Restorative Practice Implementation and Experiences at Two Charter High Schools: A

Multiple Case Study

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy

in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Meghan L. Breedlove, M.S., M.C., LPC

Graduate Program in Educational Studies

The Ohio State University

2022

Dissertation Committee

Colette Dollarhide, Advisor

Mollie Blackburn

Brett Zyromski

Abstract

Given the negative academic, social, and long-term outcomes associated with suspensions (Noltemeyer et al., 2015), schools have investigated alternatives. Restorative Practices (RPs) in schools are based on restorative justice philosophies and have gained momentum in schools. RPs aim to build community and seek to repair harm to relationships through mediations or restorative conversations (Amstutz & Mullet, 2015). The current multiple case study aims to understand RP implementation approaches and experiences of staff (e.g., teachers and non-teaching professional) over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of 16 semi-structured interviews, observation experiences, and document analysis were analyzed using a coding approach outlined by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2018). Across-case analysis suggested RPs aligned with school values, were embedded into various spaces on campus, were flexible, and served as a tool to strengthen student-teacher relationships and enhance student social emotional growth. Challenging experiences for RP implementation across cases included engaging students, limited time, and staff issues. COVID-19 negatively impacted the mental health of both students and staff and was disruptive to RP implementation. Implications for school counselors, administrators, teachers, training programs for school professionals, and educational policy makers are discussed in addition to recommendations for future research.

Dedication

Dedicated to the school professionals who participated in the study.

Acknowledgments

The completion of this dissertation was dependent on the tremendous support I have received across several spaces in my life, personally, professionally, and academically. I am thankful for the support I've received from my family. My husband George has been an enormous source of support for me through the years and I couldn't have completed this without you. I am thankful for my daughter Ivy, who is the absolute light of my life and has been a significant source of motivation for me completing my degree. I want to acknowledge my immediate family (Dad, Carol, Mom, Chad, Linsie) and in-laws (Penny, Jeff, Paul, Adriana) for their love and support over the years, even when we lived across the country. I am thankful to my amazing group of friends who have brought me so much joy over the years (Mitch, Sophie, Nat and Brock). Professionally, I am thankful for my Balsz family in Arizona. I want to thank Devon Shehan for being an inspiring administrator and for first introducing me to restorative justice practices in schools. This experience was influential in finding my passion. I also want to thank Sabrina Paxtor who has been not only a great friend but a model educator for whom my idea of an outstanding teacher is based. Academically, I would not have been able to complete any of this without my advisor Dr. Dollarhide and Dr. Zyromski, who have been some of the most encouraging and positive individuals I have had the pleasure of working with- I have learned so much from you! I also want to thank Dr. Blackburn for being part of this

process and for being such a positive and supportive person in my life. Sarah Lang, for being an amazing mentor, believing in my abilities, and bringing me into your world at the VLS, I have absolutely loved working with you. Thank you to Dr. Sarah Schoppe-Sullivan for inspiring me to pursue graduate work and research. You have been incredibly helpful and an amazing mentor and friend over the years. To my cohort members, Emily Baker, Emily Herman and Sarah Clapp- I am so glad to have gone through this entire process with you. Your friendship has been a significant motivating factor for me over the past four years- we did it!

Vita

2008 – 2010 …………………..…..B.S. in Human Development and Family Science
The Ohio State University

2010 – 2012 ………………......…..M.S. in Human Development and Family Science
The Ohio State University

2012 – 2014 ……………….......................................….M.C. in Clinical Counseling
Arizona State University

2018 – present ………………….....................................….Graduate Teaching Associate
The Ohio State University

Publications

Gimbert, B., Miller, D., Herman, E., **Breedlove, M.,** & Molina, C. (2021). Social

emotional learning in schools: The importance of educator competence. *Journal*

of Research on Leadership Education.

Herman, E., **Breedlove, M**., & Lang, S. L. (2021). Family child care support and

implementation: Current challenges and strategies from the perspectives of

providers. *Child & Youth Care Forum.*

Breedlove, M., Choi, J., & Zyromski, B. (2020). Mitigating the effects of adverse

childhood experiences: How restorative practices in schools support positive

childhood experiences and protective factors. *The New Educator,* 1-19.

Carotta, C. L., Bonomi, A. E., **Lee, M. A.**, Terrell, L. A. (2015). It's (not) over: Relationship instability and recovery between victims and detained domestic abusers. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 10*(3), 1679-1699.

Schoppe-Sullivan, S. J., Altenburger, L. E., **Lee, M. A.**, Bower, D. J., & Kamp Dush, C. M. (2015). Who are the gatekeepers? Predictors of maternal gatekeeping. *Parenting, 15*(3), 166-186.

Lee, M. A., Schoppe-Sullivan, S. J., & Kamp Dush, C. M. (2012). Parenting perfectionism and parental adjustment. *Journal of Personality and Individual Differences, 52*, 454-457.

Nemeth, J., Altenburger, L. E., **Lee, M. A.,** & Ludwin, J. M. (2012). Sexual infidelity as a trigger for intimate partner violence. *Journal of Women's Health, 21*(9), 942-949.

Fields of Study

Major Field: Educational Studies

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

Discipline in schools can have significant short and long-term implications for students and can influence academic achievement (Noltemeyer et al., 2015), connection to school (Jones et al., 2018), overall school climate (Augustine et al., 2018), and even students' likelihood of incarceration in adulthood (Rosenbaum, 2020). Schools in the United States have historically used punishment, or a retributive approach to discipline, to handle behavior issues. A retributive approach differs significantly from a restorative approach. The following example depicts how two different approaches to discipline can have significant consequences for students.

Table 1

Example of Retributive vs Restorative Approach

Ana's Problem
Ana is a 9th grade student who has recently demonstrated concerning behaviors different from her usual presentation in class. Ana has been tardy to class several times, has been absent three days in two weeks, and has been disrespectful to her peers and teachers.

Retributive Approach	Restorative Approach
Ana's teacher writes her up for her attendance and behavior issues and she receives one week of detention. Ana's behavior issues persist, and she is suspended for two days for "disruptive" and "disrespectful" behaviors in class. Once Ana returns to school she gets into a physical fight with another student and is suspended for five days.	Ana's teacher recognizes behavioral and emotional changes in Ana and pulls Ana aside after class to check in. Ana describes how students have been spreading false rumors about her speaking badly about Kali, another student in the school. Kali heard the rumor and is angry. Ana's teacher asks if she would engage in a mediation with Kali. Once Ana and Kali both agree to a mediation, the teacher sits with both girls to help resolve the miscommunication.

Ana's experience illustrates two drastically different approaches to preventing and responding to behavior issues in schools. In this example, the teacher's retributive approach narrowly focuses on Ana's behavior infractions and relies on punishment to achieve behavior change. Conversely, using a restorative approach, Ana's teacher identifies changes in her behaviors and pursues more information. Once Ana shares her issues with the teacher, the teacher supports Ana in the process of resolving the

misunderstanding and serves as a mediator for the two students. Zehr (2015) suggests that although retributive and restorative approaches share the same goal (e.g., to end a problematic behavior and prevent reoccurrence), *how* the goal is achieved is drastically different. Zehr (2015) describes the fundamental differences between a retributive and restorative approach.

Table 2

Retributive Discipline and Restorative Justice

Retributive Discipline	Restorative Justice
Laws or *rules* are violated	*People* or *relationships* are violated
Focus is on blaming and punishing the offender	Justice involves those harmed, those who harmed, and the community
Offenders need to be punished	Harm needs to be made right (or as right as possible)

(Adapted from Zehr, 2015 pp.15)

The way in which discipline issues are handled in schools can significantly affect students' experience in K-12 education and beyond, thus it is critical to scrutinize harmful disciplinary practices and consider potential alternatives. Most schools in the United States utilize a retributive approach to discipline, in which students are punished for inappropriate behaviors through exclusion from school (i.e., suspension) (US Department of Education, 2019). Researchers and experts suggest exclusionary discipline is not only ineffective at preventing subsequent behavior issues, but it is harmful and developmentally inappropriate (APA Zero Tolerance, 2008). Moreover, students of color and students with disabilities are significantly more likely to be suspended or expelled

3

than their white and non-disabled peers, which exacerbates existing inequities (Harper et al., 2019). Given the serious implications of exclusionary discipline, some schools have transitioned to adopt restorative justice practices as an alternative (Amstutz & Mullet, 2015).

In schools, several different terms have been used to describe restorative justice or restorative justice-based practices. Since the term "justice" is reminiscent of criminal or juvenile justice settings, the term can be perceived as more reactive than preventative. Many schools substitute the term "justice" with other identifiers such as restorative *practices*, *approaches*, *interventions*, or *discipline* to better capture the preventative nature of restorative justice in the school environment (McCluskey et al., 2008; Song & Swearer, 2016). In the current study, I am choosing to use the term restorative practices (RPs) because it is consistent with many studies in the field and captures a wide range of experiences. Many of the studies cited utilize various terms to describe restorative justice-based behaviors or experiences; therefore, I will use the language of the original authors when referencing their studies and findings.

Exclusionary Discipline

Preventing, managing, and responding to student behavior issues is a significant challenge in schools. A variety of approaches for responding to student behavior issues have been employed over the years, ranging from physical punishment (e.g., whooping or paddling), to current day exclusionary practices (e.g., suspensions and expulsions) (Garrison, 2007). Exclusionary discipline, or the removal of students from school via suspension or expulsion, gained popularity in US schools during the 1970s (Losen &

4

Skiba, 2010). Exclusion can be implemented at various levels of severity ranging from a partial day dismissal to permanent removal from the school (US Department of Education, 2019). Expulsion, the most severe exclusionary action, permanently removes a student from school and is typically reserved for the most severe offenses (Evans & Lester, 2012). Although expulsion is not the most frequently used form of exclusionary discipline, approximately 120,800 students were expelled during the 2015-2016 school year (US Department of Education, 2019). The most common form of exclusionary discipline is out-of-school suspension (OSS) where students are removed anywhere from a portion of the day, to up to 10 days (Evans & Lester, 2012; US Department of Education, 2019). Suspensions are frequently extended to minor infractions (e.g., dress code violations) or subjective offenses (e.g., "disruptive" behavior), resulting in a significant increase over the years (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008).

Discipline Trends

The significant rise in exclusionary discipline can be attributed to the emergence of zero tolerance policies in the 1990s (Curran, 2016). Zero tolerance policies require school administrators to deliver consistent and harsh punishment, often in the form of suspensions, for certain behaviors despite contextual factors (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). This approach originated in response to growing concerns of drugs and gun violence in schools (Skiba & Raush, 2006). Schools clung to zero tolerance policies out of concern for safety and increased efforts were placed on emergency preparedness and prevention of gun violence (Thompson, 2016). The physical appearance of some schools changed to became more prison-like, with security cameras, metal detectors, drug

searches, and an increased police presence (e.g., School Resource Officers) (Noguera, 2003).

The Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 (20 U.S.C. §§ 7151), which mandated the removal of a student for at least one year in response to bringing a firearm to school, was a catalyst for zero tolerance and "get tough" approaches to violence (Hanson, 2005). This federal legislation required schools to utilize a no-nonsense approach to serious situations with the aim of deterring future incidents. Although the original intent of zero tolerance approaches was to create and maintain safe school environments, they are based on several faulty assumptions (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). Several of these faulty assumptions are outlined by the APA Zero Tolerance Task Force (2008): removing students with behavior issues will improve school climate, consistent punishment will clarify consequences and send disciplinary messages for other students, and the severity of zero tolerance consequences will deter future incidences.

Zero tolerance legislation such as the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 was narrowly focused on firearms in school; however, this mindset expanded to encompass minor infractions such as disruptive classroom behaviors, dress code violations, and tardiness (Losen & Martinez, 2013). By 1998, zero tolerance policies were implemented in schools nationwide, often in response to less serious offenses (Rodriguez, 2017). By the early 2000s, 90% of schools nationally enforced zero tolerance policies across various infractions (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008).

Although research consistently illustrates how zero tolerance policies have failed to make schools safer (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008), their effect on

6

exclusionary discipline rates in US schools remains. In the 2015-2016 school year, approximately 2.7 million K-12 students received one or more out-of-school suspensions, which represents between 5-6% of all K-12 students in the US (US Department of Education, 2019). Encouragingly, in a more recent analysis conducted by Child Trends, there has been a decline in OSS in most states since 2011, suggesting a shift away from exclusionary discipline (Harper et al., 2019). A closer look at the data revealed that from 2011 to 2015 all student subgroups (e.g., black, white, Hispanic, students with and without disabilities) experienced lower rates of OSS (Harper et al., 2019). Although this steady decline appears encouraging on the surface, certain populations are still disproportionately affected by exclusionary discipline in the United States (Harper et al., 2019).

Differential Discipline

In addition to the concerning rates of exclusionary discipline, the differential application of exclusion based on students' racial identity, known as the racial discipline gap, presents a significant issue. During the 2015-2016 school year over 290,600 students were referred to law enforcement or arrested, with Black and Hispanic male students disproportionately represented in these numbers (US Department of Education, 2019). A recent investigation of this data revealed that Black students were suspended at rate more than twice as high as their white counterparts (Harper et al., 2019). Unfortunately, differential discipline rates begin as early as preschool; the US Department of Education (2016) reports Black preschoolers are 3.6 times more likely to receive at least one suspension compared to white preschoolers.

Not only do students of color experience exclusionary discipline more frequently, but they also receive harsher punishments for the same offenses when compared to their white peers (Skiba, 2011). Skiba and colleagues (2011) examined data from a national sample of over 4,000 schools and found differential discipline rates based on race at the elementary and middle school level. For minor infractions at the elementary level (e.g., disruption), Black students had almost four times the odds of suspension than their white peers, and Hispanic students had twice the odds. Moreover, Black middle school students were significantly more likely than white students to be suspended or expelled for disruption, moderate infractions, and truancy/tardiness (Skiba, 2011). Skiba described two ways in which the racial discipline gap is perpetuated, through differential *selection* in the classroom and differential *punishments* at the administrative level (Skiba, 2011). The racial discipline gap has serious implications beyond K-12 and contributes to the school-to-prison pipeline (Wald & Losen, 2003).

Another demographic factor that has been examined in relation to suspension and expulsion rates in the US is gender identity. Males are significantly more likely to experience exclusionary discipline, to be referred to law enforcement, and to be arrested than female students (US Department of Education, 2019). In the 2015-2016 school year, males accounted for 51% of student enrollment yet represented 69% of students referred to law enforcement (US Department of Education, 2019). Even in preschool, boys are three times more likely than girls to be suspended at least once (US Department of Education, 2016).

In addition to demographics factors such as racial and gender identity, students with disabilities have also been disproportionately affected by zero tolerance policies and exclusionary discipline practices in schools (US Department of Education, 2019). Although students with disabilities only accounted for 12% of enrollment, they represented 28% of referrals to law enforcement (US Department of Education, 2019) and in the 2015-2016 school year were suspended at a rate twice as high as students without disabilities (Harper et al., 2019). Moreover, students with disabilities experienced more severe responses to misbehavior and were more likely to be physically restrained or secluded than their peers (US Department of Education, 2019). Discipline data consistently reflects disparities for students based on race, gender, and ability; however, a significant portion of the literature focuses specifically on the racial discipline gap in schools (Skiba, 2011). Given the prevalence of exclusion, researchers have begun to investigate the short and long-term effects of these practices in schools.

Harmful Effects of Exclusion

Given the substantial number of suspensions in US schools, researchers have investigated the potential short and long-term consequences of exclusion. Researchers consistently identify harmful outcomes for students subjected to exclusionary discipline across various contexts. Suspensions have been associated with academic issues (Noltemeyer et al., 2015), social disconnection from school (Jones et al., 2018), a more negative school climate (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008), and long-term consequences such as an increased likelihood of arrest or probation in adulthood (Rosenbaum, 2020).

Academic Issues

Exclusionary discipline has been associated with poor academic performance and lower high school graduation rates (Lee et al., 2011; Noltemeyer et al., 2015; Sharkey & Fenning, 2012; Skiba et al., 2014). Researchers estimate that in the 2011-2012 school year, US students lost nearly 18 million days of instruction due to exclusionary discipline (Losen et al., 2015). Jones and colleagues (2018) conducted interviews with 38 students ages 11-19 who had been suspended. In this investigation, students expressed how exclusion interrupts learning, making it more difficult to catch up and succeed academically.

Chu and Ready (2018) analyzed data from 322 public schools in New York City ($N = 70,130$ students) to examine the short and long-term effects of suspension on academic achievement. The racial discipline gap was prevalent in the sample, with Black males 2.5 times more likely to be suspended than their white peers. Hierarchical linear modeling revealed suspensions were associated with attendance issues, tardiness, lower credit completion rates, and an increased likelihood of dropping out the following semester (Chu & Ready, 2018). In the long-term, suspended students were less likely to pass state exams and graduate within four, five, or six years when compared to their non-suspended peers (Chu & Ready, 2018). Similar negative academic outcomes were found in Noltemeyer and colleagues' (2015) meta-analysis which examined 34 studies spanning 1986 to 2012. Researchers found a significant inverse association between student suspension and academic achievement. Moreover, students who had been suspended were significantly more likely to drop out of school (Noltemeyer et al., 2015). The

association between suspension and dropout is critical, given that dropout is associated with lower earning potential, an increased likelihood of involvement with criminal justice, and mental health issues in adulthood (Backman, 2017).

Social Disconnection

Exclusion not only physically removes students from the learning environment, jeopardizing academic success, but it can also diminish feelings of connection to school (Jones et al., 2018). Connection and a sense of belonging in school have been identified as a positive childhood experience, which can mitigate the negative effects of adversity in childhood (e.g., abuse, neglect, violence in the home) (Bethell et al., 2019; Davis et al., 2019). Connectedness may be especially important for students of color, who have reported feeling less connected to school than their white peers (Anyon et al., 2016) and who are more likely to be subjected to exclusionary discipline (US Department of Education, 2019). Lacking connection to school places students at risk for negative outcomes such as depression or involvement in risk-taking behaviors (Foster et al., 2017). How teachers interact with students can be a significant factor in increasing connection to school. When teachers utilize more positive approaches to classroom management (e.g., Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports) as opposed to exclusionary actions, students report more positive relationships with teachers (Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013). Educators hold invaluable roles in cultivating connections with students and through positive approaches in the classroom, these connections can be strengthened.

Researchers have consistently identified the importance of non-parental adult relationships in the lives of children and adolescents (Davis et al., 2019; Narayan et al.,

2018). Positive adult relationships in childhood and adolescence can reduce the likelihood of substance abuse or participation in delinquent acts (Brown & Shillington, 2017; Forester et al., 2017). Exclusion fails to address root causes of student issues which can result in students not feeling valued and ultimately increase disconnection from school (Jones et al., 2018). This disconnection from school drastically reduces access to healthy non-parental adult relationships (Narayan et al., 2018).

Negative School Climate

Exclusionary discipline has demonstrated various negative effects on the students who are subjected to these experiences; however, harmful school policies can also affect the entire school environment (APA Zero Tolerance Policies, 2008). Hyman and Snook (2000) suggest zero tolerance policies exacerbate power differentials by pitting students against teachers and can contribute to a more violent school climate. Further, students are perceptive and can identify unfair and inequitable practices in their schools. Anyon and colleagues (2016) surveyed high school students from over 100 schools in a large urban district and found when students perceived discipline practices in their school to be inequitable, they were less likely to feel connected to teachers and administrators. This held true for students who had never been subjected to exclusionary discipline, illustrating the effect these policies can have on the entire school community (Anyon et al., 2016). In another study of 52 Maryland high schools, Debnam and colleagues (2013) found similar outcomes. Students who perceived their school to be more equitable were more engaged and felt more connected to school (Debnam et al., 2013). These studies illustrate how harmful and inequitable disciplinary policies in schools can have far-

12

reaching consequences for not only the students who are subjected to exclusion, but for the student body as a whole.

Long-Term Consequences

The negative academic and social outcomes students experience because of exclusionary discipline are not necessarily short-lived and can have lasting effects. Krezmien and colleagues (2014) suggest two pathways through which exclusion can lead to the criminal justice system: a direct path via referrals or arrests, an an indirect path, where students are excluded from school and experience academic and social challenges (e.g., dropout, disconnection), therefore increasing their likelihood to become involved in the justice system. The funneling of students from K-12 education into juvenile or criminal justice settings is commonly referred to as the school-to-prison pipeline (STPP) and is a significant issue in the United States (Wald & Losen, 2003). Suspended students are more likely to become involved with the criminal justice system suggesting a link between exclusionary discipline and the STPP (Shollenberger, 2015).   Although exclusionary discipline aims to deter reoffending, researchers have found that suspended students are likely to reoffend and receive subsequent suspensions (Heilbrun et al., 2015) which calls into question the effectiveness of this approach.

A significant portion of the literature on exclusionary discipline examines the short-term academic and social outcomes. Fewer studies have explored the long-term consequences of exclusion. In one study, Shollenberger (2015) used data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth to examine the long-term effects of suspension on high school students a decade after graduation. Suspended students were less likely to

graduate from high school, obtain a bachelor's degree by their late 20's, were more likely to be arrested for multiple offenses, and were more likely to be incarcerated than their non-suspended peers (Shollenberger, 2015). Rosenbaum (2020) found similar outcomes by examining a nationally representative sample of 480 suspended students and their non-suspended matched pairs. Twelve years after suspension (by ages 25-32), students were less likely to have earned a high school diploma or bachelor's degree and more likely to have been arrested or on probation (Rosenbaum, 2020). Although the data on the long-term consequences of exclusionary discipline are not as robust as the immediate effects, these investigations emphasize how crucial it is for school leaders to consider alternatives to exclusion.

Education Reform

Although the negative effects of exclusionary discipline have been thoroughly documented for years, many schools continue to rely on these approaches (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). Implementation of any large-scale initiative which challenges the status quo is difficult and time consuming. This task is especially difficult for discipline, since there is no obvious and simple alternative. Sircar (2017) suggests that for large-scale discipline reform to occur and persist, the alternative must have political support, be cost-effective and relatively easy to implement. Several programs or interventions have emerged as alternatives to exclusion in schools including community service, mentorship, counseling, transitional support, and restorative justice (Sincar, 2017). However, these programs and interventions tend to be highly variable, incorporated as supplemental to existing structures, and used at the discretion of school

leaders. Despite the challenges of widespread discipline reform in the United States, efforts at the national, state, and individual school or district level have made progress towards reducing exclusionary discipline rates.

