative of trust and how she deployed it to help students, the Pastoral Leads showed how they were able to reintegrate students into classes that they would otherwise not have been able to, but for their formed relationships of trust. The importance of relationships was something that all staff, students and even some parents were in consensus about.

The re-envisaging of communities as individualised relationships requires a redeployment of how the effective restorative communities are viewed and constructed. It is also necessary to depart from many of the normative assumptions made in the literature on best-practice restorative communities. The impact of deprivation in the school and the embryonic development of the school's restorative approach means it is necessary to look beyond the notions geographic/interpersonal/community forms and instead look to contemporary examples of atomised communities which have gained growing prevalence in the modern age. For example, when my findings are blended with the work of Gerard Delanty's work on general community theory, particularly the notion of 'webs of relationships', a recognisable form of community, operative within the school, can be ascertained. Delanty (2003) states that as societies become more fragmented, and globalisation continues to expand, that we are no longer tied to a local community based on geographic boundaries. We are now global citizens and should instead see community as a series of linked networks that we can opt in and out of depending on whichever particular need is operative at the time (Delanty, 2010). I believe an important development of the restorative literature would be to view communities in situational or networked terms, particularly where there are weakened bonds of trust, or issues with wider community engagement as found in my research setting. My research promotes the notion that webs of relationships can replicate the outcomes of a whole-school restorative system, obtaining the benefits of restorative practice, without possessing the overarching infrastructure, dedicated staff and/or embedded practice.

I can further justify this assertion with reference to Delanty's work. Delanty (2010) recognises that a number of different identities may coincide. We may be members of a work community, a social community, a familial community all with different norms and values, colloquialisms, and culture. These same operations were identifiable in my research site. Students were expected to be a member of the whole school community and adhere to the expectations imposed by embodying that identity, they would have their individual House group, a number of different academic disciplines and their social groups, all of which can lead to a number of conflicted identities. Instead, it is far simpler to view the restorative community at Pioneer as a networked web of interacting and coinciding groups which could co-exist together and be engaged with depending on the particular need of the person seeking to engage. In doing this we can reflect the individual nature of the people in the school and the relational dynamics that exist within the school building. If a student is unhappy, or has conflicted with another student, they see their House Leader. If it is sufficiently serious, they see a senior leader, and if it is something that can be managed internally, they rely on their network of friends who they can go to for informal support. The majority of students felt no

substantial connection with the wider-school identity, nor did they see themselves as part of a Pioneer community (except in some nominative sense), yet all participants had perceptible community bonds with other groups of individuals, even if those individual sub-groups did not directly interlink at any point.

There are additional parallels in the literature on restorative justice, for example, in the book *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*, Braithwaite (1988) refers to two types of communities capable of shaming the conduct of individuals. He recognised that the geographic community was having a waning impact due to loosening social bonds and a more globalised society. However, he did note that shaming can still be impactful where there are interdependent personal relationships. Once again, this reliance on such relationships is evident in my research. When we look at the formal restorative practices that took place, my participants stated that they were more effective when attended by a member of staff with whom the student had a good relationship.

In referring once again to Buckley and Maxwell's (2007) 'Keys for Successful Restorative Implementation', there is another imperative:

'A successful approach will require the commitment of the whole school community. Students, management, staff, board members, ... local community must all be part of the process of building relationships.' Buckley and Maxwell, 2007: 26)

I will refer to this quote again later in the chapter – namely under the 'Barriers to Community Inclusion' subheading, particularly the term 'success'. But, again, this process implies a continuity that was difficult to obtain for my members in my research site and a way to do restorative practices which may be inappropriate for many schools who would like to adopt them. There was a comprehensive disengagement between school and local community according to a number of my respondents, many school leaders I spoke to noted that a whole-school approach was, at that point, unachievable. They commented that this was primarily due to a lack of trust initiated by the predecessor school (albeit this was probably just one of a myriad of important factors). They stated that the relationship between the community and the school had been fractious. If it is accepted that Buckley and Maxwell's statement is valid, then it is unlikely that this school, or similar schools will ever be able to effectively implement the type of restorative practices they refer to and, consequently, will never achieve the benefits that Buckley and Maxwell state. From my research, the Senior Leaders were assured in their belief that an eighty-percent engagement rate with the local community is likely to be the apotheosis of their community association and that there would always be pockets of students and parents who were disengaged. Students affirmed this message, noting that, in

the majority, they had no bond or attachment to the school, other than the smaller scale relationships they had formed with staff. Although, as seen in my research and the positive interactions between students and individual staff, a whole-school commitment was not always necessary to achieve the outcomes stated by Buckley and Maxwell (2007). Instead, a group of dedicated and capable staff, able to deliver the outcomes of a restorative practice, who had the trust of the students was effectual in meeting a number of the school's restorative needs. Whilst their approach may not be successful in a whole-school sense, it could be argued that such an approach was not necessarily needed or appropriate, as the myriad of identities and circumstances in the school meant that, in actuality, a one-size fits all approach to relationship building was inappropriate to the needs of the school and its members.

7.1.2 Can 'Whole School' Ever Be Achieved, is it as important as the literature would have us believe?

It is unknown whether in a school with such pervasive and differing needs a 'whole-school' restorative community can ever be realised or even if it should be. However, it is important to address the notion, as declared by some restorative advocates that to be most effective restorative practices must be adopted across the whole school (Hopkins, 2004; Buckley and Maxwell, 2007). It is perhaps unfair to judge the state of whole-school restorative practices in Pioneer at that point as school leaders readily admitted that they were not in a position to deliver a whole-school approach to restorative practice, (albeit they did recognise, as previously mentioned, that a whole-school approach was unlikely). However, there are wider questions as to whether the development of a whole-school approach is viable or even desirable in schools of this type?

School leaders reported a significant level of disaffection within the school. Attendance and punctuality rates (a strong indicator of disengagement) were substantially below the national average. In addition, there was reluctance from a small group of staff to adopt restorative practices at all. A school that wishes to use restorative approaches is therefore left with two choices. Do they adapt their approaches to mean that although a whole school approach is not achieved there can be individual sub-communities who can deliver the restorative practices and achieve the goals of the restorative approach or do they attempt to force a whole-school community feeling in the face of substantial disengagement?

What was evident is that Pioneer had not really begun to explore these deep theoretical questions. Their focus on developing a community with which they could engage was primarily targeted at meeting the needs of students. They adopted a view of community that

operated on the basis that the right person would be the person who was best placed to solve the problem at that time (often the 'right' person in these instances would be the pastoral staff with whom the students had developed the strongest relationships). There did not need to be a comprehensive restorative discourse that was embedded in a wider sense, nor a restorative question list that could be utilised to create conditions suitable for restorative justice. Instead, they argued that restorative approaches were employed in a problem-solving manner³⁰.

Part of the reason for this was their claim that the formal restorative practices that the school would have used would be hampered by disengagement of wider community members and non-attendance of key stakeholders and as such, having control over the restorative actors, and keeping those groups small, was important for the viability and success of the restorative practices they wanted to use. School leaders reported that they adopted the types restorative approaches which best suited their needs, they were driven by practicality over theoretical adherence. Whilst a community-led, fully restorative initiative may have been desirable, they felt they were realistic in their approach to restorative practices recognising the practical limitations they experienced (lack of community engagement, compromised staff cooperation, student issues). Leaders at Pioneer commented that they opted for key aspects of the practices that they could use to help their students. They viewed the education of students in a holistic way with academic success coming as a result of strong pastoral support, healthy relationships, and the removal of contextual barriers to learning. It was for these reasons that they sought to build a restorative community. This research has no conclusion to the question, can whole-school restorative practices be achieved in schools like Pioneer? All it can say is that the staff members and Senior Leaders did not see it as a feasible prospect and many of the students who took part in this research did not view it favourably, nor did many of the community members.

7.2 What is the theoretical rationale for the inclusion of the 'restorative community'?

McCold (1996) states two of the main justifications for the inclusion of the 'restorative community'. These may be summarised as the 'affected and effected' concepts of community within restorative justice. The two conceptions envisage different roles for the restorative

³⁰ An interesting comparison between problem-solving approaches and transformative approaches to mediation is discussed by Bush and Folger (1994). In this instance, problem solving refers to the need of the school to resolve a situation as it arose, not to transform the individuals in conflict so they could better manage any future conflict that could have occurred.

community. I shall reiterate the definitions briefly before establishing their applicability within the research context. McCold (1996) argues that community is affected by harm. Referring specifically to schools, if one child is abusive to another, both children are members of that community, there will be witnesses, if it takes place within a classroom, there may be disruption to education, and staff time then needs to be dedicated to solving the issue, therefore the community is affected.

Conversely, the 'effective' conception of community states that the community has a power to create a change in behaviour which can take place between the individuals involved in a restorative event, or across the community more widely. Problems that occur within the community can be solved by the community. Primarily, as the community is best placed to recognise the extent of the harm done and additionally because those in the community will have the greatest understanding of the issue, the people involved in the issue and how those people may be best restored. Where those involved can manage the process their inclusion can be a learning opportunity and can lead to less chance of future incident (Christie, 1977; Braithwaite, 1996).

7.2.1 Changing Behaviour

Whilst observing and viewing Pioneer School it became more obvious that leaders operated an approach to restorative practices where the 'community' (as it was understood) was invoked to effect change, specifically a change in the behaviour of the students. Staff respondents noted that students were very responsive to trusted adults and where there was no relationship of trust, students were less likely to engage and even less likely to reflect on their behaviour. Staff remarked that where there was a limited relationship of trust between the students and the school, students were likely to completely disengage and detach themselves from the school, figuratively and literally. The Assistant Heads of House and Heads of House acted as the community members who were most influential in effecting change within the students. In the absence of the whole-school restorative community, the House Teams provided that restorative intervention that was necessary to ensure that students could reflect and were able to re-engage with their education. For many students, they were their restorative community. In addition, some pastoral staff members played an even larger role than that, they described themselves as stand-in mentors or de facto parents. The students responded to these members of staff, they worked with them, trusted them, and complied with their requests.

The use of restorative practices to reduce instances of misbehaviour is littered throughout my research findings. The Headteacher stated that the initial motivation of the school was to

employ restorative practices to improve behaviour. The school leaders saw this as a necessity, informed by the early poor behaviour they observed during the takeover and the outcomes of the OFSTED report. To improve behaviour, the Headteacher decided that employing traditional sanctions would be ineffective. An important quote from the Headteacher is as follows: "... getting them to actually think about things and how they had gone wrong, rather than a system purely based on punishment". When combined with the 'trusted adults' that the AH: Safeguarding, Karen referred to, a justification for the inclusion of the restorative community emerges. The school leaders did note that the use of restorative practices, initially at least, led to an improvement in behaviour. There were fewer instances of serious bad behaviour such as violence between students, prejudicial aggression, and suspensions. There were also fewer detentions (albeit I will once again state the caveat that this reduction does not necessarily relate to an effective behavioural sanction, it could simply be that students were diverted away from these processes). Because of this reduction the school leaders concluded that using trusted community actors, to implement restorative practices was a success in the school. This notion of restorative practices as a mechanism to reduce rule-breaking amongst students is apparent in the literature (Hopkins, 2004; McCold, 2004; Morrison, 2007; Cremin, Sellin and McCluskey, 2013) and my findings confirmed that this can be realised in schools of this type. The outcomes of the second OFSTED report in the school recognise the positive impact that restorative practices had in reducing instances of misbehaviour by students. But I must reiterate, a simple reduction of negative behaviour statistics does not causally mean that students were behaving better. Instead, cynically, one may assume that students are still behaving poorly, but they are not receiving detentions and suspensions which are tracked, because they are in a restorative diversion which is not tracked. The AH: Behaviour, Tom did not answer provide any information regarding this and I did not receive an answer at any point during my research. Therefore, whilst I can state with confidence that the restorative practices used by the school did effect some small-scale behavioural changes with some individual students (as I observed this take place), this research cannot affirm that the practices have larger behaviour altering functionality, as this still remains to be seen.

7.2.2 Meeting Student's Additional Needs

Pioneer is a demographically diverse institution with substantial wealth disparity, students who were born in a number of different countries and students with varying medical and psychological conditions. Staff reported that some students at Pioneer will have a very different homelife and experience than a lot of children in the UK, particularly those from more affluent backgrounds. They stated that a large proportion of their students do not have

two parents at home, and some will live with grandparents and some will reside in foster care or be a ward of the local authority. Some students will act as carers for parents or siblings. There are a number of students whose parents are spending time in prison and a number of students who have spent time in young offenders' institutes and carry criminal convictions. Pioneer is a cultural melting pot with an above national average of students who speak English as an additional language. As students form their individual identities within this diverse context, it was decided that to adopt an approach which gives recognition to the contextual differences and that could be responsive to student's individual needs would be the most appropriate system (Rogers 1955; 1965, Freeth, 2007).

The relational approach opted for by the Academy meant that specialist staff members could respond to the individual needs of the students. The pastoral teams were aware of the relationship dynamics that existed in the school. They knew the teachers that students had a good relationship with and, conversely, where there was friction. Pastoral team members would take time to investigate the familial connections of students and would therefore know when to contact home for parent support and when contacting home would be ineffectual. Pastoral staff members argued this individualised approach was essential in delivering the best care for the students. Most students reflected on the House Team as a group of people who they could go to if an incident had occurred. Nearly all students spoke positively of their pastoral lead. This shows a true strength of the provision within Pioneer and the value that the restorative intervention has in a school such as this. Rather than simply adopting a punitive response and instead invoking the House Teams it was felt that issues could be resolved more effectively with less additional harm caused.

Where staff members were seen to have been acting in good faith by students, the students were more willing to participate and engage. One gap in the provision was the liaison between the academic staff and the pastoral staff. Where pastoral staff were usually well-liked by student respondents, there was a less cohesive dynamic between teaching staff and students. Most of the conflict between staff and students that I witnessed took place in the classroom during lessons. Some instances arose where teaching staff would perceive students as being disruptive and students would react to this. Whilst additional needs of students (such as their feelings on the day, or any academic difficulty they were suffering as a consequence of some external factor) were taken into consideration in class, they were viewed through the lens of a factor of academic performance, rather than as a standalone condition worthy of focus.

This tells us two things about restorative practices within the specific context. Firstly, an approach that recognises the array of individual needs is one which operates well in a school

with students from diverse contexts and demographics. No one child will be the same and they may be suffering from unique and inconsistent difficulties. It also shows us that a behaviour policy which is traditionally structured on a strict application of: wrongdoing equals punishment may not be as effective for students in this context and therefore, a restorative solution to misbehaviour may be a suitable approach. There may be a causal root for misbehaviour which cannot be solved or ameliorated with traditional sanctions. The Heads of House commented that for many students, the fact they could motivate themselves to get to school in the morning was praiseworthy. They argued that many of the students did not experience a childhood that those in more affluent backgrounds would, many of them did not have anyone to wake them up in the morning, make them breakfast, provide them with lunch, or check to see if they had done their homework. Instead, some of the students were required to be self-sustaining and self-reliant at a very young age. For this reason, some of the pastoral staff members argued that the fact they may be ten minutes late, or miss the occasional piece of homework, was not only irrelevant, but not a mechanism of success through which many of the students should be judged. This argument posed a number of questions about the educational system more generally, schools where students face challenges like Pioneer Academy, whether the normative understanding of performance is even applicable?

This sub-chapter also reinforces the importance of relationships, particularly those based on themes of trust. The Restorative Justice Council (2017) says that restorative practices are useful in building trust in schools. This was important as a number of staff interviewed commented that students at Pioneer found it difficult to trust adults. They argued that this was partially due to the chaotic homelives that they endured, but also due to the substantial turnover of staff and lack of continuity they faced at school (Karen, AH: Safeguarding explicitly referred to this). The ability of the House Teams, particularly when undertaking those informal restorative conversations, highlights the efficacy of restorative practices at the school. These conversations enabled students to vent, discuss the issue which had led to them leaving the class, or getting angry, and then conversations could take place about reintegration.

7.2.3 Inclusion of the Secondary Stakeholders

As stated in the literature, the rationale for the inclusion of secondary stakeholders stems from two primary justifications. The first is that the community has a power to influence the processes positively (Braithwaite, 1998; Karp, 2001; Pranis, 2005; Morrison, 2007). Perhaps to affirm the message given by the school, or potentially as a supportive body for those involved in the conflict (Johnstone, 2002; Boyes-Watson and Pranis, 2015). In addition to this, advocates for restorative practice also recognise the potential restorative practices possess to increase the engagement in education of all participants. Evans and Vaandering (2016) refer

to this engaging factor. They comment that restorative practices create space for the facilitation of connectedness, noting that good education will foster the opportunities to build external links of efficacy between groups, instead of the primary stakeholders (such as the school actors) simply controlling the processes themselves. The secondary stakeholders can offer reintegration, understanding or emotional and interpersonal support (Braithwaite, 1998; Pranis, 2005). This support can be offered to all participants in the process. If, for example, two students had engaged in violent conduct, with an aggressor and a harmed party, the relative emotional traumas that each party faced may differ and as such, the support required from the extended community may differ.

In schools, one example of a secondary stakeholders is the parents. The rationale for parental inclusivity is stated overtly in the literature. It is argued that parents are key to academic success of students and key to students exhibiting school appropriate behaviour as designated by the rules. This is due to the rationale that everything that goes on in the school has a direct impact on parental welfare as the welfare of parents is inextricably linked to that of students (Hopkins, 2004; Morrison, 2007).

In the school there was a presumption that parental contact should take place after any incident where a formal intervention by a teacher had been conducted. As I stated in the findings, this contact was made with varying degrees of success by the pastoral staff. Where there was a failure by the teacher to make contact, the onus was on the House Leader to raise the concern with parents as the primary point of parental contact. Often this would simply be for the purposes of notification. If, however, the incident was deemed as sufficiently serious it would necessitate a full face to face parental meeting or a form of more formal restorative meeting (FRP). This meeting would be undertaken restoratively as a form of conferencing and mediation with students, staff and parents present. We will forgo discussion of the negatives of parental inclusion until the dedicated sub-chapter later in this section. Instead, we will focus on the positive outcomes of the meetings and how this can be placed within the literature.

One aim of the parental meetings as the school saw them was to form a support structure around the student and affirm positive behaviour. There was a perception at the school by some staff members that the students were sensitive to the impact of shaming. Also, that many students were either disengaged or on the precipice of disengagement. The restorative policy of the school borrows heavily from the work done by Braithwaite (1989) on the reintegrative power of shame. To reiterate the core point, Braithwaite argued that there were two types of shaming. Destructive shaming and Reintegrative shaming. Reintegrative shaming

recognises that individuals may behave badly and proportions shame in accordance with their bad behaviour. However, it does not go so far as to say that the individual is inherently bad and unworthy of reintegration to the community. As a consequence, they can be reintegrated back into the community who will support them in their restoration.

The focus of the parental meeting (depending on how effective the meeting conveners were) would usually be to recognise the rule-breaking behaviour. Then seek to restore the parties using the support of the secondary stakeholders (mostly, parents) to reintegrate students. This was seen by staff as a powerful tool for students. They felt that students responded well to trust and sought inclusion, particularly when this was promoted by a trusted adult. In the cases that I have referred to in my findings this was usually the Head of House or Assistant Head of House. For example, as depicted in the case of Sarah, the Y11 referred to in Chapter 6.3.2. When discussing why she chose to attend the formal restorative meeting she stated that it was: "Usually because [Head of House] asked me to, he'd said "It won't get better for ignoring it. He'd been alright with me, so I didn't want to let him down".

Parental support was sought as an extension of the restorative activity and the school intended it to enforce the outcomes of the meeting after the school day had ended. One issue with the use of restorative practices in the school, commented by school leaders, was that students are only under the direction of the school between 8:00 and 15:30. After that, the school has minimal jurisdiction. School leaders felt that any restorative practice taken place within the day would cease to be effective without the continuation of the supportive adults at home and therefore, the school leaders felt it was necessary to try and build parental complicity to ensure the continuity of the restorative message at home. Also, there is a benefit to including parents and the community in the restorative message. If we refer once again to the guide for effective restorative implementation by Thorsborne and Blood (2006) and Buckley and Maxwell (2007). It is stated that if learners are taught the problem-solving skills necessary to participate in the restorative practice, they will become skilled in managing their own conflict at school and at home. The notion that restorative practices can enhance these skills in students is prevalent amongst the research (see: Pranis, 2005; Vaandeering, 2011; Skiba et al., 2014). Therefore, if parents can educate themselves in the same approaches restorative practice may be applied outside the school gates as well.

Many of the supportive parental meetings I observed often achieved the desired outcomes set at the start of the meeting. The school saw a viable role for the secondary stakeholders and would orient the meetings to encourage compromise, reconciliation, and restoration of the parties. This can be seen in my findings, for example, the instance of the girl who was caught

smoking, who was able to have a functional plan put in place for her. This plan allowed her to avoid what could have been a permanent exclusion from the school and also meant that the parents, who were in support of the school's decision, had the opportunity to discuss a difficult situation they had faced, with a hope of communicating the message more effectively to their child.

When done effectively, the inclusion of secondary stakeholders in the restorative meetings/practices at Pioneer corresponded with the benefits of community involvement stated in the literature (Braithwaite, 1989; Morrison, 2007; Cremin, Sellman and McCluskey, 2013) students did feel that they had the trust of the staff, the students were able to avoid potentially more harmful repercussions such as permanent exclusions and it did allow them, in some instances, to reflect on their behaviour (Bazemore, 1998; Ashley and Burke, 2009; Bazemore and Schiff, 2010). However, it required that the conditions for implementation were correct and there had to be a role for all people involved to actively participate in the processes (Buckley and Maxwell, 2007; Morrison, 2007). Whether the parents played the role of the exasperated third party on the periphery feeling helpless to effect change (as in the case of Cath (Parent)). Or the dominant hard-line enforcer who would aid in the facilitation of a restorative approach (which I saw far less often in my observations) both types were effective in some way. In addition, in conversation after the restorative meetings, many parents felt satisfied as a result of attending. Not only did they feel consulted, but they also felt that by participating they were able to have a say in how the process was managed and were given an opportunity to affect the outcomes so that they could achieve their own satisfaction. As a result of this, the school felt that the outcomes of the restorative meeting, when supported by parents was likely to have a longer lasting impact. I also spoke to students who said that the presence of parents allowed them to reflect on their own behaviour and it made them realise the overt connection between school life and home life.

In the incident of the girl caught smoking, those involved in the buying and selling of the cigarettes vowed to never do it again and the parents established that they would keep a closer eye on them in the future, particularly when they were obtaining new items or sweets which would have required additional money from an unknown source.

7.3 The Practical Involvement of the Restorative Community

Community is seen as a central pillar to restorative practice (Rosenblatt, 2015). However, the practical involvement is often left unstated. Willis (2016) refers to a number of community types. Communities of regulation, communities of concern and community as a conduit of collective independence and togetherness. Communities of regulation affect restorative

participants through morally affirming good behaviour and condemning bad behaviour (Braithwaite, 1992; Bazemore and Umbreit, 1995; McCold, 1996; Polk, 1998; Wundersitz, 2000). When people within a community deviate from the expected norms, it is the community that regulates their own affairs and re-establishes a peace (Van Ness et al., 1989). This concept reflects the idea that misbehaviour operates within a social context and is a product of the social context. To state that misbehaviour is the responsibility of the individual is an oversimplification of the idea (Dyhrberg, 1995). This corresponds with work done by Christie (1977) on stolen conflicts. By reinvesting the issue back into the community, we allow them to best manage their own conflict.

The community of concern focusses on exploring the social context which informs the misbehaviour and then operationalises the community to participate in the restorative process (Strang, 2000). The community is represented by the 'people in the lives of the victim and the offender who care most about them' (Strang, 2000: 22). We can see this role of community in Braithwaite's: *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*. Serventy (1995) and Moore (1992) refer to this community in their work. The community of concern provides a context through which those who have misbehaved may be reintegrated into.

The practical involvement of the community is seen in the way they interact with the process. Johns (2008) refers to community as an entity to 'bring together' (2008: 60). It is necessary for the community to be involved so that they can hold people to account (Daly and Hayes, 2001). Communities sometimes need to express the emotional trauma as a reflection of a group of people (Nathanson, 1992), build empathy (Katz, 2000) and ensure moral cohesion (Griffiths, 1970).

In my research school the practical involvement of community was predicated on efficacy of participation and well-formed relationships. Staff were aware of the relational dynamics that existed at the school. They were also aware that certain students would be more responsive to particular members of staff, this is referred to specifically by a number of my student respondents. The findings in my research site reflect closely the 'community of care or concern' model of community participation (Braithwaite, 1988). It was found from both staff and students that to effectively facilitate restorative practices and to give the processes a greater chance of success, the students involved required a staff member they would trust. The notion of trust is central in my findings, for example, Jean the Assistant Head of House noted: "If the kids trust you, they'll go to war for you" and it was prevalent in the responses from students. Adrian noted: "Everyone needs someone ... you can't learn well if you're not

feeling okay”, Sarah referred to her Assistant Head of House as her “In-school Mum”. From these relationships, the practical restorative practices were scaffolded.

As discussed in the findings chapter, there were two primary practical applications for restorative practices. These could be described as formal and informal and took place in what may best be portrayed as “conversations”. The restorative conversations which were seen as informal restorative interventions and the more formal FRPs which were discussed above. These have parallels with the restorative literature, as I have already intimated, the FRPs are similar to the FGCs discussed by Drewery (2004), Pranis (2005) and Morrison (2007) amongst others (originating in New Zealand with a view to bridging cultural gaps amongst disaffected Maori students). Again, the practical role for this community was as a supporter or facilitator of reparation. Sometimes it was as simple as the students having someone to speak to when they were suffering a tumultuous moment. These processes also invited students to reflect on their conduct and actions (Cremin, 2008; Thorsborne and Vinegrad, 2008), as we have seen from the findings, the de-escalatory function provided by the pastoral staff was key, this was evident in Harry’s (Head of House) comments: “... we try to put the emphasis on the students reflecting on their own behaviour ... Only after this do we get the student and staff member together and get the student to lead the restorative.” In this case, the deliverers of the restorative practices provide that reintegrative pathway for students and enable them to get back into the classroom without exacerbating the issues that may have led to an outburst from a student.

The Senior Leaders recognised the integral role of the House Team in this process. The House Team Member (be it the Head of House or Assistant Head of House) was usually the person involved in the restorative practices. There was a practical and efficacy driven justification for this. The House Teams were employed to deal with pastoral matters, a major aspect of their job was to spend time getting to know students and forming good relationships with them. And they were given the space and time to be able to do this. Assistant Heads of House had no teaching commitment, they spent their time at the Academy forming strong bonds and working with students – most of the time they lived on the same estates as students and as a consequence, understood their culture and context. They would act as facilitators for the meetings and support students going through the restorative process. Consequently, they were the effective foot-soldiers of the restorative practice at Pioneer.

7.4 The Benefits of Involving the Restorative Community

Selznick (1992) wrote that strong communities are institution centred. That individuals and communities develop and derive their social competencies from the families, schools, and the

law and that through this social development more effective citizens are created. Karp and Breslin (2001) expand on this idea, noting that strong social control is provided by two entities - the school and the family – and that this is essential in curbing potential juvenile delinquency. In his 1989 work Braithwaite stated that families provide discipline based on the moral dimension of misbehaviour. From this understanding of misbehaviour, we may focus on how the family can provide conducive conditions for delinquency reduction. When we look at the role for the restorative community, the restorative literature first asks us to depart from the preconceived notions that we may have around misbehaviour in school and its impact. Instead of viewing misbehaviour in school as a violation of a relationship between two people, we are asked to see it as an action that exists within an entire school community dynamic (Morrison, 2003; Drewery, 2004). To reimagine school behaviour in such a way requires a fundamental paradigm shift to circumstances where the entire school climate and community are addressed (Bazemore and Schiff, 2010; Cremin, 2010; Morrison, 2011). A justification for restorative practices is cited in the literature on grounds of efficacy. For example, work done by Drewery (2004), Fields (2003), O’Dea and Loewen (1998) notes that students and the wider community prefer restorative practices to so-called traditional responses to student behaviour (examples of these are: detention, suspension and expulsion) as restorative approaches allow students to appreciate the impact of their actions on the wider school community (Gottfredson and Gottfredson, 2001). However, some see a greater potential for the involvement of the restorative community. Rather than undertaking a role where the primary function is to manage behaviour, some restorative proponents argue that the community can promote a functional philosophical change within the school (Bazemore and Schiff, 2010). If the school is seen as a communal organisation, the result can be a whole-school environment of support and accountability (Gottfredson, 2001).