National Level

Although no sweeping legislation banning exclusionary discipline has occurred at the national level, some policies and initiatives have been developed to reduce harmful and inequitable practices. In 2011 the Department of Education and the Department of Justice collaborated to form the Supportive School Discipline Initiative (SSDI). The SSDI coordinated federal efforts to develop safe and supportive learning environments for students aimed at the reduction and reliance on inequitable exclusionary discipline (US Department of Education, n.d.). The SSDI first sought to build consensus around the issue, thus the School Discipline Consensus Project was created, bringing together a range of stakeholders (e.g., individuals in behavioral health, law enforcement, education, juvenile justice, students) to collaboratively discuss and identify recommendations for change (US Department of Education, n.d.). The SSDI invested nearly $1.5 million for research on potential interventions and alternatives to harmful disciplinary practices. Moreover, the SSDI created resources and materials for school districts aimed at improving school climate and even provided legal guidance to assist districts in avoiding Civil Rights violations. Lastly, SSDI built awareness, capacity, and leadership through the creation of various training opportunities and a web-based community for educators (e.g., Supportive School Discipline Community of Practice) (US Department of Education, n.d.).

Discipline reform was also included in the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act

(ESSA). The ESSA sought to advance equity through supporting disadvantaged and high-

needs students. Under ESSA, states are required to identify how they support districts in

reducing harmful discipline and assist in fostering positive school conditions (Leadership

Conference Education Fund, 2016). National policies such as SSDI and ESSA are

important in disavowing harmful and inequitable disciplinary practices, although there is

still considerable work to be done.

State Level

ESSA grants states access to federal funds for school improvement programs

(e.g., Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports [SWPBIS]) and

professional development on trauma-informed care or classroom management (Dignity in

Schools, n.d.). States have made progress in discouraging exclusionary practices; in 2015,

twenty-two states and the District of Columbia had revised laws which discouraged

exclusionary discipline and mandated schools to implement alternatives (e.g., dropout

prevention efforts or behavioral interventions) (Steinberg & Lacoe, 2017). In their recent

feature on discipline reform in schools, Steinberg and Lacoe (2017) report "23 of the

nation's largest 100 school districts have implemented policy reforms requiring

nonpunitive discipline strategies, limits on suspensions, or both" (p. 46). Legislation and

funding at the state level has also been instrumental in shifting disciplinary approaches.

In 2018 the state of Ohio passed the Supporting Alternatives for Fair Education (SAFE)

Act (HB 318), to financially support alternatives to exclusionary discipline (e.g.,

SWPBIS) and phase out suspensions and expulsions of students in PreK-3rd grade (Ohio

Department of Education, 2019). Educational organizations at the state level may be useful in assisting schools to shift away from exclusionary discipline and embrace alternative approaches.

School or District Level

To explore alternative disciplinary approaches, individual schools and districts have tested a range of targeted and whole-school approaches such as SWPBIS and restorative practices (Steinberg & Lacoe, 2017). SWPBIS and RPs share common goals in preventing behavior issues via teaching social emotional learning skills and creating positive relationships. These approaches use tiered interventions ranging from whole-school preventative measures to individualized and targeted interventions (Amstutz & Mullet, 2015; Sugai & Horner, 2002; Fox et al., 2003). SWPBIS has been heavily researched and identified by several states (e.g., Ohio) as an evidence-based program aimed at reducing inequitable discipline in schools (Sugai & Horner, 2002). SWPBIS emphasizes the direct instruction and promotion of positive behaviors and data-based decision-making to monitor intervention effectiveness (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Randomized control trials of SWPBIS suggest the program is effective in reducing student suspensions and office discipline referrals (Bradshaw et al., 2010) and has been associated with a more collaborative work environment for staff (Bradshaw et al., 2008).

Restorative Practices as an Alternative

RPs in schools have gained momentum over the past several years as an alternative to exclusionary discipline (Amstutz & Mullet, 2015). Restorative justice philosophy is based on the interconnectedness of people and emphasizes creating,

maintaining, and repairing relationships once harm has occurred (Zehr, 2015). RPs in schools span preventative experiences in which strong communities are built (e.g., community-building circles, social emotional learning) as well as reactive approaches (e.g., mediations, family conferences) following instances of harm (Amstutz & Mullet, 2015). Although research on RPs in schools is still growing, several case studies have yielded encouraging outcomes. Increases in school safety and climate (Augustine et al., 2018; González, 2012) and decreases in behavior referrals for all students (Ingraham et al., 2016) and for students of color (Anyon et al., 2016) have been identified. The success of RPs in schools warrants further investigation as a tool to phase out harmful disciplinary practices.

Purpose of the Study

Given the significant issues with harmful discipline in the United States, RPs have gained momentum in schools (Amstutz & Mullet, 2015). Research on RP implementation and experiences in schools is on the rise; however, more information on these practices is needed (Song & Swearer, 2016). The purpose of the current study is to contribute to the growing body of information on RPs in schools. I used a multiple case study approach to investigate two charter high schools who identify as using RPs. The cases of study differ in their approaches to RP implementation; however, both cases have adapted RPs to meet the needs of their environments. The current study aims to understand how RPs occur in each school and to capture the experiences of school staff with RP implementation. Information from this study may be particularly useful for school leaders interested in

applying RPs in their school environment as well as encourage consideration for what RPs can look like in a virtual or hybrid learning environment.

Social Learning Theory

Students spend a significant amount of their days in school buildings, surrounded by peers, teachers, and other school staff members. The social environment students experience in schools can have tremendous consequences on what and how children learn. Schools are often associated with academic learning; however, critical social learning occurs within walls of school buildings. Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT) (1977) can be applied to how students learn via observing behaviors modeled by others and imitating observed behaviors. RP experts recommend whole-school implementation which expands beyond students and calls on staff and community involvement (Morrison, 2007). Often, with whole-school implementation in schools, the focus is placed primarily on the students. For RPs, students and teachers alike are responsible for upholding restorative behaviors. For example, in the International Institute of Restorative Practices' (IIRP) 11 essential elements of RPs, several align with SLT. The modeling of affective statements (e.g., "I-statements") and restorative dialogue through informal interactions is imperative for successful whole-school RP implementation (IIRP, 2011). Through observation of these behaviors, students learn effective communication skills and how to engage in peaceful conflict resolution. The creation and maintenance of a restorative staff community is an expectation of whole-school implementation of RPs. The IIRP (2011) describes "A restorative staff community models and consistently uses restorative practices with each other to build and maintain

healthy staff relationships" (p. 17). Since RP implementation is concerned with promoting positive behaviors, SLT is a useful perspective with which to view RPs in schools.

Assumptions

In qualitative research it is imperative to address assumptions early in the research process, since all researchers hold their own biases based on prior experiences. I have worked in schools for several years and have personal experiences with RP implementation, thus I have developed my own assumptions regarding this topic. Although it is not possible to fully separate a researcher from their biases, there are several processes that can aid in acknowledging and tracking these biases which influence the data (see section on Trustworthiness in Chapter Three). Below are some of the assumptions I hold regarding RP implementation and experiences in schools.

- RPs are a better approach to discipline.

- RPs in schools may not always reach the community level and families may not be as involved in RPs as would be desired.

- School staff will have had a range of successful and challenging experiences with RP implementation.

- The frequency and types of behavior issues requiring restorative intervention during virtual or hybrid instruction will be different and less frequent than in-person instruction.

- If schools did make an intentional effort to transition RPs into a virtual or hybrid setting, this was challenging.

Research Questions

A multiple case study method was used to examine the experience of RP implementation across two charter high schools who identify as using a restorative approach. The current study examined how each school has implemented RPs in their unique environment and described the experiences of teachers and non-teaching professionals with RP implementation over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. I used a multiple case study methodology to understand each individual case and identify similarities and differences in experiences across both cases.

Each case had a unique implementation approach and experiences with RP growth over time. At the time of this study, South High School was in their third year of formal RP implementation but had shifted away from their original implementation plan. RP implementation at South was intended to be scaled up every year into the next higher grade but was significantly changed by COVID. North High School was in their sixth year of implementation and had position dedicated to RPs during their initial stages of implementation. The following research questions were identified:

1. What are the experiences of staff (e.g., teachers and non-teaching professionals) with RP implementation in their school environment?

    1a. How are these experiences similar or different across cases?

2. What are the challenges or barriers to RP implementation experienced by staff in their school environment?

    2a. How are these experiences similar or different across cases?

3. What are the experiences of school staff with implementing RPs during the

COVID-19 pandemic in their school environment?

3a. How are these experiences similar or different across cases?

Definition of Terms

Differential Discipline

An issue where students of color or students with disabilities are more likely to be identified for disciplinary issues and are disciplined more harshly than their White or non-disabled peers (Skiba et al., 2011).

Exclusionary Discipline

The removal of students from the learning environment via suspensions or expulsion (Losen & Skiba, 2010). Suspensions can last anywhere from partial day to 10 days, whereas expulsion permanently removes the students from school (US Department of Education, 2019).

Hybrid Learning

Learning that takes place through a combination of in-person instruction and virtual instruction (either synchronous or asynchronous). For example, in-person attendance two days per week and three days of virtual instruction.

Implementation

The process by which school staff are trained to use a specific approach or interventions and the way in which these actions are completed.

Non-Teaching Professionals

In this study, the use of the term "non-teaching professionals" refers to any individual who works in the school building whose primary role does not include direct instruction of students.

Racial Discipline Gap

The result of differential discipline by racial identity, where students of color are significantly more likely to be identified for disciplinary infractions and punished more harshly than their White peers (Skiba et al, 2011).

Restorative Justice

A philosophy which originated from indigenous communities and later gained popularity in the criminal and juvenile justice system in the United States. Restorative justice emphasizes the interconnectedness of people and values the creation and maintenance of strong bonds and the repairing of bonds once harm has occurred through various actions (e.g., victim-offender mediations, community service, circles) (Zehr, 2015).

Restorative Practices

The adaptation of restorative justice in school settings. RPs include a range of preventative and reactive interventions aimed at creating and maintaining strong social bonds and repairing relationships once harm has occurred (Amstutz & Mullet, 2015; Zehr, 2015).

Retributive Discipline

A common approach used in schools in the United States focused on blaming and punishing the offender for wrongdoing. Retributive discipline often emphasizes laws or rules violated by the offender and tends to utilize shame and humiliation as a tool to deter future offending (Zehr, 2015).

School Climate

Loukas (2007) defines school climate as "the feelings and attitudes that are elicited by a school's environment" (p. 1).

School-to-Prison-Pipeline

The process by which students (especially students of color or students with disabilities) are funneled out of K-12 education and into juvenile justice or criminal justice settings (Wald & Losen, 2003).

School Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (SWPBIS)

A whole-school approach which advocates for the direct instruction and promotion of positive behaviors and data-based decision-making to monitor effectiveness of interventions (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

Staff

In this study, the use of the term "staff" refers to all individuals in the school building, including both teachers and non-teaching professionals.

Virtual Learning

Learning that takes place in a fully virtual format, either through asynchronous work or synchronous meetings.

Zero tolerance

Policies that emerged from the 1990s starting with The Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994, (20 U.S.C. §§ 7151) which mandated the removal of a student for at least one year in response to bringing a firearm to school (Hanson, 2005). Zero tolerance policies require school administrators to deliver consistent and harsh punishment, often in the form of suspensions, for certain behaviors despite contextual factors (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008).

Summary

This chapter explored the history and trends of harmful discipline approaches in schools such as zero tolerance and exclusionary discipline. Next, this chapter described how exclusion contributes to negative academic, social, school-wide, and long-term outcomes for students. Movements at the national, state, and individual school or district level toward reducing exclusionary discipline were addressed as well as the use of promising alternatives such as RPs in schools. This chapter also addressed the purpose of the current study, researcher assumptions, and outlined the research questions.

The next chapter will elaborate on the origins of restorative justice and how this philosophy has been adapted to become "restorative practices" in schools. Theoretical and current empirical literature on restorative practice implementation, outcomes, and barriers in schools are discussed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I present a review of the literature encompassing the origins and elements of restorative justice and the transition to "restorative practices" into school environments. Next, I elaborate on recent empirical investigations which examine RP implementation, ranging from whole-school implementation approaches to studies of specific RP interventions (e.g., circles). Outcomes at the individual, interpersonal, and school-wide level from recent empirical studies of RPs in schools are discussed. Barriers to RP implementation in schools and emerging research on the COVID-19 pandemic are also discussed.

Due to the significant issues associated with suspension across academic and social domains (Jones et al., 2018; Noltemeyer et al., 2015), and particularly for students of color and students with disabilities (Harper et al., 2019), school leaders have sought potential alternatives, one of which are RPs. The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the experiences of school staff (e.g., teachers and non-teaching professionals) across two charter high schools with RP implementation. My research questions include:

1. What are the experiences of staff (e.g., teachers and non-teaching professionals) with RP implementation in their school environment?

    1a. How are these experiences similar or different across cases?

2. What are the challenges or barriers to RP implementation experienced by staff in their school environment?

   2a. How are these experiences similar or different across cases?

3. What are the experiences of staff with implementing RPs during the COVID-19 pandemic in their school environment?

   3a. How are these experiences similar or different across cases?

I used a multiple case study approach to examine these experiences across two unique school environments. The two cases studied utilized different approaches and were in different stages of implementation. This study contributes to the literature by comparing implementation processes and experiences across two unique school environments. Moreover, this study offers unique insight into the experiences of school staff with RP implementation over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Literature Review Strategy

Articles included in this literature review were located using PsychINFO and the Educational Research Complete database. The initial search included academic articles and books published between 2011-2021. Original keywords used were "restorative" and "schools" which yielded over 900 responses. Since RPs in schools often have various names (e.g., justice, practices, interventions, approaches, discipline) I decided to only use "restorative" in my initial search. The term "restorative" was also searched with various other combinations to focus more specifically on certain information (e.g., implementation, challenges, barriers, outcomes). Titles and abstracts were perused to narrow down the list of relevant books and articles. After the initial search, a follow-up

search was conducted more recently on Google Scholar using the same keywords to identify any recently published articles since the original search. Some articles were identified through article reference lists. Special attention was paid to articles which were frequently cited in the literature or identified by other researchers as critical exemplars in the field.

 In March of 2022, a follow-up literature search was conducted to gather recent and emerging data on the COVID-19 pandemic. Google Scholar was used to identify scholarly articles regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Keywords used included "restorative," "COVID-19," "mental health," and "schools." Since data on COVID-19 is still emerging, few relevant scholarly articles existed. Abstracts were perused and relevant articles were included in this chapter.

The following sections in this chapter detail the essential elements of restorative justice in criminal and juvenile justice settings to current day applications in school environments. Empirical studies describing both whole-school approaches as well as studies examining individual RP interventions are included. Next, I detail findings from empirical studies where RPs were utilized. Outcomes are organized into individual benefits (e.g., social emotional skill enhancement), interpersonal benefits (e.g., improved student-teacher relationships), and school-wide benefits (e.g., improved school safety). Lastly, I discuss empirical studies that address the challenges of RP implementation and conclude the chapter with recent literature on the COVID-19 pandemic and a chapter summary.

Restorative Justice

Restorative justice is a philosophical approach which emphasizes interconnectedness, relationship building, and relationship repair (Zehr, 2015). Howard Zehr, described a restorative approach as guided by three underlying values known as "the three R's:" respect, responsibility, and relationship (Zehr, 2015). Traditionally, the criminal justice system in the United States responds to crime with retributive justice which emphasizes punishment. Both retributive justice and restorative justice aim to deter future harm, however, the process of reaching this goal is drastically different (Thorsborne &Blood, 2013; Zehr, 2015). A retributive approach aims to deter future offending through shame, humiliation, isolation, or exclusion of the offender with little to no involvement of the victim. Conversely, restorative justice involves the victim and/or community by engaging in conversation and together determining how harm can be repaired (Zehr, 2015). Another key difference is that retributive justice views harm as a violation of *laws*, whereas restorative justice views harm as a violation of *relationships* (Zehr, 2015). When a relationship is harmed, the process of making things right often includes acknowledging the harm, restoring equity, and discussing future intentions and expectations (Claassen, 2008). Zehr (2015) describes, "restorative justice is a compass, not a map" (p. 17) with the ability to guide interactions and decision-making but does not adhere to a standardized program or curriculum.

Restorative experiences can be traced back to indigenous communities in North America, New Zealand, and Australia. Elements of community, interconnectedness, and relationships have long been embedded into the daily lives and cultural understandings of

early indigenous communities (Zehr, 2015). In fact, specific restorative interventions such as family group conferencing are derived from the Māori community in New Zealand (Cunneen, 2007). Modern day restorative justice in the United States relies on these principles and gained significant momentum in the criminal and juvenile justice system in the 1970s (Thorsborne & Blood, 2013). Bazemore and Umbreit (2001) outline four restorative interventions utilized in criminal and juvenile justice settings, which are still relevant today, including: victim-offender mediations, community reparative boards, family group conferencing, and circle sentencing. These interventions share the experience of reconnecting offenders with either the victim or the community with a focus on accountability and relationship restoration (Bazemore & Umbreit, 2001).

Restorative justice in the criminal justice system has yielded encouraging outcomes including reduced recidivism rates (Strang et al., 2013), greater compliance with restitution requirements, and higher levels of satisfaction for offenders (Latimer, 2005). For offenders who are genuinely engaged in the restorative process, victims can benefit from participating in restorative interventions. Choi and colleagues (2011) investigated the experience of 34 victims who participated in victim-offender mediation. Qualitative interview themes suggest victims felt empowered by sharing their experience and having the opportunity to acquire more information about the offense from the offender (Choi et al., 2011). In juvenile justice settings, participation in restorative interventions has also been associated with a decrease in recidivism (Bergseth & Bouffard, 2007; Bradshaw et al., 2006; Wong et al., 2016). Due to these positive outcomes, restorative justice has grown in criminal and juvenile justice settings, with at

least half of US states enacting programs which involve the victim in the justice process (Zehr, 2015). Restorative justice philosophy has permeated other environments where conflict occurs such as community centers, businesses, hospitals, and most notably, schools (Pranis, 2005).

Language in Schools

Much like the flexibility of restorative justice philosophy, the language used to describe these experiences is dynamic and complex. In school settings, several different terms have been adopted to describe restorative justice and restorative justice-based experiences. Since the term "justice" is reminiscent of criminal or juvenile justice settings and can be perceived as more reactive than preventative, many schools substitute the term "justice" with other identifiers such restorative *practices*, *approaches*, *interventions*, or *discipline* to better fit the school environment (McCluskey et al., 2008; Song & Swearer, 2016). In the current study, I chose to use the term restorative practices (RPs) to capture a wide range of experiences. Many of the studies cited in this section utilize various terms to describe restorative justice, therefore, when referencing these investigations, I used the original language of the authors.

<div align="center">

Restorative Practices in Schools

</div>

Given the positive outcomes of restorative justice in criminal and juvenile justice (e.g., Latimer, 2005; Strang et al., 2013), school leaders have explored these practices in hopes of mitigating issues such as exclusionary discipline, discipline disparities, and the school-to-prison pipeline (Amstutz & Mullet, 2015; Morrison, 2007). RPs in schools as

an alternative to exclusionary discipline and an approach to improve school climate has only increased over the past few decades.

RPs encompass a wide range of behaviors and experiences and are often applied as a framework of guiding principles and values that schools can adapt to meet the needs of their environment (Garnett et al., 2019). Due to this flexibility, defining RPs in schools can be a challenging task. In conjunction with the International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP), Costello and colleagues (2009) describe a continuum of practice which identifies a range of informal to more formal restorative processes.

Figure 1

Restorative Practices Continuum (Costello et al., 2009; p. 12)

Informal   Formal

Affective statements	Affective questions	Small impromptu conferences	Group or circle	Formal conference
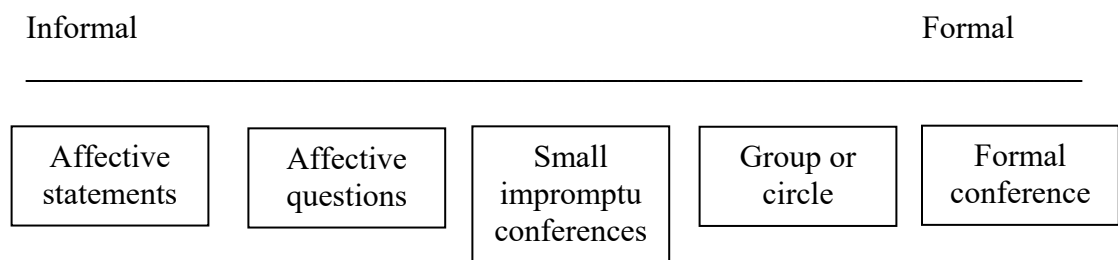
Given the reality of disproportionate discipline and harsher punishments for students of color (Harper et al., 2019; Skiba et al., 2011) some experts have called for incorporating justice and equity into schools' conceptualizations and implementation of RPs. Evans and Vaandering (2016) identify supporting learning environments characterized by justice and equity as one of the three core components of Restorative Justice in Education (RJE). Through her Transformative Justice approach Maisha Winn (2018) also emphasized the need for restorative justice to increase access to high quality

32

educational experiences for marginalized groups. The way in which RP conceptualization and implementation can promote equity and support minoritized students is still developing.

Although the conceptualization of RPs and the extent of implementation (e.g., informal to formal) can vary significantly across schools, common components of RPs in schools aim to a) improve relationships between educators and students, b) prevent harmful behaviors, c) repair harm and restore relationships, d) resolve conflict and encourage accountability, and e) address the needs of the school community (Anderson et al., 2014). The way in which these components are expressed in school settings can vary to include a range of informal and formal interventions. Common restorative interventions in schools may include: the use of preventative programming (e.g., SEL), circles, informal RPs, community conferencing, peer mediation or peer juries, and community conferencing or service (Amstutz & Mullet, 2015; Anderson et al., 2014).

Preventative Programming

Often, RPs are assumed to be solely reactive, by repairing relationships or confronting issues only once harm has occurred (McClusky et al., 2008). Although reactive interventions are central to RPs (e.g., mediations), education and skill building to prevent issues and strengthen relationships is essential (Amstutz & Mullet, 2015). Restorative schools implement social emotional learning (SEL) or conflict resolution programs to educate students and build interaction skills (Anderson et al., 2014). SEL is composed of five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision- making (Collaborative for Academic Social

and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2020). RPs rely on skills from all five SEL competencies. For example, in a mediation, skills such as identifying emotions (self-awareness), controlling impulses (self-management), perspective-taking (social awareness), communication (relationship skills), and reflection (responsible decision-making) are all critical for successful and meaningful interactions. Teaching students to understand and manage their own emotions and emotional responses can help prevent issues (Amstutz & Mullet, 2015). Restorative schools may also teach conflict resolution in the classroom and encourage students to learn and practice these skills in settings with peers.

Circle Processes

Another common restorative experience in schools include circle processes (Amstutz & Mullet; Zehr, 2015). Circles can range from preventative (i.e., community-building circles) to reactive circles, which focus on repairing harm and restoring equity (Pranis, 2005). In her book *The Little Book of Circle Experiences*, Kay Pranis (2005) describes the common elements shared across circle experiences. Circles generally consist of opening and closing ceremonies to initiate and conclude (e.g., check-ins or check-out questions). For an effective and respectful circle, expectations regarding conduct are discussed and agreed upon early in the circle. A talking piece, often a meaningful object, may be passed around to provide opportunities for individuals to speak and be heard by the group (Pranis, 2005). A talking piece can be especially helpful in maintaining order and encouraging respectful interactions among students. Although circles share power among all participants with no single voice more important than

another, facilitators can be used to guide the group process (Pranis, 2005). Circles empower students and encourage them to share their perspective and receive validation from their peers. All circles, no matter the type, are centered upon respectful interactions and interconnectedness between participants (Pranis, 2005).

Informal Restorative Practices

Informal RPs are minor actions taken by school staff which contribute to a safe and positive school environment (Anderson et al., 2014; International Institute of Restorative Practices [IIRP], 2011). Modeling restorative language, proactively building relationships with students and families, and creating informal spaces to build connections (e.g., lunchtime table talks) are several ways school staff can informally contribute to a positive school environment (Anderson et al., 2014).

The International Institute of Restorative Practices' (IIRP) Safer Saner Schools approach to whole-school RPs (2011) highlights the importance of restorative language (e.g., affective statements and restorative questions). Affective statements are personal expressions of feeling (e.g., "I-statements") which empower individuals to evaluate and communicate their emotions (IIRP, 2011). For teachers and administrators, this language is important in encouraging empathy from students. Moreover, affective statements allow students to view school staff as people rather than distant authority figures (Costello et al., 2009). The use of affective questions encourages students to consider how behaviors affect others or to reflect upon how emotions contribute to decision-making (e.g., "what were you thinking at the time? Or "who has been affected by your behavior and how have they been affected?") (Costello et al., 2009, p.16).

RPs are most successful when using a whole-school approach and buy-in has been established from key stakeholders (Morrison, 2007). Not only should schools critically examine their mission statement and current policies to ensure alignment with RP philosophy, but teachers need training and support (Amstutz & Mullet, 2015). Teachers need to be properly trained to teach and model these informal skills for their students.

Peer Mediation and Peer Juries

Peer mediation and peer jury experiences encourage active student participation with RPs. In criminal justice settings, restorative justice philosophy challenges traditional power structures and emphasizes shared power among individuals (Zehr, 2015). Peer mediation and peer juries empower students to resolve issues themselves, with little adult involvement (Anderson et al., 2014). Peer mediation trains students to serve as a mediator when minor conflicts or infractions occur, whereas peer juries collaborate to determine how equity can be restored (Anderson et al., 2014). Gall and Heathfield (2015) conducted interviews with students in Chicago Public Schools regarding their experiences with peer juries. One student shared "I liked how peer jury will not only help you become a leader but also a role model to other students" (Gall & Heathfield, 2015, p. 254). Peer-led components of RPs in schools allow students to practice conflict resolution skills and serve as leaders and role models on campus.

Community Conferencing and Community Service

Community is an integral component of RPs (Zehr, 2015). Community conferencing invites members of the community to participate in the conflict resolution process to discuss the issue, the impact, and how to make things as right as possible

36

(Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). Often, these meetings include individuals close to both the person who caused harm and the person who was harmed (Morrison, 2007). Community conferencing has been used for offenses such as property damage, class disruptions, bullying, or drug-related offenses (Morrison, 2007). Another way the community can be leveraged is through community service (Anderson et al., 2014). Community service can be used as an intervention, giving the offender an opportunity to give back to the community. However, Zehr (2015) warns that community service can easily be misused and operate as more of a punishment if not used correctly.

Restorative Practices and Other School-Wide Initiatives

RPs in schools include a wide range of behaviors, from informal conversations to more formalized mediations or conferences. Often, the components of RPs in schools, especially at the whole-school level, overlap with other school-wide initiatives such as trauma-informed approaches, SEL, and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) such as Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) (Song & Swearer, 2016). MTSS such as PBIS, aim to support students with interventions at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels (Fletcher & Vaughn, 2009). In fact, Thorsborne and Blood (2013) describe how a whole-school RP approach aligns with MTSS at all three tiers. Tier one includes strengthening social and emotional competencies and community building on a school-wide level, tier two includes managing difficulties or disruptions, and tier three is repairing serious harm (Thorsborne & Blood, 2013).

At the tier one level, RPs are centered on creating and maintaining positive relationships and a healthy school climate which is a shared goal with PBIS and trauma-

informed practices (Sugai & Horner, 2009). Moreover, preventative efforts such as teaching expectations and modeling social emotional skills are essential for RPs, SEL, and PBIS at the tier one level (Song & Swearer, 2016; Sugai & Horner, 2009). In a recent conceptual piece, Evanovich and colleagues (2020) outline how proactive circle processes can be integrated into existing PBIS structures in schools. Although RPs at tier one significantly overlap with other initiatives, RPs at tier two and three (e.g., mediations, healing circles, or family group conferences) offer unique experiences. RPs work in conjunction with and support several whole-school approaches aimed at improving school climate and yet provide unique additions to existing initiatives.

Implementation Approaches

RPs are complex and flexible in their conceptualization, thus there is significant variability in how schools implement RPs (Amstutz & Mullet, 2015). Some schools may utilize RPs on an occasional basis to re-integrate students following a suspension, to resolve issues of harm (e.g., bullying), or to confront truancy (Amstutz & Mullet, 2015). Conversely, schools may utilize a whole-school approach, where RPs are infused into all interactions and policies on campus (Amstutz & Mullet, 2015; Morrison et al., 2007). In this section, I discuss several recent empirical studies with various implementation approaches, outcomes, barriers to implementation, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Whole-School Approaches

A whole-school approach draws on the public health model and encompasses primary, secondary, and tertiary practices (Morrison, 2007) which align with the language of "MTSS" in schools. Although creating and maintaining an effective whole-

school approach can be time and resource intensive, the use of a whole-school approach has been consistently and highly recommended by RP advocates and experts (Amstutz & Mullet, 2015; Augustine et al., 2018; Morrison, 2007; Thorsborne & Blood, 2013). Several empirical studies have explored implementation process and experiences using a whole-school approach.

Few studies in the RP literature have examined implementation and outcomes using randomized control trials, which are beneficial in identifying causal effects (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). One such study was conducted across 44 K-12 schools in Pittsburgh over the course of the first two years of RP implementation (Augustine et al., 2018). In this study, the 22 schools assigned to the treatment group utilized "Safer Saner Schools", a two year whole-school change program developed by the International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP). The implementation of Safer Saner Schools requires experts from the IIRP work closely with schools to develop an individualized approach which meets the needs of each unique school environment. This implementation approach encompasses professional development and consistent consultation (on-site and phone) from trained IIRP experts for school leaders and staff over the course of the first two years. Staff members are trained to provide professional development for the purposes of sustainability following the first two years. Although individualized plans are developed for schools based on their needs, Safer Saner Schools is based on the 11 essential elements of RPs which provide a range of informal and formal practices to engage students and the larger community (IIRP, 2011). Augustine and colleagues' (2018) study contributes significantly to the literature because not only

do authors utilize a casual approach, but researchers examine one of the most popular restorative justice-based programs currently utilized in schools, Safer Saner Schools.

Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) continues to remain at the forefront of research on Whole-School Restorative Justice (WSRJ) in schools. The WSRJ model in OUSD schools is guided by five specific goals including: a) building district-wide capacity and buy-in, b) influencing positive behavioral change (staff, students, parents), c) ensuring reintegration for students involves with juvenile justice, d) building a positive school climate, and e) repairing individual and relational harms through respect for all parties (Jain et al., 2014). Much like the three levels of MTSS, OUSD's WSRJ approach is centered on three tiers of implementation. The vast amount of data collected and analyzed in OUSD schools encompasses both quantitative (e.g., school discipline statistics, attendance rates) and qualitative (e.g., focus groups) over the course of three years of implementation is impressive. OUSD has been a leader in the field, identifying various qualitative and quantitative positive outcomes of WSRJ in schools.

While it is beneficial to investigate RP implementation in early stages, few empirical studies expand beyond the first few years. In one recently published article, researchers utilize a case study approach of whole-school RP implementation from 2011-2018 and the development of the "Alliance Model" (González et al., 2019). Alliance is the name of the charter high school of study. Although RPs seek to empower students, the Alliance model is centered on the role of students as practitioners of RP rather than recipients (González et al., 2019). González and colleagues (2019) document the transition to whole-school implementation at Alliance occurring across various stages,

from collaboration and training with the District Attorney's Office to the alteration of course curriculum to include principles of restorative approaches. González details the integration of RP principles at all levels, with decentralizing power as a critical element of Alliance's experience. Although the early stages of RP implementation are critical, González and colleagues' (2019) examination of Alliances illustrates how restorative environments are not only *created* but how they are *maintained*. Further, the Alliance model is the first of its kind in integrating RPs into the curriculum and educational experiences.

Individual Approaches

Although RP experts suggest a whole-school approach, which encompass whole-school preventative and more individualized responsive interventions (Amstutz & Mullet, 2015; Augustine et al., 2018; Morrison, 2007; Thorsborne & Blood, 2013), some schools implement RPs in an incremental approach, or as an addition to traditional practices. Since some schools may need to gradually build-up their use of RPs over the course of several years, researchers have focused on specific RP interventions to gain insight into their unique benefits. Several empirical studies have investigated the experiences and outcomes associated with involvement in circle processes (e.g., Knight & Wadhwa, 2014; Ortega et al., 2016). Information from these studies may be especially useful for school leaders who are considering RP implementation but may only have the capacity to adopt one or two RP interventions due to barriers or resistance in the school community.

Ortega and colleagues (2016) investigated the use of Restorative Circles (RCs) in one high school whose intention was to reduce the number of behavior referrals. Trained

circle facilitators from a local non-profit organization led RCs in the school following instances of conflict or harm. Facilitators conducted pre-circles with individuals involved in the situation prior to the group circle, where the goal was for individuals to take responsibility for their own actions and identify ways to move forward. Ortega and colleagues (2016) conducted semi-structured interviews with 35 high school students and 25 staff members who all had at least one pre-circle or circle experience. This study was beneficial in providing insight into the qualitative experiences of students and staff involved in RCs.

Knight and Wadhwa (2014) examined the implementation of peacemaking circles at Bridge High School in Boston. Teachers championed the implementation of RPs and circles were conducted in their Project Graduation program, which served approximately 60 students at risk for dropout due to consistent issues in school or failing at least one grade. Weekly program-wide talking circles were held in addition to smaller healing circles following instances of conflict. Authors provided detailed student and teacher portraits which highlighted how peacemaking circles enhance and promote resilience. This investigation adds significantly to the RP literature through providing descriptive and personal portraits of individuals and their experiences with peacemaking circles.

Researchers Wang and Lee (2019) used a mixed-methods multiple case study to examine the use of responsive circles in four schools (two elementary, one middle, one high school). School staff members attended two full-day training sessions hosted by the International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP). Trainings introduced RP theory and provided space for school staff to role play circles. Each school also received two

follow-up in-person consultation visits from the IIRP where coaches provided detailed feedback on circle processes. Over the course of seven months researchers observed 22 responsive circles and interviewed 40 staff members to capture the experiences of circle participation for school staff. This article contributes uniquely to the literature on RPs by providing a wide range of data but also because researchers included data from elementary schools.

McMorris and colleagues (2013) examined the use of a Restorative Conference Program (RCP) in Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS). Researchers examined family group conferencing (FGC), which occurred following incidents of harm. In FGC, stakeholders come together to have an open dialogue about the incident of harm, offenders accept responsibility for their actions and discussions on how to meet the needs of the victims and make things as right as possible are identified (McMorris et al., 2013). Researchers identified FGC as an intensive intervention occurring at the tier three level. Although this investigation occurred in a school that was implementing RPs at all three tiers, researchers were interested in examining the unique effects and experiences of participation in FGC. FGC occurred as an alternative approach to suspension and was found to have significant positive outcomes for students involved in the intervention (McMorris et al., 2013). This study offers a unique perspective to the literature by examining a tier three intensive intervention.

Outcomes of Restorative Practices

Researchers have investigated a wide range of quantitative and qualitative outcomes for RPs in schools. However, since RPs transitioned into schools to serve as an

alternative to punitive and exclusionary discipline, much of the literature examines how

RPs decrease suspension rates and discipline referrals (e.g., González, 2012). Although

this information is important, the research examining the qualitative experiences of

students and teachers involved in RPs is growing. In this section, I discuss the individual,

interpersonal, and school-wide outcomes from the literature on RPs in schools.

Individual

Researchers suggest that involvement in RPs has the potential to strengthen

students' social emotional competencies and enhance self-esteem (e.g., Jain et al., 2014;

Ortega et al., 2016; Wong et al., 2011). In Jain and colleagues' (2014) report on the

implementation of multi-tiered school-wide RPs in Oakland Unified School District

(OUSD), authors found positive outcomes for students. Through interviews and focus

groups with high school students, researchers suggest school-wide RPs contributed to an

increase in students' ability to understand and maintain positive relationships with peers,

an increase in empathy, and better management of their emotions (Jain et al., 2014).

Researchers in Hong Kong utilized a quasi-experimental design to investigate the

effectiveness of a Restorative Whole-school Approach (RWsA) to reduce instances of

bullying (Wong et al., 2011). Over the course of two years researchers examined how

four schools implemented a RWsA to varying degrees. One school in the sample met the

threshold for full implementation, two schools identified as using partial implementation,

and one school did not use restorative approaches. Survey responses from 1,480 students

between the ages of 12-14 revealed students in more restorative environments had more

empathetic attitudes and increased self-esteem compared to less restorative environments.

Results from this study suggest that RWsAs have the potential to increase empathy and enhance students' perceptions of themselves (Wong et al., 2011).

While Jain and colleagues (2014) and Wong et al., (2011) examined RPs using a whole-school approach (e.g., RPs at tier one, tier two, and tier three), Ortega and colleagues (2016) focused on the benefits of circle experiences with high school students. Interviews were conducted with 35 high school students and 25 staff who participated in at least one circle experience led by a trained facilitator. Students felt empowered to resolve issues without total adult involvement and felt a sense of ownership in the circle process. Students also reported learning new approaches to resolving conflict (e.g., talking it out instead of physical fighting) (Ortega et al., 2016). School staff observed positive changes in students, reporting maturity, better behavior, and increased confidence in students following involvement in restorative circles (Ortega et al., 2016). Based on the outcomes of these studies, it appears that school-wide RPs and circle experiences have the potential to empower students and strengthen their social emotional skills.

Interpersonal

In addition to supporting students' social emotional skills, RP's can bolster students' interpersonal relationships with peers and adults (Gregory et al., 2015; Ortega et al., 2016). Not only are supportive relationships important for healthy development, but they also protect against negative outcomes such as delinquency (Brown & Shillington, 2017), arrests (Craig et al., 2017), and prescription medication abuse (Forester et al., 2017). Researchers have documented a plethora of long-term negative health

consequences of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) (i.e., abuse, neglect, household dysfunction) (Felitti et al., 1998), some of which include poor heart health (Klassen et al., 2016), obesity (Rehkopf et al., 2016), depression (Copeland et al., 2018), and posttraumatic stress disorder (Bielas et al., 2016). Supportive relationships with family, peers, and non-parental adults can mitigate the harmful long-term effects of ACEs (Bethell et al., 2019; Davis et al., 2019; Narayan et al., 2018) and have been identified in several studies as a positive outcome of RPs (e.g., Gregory et al., 2015). In fact, in a recent position piece, Breedlove and colleagues (2020) outline how RPs support positive childhood experiences in schools which in turn buffer against ACEs.

Gregory and colleagues (2015) explored how the extent to which teachers employed RPs in their classroom effected student perception and experience, with attention given to diverse student perspectives. Researchers collected surveys from 412 high school students across 29 high school classrooms in two high schools utilizing RPs. Teachers were trained on RPs via two full-day workshops hosted by the IIRP. Students and teachers completed surveys which rated the extent to which teachers utilized RPs in the classroom as well as a scale assessing quality of the teacher-student relationship. Results suggest that students viewed teachers who frequently used RPs as more respectful compared to teachers who did not use these strategies (Gregory et al., 2015). Further, researchers found teachers who were perceived as more restorative by students tended to have fewer disciplinary referrals for their diverse students, suggesting RPs may contribute to lessening the discipline gap (Gregory et al., 2015).

Ortega and colleagues' (2016) investigation of Restorative Circles (RCs) in a single high school suggests several significant interpersonal benefits for students engaged in RPs. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with high school students and staff who had at least one experience in an RC. Students in the sample reported RCs contributed to improved relationships with peers and having positive alternative approaches to handling conflict. Teachers also described improved relationships with their students and noticing improved relationships among students following participation in RCs (Oretga et al., 2016). This study examined the unique effects of RCs in a high school environment and suggests that this RP intervention was especially impactful on students' relationships with peers and teachers' relationships with students.

School-Wide

RPs can also contribute to a positive school climate (González, 2012). Loukas (2007) defines school climate as "the feelings and attitudes that are elicited by a school's environment" (p. 1). In the literature, school climate is often assessed by analyzing measures of school safety (e.g., number of fights, discipline referrals, or suspensions). Several empirical studies have examined how RP implementation is associated with school climate via measures of school safety.

Armour and colleagues' (2014) investigated the second year of a three-year plan to implement Restorative Discipline (RD) in a middle school in Texas. Ed White Middle school utilized a whole-school approach to reduce a range of issues including bullying, suspensions, and disproportionate discipline. Data were collected from students, parents, teachers, and school leadership. Using school climate surveys and school records,

47

researchers identified a reduction in exclusionary discipline and tardies. In-school suspensions were reduced by 65% for 6th grade students and 47% for 7th graders, whereas tardies were reduced by 48% for 6th graders (Armour et al., 2014). This investigation suggests RD may have an impact on how school is experienced by students.

Similar findings suggesting a positive effect on school climate were identified in a longitudinal case study of four high schools and a middle school pilot in the Denver Public School system (DPS) (Gonzelez, 2012). Although each school engaged in RPs in a unique way, depending on the needs of the schools, three core practices that occurred across sites included restorative justice dialogues, restorative conferencing, and restorative circles. A case study analysis of a whole-school approach in DPS from 2008-2013 revealed significant reductions in the suspension rate (from 10.58% to 5.63%). Black students experienced the largest reduction in suspensions, a reduction in 7.2%, suggesting RPs contributed to a narrowing of the racial discipline gap. For one school, over the course of two years, RPs contributed to a reduction in the average number of student fights from 50 per year to 10 or 12 per year (González, 2012). This study suggests several increases in school safety indicators and even suggests RPs may serve as a tool to narrow the racial discipline gap.

Although several investigations focus on the reduction of problematic student behavior (e.g., fighting, discipline referrals) as an indicator of school climate, information capturing staff perspectives and experiences can also provide valuable insight. Augustine and colleagues' (2018) investigated the use of the Safer Saner Schools Whole-School Change program developed by the IIRP in 44 Pittsburgh Public Schools. Surveys from

teachers suggest RPs had a positive effect on teachers' perceptions of teaching and learning conditions in their schools. Specifically, teachers rated conduct management, teacher leadership, school leadership, and overall teaching and learning conditions more favorably than schools in the control group (Augustine et al., 2018).

Challenges of Implementation

RPs in schools have shown positive outcomes for students (Jain et al., 2014), their relationships with others (Ortega et al., 2016), and the school environment (Armour et al., 2014), however, it is important to note the common challenges associated with RP implementation and lessons learned from empirical studies.

Garnett and colleagues (2019) conducted a mixed-methods community-based participatory research project to better understand RP implementation readiness and implementation needs with a school district in Vermont. Researchers assessed 25 school-based professionals using a readiness assessment survey and open-ended questions. Survey responses provided information regarding several implementation barriers including time and resources, administrative support, staff buy-in, and integration of RPs with school and community (Garnett et al., 2019). Themes from the open-ended questions included several barriers including extensive time and resources, dealing with competing demands in the classroom, maintaining consistency and enthusiasm, and coordination between administrators and staff (Garnett et al., 2019). This investigation used survey responses and themes from open-ended questions to understand a single school's barriers to implementation during their first year of RP implementation.

Although this is helpful information, it is possible that qualitative interviews could have provided more personal experiences than open-ended survey responses.

While Garnett's investigation identifying challenges of RP implementation during the first year is insightful, Jain and colleagues (2014) examine challenges in OUSD's Whole-School Restorative Justice approach over the course of three years of RP implementation. Through survey responses ($N = 200$) and focus groups with school professionals, several barriers to implementation were identified. Challenges such as limited time, establishing buy-in, limited training, inconsistency of application, student attitudes and misuse, unclear policies, and inconsistent communication among administrators and staff were identified (Jain et al., 2014). Understanding the challenges of RP implementation is critical information for school leaders interested in RPs, however, personal stories about how school staff work to overcome these barriers could be incredibly insightful and contribute to the literature.

The COVID-19 Health Pandemic

In March of 2020, massive school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic pushed millions of students out of US schools and into virtual learning settings. For many schools across the US, the 2020-2021 school year remained virtual due to safety concerns. At the start of the 2021-2022 school year, many schools reopened with safety measures in place (e.g., social distancing, wearing masks indoors). In one recent meta-analysis, Loades and colleagues (2020) suggest an association between social isolation and loneliness with increased risk of depression and anxiety in children and adolescents. Authors suggest that these findings may lead to similar experiences for students enduring

the COVID-19 pandemic (Loades et al., 2020). In a recent report by the American Psychological Association Titled *Stress in America 2020: A National Mental Health Crisis,* experts anticipate significant short and long-term mental health consequences resulting from the pandemic. In a (2020) survey conducted by the APA, teens (ages 13-17) report facing uncertainty, elevated levels of stress, and symptoms of depression. Moreover, teens in this sample described less motivation to complete schoolwork, less involvement in extracurricular activities, feeling that they didn't learn as much compared to previous years, and difficulty concentrating on schoolwork.