The benefits shown by my research school are more aligned to the responsive forms of restoration rather than the proactive forms. Rather than seeking to instil or construct a relational or democratic capacity within students, the school saw the restorative practices as an addition/compliment to the behaviour management processes. There were some reasons for this according to participants. Firstly, school leaders stated explicitly there was not a whole-school approach to restorative approaches in operation during the period of my research. It was something they sought, but it had not yet been embedded and they did not know whether it would ever be embedded. The school recognised that some staff had not undergone the appropriate training and that some staff were resistant to the adoption of restorative practice, or, that they did not see that as an important or focal part of their role (for example, the Head of Department for Science was irked by the lack of control caused by,

in his opinion, the introduction of restorative practices. He argued that it was de-professionalising). Regardless of the opposition, school leaders wanted to adopt an approach which they felt would effectively benefit students. They saw value, as did students and the wider community, in the relational attributes of restorative practices. School leaders felt that students were unresponsive to blind punitive sanctions and whilst they retained these, since they felt students had a keen sense of fairness, they responded well to the restorative approach.

In addition, when Pioneer experienced managerial change, the sanction-based approach was deemed ineffectual. The rates of detention, suspension and exclusion were some of the highest in the country. There was a strong feeling by leaders that the students had become desensitised to the punitive approach and that a new way of reenvisioning school policy was required (this was noted by staff respondents and students, particularly the response of Zak (Year 11) who stated that during the early take over period, students did not respect the authority of staff and instead, would seek to goad staff when they tried to challenge aggressive behaviour. The new management recognised that building relationships and forming trust was essential to any behaviour policy. This was informed by their experience at a different school with a similar demographic. In conversation with staff, it was evident that the restorative approaches had been effective. Parents who participated in the restorative meetings were happier and felt consulted, mostly (albeit this does not account for the substantial number of parents who did not engage). The students did not see it as an easy option, which is sometimes how restorative systems can be perceived (but some staff did). Instead, they enjoyed the fact that they were able to be given reasons for why an action may have been taken against them and were given the opportunity to participate in the systems. Often, as I have referred to in the findings chapter, students would be reintegrated much more quickly into classes than if a punitive approach had been adopted. Additionally, a number of students did begin to follow the school rules after the restorative meetings, sometimes fearing the disappointment of their trusted community link.

There are questions as to whether the approach adopted by the school would allow them to access the full range of benefits often purported in the research. There was no whole-school approach to restorative practices, nor the requisite overarching philosophical desire for there to be. School leaders recognised that, at that point, there was no whole-school staff buy in or overarching restorative ethos and having one approach to behaviour was ineffectual for meeting the needs of the students. They said that some students required the certainty and formality that is communicated by a traditional approach, whereas others required a more

nuanced restorative approach. By synthesising both approaches they felt it allowed them to meet the needs of the students and the community more effectively.

7.5 The Challenges to Operationalising Community in the School

As I have discussed, there are many benefits referred to in the literature to involving the wider community in education. For at least the last forty years (DFES, 1967) parental inclusion has been regarded as valuable and important for schools. There are a number of theoretical benefits associated with strong parent-teacher relationships. For example, there can be a continuation of learning at home, with parents building on the information provided by teachers, parents may motivate their children to learn and support if there has been an incident at school which has upset the child. Additionally, the school climate is improved, there is a beneficial effect on students attending and their behaviour is aligned to the school rules. Some argue through engaging with the school, parents can be more confident about their child's education, they feel satisfaction and confidence (Hornby and Lafele, 2011). This promise is mirrored in the restorative literature where it is said that satisfaction higher for all participants where there is a strong community presence and restoration is more likely.

However, in recent years, discussions of the difficulties of engaging the community have become more prevalent (Morrison, 2007; Cremin, Sellman and McCluskey, 2013). These discussions have not sought to challenge the impact of community engagement as a useful tool (albeit the restorative-specific literature does this to some extent), but more the practical challenges associated with engaging. In addition, much of the restorative practice literature presupposes the existence of a community that can be engaged (Braithwaite, 1988; Willis, 2016). This is an implicit understanding in the literature that engagement of the community will have a positive impact on the restorative practice. Community as a panacea – supporting the school and obtaining gratification from the process (Bickmore, 2001; Hopkins, 2004; Costello, Wachtel and Wachtel, 2009).

It is only recently that certain theorists are beginning to explore the disadvantages that relying on a restorative community may pose (Willis, 2016). When community is referred to it is often done so as imprecisely or without obvious definition (McCold, 2004). For anyone seeking to implement restorative practices or just understand more about the theory this ambiguity has caused problems. Pioneer had experienced a number of problems with their community. Value-conflicts, apathy, overt disengagement, suspicion, and practical factors all impeded the school's ability to engage with its restorative community.

Some of these conflicts are already present in the literature, others are novel to my research school and a result of the specific socio-economic difficulties that the school faced. In the literature there is little reference to community disengagement due to a lack of interest from parents as parents are often presumed as interested in their children's education. Nor are the practical factors as a consequence of single-parent families taken into account. To do so may disrupt the restorative narrative and its growing practical applicability. I will discuss below the disruption to community and the barriers faced by Pioneer in engaging their restorative community. Some which have been explored in the literature, others which have not.

7.5.1 Barriers to Inclusion

Attempting to engage a disengaged community is a common theme within the restorative practice discourse. Pranis (2006) reflects on the troublesome position where one seeks to rely on a restorative community only to find that it is absent. Many of the staff respondents in my research referred to the difficulty they faced in engaging with their wider community. They argued that it was not down to one single factor, but often, a complex myriad of interlinking factors. Sometimes they would place fault with the parents (some staff respondents professed this position, not in an accusatory way, but seated in terms of exasperation or unfortunate acceptance). In other instances, systems or practical factors meant that parents who did want to engage, were unable to do so. Lastly, perhaps the most difficult to challenge, was endemic, generational suspicion that permeated the estate and raises larger considerations and the experience of education in the UK.

Where community was absent in my research site, I was able to discern certain overt factors explaining why, in contexts such as this, the community may be hard to engage.

7.5.1.1 Apathy

The first barrier to the inclusion of the community, cited by school leaders, was apathy, more specifically, the disregard that some Leaders felt parents possessed for their children's education. Some Senior Leaders noted that parents were often reluctant to participate in their children's education in any form. Staff respondents explained the difficulty they had in reinforcing the importance of education with the students due the fact that there was not a high degree of importance placed on education at home. Discussions with students corroborated this. When asked as to why they were at school, some responded that they were there because they were made to come, or that their parents would be in trouble if they did not. The Headteacher commented that he was often placed in an undesirable position whereby the only time parents would hear from him is if he had something negative to say to them. He stated that this led to a lot of his communication to parents being ignored.

There is an increasing body of literature on theoretical approaches to parental engagement. Epstein (2001) refers to the 'Six Types of Parental Inclusion' distinguishing between the different models of parental inclusion and the varying purposes of it. For example, Epstein views parental inclusion as interlinking circles which coincide depending on need. Hornby (1995) opines that parental inclusion has eight types, 'communication; liaison; education; support; information; collaboration; support and policy' (Hornby, 2001: 38). Christenson and Sheridan (2001) state that parental inclusion has four key elements, approach and attitudes, atmosphere, and actions. Notwithstanding these theoretical models of parental engagement or wider community engagement, there is still a substantial disconnect between the theories of parental engagement and the practicalities. This is articulated by Henderson and Bela (2001) who argue 'the benefits of effective collaborations and how to do them are well-documented across all the age ranges of schooling. Still, they are not widespread in practice' (2001: 18) and according to Hornby and Lafele (2011) in the subsequent years after the publishing of the Henderson/Bela paper, little has changed. The reason for this, they argue, is that despite the number of theoretical models in place, there has still been little done to effectively challenge the effect of social barriers which still impact on how parents interact with and engage with a school. These social barriers referred to were evident in my research school and will form the basis for the next part of this discussion chapter.

Parental engagement evenings provide an interesting microcosm of the perceived apathetic wider community at the academy. It was noted by the school leaders that parental engagement evenings were poorly attended (and one reason theorised by my participants was the apathy of some parents, albeit there were other reasons operating in tandem with this). The Headteacher remarked that in many schools an 80% average attendance would be expected as minimum. He also noted that it was very unlikely that Pioneer would ever achieve that, regardless of how they sought to incentivise the events. I attended a number of parental engagement nights all of which did not meet the 80% attendance criteria stated by the Headteacher. On one evening, a group of students had attended without their parents. When asked where their parents were, they remarked 'at home, on the sofa'. When prompted for further information as to why their parents did not attend, they simply said that 'they couldn't be bothered, they don't see the point'. Attempting to triangulate these findings with information from interviews I was informed by school staff that many of the people from the estate had attended the predecessor school where they also had not performed well and as a consequence did not see the value in education. I enquired as to the veracity of these claims with parents who I had an opportunity to have discussions with. They said that their children were unlikely to follow an academic pathway and as a consequence, the time spent at the

school is likely to be wasted and could be better spent on preparatory learning for a more viable vocation. Whilst this data on its own does not affirm the notion of 'apathy' as an impediment to the delivery of restorative practices, it is certainly contended by a number of my participants (at all levels) that a perceived apathy, or a confessed disregard for the school amongst some parents were deemed to be operative.

There had been a number of events scheduled with a direct intent to combat the problem such as parental curry nights, meet and greet events, an online video transition and engagement evening and community quizzes but often the uptake was reported as low. Not only did leaders confess an issue of attendance at parental engagement evenings, but they also noted that some parents would not attend restorative meetings as they did not view them as important, nor did they seek to engage with their child's academic development.

This information provided to me by my participants confirms that whilst there can be a reliance, at least to a greater extent, on the wider-school community from those schools located within more affluent or less-culturally deprived areas, the same could not be said for Pioneer. Again, this evidence challenges the presupposition in the literature of an amenable community with the potential to benefit the restorative practices. Gilborn and Mirza (2000) state that students cannot be reintegrated into the school community if they do not feel part of the community to begin with. If the community refuses to engage, on a practical level these benefits will not be achieved. In addition, in feedback from students, they would often see this unwillingness of the wider community to engage as instructive or as permission to behave poorly without consequence. When challenged, students as to their behaviour students were known to retort 'do it, my mum doesn't care anyway'.

Some school staff felt that parents were apathetic due to them having low expectations for their child's academic performance or potential. Hoover-Dempsey and Sadler (1997) found that parents who do not foster a strong belief in the potential of their children to achieve academically are less likely to regard their own involvement in the school process as beneficial or worthwhile. Occasionally, this will be due to practical considerations that we will discuss below (examples of this could be having English as an additional language or an inability to understand the frames of reference discussed) yet, often it is simply due to a feeling of powerlessness to be impactful. In similar research done by Eccles and Harold (1993) they find that as the level of education becomes more advanced (secondary school to further education) this disconnect from the child's education becomes more pronounced as parents feel even less able to affect change. This is particularly true when it is accompanied by a presumption that intelligence is innate and that children are either fortunate to be born clever or unlucky to be

born with a lack of intelligence (Hornby, 2000). Many of these aspects were reported by staff at Pioneer. For example, AH: Behaviour, Tom's comments. He noted that when he spoke to a parent whose son had not been attending maths, instead of supporting the school, the parent remarked that they did not need maths anyway and not having a qualification in maths had not harmed their opportunities in life. Whether the link between these comments and the perceived lack of parental engagement was causal or correlative on a larger scale is unknown. However, my research did find that on many occasions, the sense of an inability to impact was expressed by parents and carers. In some instances, this frustrated parents as they felt that they should be able to do more to support their children but commented that they lacked the requisite cultural capital or financial means to be able to do so. Cultural capital is a term now employed widely in education to refer to essential education that children must have, cultural capital is said to be heavily informed by the experiences that students will have in early life and, as a consequence, the socialisation of students and the atmosphere of their upbringing will have lasting repercussions for their social and cultural outlook and the expectations they will have of themselves, particularly in later life (Mickelburgh, 2019). The notion of cultural capital has now become an important buzzword for OFSTED and consequently, schools are now expected to be cognisant of it when designing policies and educating children (Moylett, 2019). (For example, Cath (Parent) in the aftermath of the FRP relating to the conflict between her child and another student noted her exasperation at her inability to control her child, in this case, I would argue that her apathy was not due to disregard, but instead caused by helplessness or frustration). Others felt the responsibility for their child's education belonged to the school and that their involvement should end once the child passed through the school gates, this was seen expressly in interviews with Ed, the Headteacher, David, AH: Student Experiences, Karen, AH: Safeguarding and a majority of the student responses. They all referred to the disinterest of parents and carers attached to the school. Students noted that the parents had limited regard for what went on in the school, perhaps summarised coherently in the statement made by Simon: "My Dad isn't involved in the school life unless it affects him ... he blames the school for "not doing their job". This mentality is supported by the work of Reay (1998) who considers class and values as a substantial prohibitor to wider community engagement. She notes that those who possess a cultural capital which matches that of the school are more likely to be engaged in their child's education and as are more able to understand the working parameters of the school. Whereas those from a working-class background are less likely to perceive themselves as able to contribute. A view also expressed in the work of Hornby (2000) where he argues: 'for working-class families, home-school relationships are about separateness, whereas for middle-class families they are about interconnectedness and this difference shapes their respective attitudes to parental

engagement' (2000: 41). Staff reported that this level of disconnect was present in my research site and argued that it posed substantial problems for Pioneer in their attempts to engage their wider community. The need for community connection, being evident in restorative practice, requires a community with which to engage of which parents and carers are at the centre. School leaders commented that parents felt that the school was solely responsible for all matters that took place during the school day and therefore were reluctant to engage. Whilst this did not prevent practical restorative interventions taking place, it did mean that the potential benefits of the inclusion of the community as stated in the literature were inhibited. One example of this was the FRP meetings that were not attended. As a result of parental absence pastoral staff had to stand in and then communicate the outcomes to parents later. The disengagement that students felt for the school and the fact that many students, like those who attended on the parents evening, had to take ownership of their own education, and engage in self-motivation to achieve. The fact that staff perceived parents as disengaged led to issues for the school in their attempts to deliver a restorative approach, this perception, whether accurate or not, led to a disconnect between the school and its wider community. Whether these issues could be resolved is not a discussion within the remit of this study. However, it is important to note that staff did feel that parental apathy was having a detrimental impact on the use of restorative practices, and that they did not have a solution to this issue.