While some emerging studies examine the mental health effects on students, fewer examinations have explored how the pandemic has affected the implementation of RPs in schools. A position piece by Velez, addresses the significant disruptions due to COVID and the transition to virtual learning. Velez (2021) describes how the transition to virtual learning has presented challenges to establishing community connections. In a recent chapter, Velez and colleagues (2021) explored suggestions on how RPs could be translated to an online space and shares their experiences with virtual implementation.

Since the peer-reviewed literature on RP implementation during COVID requires time to publish, educators and experts have posted anecdotal blog posts sharing their experiences with RP implementation during the pandemic. For example, practitioners at the IIRP have written a blog post about how restorative practices can be a critical tool for establishing and maintaining connections during the Pandemic, through virtual circles (Abrams & Wachtel, 2020). The Learning Policy Institute also released suggestions for using a restorative approach to reopening schools during the pandemic. Experts detail the

importance of creating safe, supportive learning environments when returning to in-person instruction and RPs are part of this process (DePaoli, Hernandez, Darling-Hammond, 2020). Research exploring the effects of the pandemic on students and RP implementation is ongoing and desperately needed.

Summary

In this chapter I reviewed the literature on RPs in schools. First, I addressed the origin of restorative justice and how this philosophy has been adapted to school settings. I discussed the wide range of implementation efforts (informal to formal) and approaches (whole-school and individual interventions) to capture the complexity and flexibility of RPs in schools. Next, I discussed several empirical studies and their outcomes of RPs in their unique environments. Various research methodologies ranging from a single case study design to large-scale randomized control trials have been conducted to capture outcomes of RP implementation in schools. I addressed several empirical studies which identified positive outcomes on an individual student level, an interpersonal relationship level, and a school-wide level. While it is important to identify outcomes from RP implementation, it is also critical to gain insight into the challenges of RP implementation. I discussed studies where researchers have identified challenges of first year implementation of RPs as well as years into the implementation process. Lastly, I examined emerging literature on the COVID-19 pandemic. In the next chapter, I detail my research methodology and approaches to data collection and analysis to answer my research questions.

Chapter 3: Methodology

RPs in schools are growing in popularity as a potential alternative to punitive and exclusionary disciplinary practices (Amstutz & Mullet, 2015). Research on the implementation and effectiveness of RPs is steadily growing, however, there is tremendous variability in the implementation processes across school environments (Amstutz & Mullet, 2015). More research is needed on the ways school personnel conceptualize, communicate, train, and implement RPs. Moreover, research examining how RPs are experienced by school staff is crucial in navigating potential barriers to RP implementation. In the current study, I used a multiple case study approach to examine RP implementation and experiences across two charter high schools. Each school has had a unique journey to embracing and integrating RPs in their environment. The current study examined how school staff have experienced RPs in each individual school. I also compared experiences across cases to identify similarities and differences in experiences. This chapter outlines the current study's methodology and details critical elements of the research process such as sampling, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, and quality indices.

Review of Statement of Problem

From 1970 to 2006 the rates of exclusionary discipline (e.g., suspensions) have more than doubled (Planty et al., 2009) and the use of exclusion is still predominant in

53

schools today (Shabazian, 2015). The overuse of suspensions for minor infractions grew substantially in the 1990s and early 2000s with the introduction of zero-tolerance policies in schools (Curran, 2016). Although the suspension rate has steadily declined since reaching its peak in the early 2000s, exclusion from school is common (Harper et al., 2019). In fact, Shollenberger (2015) estimates approximately one in three students will be suspended at some point during their K-12 educational career. Although there has been a steady decline in OSS in most states since 2011, suggesting a gradual shift away from exclusionary discipline (Harper et al., 2019), a closer look at the data revealed that certain populations (e.g., Black students, Latino students, students with disabilities) are still disproportionately affected by exclusionary discipline (Harper et al., 2019).

Exclusionary discipline has been associated with diminished academic success (Noltemeyer et al., 2015), disconnection from school (Jones et al., 2018), and even an increased likelihood of arrest (Rosenbaum, 2020). Given these associations, school leaders have begun implementing RPs as an alternative to exclusionary discipline. Although initial studies have shown positive outcomes for RPs in schools on an individual, interpersonal, and school-wide level, (Jain et al., 2014; Ortega, 2016) continued research on how RPs are implemented and experienced by school staff across environments is needed.

Review of Research Questions

My research questions included:

1. What are the experiences of staff (e.g., teachers and non-teaching professionals) with RP implementation in their school environment?

1a. How are these experiences similar or different across cases?

2. What are the challenges or barriers to RP implementation experienced by staff in their school environment?

    2a. How are these experiences similar or different across cases?

3. What are the experiences of school staff with implementing RPs during the COVID-19 pandemic in their school environment?

    3a. How are these experiences similar or different across cases?

I used a multiple case study methodology to examine the implementation approaches and experiences of school staff engaging with RPs in two charter high schools who identify as using RPs. In the current study, I examined not only the unique experiences of staff within each case, but I also compared these experiences across cases.

Research Design

A case study approach can be informative when examining program implementation in school environments (Merriam, 1998) and has been used in several investigations of RPs in individual schools and district-wide (e.g., González, 2012; Stinchcomb et al., 2006; Sumner, 2010). The negative academic and social outcomes associated with exclusionary discipline (e.g., suspensions) (Jones et al., 2018; Mowen & Brent, 2016; Noltemeyer et al., 2015), have encouraged school leaders to consider alternatives. In the criminal and juvenile justice system, restorative justice (e.g., victim-offender mediations, family group conferencing, circle sentencing) has demonstrated increased satisfaction for victims and offenders (Latimer, 2005; Strang et al., 2013).

Given these positive outcomes, restorative justice (often referred to as restorative *practices, approaches*, or *interventions* in schools) has been adapted to school settings.

Restorative justice has been used for many years by indigenous communities to repair and maintain relationships once an individual has caused harm to the community (Zehr, 2015). In schools, the focus of RPs remains centered on creating strong relationships and engaging in approaches to repair harm rather than pushing students out of the learning community (Amstutz & Mullet, 2015). RPs in schools are flexible to meet the needs of each school environment. Since RPs are highly diverse in their conceptualization and implementation, this can present challenges for measurement and generalizability across cases (Song & Swearer, 2016). Case study design is a natural fit for examining RP implementation in schools because it is highly contextual and provides space to explore the nuances of each individual case (Merriam, 1998).

Given that case study is an effective approach to studying RP implementation and experiences in schools, some researchers have expanded to use a multiple case study approach. Multiple case study extends beyond the examination of a single case and incorporates several separate and individual cases, which enhances validity and strengthens findings (Miles et al., 2018). Case studies emphasize the importance of context (e.g., historical, physical, economic, or political) in understanding a single case, whereas multiple case study extends to explore a phenomenon across multiple contexts by illuminating similarities, differences, successes, and challenges (Stake, 2006). Multiple case studies are composed of two levels of analysis, *within*-case and *across*-case (Stake, 2006). Within-case analysis treats each case as a comprehensive unit and outlines

themes or patterns that exist within that case, whereas across-case analysis draws comparisons across multiple individual cases (Stake, 2006). Across-case analysis is critical to multiple case study and can be especially valuable in understanding how a phenomenon operates or exists across multiple contexts and environments (Stake, 2006).

Not only is multiple case study an excellent choice for examining unique and highly contextual environments, but case studies often include a wide range of data. Case study research typically involves several forms of data such as interviews to capture participants' experiences, researcher observation, and document analysis (Merriam, 1998). Multiple sources of data can provide considerable depth and perspectives into the topic of study. RPs are highly complex and are often integrated into school environments or intertwined with other school-wide initiatives (e.g., trauma-informed care, PBIS, SEL). Case study allows space for the researcher to delve deep into the complexities of RPs in each unique case.

Assumptions

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument, within whose perspective the entire study is conceptualized, analyzed, and communicated (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Since qualitative research relies significantly upon the researcher, it is critical to consider and address inherent assumptions about the topic of study and continually engage in a systematic corralling process (Stake, 2006). This process encourages researchers to consider how their own personal biases may guide data collection and analysis. Although it is not possible to completely separate the researcher from their own biases and prior experiences, I used two common qualitative strategies to

57

aid in acknowledging and tracking my biases and assumptions, articulation of assumptions and consistent reflective journaling. I have several years of experience working in schools and with RP implementation, therefore, I have developed my own assumptions about the topic of study. Below are some of the assumptions I hold regarding RPs in schools.

1) RPs are a better alternative to punitive discipline. As a counselor, I consistently operate from a position of support, therefore, I do not engage in or believe punitive actions are the ideal approach to correcting behavior issues. In addition to my personal belief system, I have read numerous studies which identify the harmful effects of punitive discipline. These experiences have contributed to my opinion that RPs are more effective than punitive or exclusionary approaches.

2) School staff will have had a range of successful and challenging experiences with RP implementation. Based on my own history with RP implementation, I have had the opportunity to experience both successful moments as well as significant barriers to implementation. I hold the assumption that school staff members implementing RPs will also have experienced a range of successes and challenges and can speak to the complexity of RP implementation in their school.

3) Behavior issues which occur during virtual instruction are less frequent and different than challenges which occur in in-person settings. There are considerable differences between virtual and in-person instruction, therefore, I

assume there will be significant differences in how RPs are applied in a virtual setting. From my own experiences with in-person schooling, restorative interventions are often used to repair harm for in-person relational issues (e.g., a student disrupting or disrespecting classmates or the teacher). I am unfamiliar with what behavior issues look like in a virtual setting and would assume that issues of relational harm are less frequent than in-person learning. I believe this may be the case due to the issue of time since online learning relies more heavily on asynchronous learning. For example, in a virtual setting, students may only engage in synchronous learning for one to two hours per day as opposed to six; therefore, there are fewer opportunities for relational harm.

4) If schools did make an intentional effort to transition RPs into a virtual setting, this was challenging. At the start of the pandemic, teachers and school leaders were presented with the significant challenge of suddenly transitioning to virtual learning. It is my assumption that in the rush to adapt to virtual learning, RPs may not have been identified as a top priority and attention may have been diverted away from RP implementation.

In the subsequent sections I detail my sampling procedure, data collection, and data analysis, and quality indices. Each topic is broken down to include information on each type of data collected (e.g., interviews, observation, and document analysis).

Sampling Procedure

In case study research, a case is defined as a single bounded unit (Stake, 1995). In my study, I define a case as a single school. I intend to examine two schools who self-identify as using some level of RPs. Quantitative research requires a certain number of cases for the purposes of generalizability, however, in qualitative research there is no minimum number of cases required (Merriam, 1998). Instead, the number of cases selected is determined by the aims of the research question and the level of depth desired by the researcher (Miles et al., 2018). I am choosing to examine two cases so that I can obtain a significant level of depth into each school's implementation approaches and experiences while still having the ability to compare across cases. In this section, I detail my sampling approaches and procedures for site selection, semi-structured interviews, observation, and document analysis.

Site Selection

Site selection for a multiple case study requires careful consideration. Stake (1995) describes a "*Quintain,*" or the phenomenon of study, as the guiding factor in case selection. In my study, I define the Quintain as restorative practices. Cases were chosen partially due to convenience. Both schools are local and due to past experiences, I have connections with individuals at each site which assisted in gaining access. Since RPs are highly variable and can present in different ways, I used three core criteria for inclusion. To participate in the current study, each case must meet the following criteria to be considered as using RPs. Criterion included (a) explicitly identifying or stating use of RPs in a public space (e.g., student handbook, website), (b) engagement in classroom

circles (e.g., community-building, or reparative), and (c) the use of mediations to resolve conflict. This method of sampling is also known as criterion-based selection or purposive sampling (Merriam, 1998).

Case 1 South High School

South High School is a public community school in a large metropolitan city in the Midwest serving students in grades 9-12. South identifies as using a range of RPs from community-building circles to mediations for specific behavior issues of instances of harm. At the time of the study, South was in their third year of RP implementation. At South, no single individual was responsible for RP implementation, instead a collaborative team of school staff served as RP advocates and lead RP efforts on campus.

Case 2 North High School

North High School is a public community school in a large metropolitan city in the Midwest serving a small population of students (approximately 250) in grades 9-12. North is based on several core values, one of which is related to resolving issues using a restorative approach. At the time of the study, North was in their sixth year of RP implementation and for five of those years had a full-time position dedicated to RP training and implementation. This individual was trained by the International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP) and has adapted their model to fit the needs of North's school environment. See Table 3 for differences between South and North regarding several implementation factors.

Table 3

Implementation Factors

Implementation Factors	South	North
Training	Educational Consultant trained small group (RJL)	Based off IIRP model (school-wide trainings)
Personnel Dedicated to RPs	No	Yes, years 1-5
Degree of Structure or Formalization	Some formalized/ structured procedures	More formalized/ structured procedures
Length of RP implementation	3 years	6 years

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are commonly used in qualitative research and provide insight into personal experiences with the topic of study yet allow flexibility for the exploration of other relevant topics (Merriam, 1998). Semi-structured interviews are designed using some structured and less-structured questions so that participants can expand on information they believe to be relevant to the phenomenon of study (Merriam, 1998). I used a maximum variation sampling approach to include participants from different positions on campus (e.g., teachers, administrators, founders, deans, school counselors, staff) to collect a wide range of perspectives and experiences. To recruit participants for this portion of the study, I used a common qualitative research technique, snowball sampling. Snowball sampling involves asking existing participants to suggest

other individuals for participation in the study based on their connection to the topic or qualifying factors (Merriam, 1998). To be eligible for this portion of the study, participants had to have been employed by the school for a minimum of three full school years. This criterion was selected so that participants can speak about their experiences with RPs in-person (the 2019-2020 school year and earlier) and in virtual settings (the 2020-2021 school year).

Recruitment began with individuals from each school with whom I have established relationships. I consulted with these individuals to determine other potential participants for interviews. Upon study approval by the University Institutional Review Board, staff were sent recruitment emails (see Appendix A). Interested individuals were sent the informed consent document (see Appendix B) and the semi-structured interview questions (see Appendix C) prior to the interview for their review.

Observation

Observation can be an integral source of data for case study research because it allows the researcher to directly observe the phenomenon of study and can serve as an alternative source of data (Merriam, 1998). Alternative sources of data corroborate emerging findings and strengthen the study through triangulation (Merriam, 1998). For phenomenon that are not easily defined, or experiences that are difficult to describe, observations can be useful in capturing unique aspects of the phenomenon of study (Merriam, 1998).

Since RPs are often integrated into the environment of a school and can overlap with other school initiatives (e.g., trauma-informed care, PBIS, SEL) (Song & Swearer,

2016), observation was helpful in gaining insight into RPs. I observed several types of activities and interactions at each site including (a) staff training relevant to behavior management (e.g., RPs, trauma-informed approaches, classroom management strategies), (b) classroom community-building experiences or circles and (c) community or family events. Observations were also recorded on the physical spaces of the building (e.g., relevant posters, signs, behavioral expectations).

To gain access to observational experiences, I relied on my relationships with participants for invitations. My primary contact at each site extended invitations to any relevant staff trainings or community events that could be observed. During interviews with teachers, invitations to observe classroom experiences were extended and secured. Prior to the observation experience, I announced my presence as a researcher, intentions, and assurance that no identifying information would be recorded.

In case study research, there are several ways in which the researcher observes or participates in the phenomenon of study (Merriam, 1998). For observational experiences, I operated as a participant observer. Merriam (1998) describes how the presence of a participant observer is known by the group observed, however, their primary role is that of an observer rather than a participant. For observation, Merriam (1998) suggests taking note of the physical setting, the participants, activities and interactions, conversation, subtle factors, and the researchers' own behavior. Creswell and Poth (2018) provide an observational protocol for note taking during observations, consisting of descriptive and reflective notes. I combined these two observational protocols into one document (see Appendix D) and utilized this document for organizing my observational notes.

64

Document Analysis

Document analysis is another commonly used form of data in qualitative research and can be useful in corroborating emerging findings from other sources of data (Merriam, 1998). For each site, I collected and analyzed both publicly available documents (e.g., school websites) and internal procedural documents (e.g., In-School Restorative Essay Document). Publicly available documents provided insight into how RPs were communicated with the community and families, whereas internal procedural documents illustrated how staff engage in RP interventions and discussions. Since RPs are complex and are often integrated into school climate, documents which describe the school or explain norms and behavioral expectations were useful. Publicly available documents such as school websites and student handbooks were accessed online. Internal procedural documents or circle lesson plans were shared by participants and primary contacts at each site.

<div align="center">

Participant Information

</div>

A total of 16 participants were interviewed across both cases. Three non-teaching professionals and five teachers were interviewed at South, whereas five non-teaching professionals and three teachers were interviewed at North. Due to the small school environments and concerns for confidentiality, specific details regarding participant demographics or experiences cannot be shared. Moreover, specific information regarding participant's positions on campus such as grades or subjects taught cannot be provided due to risks to confidentiality. Table 4 outlines information on participants across both cases.

Table 4

Participant Information

	Participant #	Pseudonym	Position
South	1	Jessie	Non-Teaching Professional
HS	2	Casey	Non-Teaching Professional
	3	Logan	Non-Teaching Professional
	4	Avery	Teacher
	5	Jordan	Teacher
	6	Peyton	Teacher
	7	Blake	Teacher
	8	Dakota	Teacher
North	1	Kai	Non-Teaching Professional
HS	2	River	Non-Teaching Professional
	3	Denver	Non-Teaching Professional
	4	Taylor	Non-Teaching Professional
	5	Hunter	Non-Teaching Professional
	6	Corey	Teacher
	7	Carson	Teacher
	8	Charlie	Teacher

Data Collection

The current study was approved by The Ohio State University Institutional
Review Board to ensure responsible research practices with human subjects. Following
approval, data collection including semi-structured interviews, observation, and
document analysis occurred concurrently beginning in August 2021.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, semi-structured interviews were conducted in
secured virtual Zoom meetings. Audio and video recordings of interviews were securely

stored until I confirmed the interview transcripts, generated by Zoom, for accuracy. During the transcription process, I redacted all identifying information shared by participants and assigned pseudonyms. Following transcription, audio and video recordings were permanently deleted. I conducted semi-structured interviews with participants on Zoom from both sites concurrently from October 2021 through January 2022.

Instrumentation

My research questions were centered on understanding how RPs were implemented and experienced across two high school environments using data from semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis. I used semi-structured interviews as my primary source of data due to my interest in understanding participants' experiences with RPs implementation. Semi-structured interviews are primarily composed of open-ended questions and provide some structure for the interview while allowing space to explore the phenomenon of study (Merriam, 1998). I was intentional in developing open-ended questions so participants could explain their experiences, thoughts, and feelings using their own words. To capture detailed accounts of participant experiences, I emailed participants the interview questions ahead of time to allow participants time to reflect upon their experiences (Stake, 1995).

Interview questions were driven by my assumptions that participants would have a range of experiences (e.g., successful, and challenging or ineffective) with RPs. Empirical literature on RP implementation commonly describes positive outcomes as well as implementation barriers. During the interviews, I used probes to follow up on

participant responses, such as asking for details or clarification (e.g., "tell me more" or "What did you mean?") and I was flexible in my approach so that other relevant topics could be explored (Merriam, 1998).

Since my years of experience with RPs have an influence on the way I designed the semi-structured interview questions, I sought out alternative perspectives. I provided a draft of my semi-structured interview questions to an individual with expertise and experience working in K-12 schools. The detailed feedback obtained from this consultation provided an alternative perspective and helped to develop my questions further. I incorporated feedback from this outside expert to enhance my semi-structured interview protocol.

Observations

I observed three different types of experiences or interactions at each school, including (a) staff training relevant to behavior management (e.g., RPs, trauma-informed approaches, classroom management strategies), (b) classroom community-building experiences or circles and (c) community or family events. For observation experiences, no identifying information was included in field notes to ensure confidentiality of individuals being observed. I utilized an observation protocol (see Appendix D) to record both my descriptive and reflective notes of the following information: the physical setting, participant activities and interactions, conversation, subtle factors, and my own behaviors. Observation notes were examined in conjunction with the other sources of data.

Document Analysis

For document analysis, I collected a range of publicly available and internal procedural documents. Publicly available documents included school websites and student handbooks. Internal procedural documents consisted of instructional or teaching tools (e.g., PowerPoints, videos, lessons) which served to educate or engage staff or students with restorative processes (e.g., circles, ISS). I was granted permission to view and analyze these documents by my primary contacts at each site.

Data Analysis

Case studies yield a significant amount of data; therefore, it is critical to clearly identify a data organization plan and delineate the data collection and analysis process to ensure trustworthiness (Stake, 2006). This study included a range of documents generated from myself (e.g., reflective journals, analytic memos, observation notes) and information communicated by participants (e.g., interview transcripts). I used semi-structured interviews as my primary source of data and used observations and document analysis to triangulate emerging themes and provide alternative perspectives. As is recommended in qualitative research, I engaged in concurrent data collection and analysis to improve my data collection strategies and delve deeper into emerging themes and concepts (e.g., Miles et al., 2018). Data collection and analysis were concurrent for both sites, however, interviews were slightly staggered to focus on individual schools and obtain a clear within-case picture of the data before moving to across-case analysis. For example, interviews with participants at South occurred primarily in October and November, whereas interviews for North occurred primarily in November and December.

This approach was helpful for me to capture emerging themes occurring at individual sites.

Semi-Structured Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews with teachers and non-teaching professionals to address my research questions. After each interview, I checked the Zoom transcription for accuracy and engaged in the data analysis process outlined by Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2018). This process involved (a) first-cycle coding (b) second-cycle coding/ pattern codes (c) examining jottings and analytic memos and (d) assertion and proposition development. I also used Saldaña's (2013) *Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* to inform my coding approach. I chose to code and organize my data primarily by hand instead of using qualitative data analysis programs.