7.5.1.2 Practical Considerations

Work done by Hornby and Lafele (2011) finds that practical considerations have a substantial impact on how engaged the wider community will be. They state that 'family circumstances can be major barriers to parental inclusion, solo parents and those with young families or large families may find it more difficult to get involved in parental inclusion because of their caretaking responsibilities' (2011: 41). They go on to say that work can also be a factor, this is both when parents are in work but also when they are out of work. In work parents may not be able to organise a shift-change, if they are a single parent this will mean they have to make a choice between attending engagement events or missing a wage. Not just that, but they may face financial difficulties, they may not be able to afford a babysitter for their other children or a car for easy access to the school. In addition, a job which requires a substantial amount of physical exertion may leave parents too tired to attend. Even in some extreme cases, where parents are not in gainful employment they will not be able to afford an additional bus ticket or have no adequate means of transportation to attend the school. The high rate of socio-economic poverty in the area was referred to by participants as a contributory factor in community disengagement. Leaders reported that sometimes parents were unable to attend meetings due to an inability to travel effectively citing costs as a causal

factor, additionally caring commitments for relatives or due to being on a 'zero-hours' contract (piecework where workers are called to work when requested by their employers) were considered to be other impactful concerns. In areas where there are two parent, nuclear family structures, these impediments would not be as effectual as within my research site. The context posed challenges for parents and young people that may not be as pervasive in my affluent areas. The hidden impact of deprivation in the area needs to be recognised as an important factor in community engagement more generally.

Work has also been done into the impact of poor physical and mental health on the ability of parents to engage with the school. Eccles and Harold (1993) have found that those parents without an effective social support network, who suffer from physical or mental conditions, abuse issues, domestic violence concerns or safeguarding and welfare concerns will all find it practically difficult to engage with the schooling of their child.

All these impediments were present in Pioneer. Anecdotally, there were parents with substantial mental health issues, sometimes these would stem from alcohol and drug abuse issues (this was referred to by Pete, the PHSE teacher). Students had been safeguarded due to these issues and as a result, parental engagement at the school for parents of this type was seen as a potential threat to the other students at the school. A large number of the students who attended the school came from single parent families or where the primary caregiver was someone other than the biological parent. There were a number of families in which grandparents were the designated point of contact for the school and they would be unable to attend any meetings due to physical health issues.

Poverty was a huge impediment to wider community and parental involvement. The school began a system where parents could 'check-in' online, in a further attempt to construct a virtual community (recognising that face-to-face contact was minimal). They would be able to view a substantial amount of information relating to children's attendance records, punctuality, behaviour, academic attainment, and progress. However, this required a viable internet connection and a device capable of accessing the information. In conversations with parents, many noted that they could not take advantage of this initiative as they lacked the requisite ICT equipment or a reliable internet connection (also impeding contact by email). Also, the AH Safeguarding: Karen noted that parents would often have phone lines disconnected, which meant that sometimes contacting parents about a serious safeguarding concern would be impossible. The administrative staff had to do an audit of valid phone numbers for parents on their central system every three months to account for the changes in status. Childcare was another huge barrier to wider community involvement. The

combination of single-parent families, multiple-children and a lack of financial resources/extended family support meant that, again, for many parents, attending the school for a meeting was either impossible or too much of an inconvenience to countenance (this was reported in meetings with parents).

The lack of recognition in the restorative literature for these concerns is troubling. Once again, there is a presumption that restorative practices are best when there is a wider community engagement and support structure (Hopkins 2004; Morrison, 2007). The parents, in some instances, did not disengage due to a lack of care but simply because to engage would be too problematic or impracticable. I can only conclude that for some schools there is an operative socio-economic impediment to engagement and that factors other than a desire to implement obstruct the implementation of restorative practices.

7.5.1.3 External Success Pressure

When the school changed hands the leaders at the school expected a monitoring visit from OFSTED (as previously stated, an OFSTED inspection is a visit from an independent governmental body which would judge the adequacy of provision at the school. If schools are judged as not meeting an adequate standard, they may be forced to make changes. These changes could include restructuring of the leadership, termination of the staff in some instances and/or increased scrutiny).

An OFSTED inspection did take place around 3 months after the initial takeover process and transition from the old regime to the new. The changes made during the takeover period meant that OFSTED viewed a substantial improvement in the school and as a consequence, the school went from having a poor judgement to one of 'good'. This means that OFSTED believed that the school was providing the students with an above average standard of education, based on a number of factors. These factors include, how safe the pupils are, their academic outcomes, standards of good behaviour and how effective the leadership of the school is. This strong inspection outcome coincided with the school achieving its highest GCSE results. GCSEs or General Certificate in Secondary Education are the assessments that all 15 – 16-year-olds sit at the end of their mandatory education. These results provide a strong performance indicator as an external measure for the school league tables. The percentage of students who achieve an average pass (Grade C or a 4) will be published in local and national statistics, where this number is too low based on regional performance, a school may be investigated). This upturn in exam performance and strong OFSTED judgement meant that the school felt less external pressure. It was stated by respondents that a substantial amount of time and effort went into OFSTED preparation and that once there had been a visit, they were then able to alter their

foci onto other matters which would enhance the student's education; in pursuing strong exam results, a large proportion of time and the financial budget had been monopolised by running intervention classes. Intervention classes were additional revision classes that take place outside of the school day. After school sessions, weekend and holiday sessions would be used to provide additional class instruction and revision time for students. These sessions are delivered by teachers who work in the school but fall outside of their duties within their employment contracts. As a result, they have an additional cost. Teaching staff could be paid as much as two hundred pound per day for running intervention sessions. When we multiply this by the number of subjects on offer and the potential for the fact that multiple staff will be delivering per subject, the intervention cost can run into thousands of pounds. Additionally, to promote attendance to these optional sessions, there will usually be incentives, ranging from trips both domestic and international, vouchers for food and prize draws for large items³¹ at the end of a year.

After the OFSTED inspection these interventions did not pose the essential imperative that they may have done previously. It was decided that more of the budget would be used to pay for additional services that would enhance student's holistic education. This included hiring more pastoral staff to support students more effectively. The school instructed external services such as peer-mediation tutors, motivational speakers, resilience trainers and employment instructors. Students who were at risk of expulsion or fixed-term exclusion due to cumulative rule-breaking or isolated serious incidents were given individualised support from a local Pupil Referral Unit who would take them out of school for a number of sessions a week to work on practical skills as a divergence from their usual school day. These individualised programmes were supported by a strong restorative ethos. Due to the increase in the number of pastoral staff, primarily, more restorative meetings were taking place the number of restorative conferences involving parents increased substantially.

Unfortunately, in the second-year post-takeover the school recorded a 20% underperformance on the previous year's results in the second series of GCSE examinations. It was recognised by the school staff that this severe and sudden underperformance would be viewed by OFSTED as an indicator of something seriously wrong at the school. As a consequence, when the school returned to the Autumn Term the repercussions were significant. A number of students who were deemed persistent rule-breakers received fixed term exclusions and then were

³¹ In the school there had been a number of inducements on offer, from iPads, high-end laptops and family holidays for the students who attended the largest number of intervention sessions.

subsequently permanently excluded. The restorative distraction programmes were no longer operative, and the budget had been redistributed with a stronger focus on intervention and academic-based performance rewards predicated on a strong behavioural orientation. The behaviour policy was revised to include a hierarchical structure formed on punitive sanctions and a more 'traditional' focus. For example, prior to the downturn in results, when an incident had occurred in class, a pastoral head would be called for to remove the student, diffuse the situation and if needed, call an appropriate meeting with the teacher and student. After the downturn, a sanction-based approach was instigated, this recognised the level of disruption and attributed an appropriate punishment ranging from in class detention, call-backs during break time or lunchtime and whole-school detentions/isolation.

There is an emergence of a punitive-restorative cycle based on how well the school perceives it is functioning at the time. When the school felt that they were in control and that they did not need to adopt policy that prioritised academic attainment they could focus more on the holistic student education. However, when the protection that they felt they enjoyed from the external school agencies was removed by virtue of the academic underperformance, they reverted to a punitive orientation and resorted to employing traditional, results focussed tactics which they felt could directly result in higher student performance. The Headteacher, Ed reflected on the calculation he had to make on securing academic performance versus meeting the wider needs of students which I will report here as it succinctly epitomises the conflict faced by the school:

"If you had a blank cheque, we could do everything, but you've got a finite pot of money and you have to prioritise those things that put your head above the parapet, so instead of a specialised pastoral staff member, you pay intervention costs for staff, because that gets you the exam results."

Proponents of restorative practices would argue that striving for academic excellence and adopting a restorative approach are compatible. Many argue that schools that adopt restorative practices see a positive influence on academic attainment (Hopkins, 2004; Morrison, 2007; McCluskey et al., 2008). Morrison particularly refers to the allure in which schools 'default' to a punitive, conventional approach when there is an academic underperformance (and how ineffective that approach can be) (2013: 137). She cites work done by Skiba and Rausch (2006) who state: 'recent research indicates a negative relationship between the use of school suspension and school-wide academic achievement, even when controlling for demographics such as socio-economic status' (2006:5). However, it also noted

in the literature that certain groups of pupils are resistant to the effective impact of restorative practices on academic attainment. Morrison (2013) states that: 'the continued under-achievement of children from poorer families and 'looked after' children pose an uncomfortable question for RP' (2013: 137). As I have already discussed, Pioneer is primarily made up of students who originate from poorer families. In addition, they have an above average proportion of 'looked after' students.

Morrison (2007) states that the only way to impact meaningful change on the over-representation of these groups in the key statistics (exclusions/behavioural problems/lack of engagement) would be to have a 'strong version' of restorative practices. Unfortunately, this strong version suffers the same definitional problems that the 'whole-school' variation as preferred by Hopkins (2004) has. A strong version for Morrison is one that builds an ethos within the school and looks for reflections on issues of race, age, religion, and gender. But we are offered little more in instructive terms than that and this theoretical notion did not reflect the experience of my respondents. Their experience was one where financial constraints meant that they had to make a choice, continue the restorative practices which they considered to be working, and look to a more proactive, constructive behavioural and welfare management approach, or forgo this in an attempt to gain short-term impact through suspension or exclusion for fear of what a negative OFSTED report may trigger.

7.5.1.4 Suspicion

School leaders reported that parental suspicion, of the school and its motives had an impact on engagement. Suspicion as an impediment to parental or community engagement may be a result of a negative educational experience which creates a reluctant to engage with the school (Clark, 1983; Hoover-Dempsey and Sadler, 1997; Hornby, 2000).

Reay (1998) refers to this specifically when exploring the paucity of cultural capital that parents may possess. She finds that where schools possess cultural capital which is similar to that of the parents it encourages a harmonious relationship. However, she also identifies that often, the school will possess a middle-class understanding of cultural capital which may conflict with that of the parents. Reay (1998) argues that working class parents often possess cultural capital that does not match that of the school and as a consequence there is a lack of value attached to it by school members. Again, this emphasises the disconnect between school and home life. In addition to this, Bastiani (1989) focusses on the conversations that take place between parents and teachers. He says that often, particularly when there is a conflict between the expected outcomes of the meeting, parents will treat these meetings with suspicion. Parents may assume that these meetings will be used as a mechanism to

criticise them for the misbehaviour of their child. Seeking to avoid this deflected criticism they choose not to participate in matters relating to the school. This in some ways reflects the one-sided nature of the parent and school relationship. The power imbalance, it could be argued, always favours the school in that they set the boundaries and parameters of the relationship and they control the success criteria for the relationship with the wider community. One problem with Bastiani's (1993) view is that it presupposes a mutual respect, negotiation and shared purpose between the school and its community. This view is criticised by Hegarty (1993) who, referring to Leuder's (2000) eight steps of school interaction formulates the theory that the school-community relationship is one dominated by one-sidedness. He states that there is no accommodation of parent's goals, instead there is a situation where parental contribution is only validated by how it can ensure that the school agendas and concerns are met. When there is a conflict between these two narratives, we see suspicion emerging. When suspicion becomes overwhelming, Leuder (2000) recognises that the result is 'missing parents' and disengagement.

This notion of suspicion was also present in my findings. For example, Rob, the AH: Curriculum and Data noted that that the memories parents had of the negative experiences they faced when they were at school impacted on their desire to attend. Karen remarked that there was limited migration from the estate, so that many of the parents who lived on the estate would have been the students who attended the predecessor school and as a consequence, those negative experiences would be imprinted on them. In addition to these concerns, there was also a wide-spread perception, propagated through social-media channels that the school was ineffective in managing behaviour. This was discussed with the House Team who noted that this often led to parents disengaging from the school as they felt they would be blamed for the poor behaviour of their child. The school had not constructed an effective solution to parental suspicion, they had tried to change the perception through a positive social media presence and made a concerted effort to engage more positively with the community, but at the time of writing, the negative perception was still present and there was still wide-spread suspicion amongst the wider community. The 'missing parents' idea noted by Leuder (2000) was evident in the school. The impact of this on the restorative practices was that, again, there was an absence of a wider community to draw from. The practical impact of this is visible in James' experience where his father was unwilling to attend the restorative meeting as he was concerned that he would be made to pay for the damage caused by his son.

7.5.1.5 Restoration as Reinforcement of Authoritarian Power Dynamics?

I have explored different ideations of the concept of community. This has been done to establish the type of restorative community at Pioneer. In addition to this I have explored the theoretical and empirically driven benefits of engaging the restorative community.

During this exploration I uncovered a number of instances where the practice taking place at the school contradicted the ideas referred to in the literature. In much of the literature, the community is seen as having a beneficial role. As I have discussed previously, the wider community is often used to affirm the restorative practice, they can support, and effect change with participants who would otherwise be reluctant, and they provide a safety net that a child can be restored into. In addition, they are a harmed party that requires their own consultation and restoration and should be included on that basis. This assumption presupposes two things. Firstly, that the school and its community share the same desired outcomes of a restorative process and, secondly, that the values that drive the process are shared and accepted norms of the school and its community.

Initially, this seems like a valid presumption and a rational one to make. If two students are in conflict, restoring relationships, repairing harm, and combatting future conflict should be the normative process to follow. The rationale behind such an assumption is that through restoration, students can achieve the benefits of being conflict neutral. The literature promises that higher academic achievement, better attendance, value as to the membership of the school community and enhanced participation in school-life all stem from a strong restorative approach.

This school conditioning, based on principles of secondary socialisation are for many, the accepted norms of attending school. Yet, in my research, it was found that when engaging or seeking to engage with the wider community what would often result is a normative contradiction. Instead of finding support within the community, the school would find conflict. The initial position taken by some advocates of restorative justice, that schools and their wider communities share the same goals may not be a valid presumption after all.

A criticism of restorative practice is that by importing middle class teachers into schools located in socio-economically deprived communities the expectation is that the community will start to conform to the values that the school seeks to promulgate. For example, Adelman (1992) refers to the differences that may exist between the agendas of the school and its wider community. Where parents are cooperative with the values of the school they will be viewed in a positive way by the school, but, when there is a conflict between the values of the school and its wider community, the school view the community as a problem. This was cited by Hornby (2000) who recognises the deficit model of parents which manifests where teachers

view parents as problems or less able. Hornby also recognises that any divergence between the school and its community can create conflict. The school prioritises education over all else whereas parents may have other things which they view as important. Munn (1993) recognises the lack of political power than parents will possess, also, if there is an assumption that education is about schooling there will be an imbalance as teachers will possess the greatest knowledge and expertise as well as the greatest power. Therefore, there is an argument that the parents and the wider community simply become a tool of reinforcement for the school values. The expectation then becomes that the community will promote the idea that achievement stems from attendance and therefore students will wish to attend, or at least will be prompted to by their support structure in the community to attend and seek to achieve regardless of their particular preference or values.

These ideas presuppose a right and wrong way of managing behaviour, it also imposes a value-system that is mandated. When the restorative literature speaks of operationalising the community, one may argue it does so on the presumption that the community affirm the decisions made by the school as the decision made by the school will be in tandem with the community value.

However, the restorative literature has not yet come to terms with instances when the values of the school and the wider community contradict each other. This may occur when the community refuses to provide affirmation, or, conversely, when a message given by the community is directly antithetical to that of the school. If a student is persistently absent the school will view this as a contravention of school rules and seek parental support in an attempt to remedy the issue as they see it with the natural presumption that poor attendance should be viewed negatively by all school stakeholders. However, this approach fails to take account of the idea that the student may be being given messages from home that school is unimportant and that there is no point in going. They may be being told that instead of going to school it would be better to find a job. Alternatively, they may be being forced to work to contribute and support the income of the family.

This idea of a value-conflict has escaped focus in restorative theory for a number of reasons. The most compelling, in my opinion, is that these issues are unlikely to appear as pervasively where there is a complicity between the values of the wider community and the school. I have alluded to times where there may be no shared values between the school and its community and, similar to the stated outcomes of the literature, the school views the community as the problem, when the community does not affirm the message of the school.

There is little in the restorative literature to countenance the problem of direct conflict between the expectations of the school and its community. There is a natural presumption that parents send their children to school in the hope of a good education and that they will do everything possible to facilitate this education. However, in practice my research indicates that this is not always the case. Senior Leaders and school pastoral leads in my research contended that parents who have had an unenjoyable experience of education will not support the school in their goals, making the delivery of an effective restorative model a more complex process. They argued that when a restorative conference is convened, there was little or no support from the wider community, and in fact, community can be more detrimental in trying to meet the aims that they were attempting to achieve by contradicting the message of the school.

The impact of deprivation faced by students led to similar value-conflicts. The AVP: Safeguarding, Karen refers to this stating that many students would not have a significant care as to the priorities of the school when they face tumult or issues in their life outside of the school. She noted that many students face difficulty securing a meal or ensuring that they have adequate provisions to live. In those instances, students would prioritise their well-being and that of their families, over adherence to school rules.

This poses a number of questions regarding restorative literature. If the school and the community values conflict, should we always presume the school is correct? Who is best placed to ascertain the welfare of the child? Does the standardisation of behaviour according to set policy meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds with contextually driven requirements? What can be said is that the lack of debate on this topic in the wider body of restorative practice literature results in a failure to note the arbitrariness on which behaviour policies in schools are constructed. Often said policies are constructed to promote adherence over for the sake of adherence, therefore utilising restorative practices to support the preconceptions of good behaviour is potentially troubling. Without providing an adequate answer to these questions and without countenancing the issues unearthed in this research, my findings are potentially detrimental to the generalisability or universality of restorative practices in schools. These matters must be acknowledged and accounted for by those who purport the efficacy of a restorative alternative, particularly one which encompasses the whole-school community.

7.6 Summary

This chapter explored the key questions as posed at the beginning of the thesis and how the information garnered through the empirical research complements and contradicts the wider

body of restorative literature. As the field of restorative practices in schools is still relatively young, this research and the discussion above contributes to the general restorative discourse. It establishes where some participants viewed community as beneficial and the functions of community, but also, it looks at where there is a deviation in my findings and the expected role of community in the literature.

Chapter 8 Conclusions: The importance of relationships and the impact of an absent community.

This thesis explored a fundamental concept in restorative literature, the restorative community. In doing so, it provided an opportunity to study the views of the important stakeholders within the school and develop an understanding of their opinions about restorative approaches generally, as well as how the participants viewed their own 'restorative community'. In addition, it allowed a practical insight into the use of restorative practices in a complex and contextually interesting school.

My research provides an honest insight into my participant's experience of school and depicts the school in an undisguised way. For the truly uninitiated many assumptions may be made about modern schooling. These assumptions may presuppose a number of things, for example: schools operate better when there is a strong parental presence, that parents, largely, will support and affirm the messages given by the schools, student attendance of 95% should be the minimum expected standard for all schools, and many of these presumptions are supported by research and literature. However, as we saw in the school in which the research took place, meeting these criteria was often reported to be impossible. Even where there was a desire to implement the above school leaders stated that practical factors, apathy, and disengagement impacted on the ability of the school to realise the aforementioned goals. This then poses a fundamental challenge to the current thinking around the use of restorative practices in schools. Particularly for those proponents who favour a whole-school restorative approach. My research indicates that much of the investigation into the function of restorative approaches has been done in schools with amenable or conducive circumstances for implementation. I also find that the current body of literature is selective with regard the schools researched. In my opinion, this has led to a skewed perspective regarding the wider applicability and function of restorative practices.

This research notes that if the practices are going to be implemented in a broader context of schools it is necessary to look what might occur when you use them in all settings. Including those with conditions which may not necessarily favour the implementation of the practices. What I found is that that whilst these practices are a good idea, when exposed to a harder test and a school in more complex circumstances than the ones researched, the failings of restorative practices are exposed and whilst these failings may not be fatal, that they do require addressing in the wider body of restorative literature.

In this chapter I will summarise the key findings from my research, at the end of each sub-chapter I will focus on how these findings contribute to the wider understanding of restorative

justice/practice theory before assessing the limitations of my project and opportunities for further research.

8.1 Communities and Relationships

Few participants in the research could articulate their view of what their 'community' was and, observing the school, I could not discern any overarching notion or presence of community. Instead, atomised sub-groups were present. Whilst the Senior Leaders put forward the desire for a whole-school restorative approach, this was not stated by other research participations. Staff, students and parents spoke of communities based on individual relationships rather than any cohesive definition of community. Some students I interviewed spoke of disaffection, a lack of belonging and often, an overt dislike for their school. Pastoral leads sometimes criticised teachers for their practice, feeling that they were overtly punitive or unprofessional. Teachers were pressured to ensure students achieved results at all costs, even at the price of focussing on student welfare or delivering restorative practices. External pressures the school faced were increasing. This due in part to a change in Government agenda which put schools located in a disadvantaged area under an expectation to meet national standards, regardless of the cultural and material deprivation which may permeate their local community. Yet, despite all these impediments there was an effective restorative system in place. Not a whole-school (Hopkins, 2004) system or one that may adhere to the utopian vision of 'restorative' practices articulated in much of the literature (Hopkins, 2004; Morrison, 2007). Instead, the school had constructed a piecemeal system directed at meeting the individual needs of the students. The community was not, a whole school community, instead, it was a series of reliance networks that stakeholders would operationalise whenever a need arose. If there was a conflict in the classroom, it was not the job of the teacher to resolve the conflict. Instead, there was an appropriate pathway that students could utilise with a person they trusted. This person, usually a pastoral head, was conversant in their individual needs and who they felt some form of interdependence.

The idea of viewing 'community' as networks of people is not a new phenomenon in 'community' literature (Delanty, 2010). But for restorative practices in schools, where the pervading ideological position is that to be most effective, restorative practices need to be embedded across the whole of a school, it will require a positional realignment. In schools like Pioneer, it may be impossible forge strong and positive relationships amongst the whole community. Instead, practitioners should look to small pockets of trust where good relationships can be nurtured to enable a form of effective restorative practices.

Placing a focus on 'trust' and 'relationships' was essential. In some schools, there is a view that deterrent punishments, or traditional sanctions may secure complicity. However, for a large proportion of the students within this school, staff reports indicate they were ineffectual. Noting that exclusions and detentions were seen by some students as badges of honour. Often, when detentions were given by teachers, students refused to attend, and this student refusal was affirmed by parents at home. The normative power dynamic in schools, that teachers say, and students do, was not present in my research site. In the absence of this dynamic, adherence was secured through operationalising relationships of trust. Even the students with the most complex needs would be responsive to those teachers that they trusted or with whom they had formed a relationship. In this way, my research site conforms to the restorative literature. Karp (2002) a prominent writer in the field notes the importance of relationships, even in the most extreme circumstances. When he visited (the British equivalent) of youth offender institutes, he would note that often it would take one person to have a demonstratively positive effect on a young person's life if the relational circumstances were present.

These trusted adults covered several differing roles. Sometimes providing the only constant in the student's otherwise tumultuous life (for example, in comments made by the AH: Safeguarding). They would be the de facto parent, the social worker who would liaise with outside agencies if needs presented, or in most cases, the supportive friend that the students would not possess. Through these points of reliance, the students received their consolation if matters in the school had gone awry, rules had been broken and harm required repairing. They would act as a translator for teachers, when students did not understand why they had been isolated or given a detention and represent the views of the student to the school and, conversely, explain the practices of the school to the student. These findings are demonstrable of the socio-economic context in which the students lived, one of high material deprivation. Where there was a parental absence, due to the factors discussed in the previous chapter, the pastoral staff assumed that role and responsibility.

When first undertaking the research, knowing the school employed a restorative approach, one may expect to see high levels of consistency and continuity, particularly regarding the school's restorative message with the leaders professing a desire for a 'whole-school' restorative approach. Instead, I found something much more individualised, bespoke, and student-centred, but an approach that was, in the view of many staff respondents, effective in meeting the needs of the students. The school had recognised that, due to the pervasive levels of differing needs (in academic, social, linguistic, material, and medical factors) trying to adopt ways of practice, or ways of being, was impossible. For example, the school had high

rates of students who spoke English as an additional language. These students found it difficult to articulate their thoughts in a restorative conference and translation was often difficult to source or prohibitive in terms of cost. By placing them with a trusted adult, who could discuss matters and liaise with other groups within the community, whilst these students may not have been able to conform to the expectations of a 'whole-school' restorative programme, they received the satisfactory outcome expected at the end of the process.

The findings stated above pose a number of fundamental questions in relation to the notion of community involvement in restorative justice/practices. Walgrave, citing Etzioni (1995) states that community may be a "social space in which people know and care for each other" (2013: 222). He also refers to the approach to community provided by Bazemore and Schiff (2001) and Sullivan and Tifft (2006) noting that community is based on shared values, norms, and interests. Whilst these assumptions of community may be applicable in certain types of schools, perhaps smaller, more closely-knit institutions, with fewer instances of extreme bad behaviour, these characteristics of community are not present in the school in which I did my research. This lack of applicability to all contexts is problematic for restorative approaches generally. It is accepted amongst many restorative advocates that the community can have a positive impact on the restorative process, or that community should be involved as a result of the status as a concerned party. Implicit in this view is that there will be a community to draw from, with resources that can be utilised to benefit or enable the restorative process. However, this view neglects or ignores the idea there may be no community present with which to engage, or a community that is not reminiscent of that exhibited in the literature. As I have reported in my research the times where there is an absence of community with this leading to a modification of the restorative approach a school employs. Practical factors, intentional disengagement, or parental suspicion of a perceived nefarious motives on the part of the school are all potential reasons for the non-existence of community. Additionally, there are contextual matters which other many of the other schools researched do not face, such as the pervasive socio-economic matters which, according to my participants, rendered some wider-community members unable to engage for a diverse range of reasons. Even when an identifiable community is present, my research indicates that some schools do not possess a community like that identified by Bazemore and Schiff or Sullivan and Tifft. Amongst the community I studied there was pluralism of norms, values, and identities. The members of the internal school community (it is also contentious as to whether they would have self-defined as community members), engaged in interpersonal conflict, many were disaffected with the school, they showed disregard of the values the school sought to instil and distrust of the school actors. This dynamic was also mirrored in the relationship of the school and its wider

community members. There were broken relationships, parents possessed a mistrust of the school, there were conflicting objectives possessed by the school and its community. In addition to this, staff respondents reported that many parents were apathetic as to the desires of the school, disengaged due to a myriad of factors. Some parents possessed an engrained negative experience of education, some showed a disinterest of what happens at the school, or a lack of importance as to the value of the function of schooling. My findings promote the need for a shift in the way community is viewed, from the overarching static definition we see in much of the restorative literature, to one based on context, circumstance, and the pragmatic reality of modern schooling and the diverse needs of students. If community is a central theme in restorative literature and restorative practices are to become a real and viable alternative option to traditional approaches to school conflict then our understanding of this key theme needs to be functional and as applicable to the shared experience of as many schools as possible, it cannot simply reflect a reality that may only exist in a small proportion of UK schools. As stated in the preamble to this conclusion these findings need not be fatal to the conversation around restorative practices and the preference in the literature for whole-school implementation. Instead, they are matters which require addressing in the wider body of restorative literature. Currently, it could be construed from the literature that if a school is not utilising a whole-school approach, their systems are lesser, or they are following the practice. Either way, space must be made for a discussion of what should occur when the school, facing difficulties, cannot achieve the system of restorative practice advocated for in the literature.