Saldaña describes a code as "(…) a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based of visual data" (p.3). During first-cycle coding, I applied initial codes to the transcripts. Miles and colleagues describe these initial codes as "*prompts* or *triggers* for deeper reflection on the data's meanings" (2018; p. 64). Miles and colleagues describe the four elemental methods that create a foundation to first cycle coding (e.g., Descriptive, In Vivo, Process, and Concept Coding). Descriptive codes usually emerge as nouns and serve to assign labels to summarize the data. In Vivo codes consist of language used by the participant. Process coding captures actions or processes occurring in the data. Lastly, concept coding aims to capture ideas. I used these elemental coding procedures to guide my first round of coding interview transcripts.

Following first-cycle coding, I engaged in second-cycle or pattern coding, where I grouped codes into categories, themes, or concepts (Miles et al., 2018). Pattern coding has several critical functions in qualitative data analysis and serves to (a) condense large amounts of data, (b) engage the researcher in data analysis during data collection, (c) encourage the researcher to engage cognitively with the topic of study, and (d) prepare for across-case analysis in multiple case studies (Miles et al., 2018). Pattern codes often consist of categories or themes, causes or explanations, relationships among people, and concepts or theoretical constructs (Miles et al., 2018). I considered these elements as I engaged in second-cycle coding to identify themes in the transcripts.

Throughout the first cycle and pattern coding processes I composed analytic memos to help make sense of the data. Creswell and Creswell (2018) describe how analytic memos support trustworthiness through member checks, or the sharing of data analysis with participants to ensure themes are being captured accurately. I engaged in this process throughout the data analysis process to ensure I was accurately understanding participants' experiences. As I engaged in coding, I also considered jottings, which are defined as the researcher's thoughts or reactions to the data (Miles et al., 2018). Jottings and analytic memos support emerging themes and ultimately contribute to assertion and proposition development (Miles et al., 2018). Assertion and proposition development is a process of formalizing findings from qualitative work. Miles and colleagues (2018) describe an assertion as a "declarative statement" which is supported by evidence, whereas a proposition suggests a conditional "if-then" or "why-because" (p. 93) which aligns with prediction or theory development.

Qualitative research is described as an iterative process and doesn't operate in a linear fashion (Merriam, 1998). As I identified emerging assertions and propositions, I returned to the transcripts to ensure that these themes were accurately reflected in the experiences of participants. I also developed a codebook and used a matrix display to track the prevalence and magnitude of emerging themes. I was intentional in ensuring that identified themes were present across more than a couple interviews and were addressed with some level of depth. Identification and checking of emerging themes were iterative and occurred throughout the data analysis process. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research is not dependent on specific metrics regarding sample size. Instead, qualitative researchers continue data collection until saturation is reached, which occurs when no new themes are emerging from the data (Stake, 2006). In the current study, each school had a small pool of individuals who met the criteria of the study, therefore there was a limit to how many participants I could engage in my study.

Observations

In addition to semi-structured interviews, I collected and analyzed other sources of data to triangulate and strengthen emerging findings. I engaged in observational experiences at both sites to gain a unique perspective of RPs in schools and encourage new areas of exploration for semi-structured interviews with participants. I observed several types of experiences such as staff trainings, family events, and classroom community-building experiences. Detailed notes including both descriptive and reflective interpretations from observational experiences were handwritten during observational experiences. Handwritten notes were also transcribed electronically. I used Miles and

72

colleagues' (2018) approach to coding to identify patterns and corroborate emerging themes from the interviews. Following each observational experience, I composed summaries of the experience to help organize the data. In these summaries I identified the emerging themes and thoughts on how it supported, challenged, or offered new information regarding RP implementation and experiences.

Document Analysis

For document analysis, I accessed publicly available spaces (e.g., school webpage) and reached out to my primary contact at each site for documents relevant to RPs. I engaged in Miles and colleagues' (2018) coding process to identify codes and emerging themes in the documents. I composed summaries of each document, to capture the purpose of the document, emerging themes, and considerations for the data. Information from the document analysis was compared to emerging themes from interviews to identify spaces where documents supported, challenged, or provided new insights into RP implementation.

Across-Case Analysis

Multiple case study contains two levels of analysis, *within*-case and *across*-case (Stake, 2006). For multiple case studies, it is beneficial to utilize both case-oriented and variable-oriented strategies for data analysis (Miles et al., 2018). Case-oriented strategies examine one case at a time then move to compare cases to one another, whereas variable-oriented strategies identify themes that are present across cases (Miles et al., 2018). Although I collected and analyzed data from both sites concurrently, I attempted to stagger interviews slightly to better understand each individual case prior to examining

across-cases. I primarily used a case-oriented strategy and focused understanding RP implementation and experiences at each site before examining across cases. To organize themes across cases, I used Stake's (2006) "matrix for generating theme-based assertions from case findings" worksheet (p.51) to help guide my process. This was helpful in organizing the data for each case prior to comparing across cases.

<p align="center">**Trustworthiness**</p>

Issues of reliability and validity are critical in empirical research, however, Creswell and Creswell (2018) describe "validity does not carry the same connotations in qualitative research that is does in quantitative research; nor is it a companion to reliability (examining stability) or generalizability (the external validity of applying results to new settings, people, or samples)" (p. 1999). Qualitative validity is concerned with how the researcher ensures the accuracy of findings and qualitative reliability ensures the researchers' approach is consistent (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To account for reliability and validity concerns, qualitative researchers undergo a rigorous process to establish and communicate their trustworthiness (Kline, 2011; Merriam, 1998). Trustworthiness is the degree to which a qualitative inquiry genuinely portrays the phenomenon of study and is composed of several elements including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this section I describe specific approaches I used to address the central elements of trustworthiness in my study.

Credibility

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the instrument, formulating questions of interest, collecting, and analyzing data through their own unique perspective (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Since the researcher is the instrument through which the entire study is conceptualized, analyzed, and communicated, steps must be taken to ensure that findings were drawn from information directly shared by participants. To ensure credibility I engaged in member checking with participants throughout the data analysis process and utilized methods to triangulate my data.

Member checks occur when the researcher presents participants with segments of analyzed data (e.g., memos or description of themes) to confirm the researcher's interpretation of the phenomenon of study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). During data collection and analysis, I completed analysis memos where I analyzed segments of data. I sent analysis memos and thoughts on tentative assertions to participants at several points during the data analysis process to confirm and validate emerging findings. This process was helpful in identifying any potential gaps in my understanding of RPs and created opportunities to address those gaps while actively engaged in data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Triangulation

Stake (2006) describes triangulation as "an effort to assure that the right information and interpretations have been obtained" (p. 35). Triangulation is especially important when developing assertions in case study research, as utilizing evidence from various sources strengthens assertions and provides ample evidence for the readers

(Creswell & Creswell, 2018). There are several ways researchers can triangulate and strengthen assertions such as using multiple observers (e.g., consulting with a research team), incorporating multiple perspectives (e.g., interviews with several individuals), and incorporating multiple forms of data (e.g., documents and interviews) (Stake, 2006). I engaged in triangulation through collecting multiple perspectives and analyzing several types of data (e.g., interviews, observation, document analysis).

One of the defining qualities of qualitative research suggests that there are multiple realities or ways in which meaning is constructed by participants (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, when studying a case composed of multiple individuals (e.g., teachers and non-teaching professionals), collecting multiple perspectives can strengthen findings (Stake, 2006). In the current study, each case is defined as a school community which includes many individuals (e.g., administrators, teachers, students, founders, or deans). I interviewed participants from a variety of positions within the school rather than rely solely on one type of position within the school (e.g., teachers). Obtaining multiple perspectives of RP implementation and experiences served to strengthen assertions derived from the study.

Stake (2006) describes how case study research is not limited to or defined by one single type of data and often incorporates several types. In addition to interviewing a range of individuals, I also collected and analyzed several forms of data including interviews, observation, and document analysis. When themes are derived from several converging sources of data, this supports the validity of the findings (Merriam, 1998). Observation and document analysis contributed unique perspectives and helped in my

understanding of RPs at each site. Moreover, these approaches were essential in supporting emerging themes from interview data.

Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research connects to the concept of generalizability, or the extent to which findings can be transferred and applied to other contexts or settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The concept of transferability presents a challenge for qualitative research, given that each case is unique. One way in which transferability can be enhanced is by providing detailed contextual information about the context of the study (Morrow, 2005). I was intentional in providing a thick, rich description of the research process and contextual information on the cases studied. This process was important so that readers are aware of the specific context in which the study was conducted (Morrow, 2005). Enhancing transparency about the conditions of the investigation allows readers the opportunity to draw conclusions about elements that may be transferable to other settings.

Dependability

Dependability aligns with the concept of reliability in quantitative research and is concerned with the stability of findings over time (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morrow, 2005). One way dependability can be supported is through using an audit trail, or materials that document the researcher's process throughout the study (Ryan- Nicholls & Will, 2009). An audit trail elucidates the entire research process and delineates how the researcher arrived at their assertions (Ryan-Nicholls & Will, 2009). The audit trail can include information on instrument development, raw data, and memos demonstrating data

analysis process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I engaged in consistent reflexive journaling and memo analyses to enhance dependability in my study.

To ensure trustworthiness, it is imperative for researchers to explore and express their unique positionality in relation to the research topic and clarify bias for transparency (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Rigor in qualitative research is dependent on the continual process of researcher reflexivity and reflection of personal biases throughout the data collection and analysis process (Tobin & Begley, 2004). It is critical that the researcher understand how their experiences, beliefs, or identities shape the way in which they experience the phenomenon or interact with the environment or participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Prior to collecting data, I reflected upon my experiences in schools with RP implementation and engaged in reflexive journaling regarding these experiences. I was intentional about using reflexive journaling to process personal opinions and emotional responses to interviews, observations, and document analysis. Following each experience with data collection or analysis, I engaged in journaling. I also jotted down thoughts or questions in my reflexive journal as they occurred throughout the study.

In addition to reflexive journaling, I engaged in memo analysis throughout the study. Analytic memos, or narratives where the researcher processes and analyzes portions of the data, are a tool for supporting trustworthiness through member checking (Miles et al., 2018). Memos were essential in helping me to analyze the data during data collection and confirm emerging themes with participants.

Confirmability

Confirmability is defined as the extent to which findings can be confirmed by other researchers and ensures that findings are not originating from the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One way in which confirmability can be supported is using a data auditor (Morrow, 2005). A data auditor is an individual who is responsible for checking portions of the data to confirm the researcher's emerging themes and assertions (Morrow, 2005). I consulted with a data auditor at two points throughout my data collection and analysis process. The auditor was a colleague who had years of experience working in schools and with the qualitative data analysis process. The data auditor was provided with de-identified portions of the transcripts, analysis memos, and the codebook. I met with the data auditor via Zoom to discuss insights and suggestions.

Summary

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the experiences of school staff (e.g., teachers and non-teaching professionals) across two charter high schools with RP implementation. I aimed to understand the challenges of RP implementation and how the COVID-19 pandemic influenced RP implementation and experiences. The current study also compared RP implementation and experiences across two unique school environments.

In this chapter I detailed how I used multiple case study methodology to investigate how RPs are implemented and experienced within each case and across cases. I described how I selected each case and engaged in sampling of interview participants. I conducted semi-structured interviews with eight school staff members at each site,

attended several observational experiences (e.g., trainings, classroom experiences, and family events) and analyzed public and internal procedural documents regarding RP implementation at each site.

I detailed my data analysis approach for interviews which involved (a) first-cycle coding (b) second-cycle coding/ pattern codes (c) examining jottings and analytic memos and (d) assertion and proposition development (Miles et al., 2018). I described my approach to collecting and analyzing alternative sources of data such as observational experiences and document analysis. I clarified how trustworthiness of the study was ensured through enhancing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The following chapter describes the study's findings within each case and across-cases.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the experiences of staff (e.g., teachers and non-teaching professionals) across two charter high schools with (a) RP implementation, (b) barriers to RP implementation, (c) how RPs have been changed by the pandemic and (d) to compare themes across cases. A purposeful sampling technique was used to identify interested participants who have worked in the school for at least three years. Snowball sampling was used to identify additional interview participants. Data analysis was conducted using an approach outlined by Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2018) which included first-cycle coding, pattern coding, examining jottings and analytic memos, and assertion and proposition development. Concurrent observation and document analysis were completed at both sites to triangulate emerging themes and identify other relevant factors for RP implementation. This chapter provides a summary of the study findings beginning with detailed implementation stories for each case. This chapter is organized by research question and provides a within-case analysis describing themes from each case followed by an across-case analysis. A discussion of supporting data from observation and document analysis concludes the chapter.

Research Questions Revisited

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the experiences of staff from two charter high schools who identify as implementing RPs. The following research questions were identified.

1. What are the experiences of staff (e.g., teachers and non-teaching professionals) with RP implementation in their school environment?

    1a. How are these experiences similar or different across cases?

2. What are the challenges or barriers to RP implementation experienced by staff in their school environment?

    2a. How are these experiences similar or different across cases?

3. What are the experiences of school staff with implementing RPs during the COVID-19 pandemic in their school environment?

    3a. How are these experiences similar or different across cases?

Case 1 South High School

South is a 9-12 charter high school serving approximately 400 students in a suburb of a large mid-western city in the United States. South is known for being a highly inclusive and supportive school. There are approximately 25 staff employed at South. South has a traditional administrative structure with a principal, assistant principal, and two school counselors. South does not have a position dedicated to school climate or RP implementation.

Original Implementation Plan

Upon learning about RPs in schools, an administrator at South sought out literature to learn more about this approach. The administrator hired an educational consultant to host an intensive multiple-day training with a small group of staff members at South. Staff were trained in tier one restorative interventions such leading community-building circles, facilitating respect agreements, and using restorative conversations in the classroom to resolve issues. Trained staff identified themselves as the "Restorative Justice League" (RJL) and hosted meetings every few weeks throughout the 2019-2020 school year to discuss and lead RP implementation at South.

The original implementation plan was to gradually scale-up RPs each year into the next higher grade level, with the RJL serving as experts and leaders in this process. South's first year of formal RP circle implementation was during the 2019-2020 school year. While teachers assumed leadership in promoting and implementing tier one universal practices, targeted tier two and three interventions (e.g., mediations) were primarily conducted by administrators.

The COVID-19 Pandemic

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March of 2020, South transitioned to asynchronous virtual learning for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. Community-building circles were halted due to the challenge of navigating the transition to virtual learning. The 2020-2021 school year at South was primarily conducted via synchronous and asynchronous virtual learning, with the first three quarters fully virtual and the fourth quarter as a hybrid option. The hybrid option allowed students to return to

83

the school two days per week for in-person instruction, however, this option was not utilized by many students.

The 2021-2022 School Year

During the summer of 2020, the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and the subsequent Black Lives Matter protests increased attention on the pervasive issues of racial inequity and police brutality against the Black community in the US. The administrator at South, who sought out RP training originally, expressed hearing teachers request more antiracist approaches in the classroom. In response to these requests, the administrator introduced Democratic Classrooms training for a staff prior to the 2021-2022 school year. Democratic Classrooms aligns with several elements of RPs by encouraging shared power in the classroom and the development of strong community relationships. Prior to the 2021-2022 school year, South decided not to have a consistent schedule for circles, but rather, chose to implement class meetings. Class meetings are a component of Democratic Classrooms and allow space for students and teachers to connect and handle class issues. Although class meetings are different from circle processes, there is some overlap with the focus on community-building and resolving issues collaboratively.

At the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year, staff at South experienced two events which significantly affected morale. Prior to the start of the school year, a staff member used an offensive racial term while presenting in a staff meeting, resulting in resignations. Approximately one month after this event, South experienced another significant loss, an administrator who was a central member of the school community left

84

their position. Due to legal limitations associated with discussing changes in personnel, little to no information was shared among the school community. These two events had a significant effect on the experiences of participants in the current study.

Case 2 North High School

North is a charter high school serving approximately 250 students in grades 9-12 in a suburb of a large mid-western city in the United States. North is part of a family of schools which include another high school and a K-8 that feeds into North. North has a high percentage of students who require academic accommodations for learning (e.g., Individual Education Plans). There are approximately 25 staff employed at North. North has a unique administrative structure, with three co-deans who collectively share power. North recently added a school counseling position and currently employs two school counselors to support students.

Original Implementation Plan

North's first formal introduction to RPs occurred approximately six years ago. At this time, North hired a teacher who had personal experience as a restorative justice mediator and recognized the benefits of using RPs in a school environment. This teacher sought out training from the International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP) to better understand how to apply RPs in schools. North created a position focused on school climate with the primary objective of training staff in RPs and leading RP implementation. However, during the 2020-2021 school year, this position was transferred to another school in the district and there is no longer a position dedicated to RP implementation at North.

The COVID-19 Pandemic

In March 2020, North transitioned to virtual learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. North continued to use virtual learning throughout the 2020-2021 school year and used a combination of synchronous and asynchronous approaches. Over the course of virtual learning, attempts were made to continue PACK (a dedicated time for circles and community-building activities in the classroom) virtually for students and staff. There proved to be significant challenges with building community in an online setting. North returned to fully in-person instruction at the start of the 2021-2022 school year.

Research Question 1

In this section, I describe the identified themes for each individual case regarding the first research question: what are the experiences of staff with RP implementation in their school environment?

Within-Case Analysis of South High School

Participants at South described how RPs operate and shared a range of experiences with using a restorative approach. Table 5 outlines the prominent themes derived from interviews regarding this research question. Themes in this chapter are labeled to assist with organization and include information on the research question, case, and theme or subtheme number (e.g., RQ1.S.T1 = Research Question 1, South, Theme 1 and RQ1.S.ST1.1= Research Question 1, South, Subtheme 1 under Theme 1).

Table 5

South High School Themes for Research Question 1

- [RQ1.S.T1] Natural Alignment of RPs
  - [RQ1.S.ST1.1] RPs Align on a Personal Level
  - [RQ1.S.ST1.2] RPs Align with What We Do Here
- [RQ1.S.T2] Relationship-Building Experiences are Embedded into Various Spaces
- [RQ1.S.T3] The Preventative Nature of Informal RPs in the Classroom
  - [RQ1.S.ST3.1] Modeling Relationship Skills to Build Connections
  - [RQ1.S.ST3.2] Using Restorative Conversations Early to De-Escalate
- [RQ1.S.T4] Structured Flexibility
- [RQ1.S.T5] RPs Strengthen Student-Teacher Relationships
  - [RQ1.S.ST5.1] RPs as a Tool for Teachers to Better Understand Students
- [RQ1.S.T6] RPs Empower Students and Enhance Student Voice

[RQ1.S.T1] Natural Alignment of RPs

Staff at South described how RPs naturally align on several levels, including (a) alignment with personal beliefs and (b) alignment with school values and approaches.

[RQ1.S.ST1.1] RPs Align on a Personal Level. Participants described how RPs align with their existing approach to working with students. Staff at South were first formally introduced to the terminology of "restorative practices" in the summer of 2019. However, participants described the terminology of RPs as simply putting a name to the work they have been doing for years. Casey, a non-teaching professional, spoke about their first time hearing the term 'restorative practices," stating "(…) this was something I was doing already, this is how I view things anyways (…) the term didn't come into my brain until that time [2019], but I've been doing it." Jordan, a teacher, explained how the

element of relationship building with students connected with their own beliefs, stating "my understanding of restorative practices have to do with relationship building, and that's why it has been a really good fit for my teaching practice, because it's all about relationship building." Prior to the formal introduction to RPs, several staff members felt connected to this approach.

[RQ1.S.ST1.2] **RPs Align with What We Do Here.** Participants at South described how a restorative approach to working with students has been present long before the official RP training leading into the 2019-2020 school year. Jessie, a non-teaching professional, described how restorative elements such as "talking students through an issue and mediating conflicts between students rather than relying solely on punishment and hard consequences to teach lessons" has always been emphasized at South. Jessie continued to describe that the formal introduction of RPs "was amplifying, formalizing, and systemizing something that was already happening." Jessie spoke about the alignment of RPs with the values of the school, and how RPs are one avenue to enact these values, stating,

> The values are, and I don't mean this in a derogatory way, but they're just words, you actually have to practice them. I think restorative practices kind of puts rails on that. This is what kindness can look like, this is what problem solving and communication can look like, the practice of how we actually would put the values into action.

Avery, a teacher, described how a restorative approach is not completely new to South, but that the RP training was helpful in formalizing the process, stating,

We have always taken a different approach to discipline, we hadn't really done

capital R restorative justice, but we had always leaned in that direction. The

concepts were already pretty familiar to me, but I really enjoyed the way he

[external trainer] gave us specific tools.

Several participants at South described how RPs align with or overlap with other

school-wide initiatives, such as Democratic Classrooms. Jessie, a non-teaching

professional, described the connection between the two, stating, "there are a lot of

parallels between the two, they are different, but it's a lot of that proactive piece, instead

of the reactive piece, and building those relationships to be able to handle whenever

conflict happens." Logan, a non-teaching professional, described how Democratic

Classrooms "dovetails with restorative practices." Although South has changed course in

their RP implementation, some of the essential elements are present in their new

approach (Democratic Classrooms).

[RQ1.S.T2] Relationship-Building Experiences are Embedded into Various Spaces

Staff at South are intentional in creating spaces for growing relationships between

staff and students. Opportunities to build meaningful relationships were discussed across

various spaces such as classroom experiences, events hosted by the school, and intensive

individualized experiences (e.g., ISS). During the 2021-2022 school year, South

implemented POGs, or unique elective class experiences for students (e.g., songwriting,

cooking). Jessie, a non-teaching professional, described how teachers can design POGs

based on their personal interests and cultivate connections with students, stating,

89

It's a neat way for students to get to know teachers outside of their discipline area, there's a teacher who is doing a cooking POG, like "let me teach you the basics of cooking, let's talk about cooking" and I think a lot of times that helps students recognize that teachers are people too with other interests outside of what they do in their classroom.

In addition to creating opportunities for relationship building in curricular spaces, South has utilized "home time" over the past two years (formally known as advisory in 2019-2020) as a non-academic time dedicated to building community and individual connections. One teacher, Peyton, described about how they used circles in advisory during the first year of implementation to discuss and connect on larger societal issues. Peyton also elaborated on home time and described it as an opportunity to build deeper relationships with students and their families, and to highlight positive behaviors, stating,

(…) to be able to call and say, "these are really good things that they're [the student] doing." I got to call for everybody instead of just calling for kids that were struggling. As teachers, we often don't get to have that time to say, "hey you're going a really good job, thank you, and how else can I support you?" I wish we had more of that all the time.