Participants in my research recognised an importance for an individual construction of interpersonal restorative practices, predicated on the needs of the individual over the needs of the whole-school community. The deprivation of the area meant that the reasons behind misbehaviour, or other matters which would normally require restorative intervention, was as diverse as the cohorts in the school. The fact that leaders perceived an unreliability in wider-community engagement meant that they had to adopt a needs-must oriented approach to their use of restorative practices. This necessity model emphasised the important of the individual, managing their needs without intervention from, or engagement with a wider-community and my research reports effectual outcomes for this approach that were positive. Subsequent research, undertaken after this study, may indicate that there can be whole-school models in schools that suffer similar rates of deprivation, however, this is a shallow theoretical pool which requires further investigation and elaboration.

8.2 Rationale and Role of the Community

When opting for a restorative approach, the school leaders desired the benefits described in the literature and in various restorative training packages that some of the staff had undertaken. Leaders reported a desire for a non-punitive resolution to the pervasive behavioural problems that existed within the Academy. They commented that the use of traditional sanctions by the predecessor school had antagonised the local community and led to a breakdown of the relationship with the school. As a result, the school needed something more inclusive with the hope of engaging the wider school community. As the research indicates, this inclusive approach with the desire to engage the community was seen as, initially, effective and the school experienced a better relationship with some of the key stakeholders, particularly parents and students. Teachers were happier and overall, the school performed better as a result. Whether we can draw a causal relationship between the use of restorative approaches and the more harmonious atmosphere in the school, we cannot be certain. However, some participants felt that restorative approaches were at least a contributory factor.

A key role of restorative practices in the school was operationalising the community to provide emotional, pastoral, or behavioural support to students who required it. As we have seen, this was provided by a key person with whom the student had a bond of trust. All participants felt there was a value in this approach. However, that is not to say there was always complicity between the messages given by the school and those children received at home and, again, this poses a number of questions at the way community is presented by some advocates of restorative justice. In my research, I found that sometimes there was conflict between the role envisaged for the community by the school and the desires of community members, especially on matters relating to behaviour. I report the occasions in my research where the priorities of the school and its community were in conflict and where adherence to rules was predicated less on achieving some positive outcome or the academic benefit of the student and instead oriented more towards rule enforcement for the sake of enforcement. The seamless dynamic, sometimes envisaged in restorative literature, of a cooperative and supportive community who participates and enables conflict resolution working in tandem with the school and then affirming the school's message at home was not always present in my research. An example of this is seen in the instance where a student was told by their parents to fight back if violently confronted, whereas the school wanted to convene a restorative meeting. This conflict between the message of home and school must be acknowledged and tackled as a part of any community engagement strategy. It is my contention, specifically in consideration of the above findings, that by operationalising a

whole-school ideation of restorative practices in schools the scope for individuality is either ignored or intentionally disregarded. If restorative practices are predicated on relational principles of individual harm, whole-school identity presupposes that everyone should think or act in the same way, and the harm suffered by the individual is subsumed into the central milieu. This was not the case for many in the setting I explored, especially when concerning how harm was responded to. Where the normative response to conflict was contested (for example, by the school look for affirmation of their rules and the wider community preferring another type of response, maybe something more immediate or retributive), the school viewed their approach as dominant and correct with the wishes of the wider community disregarded or deemed irrelevant or wrong. It is therefore important to note, that if a whole-school approach is proffered as best practice, there needs to be a resolution to these value conflicts and if a school seeks to engage a community, they must recognise that the community is not a meek, insipid entity which will blindly adhere, but an entity with its own values, desires and preferences. These value conflicts are a product of, unintended or otherwise, the desire of school leaders to engage with their wider community. The restorative literature requires a solution or response to these value conflicts, and this has to be more than some idealistic view of a community bound into complicity that is currently offered. We have seen in this research that sometimes a community will not benignly assent, therefore any attempt at engaging a community for the purpose of whole-school restorative approaches must practically state how a community that does not subscribe to the value-systems of the school can be reached, if at all.

The notion of viewing community in individual, interpersonal terms, obviates these difficulties. Rather than striving for the theoretical imperative of a whole-school community, schools like Pioneer illustrate the notion that interpersonal restorative practices can be effectual and do not require a sometimes-unreachable standard of whole-school adherence to restorative approaches.

I think that it is important that any practitioner who attempts to implement restorative practices in a similar school to the one I did my research in, is aware of the contradictions and complications that may exist, for these matters will have a significant impact into the way they deploy restorative practices in their setting.

8.3 Barriers

Despite the school having what they thought to be an effective programme of restorative approaches which they employed to meet the needs of students and stakeholders. There were obvious challenges reported by my participants. This research brought to attention a

number of fundamental questions regarding assumed practice in schools and when there is a conflict between the expectations of the school and its wider community. This is particularly important when we focus on parents within the school.

Daly (2002) and Willis (2016) have written comprehensively on barriers to the restorative community, and my findings correspond with their work. They state that, particularly in disadvantaged areas, the wider-community stakeholders (groups such as parents or important community members) would be difficult to engage. Daly (2002) offers a limited list of reasons for this for example: that there may be suspicion held by parents about the systems of schooling, potentially informed by a negative experience they may have endured, or that they would suffer responsibility or blame for their child's breaking of the rules. However, Daly does not consider more practical factors that may impact. Many of the students at the research school were from single parent families, were looked after by grandparents or older siblings or were looked-after children. In some extreme cases, where the children were old enough, they were in their own self-contained accommodation. The students at the school were forced into adulthood by virtue of their circumstances. This contradicts the presumption of the literature where students are seen in a state of childhood, beholden to their parents. Again, the literature lacks acknowledgement of the many differing contexts in which it could be potentially applied.

Another assumption made in much of the restorative literature (Blood and Thorsborne, 2002; Morrison, 2005) is that there will be complicity in the messages of the school and parents. This is due to the presumed fact that both entities share a similar vested interest: the education of the child/student. From this, we move forward on the understanding that communication between the two entities will be informed by this presumption. For example: if the student disrupts their education in school through misbehaviour or inattention, the school will provide an immediate corrective function through sanction or a discussion which will prompt the student to focus on their studies and, if needed, this message will be affirmed at home.

However, in undertaking this research, I found that theory did not necessarily inform practice. There were often occasions where parents were instructed by the school and that parents would affirm the school's message: 'attend, be punctual, do your homework and don't cause problems', however, there were a number of cases where the message of the school and parents were directly in conflict. Where the student was told to get a job, rather than focus on academic attainment, or hit the child who had hit them back, rather than go to the trusted adult and whilst there has been a theoretical focus in the restorative literature, there has not, as of yet, been a salient restorative response to these problems.

One issue is that it presumes a correct and incorrect position, perhaps that the school, seeking to affirm the rules is correct and that the parents, positing a retributive, immediate response, is incorrect. In doing so it encourages us to engage into a value-judgement, informed by our own preconceptions regarding society and the purpose of education. If the parents of student A prefer a vocational alternative for their child, on the assumption that it is the most appropriate pathway for their child due to circumstantial factors and that they shouldn't attend additional revision sessions or place an importance on strong attendance and punctuality are they not entitled to do so, without fear of reprisal? If restorative approaches are supposedly engaged for reasons of harm reduction, and they are being utilised to coerce students back into an unsuitable paradigm, is it not arguable that restorative approaches are being utilised for harm infliction? We have not yet found an answer for this question and to do so would require a fundamental repositioning of how we view education and its purpose, something far beyond the parameters of this thesis.

In addition, the literature often fails to consider practical and external factors that can have an impact. For example, the reduction of funding that the school suffered and the need to meet an ever-changing governmental agenda. When these external influences arose, it was necessary for the school to alter their provision to respond to these changes. This meant that priorities that the school had would have to be sacrificed and resources moved to ensure that they were compliant. The Headteacher noted that delivering restorative approaches required a strong pastoral team, but that if they did not hit a certain academic standard, they were likely to be observed and deemed inadequate. Balancing these factors was a constant challenge for the school and obviously impacted on their ability to deliver as comprehensive a restorative approach as they would have liked.

The outcomes of this portion of my research deviate from the wider body of literature on restorative approaches. As I have shown, in some instances, pursuing community involvement may have unintended or undesirable (for the school, at least) outcomes. A substantial body of restorative literature (see Hopkins (2004); Morrison (2005); Walgrave (2002) as examples) describes the positive impact that the community may have on the restorative processes and the potential benefits the community members may receive through their participation. However, such a view neglects some of the practical, aspects I found in my research, namely, that in some instances there will be conflict between the values of the school and its community. Parents may not affirm the messages of the school; they may even encourage additional rule breaking. My findings contradict the positively framed role for community that is found in much of the restorative justice/practice literature. This contradiction poses certain questions, for example: Is the inclusion of the restorative community desirable when it is not

affirming the 'restorative' message of the school? This is particularly important when we focus on the socio-economic context of the school. Some participants contended that the contradiction of values was consequent of the material deprivation suffered by some of the students and parents located on the estate. Examples of this can be seen in now oft referred to comments of the AVP: Safeguarding and on instances where children operated as de facto parents for their younger siblings. My research shows that, often, it is not, either the community will disengage, or the school will not seek the engagement of relevant community members. It may be argued that, currently, the power balance favours schools in that, restorative practices are promoted as a way to resolve conflict, restore individuals, the school and ensure the return to a harmonious atmosphere. However, within this, there is a presupposition that a return to a harmonious atmosphere requires the community to fall in line and promote adherence to the school rules, with the implied invocation that the rules set by the school affirm the correct approach and any approach that does not conform to these rules is inferior in comparison to restorative intervention.

What I found is that if there is rule-breaking, the wider community is operationalised by school leaders to deliver rule-adherence, if the community cannot do this, then it is not engaged. This is problematic for the following reason: If it is the case that the community provide a useful function, or should be involved as community members require their own personal restoration as currently stated in the literature, it must be accepted that this process will not always be positive and a value-conflict between the school and its community may be present. How this can be responded to, to garner that mutuality and reciprocity that many restorative advocates proffer as a benefit of a restorative approach requires more nuanced exploration than currently offered in the current body of restorative literature, which perhaps all too often imposes a utopian reproduction of a community, perhaps not present in every case.

8.4 Practical Applications

It is my hope that this research will hopefully allow practitioners and theorists to explore different applications and conceptions of restorative approaches through an objective exploration by a neutral researcher. One often finds in the restorative literature that those who write about it/practice it, have a vested interest in the success of the processes or have already consolidated their conclusions regarding restorative approaches. Sometimes there is a desire to position restorative approaches as the primary alternative to traditional punishments or as the model for in-school delivery and therefore all conclusions from the work must affirm this narrative. In this research I hope that I have taken no overarching pre-position, but instead simply sought to represent the opinions of my research participants, linking this back to the research and developing an understanding of the approaches in context. I feel the

conclusions of this research are interesting and do provide a unique insight. The headline findings do much to affirm some key messages found in the restorative literature. Examples of these would be the desire of all participants to implement and undertake a restorative approach even when there is wide-scale and far-reaching problems within the school. The applicability of restorative practices to a school in flux and that even when there may not be a strong managerial structure in place, the relational aspects of restorative practices can be useful on a micro-scale. The need for a strong community to implement and employ restorative approaches. All these factors were apparent in the research. There were, also, times where the research findings deviated from the information proposed in the literature. The need for whole-school approaches and a vested community interest to deliver restorative approaches, the often-blinkered conceptions of community that can exist within schools and presumptions made about the wider community, their interests, and needs. My research also identifies a theoretical gap in the current literature on restorative practice: the absence of acknowledgement for those schools located in an area of high socio-economic deprivation. My research shows that restorative practices do have a role in these schools, but that the way we envisage restorative practice, and its implementation, will differ and deviate when compared with schools located in more affluent areas. Instead of operating on a whole-school community approach, it will require a much more nuances, atomised envisioning of community in which interpersonal relationships are prioritised over macro-scale community structures that involve all stakeholders. The legacy of this research is an example of a model which can be used to implement restorative approaches in difficult circumstances and the benefits that can be drawn from doing so. There was no doubt that everyone in the school was acting to meet the needs of the children and each person had their own priority to meet.

8.5 Contribution to Knowledge

The complex challenges and socio-economic poverty as referred to by my research participants provided an interesting and novel context through which to explore restorative practices. It has broadened the understanding of restorative practices in the following ways:

This research provided an opportunity to explore the difference between the rationale for community involvement in practically complex circumstances. This was particularly important when exploring the absence of community. The absence of community in my research was explained in two ways: social, practical, and material impediments to community involvement and the ideological disaffection of some community members with education and its purpose. In my research I was able to explore the impact of these factors on the restorative practices and how this was perceived by my research participants.

The study affirms the relational benefits as stated by many restorative advocates. Staff participants reported that students responded positively when they felt a bond of trust with a teacher or pastoral lead. This was affirmed in the responses of students, often they would listen to or work with a staff member who they respected or trusted. As a consequence, these staff were able to speak to students about their behaviour and work with them to reintegrate them into the classroom.

My research also showed that a whole-school or overarching definition of community, where the school itself is seen as its own de facto community will not be applicable to every situation and context, particularly those located in areas of high socio-economic deprivation, in which the deprivation of the area is a consequential factor. In this school, participants referred to an atomised community and a web of networks comprising interpersonal relationships, dependencies and connections based on trust. This was necessary due to the disaffection that a number of participants felt toward the school.