Staff at South were intentional in creating events which encourage relationship building between students and teachers. One non-teaching professional, Jessie, described the teacher talent show which is an annual event where the teachers perform unique talents for the students. Jessie described this event as a powerful experience for relationship building, stating, "(…) it helps so much coming back from winter break with

90

relationships between students and teachers (…) it gives them a chance to see that we can be goofy too and we are people, and we like to have fun."

In addition to school-wide opportunities for relationship building, individualized interventions such as in-school suspension (ISS) are also focused on relationship building. Jessie described the goal of ISS, stating, " (…) to build relationships with that student, to figure out why they did the thing that they did, and to essentially work to help that student make it right." During the 2019-2020 school year, South had a position dedicated to ISS, however, returning in 2021-2022 this position no longer exists. Currently, South's ISS plan is being redeveloped. At South, relationship building between staff and students is a priority and is intentionally embedded into curricular decisions, events, and interventions with students.

[RQ1.S.T3] The Preventative Nature of Informal RPs in the Classroom

Teachers at South described how they use RPs in their classroom to connect with students. This theme was described exclusively by teachers in the sample, and consisted of two subthemes, (a) the modeling of relationship skills to build connections with students, and (b) how teachers use restorative conversations once issues arise in the classroom. These subthemes illustrate how RPs are used at the universal tier one level through building relationships and for targeted efforts to address emerging behavior issues.

[RQ.1.S.ST3.1] **Modeling Relationship Skills to Build Connections**. Dakota, a teacher, described how they recently supported a student who was dealing with a social issue, "(…) I tried to just really show them that I am listening and that my concern is

genuine." In this excerpt, Dakota was intentional about using active listening skills to support the student. Peyton shared how they model honest and transparent communication when students express feelings of anxiety about coursework, stating,

> (…) they'll feel better about being anxious if I've communicated to them "hey, this is normal, and I get really frustrated and anxious about this too." That reframes it, so even if it doesn't take the feeling away, at least they know this is normal and these are my ways of dealing, we can talk about how to handle it.

Modeling is identified as an important component of RPs in schools. At South, teachers shared ways they model vulnerability and important social emotional learning skills in their interactions with students.

[RQ.1.S.ST3.2] Using Restorative Conversations Early to De-Escalate.

Teachers at South described how they use RPs when responding to student behavior issues in the classroom. Rather than sending students to the principal's office for behavior issues, teachers at South first attempt to talk or check-in with students individually. Teachers shared how they give students options to take a break on their own in the hallway to cool down or to speak with an available staff member (e.g., school counselor). Peyton described how they redirect class activities to make time for a restorative conversation with an upset student, and shared the questions they ask to better understand the student, stating,

> (…) ok come out in the hallway for a second with me, "let's chat, how you feeling today? What's been going on? Why do you feel this way? Now that you've told me how you feel, is it something that I did?" That's a big question that I like to

ask, "is it me? Is it class related? Or is it bigger? Is it issues at home or is it another class? What's it related to? What is this frustration that you have built up right now?" And that really helps to get the core of the issue.

Since teachers oversee a room full of students, it can be difficult to find time to pull a student in the hallway to have a restorative conversation. Dakota described how they navigate this challenge by reaching out to other adults in the building to support the student if they are unable to make time in the moment.

[RQ.1.S.T4] Structured Flexibility

Staff at South described how consistency with scheduling, circle implementation, and having clearly identified interventions is helpful. However, staff also noted how critical flexibility is when facilitating community-building circles. One teacher, Dakota, described how consistency and having a routine with circles was helpful in their classroom, stating, "once we got into the routine of doing circles on a weekly basis, saying 'every Wednesday we're going to circle up' and we had all the routines in place, it went pretty well." One teacher, Blake, shared how a lack of consistency can harm RP implementation and experiences for students, stating, "it wasn't where we were consistently doing restorative practices, I think the lack of expectations of what those 35 minutes should be contributed to the low buy-in, at least that's my theory." Blake later described how having circle lesson plans from the RLJ were helpful for providing structure, stating, "we must have had 20 or 25 different circle lesson plans that we could call back to. That level of organization and preparedness going into the year was really

great." In the first year of implementation, circles were scheduled but teachers had flexibility in facilitating the circles.

Although staff spoke positively about the consistency and structured circle lessons during the first year of implementation, participants also described that they utilize flexibility in how they facilitate circles. One teacher, Jordan, described how they were flexible with adapting the circle experience, stating, "I had that teacher remix brain (…) how can I compile it with this thing I did already in my room, or this other training?" Another teacher, Avery, described adjustments they made by adding their own questions for a recent circle experience focused on pandemic experiences.

Although balancing consistency and flexibility was described as an important consideration with RP implementation at South, some teachers expressed concerns over the frequency of circles. Avery, a teacher, described how they were cautious about facilitating too many circles during the first year of implementation (2019-2020 school year) and the effect it could have on students, stating,

> I was a little bit concerned because it was such a brand-new thing, everyone's like 'let's do circles.' I was really cautious about overdoing it because I think sometimes with stuff like that the kids get to a point where they're like "oh my God, are we doing this again?" and it becomes a cliché almost and then sort of a joke and I really like a lot of things about this, so I didn't want to overdo it because I didn't want to ruin it for everybody."

Staff at South described the benefits of having both structure and flexibility in how they implemented RPs in the classroom with students.

[RQ.1.S.T5] RPs Strengthen Student-Teacher Relationships

Staff at South described how RPs are a tool to strengthen relationships with their students. Jessie, a non-teaching professional, described the benefits of student-teacher mediations in clearing up miscommunications and repairing relationships. Another non-teaching professional, Logan, emphasized the reconnection and repairing that occurs in mediations, stating, "(…) having that opportunity to have dedicated time with that student, to really talk through and reconnect and repair damage to the relationship, it's really valuable."

In addition to student-teacher mediations, participants also described how restorative conversations and circles in the classrooms serve to strengthen relationships. One teacher, Dakota, described how restorative conversations encourage communication stating "it's not just sending someone to the office because they have done something that you didn't want them to do, it separates you from the student. The student-teacher relationship is essential, and it helps to build that rapport." Dakota continued to describe how circles can be an opportunity for teachers to express vulnerability and connect with students as humans, stating,

> Circles taught me the importance of being vulnerable. I think that was one of the best things about circles, it asks you to be completely open about whatever the questions or topics that you're talking about and gets you on the same level, a more human level, and removes that student-teacher divide and brings everyone down to the more personal human level.

95

***[RQ.1.S.ST5.1]* RPs as a Tool for Teachers to Better Understand Students.**

Staff at South described positive experiences or perceived benefits of using a restorative

approach with students. Jessie, a non-teaching professional, described their experience

with a successful circle while they were teaching. They described how they had

established strong relationships with one class and when they had brought in a student-

teacher to take over a portion of the teaching time, the students began exhibiting

disrespectful behaviors. Jessie facilitated a reparative circle and from this experience,

Jessie better understood the root of the resistance. Students described feeling "betrayed"

by Jessie's absence from the room. Jessie stated, "They told me their experiences and

none of it was about my student teacher. A lot of it was that they didn't feel like I was

listening to them anymore, they didn't feel like they were being heard." Once Jessie

heard the students' perspectives and understood the underlying emotions which

contributed to the behavior issues, the class collaboratively identified solutions. Jessie

described how RPs were successful at getting to the root of the problem, stating,

> I could have went about it with punishment, "it doesn't matter what you guys say,
>
> you have to listen to my student teacher, she's in charge and I don't care." Or, it
>
> could have went, "okay, I'm back now and my student teacher is over here at the
>
> side, you guys win." I think with restorative justice it's not necessarily a winning
>
> or losing situation, it's coming to an understanding of where everybody is at, how
>
> they are feeling and how do we move forward?

Casey, a non-teaching professional, described the benefits of students feeling heard in

small group discussions or mediations, stating, "students get their chance to talk about

what's truly happening, have their moment and feel heard, there's a great amount of healing there." RPs at South created an opportunity to open the lines of communication between staff and students and was identified as a tool to hear students' perspectives and experiences.

[RQ.1.S.T6] RPs Empower Students and Enhance Student Voice

Staff at South described how RPs can be a tool to empower students and enhance student voice. One teacher, Peyton, described how the format of community-building circles created space for introverted students to share their perspectives if they felt comfortable. Peyton continued by stating how they are intentional about creating opportunities for students to have a voice in the creation of the syllabus expectations, stating, "a lot of it is my expectations for them so I tried to go through and have the conversation about the syllabus, not just this is what I expect but also, what do you guys feel?" Another teacher, Jordan, described how they were intentional about collaborating with students in a reparative classroom circle to address the issue of disruptive phone use this year. Jordan described how the students formulated potential solutions for the issue and this was effective.

Logan, a non-teaching professional, described how involving students who have been harmed in the resolution process can be powerful, stating, "there's great value in asking the student who's been harmed, 'what would you like to see come out of this?' And try to make that happen if it's within reason." One benefit of RPs in schools is that it seeks to support the individual harmed rather than focusing solely on punishing the

individual who caused the harm. Participants and South actively aimed to involve

students in formulating classroom expectations and resolving issues of harm.

Within-Case Analysis of North High School

Participants and North described a range of experiences with RP implementation

at their school. Table 6 outlines the themes for this individual case.

Table 6

North High School Themes for Research Question 1

- [RQ1.N.T1] RPs Align with What We Do as a School
- [RQ1.N.T2] Intentional Spaces for Relationship Building and RPs
- [RQ1.N.T3] Flexibility of RPs to Meet the Needs of Students
- [RQ1.N.T4] Staff PACK as a Tool to Build a Strong Staff Community
- [RQ1.N.T5] RPs are Reflected at the Staff Level Through Collaboration and
  Shared Power
    - o [RQ1.N.ST5.1] Collaboration with Supporting Students
    - o [RQ1.N.ST5.2] Collaboration in Administrative Decision-Making and
      Planning
- [RQ1.N.T6] RPs Strengthen Student-Teacher Relationships
- [RQ1.N.T7] RPs as a Tool for Student SEL Growth

[RQ1.N.T1] RPs Align with What We Do as a School

Staff at North described how RPs align with the school mission and have been

present before the formal terminology of RPs was introduced. North utilized PACK with

students, which is a daily 35-minute time dedicated to community-building circles and

relationship-focused activities. Taylor, a non-teaching professional, described how PACK

was developed as a space to build relationships, which is essential to both RPs and

North's values, stating,

98

We were founded on principles that are related to our practices. We have PACKS (…) so everyone feels connected and that's a key part of it. I think of restorative practices as building a foundation so there's something to restore if restoration is needed later on.

Kai, a non-teaching professional, described that before the formal introduction and terminology of RPs at North, "discipline has always been very contextual." One teacher, Charlie, echoed this sentiment and described how RPs have been present before the terminology, stating,

A lot of it is honestly stuff that we were doing, we just didn't use the formal terminology (…) but we were always sitting in circles, we always had that designated time where we were doing social emotional stuff, we've just put different labels on it throughout the years.

Although North has only been doing formal RPs for six years, staff felt that the underlying principles were present long before this transition.

[RQ1.N.T2] Intentional Spaces for Relationship Building and RPs

Staff at North described places and spaces in the school environment where RPs are deliberately utilized. Common spaces identified by participants included community-building experiences in PACK, and responsive interventions such as lunch detention or ISS. PACK is a central component of RPs at North, with dedicated time for community and relationship building embedded into the school day. Taylor, a non-teaching professional, described the goal of PACKs is that everyone feels connected to an adult in the building and that PACK feels like "their family within the school." Carson, a teacher,

described how it is beneficial for teachers to have PACK with the same students they teach since they already know their students and can better support their academic goals, stating,

> (…) as their teacher I have a really good pulse on how all the sophomores are doing and since I already know how they're doing with their academics, it makes it a lot easier to push them to excel in their classes and make sure that they're being successful.

While PACK is a universal preventative community and relationship building experience at North, there are responsive spaces where RPs are used (e.g., lunch detention, ISS). Kai, a non-teaching professional, described how lunch detentions are strategic in using co-play (e.g., playing a game such as Connect Four) to connect with students and engage in meaningful conversation, stating, "You have to slowly build to it, co-play is where the guard goes down and then you can have real conversations." Kai described how the data on ISS and lunch detentions has shown that using RPs has been effective, "students who are having a half day of ISS are by and large feeling more connected when they leave than when they come in, that's good stuff, those are the things we want to have and honestly, we're doing a lot of work." Another non-teaching professional, Taylor, shared an experience of tailoring ISS to the needs of the individual student, stating,

> I've got a kid who had an issue in (subject) class, so his 'consequence' was I pulled him out of there. I used to teach (subject). I tutor him while he's here. That's the best punishment in the world because he gets the help he needs; we're

working on the relationship and talking about the conflict with the teacher in there

and how we can resolve that.

North was strategic in using a range of spaces for relationship building and often through informal approaches such as playing games or conversation.

[RQ1.N.T3] Flexibility of RPs to Meet the Needs of Students

PACK establishes a specific time of the day for building community connections, however, there is flexibility in how PACK lessons are delivered. Although teachers are provided with PACK lesson plans, teachers have the opportunity to adapt the lesson to meet the needs of their students. Hunter, a non-teaching professional, described how they use a semi-structured approach to PACK, stating,

> In the more structured, you have to sit in the circle and follow these guidelines. It still feels like school, and it's not that it doesn't work, it's just that for my kids, a couple of them probably would have done just fine with the more structured PACK but most of my kids do not and it [a semi-structured approach] has worked.

Hunter described several fun activities they integrate into PACK to build community such as taking a walk to the local taco truck, creating a PACK Olympics to compete with other classes, and hosting a gift exchange. Carson, another teacher, shared how they were flexible with PACK during virtual learning to create a fun space for students to laugh and connect with one another, stating,

> I had a PACK student who wanted to be macho and stoic, and so everyday I would put on a cute animal video to see if I could get him to say "aw," like a

101

sheep in a sweater. We would just do goofy stuff like that, and they really liked it.

I think for a lot of them it ended up being they were able to make friends they

didn't previously have through that.

Although PACK was identified as space for developing student-teacher connections,

student relationships and connections can also be cultivated during this valuable time.

[RQ1.N.T4] Staff PACK as a Tool to Build a Strong Staff Community

Staff at North described how RPs are replicated on the staff level via Staff

PACKS and contribute to the development of a strong staff community. One teacher,

Carson, described how Staff PACK mirrors the student experience, stating,

We typically do our own staff PACK where there is a reading, we do a greeting

all together and we're all sitting in a circle. There's a shared activity and space for

people to just share. We definitely focus on trying to replicate a lot of our student

protocols and making sure that everybody feels like they have a voice.

Charlie, a teacher, described how staff circles range from small group circles or whole-

staff circles. Charlie elaborated on the types of questions and the content of conversations

in Staff circles, stating,

It's like, "how are you doing? What's difficult right now? What do you have

going on? Where are you at? What's preventing you from fill in the blank?" They

[staff circles] are more emotion-based conversations, it's a safe space to talk (…)

really, it's just a way to process things.

Staff PACK at North is utilized for building community among staff and as a way to

check-in emotionally with how teachers are doing and as a source of support. One

teacher, Carson, described how Staff PACKS are a positive space for teachers who are stressed, stating, "it's been a pretty good outlet of getting to connect back with colleagues and have just a moment a bit removed from the stress of the school year." Several participants described feeling connected to and supported by their colleagues. Taylor, a non-teaching professional, described how during the interview process, they sensed that the school had a "close knit community" and contributed to their decision to work at North.

[RQ1.N.T5] RPs are Reflected at the Staff Level Through Collaboration and Shared Power

Collaboration among staff was identified as common experience when it came to (a) supporting students with behavior issues and (b) with some administrative decision-making at North.

[RQ1.N.ST5.1] Collaboration with Supporting Students. When issues arise in the classroom, teachers are encouraged to engage in restorative conversations with students to get them back on track, however, sometimes more intensive support is needed. Denver, a non-teaching professional, described the student support system at North, which is the process by which teachers reach out to staff in the building for support with challenging student behaviors. When teachers need extra support with student issues, a message is sent out to a collaborative team of individuals in the building, Denver described, "the student support email list goes to the counseling team, IST, the administrators, and the instructional coach. So essentially, it's like, hey something is happening, we needed help, flag down someone." Hunter, a non-teaching professional, described how student support messages are prioritized and relationships are taken into

103

consideration, stating, "typically it's whoever has the best relationship with that student will try to respond first, but if something's happening and I'm the only one available then that's what it's going to be." Hunter went on to describe the student support process is intended to give students a space to process, collaboratively discuss solutions, and get back to class, stating,

> A lot of times its students being disruptive (…) so we come in and have that conversation, "hey what's going on? Why are you struggling today?" A lot of times it's "well, the teacher made me mad" or "so and so pissed me off" and so we have a conversation about that "okay what happened? What can we do?" And the goal is always to get them back down to a place where they can go back to class as soon as possible.

Although teachers are encouraged to address issues restoratively in the classroom first, North has a system to support students and teachers when behavior issues occur.

[RQ1.N.ST5.2] Collaboration with Administrative Decision-Making and Planning. Not only is staff collaboration critical in supporting struggling students and teachers, but staff collaboration is also present in administrative decision-making on campus. North's administrative structure is unique, with three co-equal Deans as opposed to a traditional Principal and Assistant Principal structure. Shared decision-making is present in the hiring and interview process, in leading training or staff PACK, and in rostering student PACKS.

Denver, a non-teaching professional, described their experience interviewing at North, stating "the whole staff is invited to come and ask you questions and listen to you

talk. I did my interview with probably ten staff members." Taylor, a non-teaching professional, described the democratic nature of the hiring process, stating "staff hires the staff, so we vote. If we've got two staff interviews and two people for a position, the staff will decide. The administrators don't decide who to hire." One core element of RPs is eliminating power differentials and creating space for everyone to have a voice. This is reflected in the way that hiring decisions are made at North.

Collaboration among staff is also present in Staff PACK. Charlie, a teacher, described how staff are encouraged to lead a Staff PACK and that these experiences are not always led by administration. The student PACK lesson plans are also collaboratively developed by staff in the building. Taylor, a non-teaching professional, described who contributes to PACK lessons, "PACK leaders make new lessons as needed, there's some school-wide lessons that Deans or the Instructional Coach writes that are out into the ether for everyone to use as needed, the PBIS team writes lessons." Collaboration is also present in the process of creating rosters for student PACKS. Charlie, a teacher, described how when they roster PACKS, "we try to get input from each other about who did well together, who shouldn't be together, that kind of stuff." This process was echoed by Taylor, a non-teaching professional, who described how and why this process is important, stating, "the PACK leaders decide what the PACKS are going to be after the first four weeks, so that we can be sure that every kid has the best chance of being with an adult they can connect with well." Administrative decision-making at North is unique, with a collaborative Dean structure and several spaces where staff are encouraged to participate in decision-making and planning.

105

[RQ1.N.T6] RPs Strengthen Student-Teacher Relationships

Although participants at North described a range of difficult experiences with RPs, participants also shared some benefits of using a restorative approach, such as the strengthening of student-teacher relationships. Kai, a non-teaching professional, described how a restorative conversation with a student in lunch detention helped the student understand why Kai won't let him leave class early. Kai described how they communicated their concern for the student's safety, stating,

> I explained to him what happens during an active shooter training and how we are trained against our impulses to keep doors locked, regardless of who was in the hallway, and he could see on my face that I meant what I was saying. All the sudden he was like "oh."

Restorative conversations create opportunities for staff to be honest and vulnerable with students and can be one way staff communicate their care for students.

Taylor, a non-teaching professional, described how assigning ISS instead of traditional suspension has been beneficial because it keeps students in the building and creates a space for restorative conversations and relationship building. Denver, another non-teaching professional, described how their most successful experiences with RPs have been in student-teacher mediations because "kids get to see teachers have emotions and kids get to understand that their teachers are not robots, and they are humans that have feelings." Denver continued by describing the effect these experiences can have on teachers, stating "[mediations] allow the teachers to see that these kids are human as well." This theme illustrates how restorative experiences at North, ranging from informal

106

conversations to more formal mediations, contributed to enhancing the relationships between students and teachers.

[RQ1.N.T7] RPs as a Tool for Student SEL Growth

Participants at North described how RPs were a tool for students to practice and enhance their own social emotional learning skills. Hunter, a non-teaching professional, shared how a lot of social emotional learning is "learned in the moment" and staff can help students work through issues as they occur. For example, Hunter described "sitting someone down saying 'okay, imagine somebody called you a bitch. How would you feel?' As opposed to that literally just happened, let's identify these emotions, it really does make a difference." This excerpt illustrates how restorative conversations and questions can help guide students through identification and processing of emotions, which are important social emotional learning skills.

In addition to practicing emotional identification and processing, RPs actively involve students in problem-solving, which is another important social emotional learning skill for students. Taylor, a non-teaching professional, described RPs as "trying to get to the bottom of things and help kids go through that process rather than us just figuring out what happened and telling them to feel better about it." Another non-teaching professional, Kai, described one successful experience where a class developed their own behavior management system. Kai explained that students in this class were struggling with behavior issues returning from lunch and following a circle, the students collectively identified issues and subsequently created a character and a chart to visually monitor their behavior. Kai described, "these kids called one another out, they took

accountability for their own behaviors, and they acknowledged that they had been ding-dongs to their teacher." Carson, a teacher, described the long-term social emotional benefits of RPs for students, stating, "RPs can actually help students grow into adults that are very cognizant of how to move forward after any sort of incident, accident or mistake." Carson continued to describe how these skills are critical for students' futures, "it is a much more successful way for them to prepare for their futures and especially thinking about soft skills for job settings."

Research Sub Question 1a Across-Case Analysis

The aim of research sub question 1a was to understand how participants' experiences with RP implementation were similar or different from one another across cases. There were similarities in experiences identified across both cases (see Table 7).

Table 7

Across-Case Analysis Research Question 1a

	RP Alignment	Spaces for Relationship Building	Informal RPs	Strong Staff Community	Staff Collab.	Flexibility	Consistency & Flexibility	Strengthens Student-Teacher Relationship	Strengthens Students
South	X	X	X				X	X	X
North	X	X		X	X	X		X	X

Participants in both cases described how RPs naturally align with how the schools have been operating prior to their formal introduction to RPs. However, at South, participants also described how RPs align with their personal beliefs in addition to alignment at the school-level. Participants across cases also described various spaces where RPs or relationship-building efforts were embedded into school experiences (e.g., South: events, POGs, North: lunch detention and ISS). Both cases were intentional in their integration of relationship-building opportunities across universal (e.g., South: Home time, North: PACK) and individualized interventions (e.g., South: ISS, North: lunch detention and ISS).