A conflict between class values were also exposed by my research. Sometimes, the rules constructed by the school did not conform or correspond with the experience of the students. As stated by many of my participants, some of the students at the school were exposed to varying levels of abuse, a number could not be confident of a guaranteed meal on an evening amongst other indications of socio-economic deprivation, this deprivation led to a number of conflicts which meant that students could not fulfil the obligations that the school imposed on them. School staff sometimes presumed that students should be focussed purely on their education and ignore anything which did not enable academic progression. In some instances, misbehaviour was perceived, and a restorative approach undertaken when the student was undertaking behaviours they deemed necessary or was mandated by their parents. When restorative meetings would take place, this value conflict would come to the fore and there could be no compromise or restitution as the source of the conflict was ideological. Parents and students acting in a response to the contextual deprivation they faced and the school imposing a set of rules that parents and students did not see as significant or imperative. Additionally, the value of education was another area of contention. Sometimes the students would want to progress onto a less academic, more vocational route therefore seeing the substantive education they were being asked to undertake as redundant. This prioritisation of academic development did not always conform to the experience of all school members.

It also poses questions about the way in which a school views behaviour and the rationale behind the enforcement of rules. The school employed restorative practices when a student had broken the rules, but sometimes the rules stipulated by and the school and the resultant

restorative approaches were incompatible with the needs and circumstances of its students and wider community. In some instances, we saw the school enforcing rules on the basis that they were the rules, without taking account of mitigating factors brought about by the difficulties faced by students. A good example of this was the girl who was punished for lateness, even though she was only late as her parent had told her she had to take her sibling to school.

Lastly, it may be necessary to revisit the approach to defining community in the restorative discourse. Adaptations to community theory, like those seen in the work of Delanty (2010) may provide a more precise or applicable form of community which better reflects the interpersonal dynamics at the heart of restorative practices. The example of networked communities which provided a new and modern way of viewing community was a useful way of imaging the community in my research school and could be applied more widely to schools that cannot achieve, for whatever reason, the whole-school community referred to in the restorative practice literature. My research found that interpersonal communities, built on strong relationships were preferable in Pioneer and that a whole-school view of restorative practices, regardless of the significant ascription in the literature, was not one that was found to be effectual or present.

8.6 The Feasibility and Desirability of Restorative Approaches in Schools

8.6.1 Exploring Early Perceptions of Restorative Practices against the Outcomes of my Study

Prior to undertaking this study my opinion was that whilst restorative practice in schools showed promise, this promise could only usually be realised where the circumstances were conducive to the implementation and delivery. For example, where a school had a supportive and engaged wider parental network, minimal instances of severe misbehaviour and where there was a desire, at least by the majority of the staff and students, to participate in the practices.

This led me to the initial assumption that the macro-scale restorative practices (such as whole-school restorative approaches) were primarily the domicile of primary schools. I believed this as students in primary schools are still forming their social identities and their misbehaviour is perhaps less acute than in secondary schools. Where people sought to utilise restorative practices in secondary schools, I thought it was only feasible where the school was located in a more affluent area and where there was a fluent, cohesive relationship between the school and its community.

Partly, these assumptions were informed by my experience working in a school similar to Pioneer. I had witnessed the reported challenge that high levels of parental disengagement brought. I had seen the desire of School Leaders to punish students, sometimes capriciously, sometimes though a lack of a perceived efficacious alternative. I was aware that staff turnover is an issue for schools located in socio-economically deprived area and from this I inferred that any attempt to introduce restorative practices would be compromised by the inability of School Leaders to train and develop novel restorative practices, on a consistent basis where staff would train only to leave shortly after.

Through undertaking this research, some of these initial beliefs have been affirmed. For example, leaders did report a lack of reliable parental involvement which staff respondents perceived as having a negative impact on the effectiveness of the school's use of restorative practice. Also, the absence of a sense of community felt by many members of the school and the lack of an overarching, or whole-school community identity was present throughout this research. Furthermore, practical, social, and material factors which meant that all participants in this research were constantly balancing needs. The need to pursue an academic agenda, versus meeting students social and emotional needs, for parents, the need to support their children by being present within the school, whilst also enduring external pressures such as the need to earn a living to support their family financially.

However, I also discovered that despite these impactful socio-economic factors, the school staff were delivering an effective form of restorative practices which they felt adequately met the needs of their students. This approach did not necessarily conform to the idealised examples set out in the literature, but it was a context-specific adaptation of restorative theory, suited to the circumstances and realities of the school. This approach was deemed effective by many of my research participants. When the staff realised that wider-community engagement was proving difficult, or impossible, they reconciled this by utilising the strong, individualised pastoral relationships which they placed at the centre of their restorative approach. Cognisant of the fact that there was a high rate of staff turnover, School Leaders focussed the restorative training on Pastoral Leaders, particularly the Heads of House. These staff members had been employed at the school for a long time and often they resided on the same estate as the students, ensuring that they were positioned to understand the real experience of the students. Additionally, the reported socio-economic poverty faced by many on the estate was overcome through centralised staff support. The school argued that they only adopted the practices which they felt were feasible and those they had the resources to deliver effectively. My research documents some of the successful ways in which these practices were employed, students who may not otherwise have returned to class to continue

their education, did so on the basis of the relationships they had formed with their Assistant Head of House and the pre-existing bond of trusts. Additionally, instances of misbehaviour that could have escalated if responded to using traditional behavioural sanctions were deescalated using restorative practices.

Therefore, although a number of my preconceived expectations of restorative practices were affirmed by this research, it is notable that informal, individualised and often, crude restorative practices can be employed in schools like Pioneer and in spite of the material and wider-community impediments that may exist within a socio-economic area like the one Pioneer was located in. However, using a restorative approach in these circumstances may require a departure from the normative understanding and expectations set out in much of the restorative literature. It may need to be recognised that whilst a whole-school approach is effective, there are other ways in which the outcomes of restorative practice can be achieved and there needs to be space in the restorative literature for the acknowledgement of this idea. Although initially, and in some cases, throughout, leaders reported a desire for a whole-school practices, I believe they recognised the practical limitations in their ability to create such a system.

8.6.2 Feasibility and Desirability of Restorative Approaches in Schools: Generally

By undertaking this research, I have also considered the feasibility and desirability of restorative practices generally. Through my experience and earlier study, I was persuaded that traditional sanctions do little to combat misbehaviour that a restorative alternative could not do equally as well or better. The adaptation of quasi-judicial, punitive methods³² in schools is unsuitable for what I believe are the two primary purposes of schooling: academic and social development. It is more likely that the use of these systems will have a longer-lasting, detrimental impact on the futures of the children who are exposed to them. A restorative alternative - predicated on what I understand as the core restorative message: the resolution of dispute in an effective manner which meets the needs of those involved - is not only practical, but also constructive. It enables an expedited path back into the classroom for the continuation of the students' academic development and it teaches key social skills: negotiation, compromise, and resolution of conflict and for those reason, it is favourable.

³² For example, isolation rooms where students are placed in segmented seating, separated by dividers and sometimes placed in single-space rooms to undertake their class work.

The research I have conducted has not led to me to abandon that belief. However, it has sensitised me to some of the complexities and problems involved in moving schools from punitive to restorative approaches to troublesome conduct. As restorative theory has developed, it seems to me that the aims of restoration/conflict resolution have become less prominent amid the ever-widening body of restorative literature and the influx of professional restorative trainers. As a result, schools now face a number of conflicting messages as to how a restorative approach should be pursued. There are restorative quality marks that profess a certified effective restorative status in schools, trainers who all possess their own perspective as to the legitimate restorative approach in schools and training packages, delivered electronically, which can apparently imbue staff with the necessary skills to be 'restorative'. I feel that the professionalisation of restorative approaches in schools has led in some way to a departure from the core restorative message. I believe that a restorative approach is desirable when the school staff believe that it can more effectively meet the needs of their students than any other approach. I also think that they should not do so on the basis that they may achieve some other, incidental goal. For example, to obviate negative behaviour statistics which would have to be reported to an external inspector, because other 'better performing' schools are employing them or because it is the en vogue approach according to current pedagogy. Whilst schools may exhibit an external homogenous veneer, the practices, students, culture, and context are often very nuanced and therefore, a restorative approach is only desirable, if it is appropriate to meet the individual needs of the members of the school.

As for the feasibility of restorative approaches in schools, my research indicates that it depends on what the school hopes to achieve from adopting restorative practices and the extent to which they are willing to compromise their expected outcomes against the resources they have to draw from. A school which does not have a strong relationship with its local community will find it practically difficult to adopt the community-oriented aspects of restorative approaches. A school which possesses a limited financial budget may not be able to employ additional staff which may be required to deliver some of the more time-consuming components of restorative practices. Similar arguments may be made for staff groups resistant to a departure from traditional sanctions, an uncooperative board of directors or external academic pressures that schools face.

Through my research I conclude that the feasibility of restorative approaches only becomes problematic when unattainable preconditions for success are set. I would argue that to be 'restorative' a school does not require a whole-school buy-in, a fully engaged wider community or a training package, undertaken, understood and expertly delivered by all staff members and I believe this research affirms that conclusion. For some schools, small-scale, informal,

interpersonal practices are a useful addition to the array of methods they use to meet the needs of their students and this research indicates that restorative practices are a useful and effective example of that.

8.7 Limitations of the Research

Whilst this research provides a deep insight into the use of restorative practices and role of community in a school which involved a substantial amount of time dedicated to interviewing participants and understanding the operation of the school, it can only capture restorative practices as existing within a specific temporal aperture. I was able to research the school as it made the decision to implement restorative practices, to a state where there was a full-scale implementation. I would have enjoyed the opportunity of researching the practices once they were fully embedded after a substantial period of execution and after the practices were more engrained for staff and students.

8.8 Opportunities for Further Research

Buoyed by governmental, anecdotal, and research-led support the promulgation of 'restorative' approaches in schools has perhaps now begun to outpace its precursors in the criminal field. Schools are clamouring to display the restorative label and new vocations have emerged, new approaches installed, and thousands of students have been education under the principles of restorative approaches.

As the practices develop it is useful to address or understand how and when they are being applied and for what reason they are being applied. If restorative practice was once seen as a new way of thinking about addressing issues in schools, or as is the case in some people's views, an efficacious alternative to traditional sanctions, what happens when the alternative becomes the mainstream? Are schools implementing restorative practices on the proposed efficacy, the empirical potential of better performance in all areas of the school? Or are they following a trend set by others, legitimated, and imposed by government, so that when they are inspected, they won't be criticised for not adopting the nouveau, en vogue approach?

An opportunity for further research would comprise an exploration of the fundamental purpose of restorative practices, particularly in schools contextually similar to Pioneer. Restorative approaches are represented as an alternative due to their victim/community-oriented focus, that they prioritise the well-being of those involved in any harm and are targeted at restoring the harm suffered by all participants. However, in schools, there are other priorities, such as the need to follow the school rules. So, one aspect of further research would be to explore whether restorative practices are simply just another tool used for

behavioural control and to ensure complicity with the school rules. They may do it in a more constructive or sympathetic way than in traditional punishments, but the end goal and priority of those who wield the punishment is the same. So, whilst they are painted as a relational alternative, they are simply another way to meet the narrative of conforming to the school rules.

Further opportunities for study may be wrought as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic. Restorative practices are often marketed on the basis that they provide a strong emphasis on relational growth. However, a significant body of emerging evidence indicates that formation of relationships (particularly in schools) has been impeded due to the impact of consecutive and lengthy periods of isolation and online learning. This has two potential significances for the use of restorative practices in schools. It may be that restorative practices are implemented more widely, to encourage the formation of effectual and strong relationships between stakeholders. However, it may also be the case that the skills required to undertake effective restorative practices have been remediated and therefore there may be no strong basis on which to undertake restorative practices in the short-term.

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Appendix 1 Staff/Student Interview Participants: Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Type	Focus
Headteacher	Headteacher	<p>The Headteacher at the Academy is the figurehead. This was Ed's first experience of the Headteacher role, previously he was employed as an Assistant Headteacher of Behaviour. His role included, chairing Senior Management Meetings, and providing both the strategic and operational oversight at the Academy. He was answerable to the Multi-Academy Trust Board and sat on it as a member. Ed wanted to employ restorative practices, but in interviews, he was sometimes sceptical about their efficacy.</p>
<p>Assistant Headteacher: The Assistant Headteachers were hierarchically just below the Headteacher at the Academy. As senior managers, they line-managed the rest of the staff in the Academy and all had areas of responsibility that they oversaw. They also had teaching commitments. They were</p>	Safeguarding	<p>The Assistant Headteacher responsible for safeguarding was charged with protecting the welfare and safety of teachers and students. Safeguarding leads must ensure that all members of the Academy are conforming to the School's safeguarding policies as well as meeting the overarching statutory obligations. The school had a</p>

responsible for setting policy in their own area.		number of safeguarding concerns, primarily relating to mental health and well-being, social media use, radicalisation and exploitation.
	Behaviour	The Assistant Headteacher of Behaviour was responsible for ensuring that students conformed to the rules and the orderliness of the Academy. They had to report to the Headteacher on behaviour statistics as well as constructing policy to ensure that students were well-behaved. As stated in the thesis, the staff felt that students were poorly behaved. This was a motivation for employing restorative practices. The Head of Behaviour took a lead on this.
	Curriculum and Data	The Assistant Headteacher of Curriculum and Data was responsible for providing statistics about the academic performance of the school and for constructing the timetable. Their role required a comprehensive understanding of the staff members at the Academy

		and their strengths and weaknesses. In addition to this, it was their job to stream students according to the students' academic capabilities.
	Student Experience	The Assistant Headteacher: Student Experience was responsible for tracking attendance and punctuality, as well as providing the tutor programmes (tutor period takes place in the morning at the Academy from 8:30, all students meet in classrooms and undergo social education, and cultural experiences).
	Teaching and Learning	The Head of Teaching and Learning works primarily with staff to enhance their teaching abilities and engage in the research on pedagogy.
Teaching Staff	Head of Department	The Head of Department oversees a curriculum area. The key areas in the school, according to the staff were maths and English as this was reported directly to the government and the percentage of passes in maths and English was used as a strong indicator to judge the overall performance of