At South, participants focused more heavily on the preventative nature of RPs in the classroom and what these practices can look like when building relationships (e.g., modeling relationship skills) and responding early to instances of harm (e.g., using restorative conversations to de-escalate situations). Whereas participants at North described how RPs were present at the staff-level via Staff PACK and feeling a strong sense of staff community. RPs were also reflected in the degree of collaboration among staff at North. The staff at North were collaborative and share power in how students are supported as well as with some administrative decision-making (e.g., hiring, rostering PACKs).

Participants in both cases described the benefits of being flexible with implementing RPs to meet the needs of their students. However, there were some differences in how this theme was described. At South, participants described the benefits of having structure and consistency with implementing circles in addition to flexibility.

North and South had overlapping themes regarding the benefits of RPs for students.

Participants across both cases described how RPs strengthen student-teacher relationships

and were beneficial for student SEL skills and empowering students.

<h1 style="text-align:center">Research Question 2</h1>

This section details the themes for each individual case for research question two:

what are the experiences of staff regarding the challenges or barriers to RP

implementation in their school environment?

Within-Case Analysis of South High School

Staff at South described several challenges with RP implementation. Table 8

outlines themes for the within-case analysis of South for this research question.

Table 8

South High School Themes for Research Question 2

- [RQ2.S.T1] Engaging Students in RPs is Difficult
    - [RQ2.S.ST1.1] Students Unlearning Traditional Discipline and Learning RPs
- [RQ2.S.T2] Being Restorative Requires Time
- [RQ2.S.T3] Feeling That RPs Are Not Consistently Used Among Staff

---

[RQ2.S.T1] Engaging Students in RPs is Difficult

Staff members at South described challenges with engaging students in the

restorative process due to limitations with student maturity level and comfort with

expressing vulnerability. A subtheme was also identified specific to students needing to

unlearn traditional disciplinary expectations and learn how a restorative approach

<div style="text-align:center">111</div>

operates. One teacher, Avery, described a difficult experience engaging a particular group of students in the mediation process, stating,

> We started out with saying "okay this is what we're here to do and can you agree to do this?" and sometimes they would just be like "absolutely not I don't want to be here, and I don't want to talk to that person."

Successful mediations are dependent on students willingly engaging in the process. Anything short of student's complete investment in the process can pose challenges and result in unsuccessful experiences.

Participants described wanting RPs to be more student-led, with students serving as circle facilitators or peer mediators. However, leading restorative experiences can pose challenges, especially for students who may not be equipped with critical SEL skills. Jessie, a non-teaching professional, described how in a recent circle experience discussing the pandemic, some student leaders struggled with managing classroom behaviors. Avery, a teacher, described how the emotional work of engaging in RPs can be more difficult for students than receiving punitive consequences, stating,

> It takes a lot of effort on their part, if a kid has done something wrong, or messed up, or caused some harm, it's a lot easier for them to just get punished and serve a lunch detention or suspension than it is to actually have to deal with it.

[RQ2.S.ST1.1] Students Unlearning Traditional Discipline and Learning RPs. This subtheme was primarily discussed among non-teaching professionals. These individuals described the challenge of helping students to unlearn traditional discipline and learn how RPs operate. Jessie, a non-teaching professional, described the importance

of reframing administrative roles for students, stating, "(…) to have students view administrators as someone who is not there to get them in trouble but somebody that is willing to work with them to solve problems is hard." Another non-teaching professional, Logan, echoed this sentiment by stating, "I saw with discipline, people seeing it as a weapon to use against other people (…) administrators are not there as a hammer, they're there to coach you." In this excerpt, Logan addresses the expectations that students often place on administration to serve as an enforcer of discipline rather than someone to support them through conflict resolution experiences.

Avery, a teacher, described how students expected to see tangible and familiar disciplinary consequences (e.g., suspension) and how students can feel that nothing was done without seeing these actions. Avery described their experience with educating students about restorative approaches, stating,

> I sit down with kids to explain, okay so this kid called you the F word. If we send them away, they're just going to keep doing that to somebody else. It's going to negatively impact their life. It's going to disrupt their education. It's not okay for them to call you that but what if instead we keep them at school, and they learn about why it's not okay?

Students at South struggled with not seeing traditional measures taken regarding instances of harm. In this excerpt, Avery encouraged the student to engage in perspective-taking and consider how an instance of harm can be used as a learning moment.

[RQ2.S.T2] Being Restorative Requires Time

All participants at South described not having enough time to dedicate to RPs. Staff described challenges in having enough time to get interventions off the ground, not having enough time to resolve conflicts, and not having enough time to go deep with circle conversations. One teacher, Avery, described how this year has been difficult to find time for RPs in professional development with "so much stuff to pack into them." Casey, a staff member, described their attempt at creating a peer mediation program a few years ago, and the challenges with getting it started, stating, "Anything I looked up with peer-mediation training was significantly longer than what I was able to provide for our students, (…) I didn't feel like it was substantial enough to implement something that could be freestanding." Casey described how it was difficult to find time to train peer-mediators appropriately and this contributed to the failure of the program just a few months after implementation.

Starting any new program in a school requires time and effort, this is especially true for restorative interventions, which often involve multiple meetings and discussions to resolve conflict. Jessie, a non-teaching professional, described "with restorative justice, the payoff is awesome but in order to do it right, you have to invest a lot of time and belief into the system." Jessie also shared about the investment it takes, stating that RPs "take a lot of time and a lot of love and if someone isn't willing to give it, it really does fall apart pretty quickly." Peyton, a teacher, recognized the amount of time administrators need to put in to facilitate successful mediations, stating

It's definitely more time consuming, it's way easier to just call parents and

say "your kid did this today, they have a lunch detention next week." It

requires all these conferences. I just couldn't imagine how they

[administrators] could ever get through everything in a day.

Several teacher participants also mentioned not having enough time to explore

deep conversations with students in classroom circles. One teacher, Jordan, described

allowing circles to be surface level because they were aware of limited classroom time,

stating "I didn't want to open up something really deep and then the bell would ring in

the middle of it and you're just sending kids into their next experience without having a

wrap-up." Expressing and recovering from emotional vulnerability requires time and this

can be an issue when students are switching classes and have limited time in classrooms.

[RQ2.S.T3] Feeling That RPs Are Not Consistently Used Among Staff

Not only were staff at South rebuilding their school community amidst a

pandemic, but they have endured two significant events which resulted in the loss of

valuable staff and chipped away at staff morale. Teachers described feeling that RPs were

not used effectively in response to the recent events and that staff were not prioritized or

given space to process events as a community. One non-teaching professional, Casey,

expressed their thoughts on the sudden loss of one of the administrators, stating,

Did you try restorative practices? Because that's what we work with, did you try

to figure it out? Mediate? Did you try to problem solve? Did you bring in a

professional mediator? Did you bring in restorative practices? And they

[administration] couldn't say anything.

115

Since there are legal limitations around what can be shared regarding personnel changes, not much could be discussed and processed as a community. This lack of transparency was a frustrating experience for several of the participants. One teacher, Peyton, echoed this feeling of inconsistency, stating, "we didn't follow our own word then it comes to what we tell students."

Several participants described not having a communal space to discuss and process these significant events. One teacher, Jordan, described their feelings when they were told at a staff meeting that the administrator was leaving, stating,

> It was said at the meeting that we weren't having a discussion, this wasn't a chance for us to raise our hand or say anything. We were in that big circle format, but we were just told this information and told expressly beforehand that we would not be discussing anything.

Jordan described feeling disappointed with how the events were handled, stating "I don't think restorative practices were used at all, I feel like that is one of the biggest disappointments – even Democratic Classroom, none of that training was used, trauma-informed care was not used in any of those experiences." Another teacher, Blake, described how the response to the events had been focused on the students and did not support teachers, stating, "I think that was the intention, that the kids need space to feel and process, but my perspective of it was that the staff was not really given that." A few staff members described feeling that there was no restoration from these events and that conversation and restoration was needed to repair and rebuild staff community and ultimately boost morale.

Within-Case Analysis of North High School

Staff at North shared a range of challenging experiences with RP implementation over their six years of implementation. Themes for North are displayed in Table 9.

Table 9

North High School Themes for Research Question 2

- [RQ2.N.T1] Students Buying-In and Engaging in the Process
- [RQ2.N.T2] RPs Require Time
- [RQ2.N.T3] Communication Issues Among Staff

RQ2.N.T1 Students Buying-In and Engaging in the Process

Staff at North described challenges with students fully understanding RPs and willingly engaging in the process. Since RPs use a different approach from traditional discipline, with clearly negative consequences for misbehavior, it can be difficult for students to understand and feel satisfied with RPs. Corey, a teacher, described the perceptions they believe students have of RPs at North, stating "students believe that we don't do anything to address behaviors." Corey described how students have viewed them as a "pushover" and don't see the behind-the-scenes work of RPs (e.g., calling parents, talking with administration) since consequences typically aren't on display. Taylor, a non-teaching professional, described the challenges with engaging the entire class in reparative circles, because it requires that "the whole class be involved" to be successful. Hunter, a non-teaching professional, also described how it is difficult when students are not engaged or open to the restorative process in mediations.

[RQ2.N.T2] RPs Require Time

Not having enough time or acknowledging the significant amount of time it takes to use a restorative approach was identified across all participants at North. Participants described not having enough time for tier one prevention efforts and for RP interventions. Preventative efforts such as teaching and practicing SEL skills in the classroom is a central component of RPs in schools. However, staff noted challenges with not having enough time to grow these skills on a universal class-wide level. Denver, a non-teaching professional, described how without enhancing basic SEL skills, "it's just a revolving door of decompression, but never gets at the root cause." Denver described the reality of needing to attend to immediate student needs (e.g., students who express suicidal ideation) and having to place SEL lessons on a backburner due to time constraints.

In addition to having limited time to invest in preventative SEL, several staff noted the difficulties with finding the time to have restorative conversations with students once problems arise. Hunter, a non-teaching professional, elaborated on this and shared,

> You have one student who is disrupting the whole classroom, you can't always take the time out to pull that student into the hallway and talk to them to see how things are going. You've got 24 other kids that you need to deal with.

River, a non-teaching professional, described the challenge of time in the long-term. River described the amount of time and investment it takes to see desired outcomes with RPs over the years, stating "it's a little bit like building a cathedral because you're not going to see the results right away because cathedrals took decades to see the results."

118

[*RQ2.N.T3*] *Communication Issues Among Staff*

The theme of communication issues among staff with RP interventions was noted in only a few interviews but was discussed at-length as a significant challenge. These participants described challenges of effective and timely communication among staff regarding how RPs were handled. When behavior issues occur in the classroom and teachers are unable have restorative conversations in the moment, the student support system is used to address issues and get students back to class. One teacher, Corey, described the frustration of not knowing how issues were addressed once students returned to the classroom, stating "it's like, what even happens? We don't even know." Corey described how they often don't have enough time to be able to seek out and follow-up with the support team regarding how situations were resolved. Kai, a non-teaching professional, also described the miscommunications between teachers and administration when it came to lunch detention. Since lunch detention incorporates the element of play, the restorative elements may not be fully communicated, Kai described, "did they [the students] tell you about the part where they have to write a reflection about their behavior and how they're going to make it better, and then we send it to their parents? They overlook that part." Effective and timely communication about RPs is important when working in a highly collaborative environment such as North and has been described by several participants as a challenge to RP implementation.

Research Sub Question 2a Across-Case Analysis

This section addresses research sub question 2a. This sub question is focused on how the challenges of RP implementation were similar or different across cases.

Participants shared similar challenging experiences with RP implementation in their schools. See Table 10 for a visual display of themes.

Table 10

Across-Case Analysis Research Question 2a

	Student Engagement	Time	RPs Not Happening for Staff	Communication Among Staff
South	X	X	X	
North	X	X		X

In both cases, helping students to understand and meaningfully engage in RPs has been described as an implementation challenge. At South, participants spoke specifically about the difficulty in helping students unlearn traditional disciplinary approaches and buy-in to restorative alternatives. Participants in both cases described how using RPs requires a significant amount of time and can be difficult to meaningfully engage in restorative approaches when time is limited.

Although there were similarities in the challenges and barriers to RP implementation across cases, there were also differences. Issues at the staff level were mentioned by participants at both sites, however, the staff issues were different. At North, participants described experiencing communication issues among staff regarding RP interventions and outcomes. At South, the primary staff challenge noted by participants was regarding the perception that RPs were not being utilized among staff interactions.

This theme at South was directly connected to the two events which occurred early in the 2021-2022 school year. Participants at South described frustrations with how these events were handled and feeling that RPs were not used for staff despite utilizing this approach with students.

Research Question 3

The following section outlines the identified themes for each individual case regarding research question three: what are the experiences of staff with RP implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Within-Case Analysis of South High School

Participants at South described several ways that the staff, students, and overall experience with RP implementation have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Table 11 outlines the most prevalent themes at South for this research question.

Table 11

South High School Themes for Research Question 3

- [RQ3.S.T1] COVID Has Harmed Students' Mental Health and Social Emotional Growth
- [RQ3.S.T2] Staff Emotional Fatigue from COVID as a Barrier to Engaging in RPs
- [RQ3.S.T3] COVID Has Disrupted and Changed RP Implementation

---

[RQ3.S.T1] COVID Has Harmed Students' Mental Health and Social Emotional Growth

All participants at South described the significant effect that the COVID-19 pandemic and transition to virtual learning has had on students' mental health and social

emotional capabilities. Participants described how mental health concerns were common prior to the pandemic and the events over the past few years have exacerbated these issues for many individuals. Avery, a teacher, described the glaring inequities the pandemic has highlighted, and the wide range of student experiences during virtual learning, stating,

> The pandemic experience has been so different for so many people. I remember when it first started, some of our kids were at home eating pizza rolls and playing video games online all day and they were fine. Then there are other kids who, now they're in charge of childcare or now they have to do a job that's fairly dangerous in a pandemic, because they have to help their family with money or they are trapped at home with people who are not safe to be around or people who don't understand them.

Another teacher, Jordan, described how students have been dealing with a lot of emotions in their classroom this school year, stating "(…) having their feelings hurt about everything, feeling super tender and super emotional, (…) there's just more of them [emotions] and they're so close to the top." Another teacher, Dakota, also described feeling an increased presence of emotions in the classroom, stating, "There are a lot of needs, students need to leave the room because they're feeling a certain way, there's less of a focus on being able to do school."

Participants at South described experiencing challenges this school year due to students' immaturity or lack of SEL skills. One teacher, Avery, shared how their students this year "seem even more immature than they have ever been" and described specific

behavior challenges they have encountered including "keeping their hands to themselves or running in the hallways, stuff that kids usually have grown out of by the time they're in high school." Another teacher, Peyton, described how students have struggled with their conflict-resolution skills this year, stating "students don't remember how to respectfully disagree with others or disagree at all without getting really upset." In fact, several participants specifically described an increase in the level of violence and fights between students this year. One teacher, Blake, elaborated on the shift in school climate and increase in violence, stating,

> I've never expected it [violence] at South, I've never thought, this is a school where fights happen, but it just feels like this year is a little bit of a powder keg (…) their first instinct is violence, they're saying 'I'm going to kill that guy, I'm going to kill myself, I'm going to punch her, I'm going to jump her' I've never heard that stuff at South.

The pandemic has had a significant effect on the social emotional development of students and at South, many teachers shared this sentiment.

[RQ3.S.T2] Staff Emotional Fatigue From COVID as a Barrier to Engaging in RPs

The mental health challenges of school staff were noted as a consistent theme across nearly all participants. RPs require staff to engage in some level of vulnerability and openness about emotions, which can be a barrier when school staff are emotionally depleted or experiencing burnout. One teacher, Jordan, described how being vulnerable with peers in staff circles was difficult, and resulted in them not being forthcoming with

their experiences. Jordan also spoke about their experience drawing emotional boundaries with staff circles, stating, "I don't have the emotional resources. I know my limits."

Participants described that they believed many staff members are currently overwhelmed and struggling with burnout. One teacher, Dakota, described feeling overwhelmed and not fully supported, stating "We're all overworked and stressed out, (…) we have way too much work and not enough support." Several participants also described being in survival mode or just "trying to survive" these past few years. Blake, a teacher, stated "I don't personally feel like I did restorative practices during virtual learning. It was just triage; I was just trying to get through the day." Another teacher, Jordan, described a similar feeling, stating, "I feel like we're not really addressing the underlying problems and we're treading water." Since RPs require some level of emotional engagement, teachers at South struggled with this over the course of the pandemic.

[RQ3.S.T3] COVID Has Disrupted and Changed RP Implementation

Participants at South described how COVID was disruptive to establishing meaningful large group connections and a sense of community during virtual learning. Moreover, COVID was described by several participants as disruptive to the momentum of RP implementation at South. One teacher, Dakota, described the challenge of hosting live zoom classes where students had their cameras off, stating "it mostly felt like you were talking into the void, how do you build relationships with that? It was very challenging." Another teacher, Avery, described how sharing was difficult for some students during virtual learning since it removed students from a safe and bounded space,

124

stating, "it's not a safe space for them to share" and "some of my kids were doing class on their cell phones from a break at work." Virtual learning presented challenges to building relationships and a sense of community at South.

Virtual learning presented challenges for community building on a class-wide level, however, it also influenced individualized interventions such as mediations. Logan, a non-teaching professional, shared their experience with a mediation on zoom, stating, "(…) ending in a zoom meeting was just like 'wah-wah' I feel like we didn't get that human connection that's so important and that building of empathy for one another." RPs are highly dependent on relationship building and other SEL skills such as empathy, which was described as challenging to cultivate in a virtual environment.

The 2019-2020 school year was South's first official year of RP implementation and was aimed at integrating community-building classroom circles and respect agreements. This first year of implementation was disrupted by COVID and the sudden transition to virtual learning. Logan, non-teaching professional, described how the first stages of the pandemic were highly disruptive to the implementation plan, which had to be set aside due to more immediate concerns, stating, "Everything got put on a backburner." Logan described how there was a shift in needing to support teachers and move away from formal trainings or discussions on RPs, stating,

> I was watching them [the staff] burnout in front of my eyes in zoom meetings and so to be like, "we're going to talk about restorative justice" it's like, "no, we're going to talk about you living today and getting through this week."

While the implementation plan and more formalized RP interventions (e.g., circles, mediations) were put on the backburner during virtual learning, staff at South remained focused on supportive relationships for students and staff, which are central to RPs. Although South lost momentum with the formalized implementation plan, they remained engaged with the essential components of RPs (e.g., relationship building, empathy, communication).

Within-Case Analysis of North High School

Similar to South, participants at North described several themes regarding how COVID has affected students, staff, and the implementation of RPs over the past few years. Below is a table of themes for this research question.

Table 12

North High School Themes for Research Question 3

- [RQ3.N.T1] Student Challenges Returning to In-Person Instruction
    - [RQ3.N.ST1.1] Increased Student Mental Health Needs
    - [RQ3.N.ST1.2] Students Relearning How to be in the School Building
- [RQ3.N.T2] Staff Mental Health Concerns
- [RQ3.N.T3] COVID As a Contributing Factor for RP Implementation Issues
    - [RQ3.N.ST3.1] RPs Have Been Losing Momentum
    - [RQ3.N.ST3.2] COVID as a Barrier to Relationship Building and Community Connections.

[RQ3.N.T1] Student Challenges Returning to In-Person Instruction

The COVID-19 pandemic has been disruptive not only to school community and connections but has been harmful for many students. Two subthemes were identified

related to how the pandemic has affected students, including (a) increased mental health needs, and (b) difficulties of relearning how to be in the school building.

[RQ3.N.ST1.1] Increased Student Mental Health Needs. Kai, a non-teaching professional, described the traumas that some students endured and are continuing to endure over the course of the pandemic. Kai described how the complex emotional process of RPs can be challenging for these students, stating,

> There's a lot of feelings involved. Particularly with these incoming cohorts, there's so much trauma for the kids, we're going to take five or six steps forwards and then we're going to take ten backwards.

Hunter, a non-teaching professional, described an increase in the frequency of student suicide assessments and how students are struggling, stating "the kids are not all right. They are struggling. There's anxiety, depression, trauma." Although struggles with mental health are not new to the students at North, the pandemic has exacerbated these issues for many students, resulting in increased mental health needs.

[RQ3.N.ST1.2] Students Relearning How to Be in the School Building. Participants at North described the unique challenge of students returning to in-person instruction this year and needing to relearn social norms. Charlie, a teacher, described how they felt school culture has taken "four steps backwards" from where they were before the pandemic stating, "pre-pandemic, we had solid expectations on how to behave, and all of that is just out the window." Another teacher, Corey, talked specifically about their experiences with the older students having a difficult time readjusting to classroom structures. Corey described how early in the pandemic, many students were expected to

take on adult roles (e.g., working jobs, assisting with childcare) and the transition back to the classroom requires them to revert to being children. Corey shared how they experience students pushing back on this transition into the classroom, stating, "they would look for ways to slip out of that structure, you would see cell phones, you would see roaming in the halls, the avoidance of the classroom structure, which they've outgrown."

[RQ3.N.T2] Staff Mental Health Concerns

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant effect on the mental health of both staff and students. All participants at North described experiencing or observing feelings of burnout or stress among staff over the past few years. Carson, a teacher, described "I feel like very few people actually recovered from the burnout they experienced from virtual learning." Carson went on to describe how it can be difficult to be fully present and engaged in community-building activities such as Staff PACK "when you're looking at the clock and you're like, this is lasting 45 minutes and I'm supposed to complete X,Y, and Z today."

Hunter, a non-teaching professional, described the chaos of addressing student needs this year, "I didn't stop until it was time to go. I was up and running. I don't know how many times we got a student support email and there was already everybody in other directions." Kai, a non-teaching professional, described how the emotional regulation of staff can be an issue for restorative interventions, stating,

> If you're a person who has to explore their emotional response to things before
> being able to do the logical response, it's really hard to be around other people's

emotional mess when you're in your emotional mess and you're the one who's

supposed to be cleaning it up.

Although RPs acknowledge and encourage teachers to express emotions and be

transparent with students, Kai described the importance of having your own emotions

under control in order to help students navigate their emotions.