		<p>the school, as such, there was heightened pressure felt by staff in these areas. The Heads of Department line-managed teachers in their area and reported to the Assistant Headteachers on academic performance. Their role was not focussed on managing the pastoral matters of the academy.</p>
	Pastoral Head of House	<p>Pioneer employed a House Team. All students across all years were placed into 'Houses'. They would have their status as a member of a specific House. The Head of House (A Member of teaching staff) and an Assistant Head of House (A member of non-teaching staff) were responsible for the running of their House, managing pastoral matters, restorative practices, and working with students and community members directly.</p>
	Teacher	<p>Teachers taught up to twenty-two sessions a week within various specialist areas. They combined the academic and pastoral provision of the school.</p>

Non-Teaching Staff	Assistant Head of House	(See: Head of House)
	Learning Resource Centre Manager	<p>The Learning Resource Centre Manager was, essentially, the librarian. The Resource Centre was a hub for students, who would go, not to read books, but to converse in a nice, comfortable atmosphere. As a result, the Resource Centre Manager was able to foster good relationships with students and provided an insight into the inter-relational dynamics of the school. He was also a representative member of the board and therefore had a more overarching perspective on the practices within the Academy.</p>
Students	Year 7 - 11	<p>Students at the Academy are recruited from various primary schools across the city. Primary schools provide education for students between the ages of four to twelve. Students arrive in secondary education at the age of twelve where they will remain until they are at least sixteen. The students are split into year groups, and key stages. Secondary</p>

		<p>education takes place between Year Seven to Eleven. At this Academy Year Seven to Nine was Key Stage Three and Years Ten and Eleven was Key Stage Four. As the students progress through to Year Eleven, they are expected to make decisions about their future, for example, if they want to progress onto a further education establishment to study A Levels/Vocational Subjects and then whether they want to go to University or into employment/training.</p>
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Appendix 2 Information Sheet For Parents

My name is Richard Rhodes; I am a second year PhD Candidate at the University of Hull as part of the Law, Business and Politics Department.

I would like it if your child/dependent could participate in a short interview to contribute to my research. This interview would take place within the school, where possible scheduled around your child/dependent's school commitments. However, this may not always be possible, and there is a chance that your child/dependent would miss an hour of their school day to participate in the interview.

All participants in my study will be anonymised, however, it is possible that their responses will be published in my thesis which would then be widely accessible. At any point you, or your child/dependent can revoke consent to participate and if you have any concern about any of the information your child/dependent provides, you can edit it (I would recommend having a discussion about the interview with your child). The AH: Safeguarding at the school is aware that should your child/dependent be concerned about any aspect of the interview; they can contact them or go and see them. The interviews will be recorded; however, the audio recordings will be restricted so that only I, or my supervisors will have access to them.

My Study

This study seeks to examine the role of community in restorative practices in schools. Your school has been chosen as it uses restorative approaches.

Restorative approaches can be defined as an approach that brings together young people in conflict. They are used to examine an incident that may have occurred, who is affected by the incident and then to look at what needs to be done, both long term and short term to make amends.

Additionally, restorative approaches may contribute to schools being more harmonious and inclusive places where people grow emotionally and intellectually.

This study will focus on the role that the community has in restorative practices in schools. It will also explore how a restorative community is defined within the school and potential community barriers to implementation.

The Principal of the Academy has assented to this interview.

The study has been passed by an Institutional Ethics Committee at the University of Hull and has received a favourable review.

Richard Rhodes

PhD Student

Faculty of Law, Business and Politics

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Appendix 3 Parental Consent Letter

Interview Consent Form (Parent)

I _____

Of _____

Hereby give consent for my son / daughter / dependent to participate in the study exploring the role of community in restorative practices.

I understand the purpose of the research is to examine the role of community in restorative practices in schools and that my son/daughter/a person in my care will be asked to participate in the research. I also understand that the research will conform with all the expected safeguarding policies at the school. I am aware of who I can contact if I have any concerns relating to safeguarding matters or the nature of the interview or the questions asked.

I understand that

1. the aims, methods, and anticipated benefits, and possible hazards/risks of the research study, have been explained to me.
2. I voluntarily and freely give my consent to my child's/dependant's participation in such research study.
3. I understand that aggregated results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in scientific and academic journals.
4. Individual results will not be released to any person including medical practitioners.

5. I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, during the study in which event my child's/dependant's participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained will not be used.

Signature:

Date:

Should you have any concerns please do not hesitate to contact me and thank you for allowing your child / dependent to participate.

Richard Rhodes

PhD Student

University of Hull

Faculty of Law, Business and Politics

r.p.rhodes@2015.hull.ac.uk

Appendix 4 Semi-Structured Questions: Staff

Interview Questions Staff (Indicative)

Remind Staff:

- **Consent can be revoked retrospectively**
- **They can speak to the Headteacher if they have any concerns**
- **I will follow-up if okay.**
- **Recorded Interview**
- **Anonymity**

Are we okay to proceed with the interview (reminding the participant that the consent can be revoked at any time)?

What is your role within the school?

Can you tell me a little about the school?

What would you say are the values which underpin _____?

How would you describe the conduct of students/other students within the school?

How do you see the school in a wider community context?

How involved are parents in the school?

If they are involved, what are the benefits of their involvement, in your opinion?

Are there any potential drawbacks of parental inclusion?

Are there any roadblocks with engaging parents, if so, how would you describe these?

Reading your behaviour policy, it says that you employ restorative practices; can you tell me what you mean by this?

What sorts of restorative practices (RP) do you use?

How do you feel, people, overall view the use of restorative practices in the school?

What role, if any, do the above have in delivering these restorative practices?

Who is usually involved in the restorative process?

What impact would you say that has?

Do you engage with any outside agencies to deliver/train restorative practices?

What was your experience of this?

What do you hope to achieve from using RP in schools?

How well do you feel you are achieving these aims?

Do you think that the use of RP impacts on the feelings of connectedness for students?

Appendix 5 Information Sheet: Students

Information Sheet: Students

Project title: Restorative Practices in Secondary Schools: Exploring the role of the 'restorative community'

Research Student: Richard Rhodes

You have been asked to participate in a study by a student at the University of Hull. The research is a project which focuses on community, the understanding of community and how you understand the communities you belong to.

This is part of a big 3-year project which you will contribute to and your ideas will be a big part of.

The reason you have been chosen is because your Headteacher feels that you could talk about how restorative practices are used in your school.

You will be asked to complete an interview with the researcher. The researcher is not an employee of the school and although in some cases the information you divulge may need to be shared with the school to protect your welfare, this interview is concerned more with your understanding of the topic and your insights.

The interview should last no more than an hour and your teachers and parents will be asked to make sure that it is okay for you to participate. They will be sent a consent form similar to the one you will sign.

The questions you answer will only be about your opinion, there are no right or wrong answers, and you are welcome to give as much or as little information as you like.

The interviews will be audio recorded; however, this information will only be available to the research student and their supervisors at the University. After the study is complete the information will be erased.

Before starting the interview, we will discuss potential risks that are associated with any interview participation and who you can talk to if you feel the need to do so.

If at any time you want to stop the interview and do not want to continue you can do so and face no penalty or punishment as a consequence.

If you have any worries about this research, you are welcome to discuss it with the Headteacher or class teacher who directed you to the study.

Appendix 6 Semi-Structured Questions: Students

Semi-Structure Interview Questions: Students

Introduction (Follow the Format):

- **Remind about consent and revocation of consent**
- **Signpost students to AH: Safeguarding, Karen if needed.**
- **Recording**

What is it like going to school here?

What do you know about restorative practices?

If you and your friend had a falling out, what would happen?

Who can you go and see if you have an issue?

How are those issues resolved?

Think about what goes into making a good school, what do you imagine?

Think about your favourite teacher or someone in the school, what makes them your favourite?

Think about a time where you have had difficulty, what happened? Were you happy with the outcome?

Do you think there is a strong feeling of community in the school?

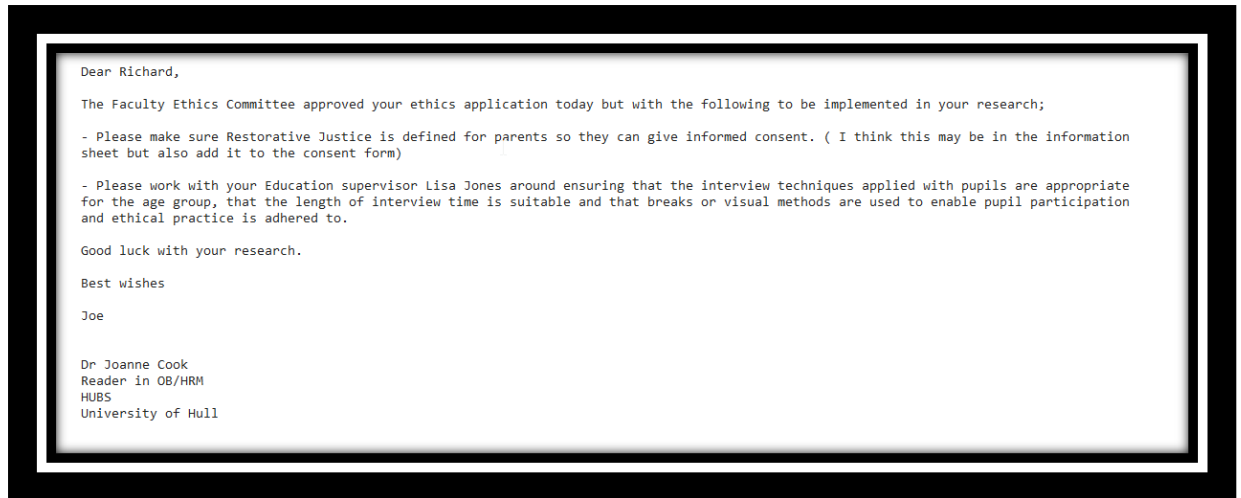
What do you understand by the term community?

Who do you feel community with?

What do your parents think about the school?

Are there any times where your parents have had to come into the school and if so, how come?

Appendix 7 Ethical Approval



Appendix 8 Types of Restorative Process

Type of Restorative Process	Participants	Process
Restorative Conversations (Informal)	<p>These took place without any external participants or members of the wider community. Often, they would only include a pastoral member of staff and the student.</p> <p>Sometimes if the issue merited it, a member of the leadership team or class teacher would be present.</p>	<p>Restorative conversations were primarily used to de-escalate issues that arose during the school day. They were usually informal processes, involving only the pastoral team and the students. They took place in the designated House Offices. These were spaces located in a quiet area of the school and were used solely for pastoral matters (no teaching or administrative functions were undertaken in these rooms; they were kept vacant). They were furnished with soft seating and a library of books and work materials that students would be directed to if, for whatever reason, they were unable to attend lessons.</p> <p>I witnessed eight conversations that took place, some of the meetings were prearranged and others were spontaneous, organised as a reaction to an event that had taken place. Sometimes these events would be between students, or it would be a matter that had occurred in the classroom, for example, some misbehaviour or disruption.</p> <p>The structure of the meeting was the same, regardless of the cause:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There was an initial relaxation phase, this might involve silence, a countdown from ten to diffuse any anger or aggression or a conversation about an unrelated matter to build trust. - A discussion of the event which caused the meeting, led by the staff member. - An action plan or next steps that would occur after the meeting had finished. If the meeting resulted from conflict between students, there would be a reconciliation plan (this would involve shaking hands, apologising). If it was an issue that had occurred in class, the pastoral staff member would speak to the teacher, then follow up with a meeting between the student and the teacher. <p>If the issue was categorised as serious by the pastoral staff member (examples would include serious violence, prejudicial abuse and/or drug related issues) a member of the senior team would be contacted, and a more serious process would result.</p>
Formal Restorative Practice (FRP)	<p>The participants for the FRPs would depend on certain factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Availability of wider community members. 	Formal restorative practices were similar to the Family Group Conferences which take place in New Zealand. They were convened whenever a serious incident had taken place. There was a number of incidents which could result in an FRP

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wishes of the students. - Inclusion of participants who would benefit the process. - Seriousness of the event which led to the meeting. 	<p>(some identified above), but a good way to typify the types of events which led to FRP is an event which had ramifications for students outside of school, for example, property damage, violence causing injury, serious disharmony amongst student groups, bullying, harassment are some examples I was made aware of. I attended three formal restorative meetings as they were not frequently undertaken, the school preferring a more informal solution to the issues that arose.</p> <p>They would take place in a soft-seating space near the offices after the school day had ended and most people had vacated the premises. This was done for two reasons, according to staff, firstly, parents were more likely to attend and secondly, it afforded the necessary privacy that the meetings required.</p> <p>The format of the formal restorative processes was not as consistent as the restorative conversations as there were a number of impactful variables. For example: would parents/carers/wider-community support attend? Would the students attend, or would they leave at the end of the school day, forgoing the meeting and would the issue be resolved before the meeting took place (as it sometimes would be).</p> <p>In the meetings I witnessed, there was an attempt to use the circle processes referred to in the literature review, with all</p>
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		<p>participants afforded an opportunity to talk. In other instances, it was similar to a judicial process, where each party would defend their conduct or explain the harm. The process was managed by a member of the Senior Leadership Team, or if they were not available, a pastoral member of staff. If parents or wider community support was not present, the pastoral staff member would replace them, supporting the student.</p> <p>The meetings lasted usually around forty-five minutes, sometimes they would go longer, but not usually shorter.</p> <p>After the meeting, all participants would be given the chance to comment on the issue (although I was told by one pastoral member that if the parents attending were known to be aggressive or obdurate this aspect may be skipped). There would be an action plan which would address the harm caused and would construct a plan of how the parties could reconcile, or how the student would alter their behaviour with the help of the pastoral team. Weekly check-ins with the pastoral team would be mandated for students for a period of a month, at which point, progress would be adjudged, and the meetings could then stop if sufficient progress was made (this was often left relatively ambiguous in my experience of the meetings).</p>
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