[RQ3.N.T3] COVID As a Contributing Factor for RP Implementation Issues

COVID has had a significant effect on RP implementation and experiences at

North. Two subthemes were identified, which (a) describe how COVID has served as a

contributing factor to RPs losing momentum over the past several years, and (b) COVID

has been disruptive to relationship-building and community connections at North.

[RQ3.N.ST3.1] RPs Have Been Losing Momentum. Participants at North

described feeling that RPs over the past few years have slowed, due in part to COVID.

Kai, a non-teaching professional, described not using RPs as much due to a lack of

student-to-student interactions. Kai also described less conflict between students and

teachers during virtual learning, stating "there wasn't a ton of teacher disrespect because

if I was pissed with the teacher, I'd just mute myself or I just wouldn't show up

tomorrow." Denver, a non-teaching professional, described feeling that RPs have been

"falling farther and farther on the backburner" in recent years due to the competing

demands for teachers, "we're not doing the training with the teachers anymore, we're

training them to do other things and it's just too many things with not enough steering

direction." The pandemic and subsequent transition to virtual learning was identified as a

contributing factor to the decline in formal and structured RPs at North.

[RQ3.N.ST3.2] COVID as a Barrier to Relationship Building and

Community Connections. Participants at North described how COVID

negatively affected relationship building and community connections. Since the

pandemic has severely disrupted the school community, emphasis has been placed on

reconnecting with students and rebuilding school community. Kai, a non-teaching

professional, described the challenge of building community during virtual learning,

stating "online was a lot harder to build community and you don't need to restore what

doesn't exist." Kai described how the disrupted community from virtual learning has

created difficulties with returning to in-person instruction, stating "having to rebuild

community while triaging a constant new barrage of shrapnel that's getting thrown at

you, that's really hard." Strong community connections are central to RPs and create a

foundation from which all other reparative experiences are built. Taylor, another non-

teaching professional, described the intentional efforts directed at rebuilding community

this school year, such as sending students on a community-building high ropes course

retreat and extra time in the beginning of the year for classroom community-building

activities.

Research Sub Question 3a Across-Case Analysis

This section describes how themes present in each individual case were similar or

different from one another in an across-case analysis. Participants across both cases

reported similar themes regarding how COVID has affected their school community (see

Table 13).

Table 13

Across-Case Analysis Research Question 3a

	Student Mental Health and SEL	Teacher Mental Health	Disruption to RP Implementation
South	X	X	X
North	X	X	X

Participants described how COVID has had a negative effect on the mental health of students and their social emotional skills. Staff at both schools described challenges of returning to in-person learning such as increased mental health crisis situations, increased violence, and having to reteach social norms and appropriate behaviors in the school building. Not only have students' mental health needs increased, but participants across both cases described the significant mental health challenges and burnout that school staff has experienced. Participants at South described specifically how the emotional fatigue experienced by staff makes it difficult to be vulnerable and engage in RPs with students.

Participants across cases also described feeling that COVID disrupted or changed RP implementation. South was in their first year of formal RP implementation when COVID forced everyone into virtual settings. During this time, the focus on formal RP interventions (e.g., respect agreements and circles) that were central to the original implementation plan dissolved and the focus shifted to survival. Although several participants reported feeling that they didn't use RPs during virtual learning, there was an increased focus on trying to establish and maintain relationships, which is a central component of RPs. Although North was in their sixth year of RP implementation when

COVID transitioned everyone to virtual learning, participants reported that this experience slowed RP implementation efforts. Staff at North described COVID as a barrier to building and establishing community connections, which are central to RPs. Although there were some differences in the experiences of staff across cases, there was significant overlap of themes for this research question.

Triangulation With Observation and Document Analysis

In addition to interviews with staff, observations and document analysis were conducted to triangulate emerging themes from interviews. Observation and document analysis further supported the identified themes for each case. I was intentional about observing a range of experiences in each school environment including staff trainings or meetings, community-building time in the classroom (e.g., PACK, Home time), and events for families. For descriptions of these observational experiences as well as themes that were identified, see Table 14 for South and Table 16 for North.

For document analysis, I included both internal and publicly facing documents regarding RPs. For example, North had several internal procedural documents for implementation of ISS or lunch detention. Whereas, publicly facing documents such as the website or student handbook were examined to understand how RPs are framed to students and families. For descriptions of the documents analyzed and themes that were supported in these documents, see Table 15 for South and Table 17 for North.

South High School Observation Analysis

At South, I observed a staff meeting, a family event, and two classroom home time experiences. Several themes from interviews were reflected in these observational

experiences (see Table 14). The most prominent themes were the opportunities for relationship building and the modeling of relationship skills and informal RPs. All observational experiences had a focus on relationship building for those involved. Staff were observed engaging in informal RPs and modeling of relationship-building skills (e.g., active listening, using affective statements) across observational experiences. One unique experience was during South Hour, which is a time dedicated to community-building and catching up with school-wide announcements. During South Hour, a video featuring a non-teaching professional and students from the senior leadership team facilitated a conversation about upcoming events and announcements for the school. During this South Hour observation, several non-teaching professionals discussed their roles at the school and focus on using RPs as a tool to support students in resolving issues rather than as disciplinarians assigning punishment. The theme of helping students unlearn traditional discipline and understand RPs could be observed in this experience.

Table 14

South High School Observation Analysis

Observation Experiences	Description	Supported Themes				
		Alignment of RPs	Relationship-Building	Modeling Relationship Skills	Unlearning Traditional Discipline	Empowering Students
Staff Meeting	Presentation on Circle Etiquette, and opportunity for staff to practice circles.		X	X		
New Student Welcome Night	Open house for new students.		X	X		
South Hour and Home time (Blake's classroom)	Morning check-ins, streaming of South Hour video.	X	X	X	X	X
Home time (Avery's classroom)	35-minute daily block for check-ins and relationship building.		X	X		

South High School Document Analysis

At South, I was able to analyze publicly facing documents such as the student handbook and school website (see Table 15). These documents supported the theme of alignment of RPs with the school, and elaborated on how RP interventions (e.g., mediations) are tied into the mission and values of the school. These documents also illustrated the theme of consistency and flexibility, describing how RPs can be used to handle behavior issues but that there is variability in how this can occur. Internal procedural documents at South included materials for training staff and students on circle etiquette and circle lesson plans developed by the RJL. These documents also illustrated themes of alignment with the school values and the theme of consistency and flexibility. The circle lesson plans provided a structure to community-building circles and the content of circles were tied to the values of the school. The Circle Etiquette Video was created collaboratively with staff and the senior leadership team to illustrate the circle process. This video was created prior to school-wide implementation of a circle in October of 2022 focused on processing experiences with COVID.

Table 15

South High School Document Analysis

	Document	Description	Supported Themes		
			Alignment of RPs	Structured Flexibility	Empowering Students
External Documents	School Website	School Website.	X	X	
	Student Handbook	Student Handbook. Contains section on RPs.	X	X	X
Internal Procedural Documents	Staff Circle Training PowerPoint	PowerPoint presentation delivered at staff training on circle implementation.	X	X	
	Circle Etiquette Video	Video created with staff and students illustrating circle etiquette. Video shown to school-wide prior to circles.	X	X	X
	Circle Lesson Plans	Structured circle lesson plans developed by the RJL for classroom implementation during the 2019-2020 school year.	X	X	

North High School Observation Analysis

   I observed several types of experiences at North High School, including staff meetings, classroom community building, and a virtual family event (see Table 16). In several of these spaces, connections were made to the school mission and values. Also, each of these observational events demonstrated intentional spaces for relationship building, whether it be relationship building between staff and families (e.g., virtual family event), among staff (e.g., staff PACK and Professional Development) or between staff and students (e.g., PACK). In the staff training and small group Staff PACKs, I was able to observe the strong bonds among staff and various opportunities for collaboration in both supporting students and in decision-making.

   In the staff meeting, space was made for checking-in with staff about their own mental health. Mental health was also the topic of discussion for the virtual family PACK. Student and staff mental health were identified as themes in the interviews related to the challenges of COVID. Although staff communication issues were identified as a challenge of RPs, I was able to observe opportunities for staff to communicate their concerns or opinions in the staff meeting. For example, staff reflected on and wrote a response to "what I got" and "what I need" at the conclusion of their staff meeting. Observations were helpful in supporting emerging themes from interviews and in identifying ways in which challenges of RPs may be approached.

Table 16

North High School Observation Analysis

Observation Experiences	Description	Supported Themes						
		RP Alignment	Relationship Building	Flexibility	Strong Staff Community	Staff Collaboration	Student-Teacher Relationships	Mental Health
Staff Training	Training and discussion about returning to school.	X	X		X	X		X
Staff PD and Small Group PACK	Large group conversations and small group Staff PACK.		X		X	X		
Virtual Family PACK	Virtual space for families to connect with staff. Discussion on student mental health.	X	X					X
Two PACK's (Charlie's classroom)	35-minute time daily for community-building and circles.	X	X	X			X	

North High School Document Analysis

For document analysis at North, I examined external documents and internal procedural documents (see Table 17). North was intentional about embedding RPs into ISS or when students return from out-of-school suspensions (OSS). Internal procedural documents created structure for RPs but acknowledged the ability for staff to be flexible in their conversations with students, which aligned with the theme of flexibility. Several of the documents were intentional about making time for relationship building between the staff member and the student. These procedural documents also included opportunities for students to utilize their social emotional skills (e.g., taking accountability for actions) through in-person conversations and writing (e.g., in-school restorative essay document). I identified two minor themes that were present in several of these internal procedural documents that weren't identified as themes from the interviews, including (a) the emphasis on student strengths and (b) goal setting with a focus on the future. Restorative experiences in ISS and returning from OSS were intentional about having students identify personal strengths and engage in goal setting for themselves.

Table 17

North High School Document Analysis

	Document	Description	Supported Themes			
			Alignment of RPs	Relationship Building	Flexibility	Tool for Student SEL Growth
External Documents	School Website	School Website.	X			
	Student Handbook	Student handbook. Contains a section on RPs.	X	X	X	X
Internal Procedural Documents	ISS Schedule	Schedule for time in ISS.	X	X	X	
	In-School Restorative Essay Document	Document given to students detailing requirements completing a restorative essay during ISS.	X			X
	Suspension Restorative Form	Form to complete with students when returning from ISS or OSS.		X	X	X
	Restorative Questions Document	Document for staff consisting of restorative questions to use once harm has occurred.			X	X

Summary

To summarize this chapter, the following topics were covered: the study research questions, implementation stories for each case, within-case themes organized by research question, across-case analysis, and triangulation with other data sources (e.g., observation and document analysis).

For the first research question regarding experiences with RP implementation a total of six themes were identified at South, consisting of: alignment of RPs (personal and school-wide), embedding relationship-building experiences, informal RPs in the classroom (modeling, restorative conversations), structured flexibility, RPs as a tool to enhance student-teacher relationships (and to better understand students), and RPs as a tool to empower students. Seven themes were identified at North including: RP alignment, spaces for relationship building, flexibility, Staff PACK and a strong staff community, staff collaboration (with students, and decision-making), RPs as a tool to strengthen student-teacher relationships, and RPs as a tool for student SEL growth. Across-case analysis identified overlap with several themes such as: alignment, spaces for relationship building, benefits to the student-teacher relationship, and for student SEL skills.

For research question two, a total of three themes were identified at South, regarding challenges of RP implementation, including: engaging students in RPs (unlearning traditional discipline), time, and RPs not being used for staff. At North, three themes were identified, including: student buy-in and engagement, time, and communication issues among staff. Across-case analysis suggested challenges across sites with engaging students and time.

For research question three, a total of three themes were identified at South regarding the effect of COVID including, COVID has harmed students' mental health and SEL, staff emotional fatigue, and COVID as a disruption to RP implementation. At North, three themes were identified including: student challenges (increased mental health needs, relearning how to do school), staff mental health concerns, and COVID as a barrier to relationship building and community connections. Across-case analysis suggested overlap with all three themes across cases.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Research suggests that exclusionary discipline is harmful for students and is especially detrimental for students of color and students with disabilities (US Department of Education, 2019). Due in part to these issues, educators in the US have sought alternatives to traditional punitive approaches in schools, such as restorative justice practices. RPs in schools have gained increased attention and momentum due to emerging research on the benefits for individual students, the student-teacher relationship, and overall school climate (e.g., Jain et al., 2014; Ortega et al., 2016). However, the literature on RPs in schools notes several challenges or barriers to implementation (e.g., Garnett et al., 2019). Although researchers have examined the outcomes of RPs as well as the challenges or barriers to implementation, the current study aims to understand these experiences amidst a pandemic which offers a novel perspective.

The purpose of this multiple case study was to better understand the experiences of school staff at two different charter high schools with RP implementation, identify the challenges to implementation, and the effect of the pandemic on implementation. Moreover, this study compared experiences across cases to identify similarities and differences in experiences with RPs. Although North and South both identify as using RPs, they have several significant differences in their approaches and experiences. The following chapter will summarize study findings, describe how findings connect with and

uniquely contribute to current empirical literature, address study limitations, provide recommendations for future research, and suggest implications for school counselors, administrators, teachers, training programs for school professionals, and educational policymakers.

Summary of Findings

I used a multiple case study methodology to understand the experiences of staff with RP implementation across two charter high schools, the challenges of RP implementation, and the effects of COVID on RP implementation and experiences. Moreover, the current investigation examined each case individually and employed an across-case analysis to compare experiences across cases. The following research questions were explored:

1. What are the experiences of staff (e.g., teachers and non-teaching professionals) with RP implementation in their school environment?

    1a. How are these experiences similar or different across cases?

2. What are the challenges or barriers to RP implementation experienced by staff in their school environment?

    2a. How are these experiences similar or different across cases?

3. What are the experiences of school staff with implementing RPs during the COVID-19 pandemic in their school environment?

    3a. How are these experiences similar or different across cases?

This multiple case study investigation examined two charter high schools (South and North) who identify as using RPs in their approach with students. A total of 16 semi-structured interviews (eight at each site) were conducted with teachers and staff

members. At South, five teachers and three non-teaching professionals were interviewed, whereas, at North, three teachers and five non-teaching professionals were interviewed. Observations and document analysis were conducted to triangulate emerging themes from the interviews.

For research question one, regarding staff experiences with RP implementation at their individual schools, several themes were identified. At South, participants described six core themes as to how they experienced RPs including: the natural alignment of RPs, embedding relationship-building opportunities, the preventative nature of RPs in the classroom, structured flexibility, RPs as a tool to strengthen student-teacher relationships, and to empower students and enhance student voice. At North, seven core themes were identified including: RP alignment, intentional spaces for relationship building, flexibility of RPs, a strong staff community, collaboration among staff, RPs as a tool to strengthen student-teacher relationships, and a tool for student SEL growth.

For research sub question 1a, I examined how RP implementation experiences were similar or different across cases. Participants in both cases described how RPs aligned with the school's approach prior to the formal introduction to the term "restorative practices." Across cases, participants described various spaces where relationship-building was embedded into the school day (e.g., South: Home time, POGs; North: PACK, lunch detention, ISS). Themes overlapped across cases regarding the benefits of RPs for students. Staff at North and South described how using a restorative approach strengthens student-teacher relationships. Participants at both schools described how RPs strengthen students, however at South, participants focused on how RPs empower and enhance student voice. Whereas this theme at North focused on how RP

engagement is a tool for students to practice critical SEL skills and better prepare them for life after graduation. Although there were several similarities across cases, there were a few differences. At South, participants described how using a restorative approach in the classroom was preventative (e.g., teachers modeling relationship-building skills and engaging in restorative conversations early). At North, Participants described how using RPs at the staff level via Staff PACK contributed to a strong staff community. Participants at North also described the high level of staff collaboration in supporting students and with some administrative decision-making (e.g., hiring).

For research question two, I explored the challenges or barriers with RP implementation at each school. At South, themes included challenges with engaging students in participation and leadership of RP experiences, not having enough time, and feeling that RPs were not used effectively for staff. Identified themes for North included challenges with engaging students in restorative experiences, not having enough time, and communication challenges between teachers and administration regarding RP interventions and follow-up.

For research sub question 2a, I explored how the themes related to challenges or barriers were similar or different across cases. Participants in both cases described challenges with engaging students in restorative experiences and with having enough time to effectively implement RPs. Both cases had a theme of challenges at the staff level, however, these looked different. For South, participants described feelings that RPs were not consistently occurring at the staff level. This theme emerged in reference to the two destabilizing staff experienced which occurred early in the 2021-2022 school year. At North, staff described challenges with communication of RP interventions or

responses between teachers and the student support team, stating that teachers weren't always in the loop about how situations were handled or resolved.

For research question three, I examined the experiences of staff in each case with implementing RPs during a pandemic. At South, participants described the significant mental health needs and regression of student SEL over the course of virtual learning and the mental health issues and burnout among school staff. Participants at South also described that the pandemic significantly disrupted their implementation of RPs (e.g., crafting respect agreements, community-building circles, mediations). At North, participants described the increase in student mental health concerns and deterioration of SEL skills and the burnout and overwhelm of school staff. Participants also described the pandemic as a disruption to RP implementation and feeling that RPs have lost momentum over the last few years and negatively affected community relationship-building.

For research sub question 3a, I explored the similarities and differences in themes across cases. There was significant overlap in the ways that staff at both North and South experienced the pandemic. Participants across sites described the increased mental health and SEL needs of students as well as the overwhelm and burnout school staff has been enduring. Staff at South described how this emotional fatigue makes it difficult to engage in restorative experiences due to the need to be emotionally vulnerable. Participants across sites viewed the pandemic and transition to virtual learning as disruptive to RPs. At South, Participants described how the more formal approaches to RP implementation (e.g., consistent community-building circles, mediations, trainings) dissolved during the switch to virtual learning and the focus became more on survival and immediate needs. Similar themes were identified at North regarding students and teachers' mental health.

147

Although participants at North also described the pandemic as disruptive to RP implementation, there were some differences in how this was explained. In addition to feeling that RPs had been losing momentum, participants described how virtual learning was a barrier to relationship building and establishing community connections.

Connections to Existing Empirical Literature

The following section connects to the existing body of empirical literature on RPs in schools described in Chapter two and elaborates on how findings from this investigation either support, contradict, or fill-in gaps in the literature. Findings from the current study relate to several areas of investigation in the existing literature on RPs in schools including approaches to RP implementation, challenges of implementation, and RP outcomes.

Approaches to RP Implementation

The existing literature has explored approaches to RP implementation in schools. Since RPs can encompass a wide range of behaviors and experiences, RP experts have described what RPs in schools can realistically look like (Amstutz & Mullet, 2015). The IIRP suggests that RPs in schools exist on a continuum of practice, ranging from informal experiences (e.g., modeling affective statements and restorative questions) to more formal experiences such as structured mediations or conferences (Costello et al., 2009). As described in Chapter two, common restorative experiences in schools can consist of preventative programming, circle processes, informal RPs, peer mediation, and community or family conferencing (Amstutz & Mullet, 2015; Anderson et al., 2014).

In the current study, there were similarities and differences in the implementation approaches across cases. Both North and South use preventative SEL programming,

engage in circle processes, engage in informal RPs through modeling and restorative questions, and engage in family conferencing to some extent. Interestingly, participants in each case described efforts to start a peer mediation program but it eventually dissolved due to logistic and time challenges. While North and South use similar restorative approaches with students, the degree of formalization was significantly different. Not only was North further along in their years of implementation of RPs (6 years vs. 3 years), but North also had a dedicated position for RP implementation who was formally trained by the IIRP. The individual in this position was instrumental in creating formalized approaches to RPs (e.g., Staff PACK, lunch detention, ISS). This formalization of approach was observed in the internal procedural documents used by staff at North to lead students through restorative conversations. Although South also had some formalization of circle lesson plans by the RJL, the switch to Democratic Classrooms took precedence and they deviated from their original RP implementation plan.

Participants across cases described their use of flexibility with RP implementation and being able to adjust materials and experiences to meet the needs of their unique students. However, at South, staff also described how elements of consistency, routine and structure are helpful for teachers and students during initial RP implementation. Finding a balance between factors such as structure and flexibility can prove challenging with RP implementation because a restorative approach is highly contextual and dependent on unique relationships and interactions.

Both North and South's original implementation plans aligned with one approach to whole-school change suggested in Thorsborne and Blood's (2013) book *Implementing*

Restorative Practice in Schools: A Practical Guide to Transforming School Communities.
In this book, researchers suggest utilizing a small group of "early adopters," or
individuals who are supportive of RPs and can serve as a catalyst for implementation. In
this model, early adopters become central to implementation by becoming experts,
providing feedback to improve implementation, and assuming leadership with RP
implementation. This was demonstrated at South through the RJL as a process by which
to increase buy-in among staff. Although implementation at North was more centralized
among administrative positions, there were intentional efforts with empowering key staff
members and encouragement for individuals to lead portions of RPs such as Staff PACK
circles or collaboration in developing PACK lesson plans for students. Overall, North and
South's implementation efforts aligned with concepts identified in the literature regarding
change processes in schools.

Barriers to RP Implementation

Several empirical investigations of RPs in schools have yielded information on
the barriers or challenges of implementation. Several of the themes identified in research
question two, regarding the challenges of RP implementation, aligned with or supported
the existing literature. All participants in the sample, across both South and North,
identified time as a challenge for RP implementation and supports findings in existing
literature (e.g., Garnett et al., 2019; Jain et al., 2014). Moreover, participants at North and
South had issues with engaging students in restorative experiences, specifically with
establishing buy-in and having them effectively engage in or lead restorative processes.
This was also noted as a challenge in OUSD's investigation of RPs in schools (Jain et al.,
2014). Interestingly, participants at South described a unique subtheme regarding the

challenge of helping students to unlearn traditional discipline, release expectations around punishment, and grasp the benefits of using RPs. Based on past experiences, students and families have pre-existing expectations on how discipline should be used in schools. Guiding students and families through conversations and experiences to unlearn a familiar and deeply engrained structure and learn a different approach, is a significant challenge.

Another way the themes from the current study supported the existing literature is through the themes related to staff issues. Researchers have identified communication issues between administration and staff as a barrier to effective RP implementation (Garnett et al., 2019; Jain et al., 2014) and this theme was identified as a challenge at North. At South, there were also issues with RPs at the staff level, however, this was directly related to the two damaging experiences early in the 2021-2022 school year. Participants at South described feelings of frustration and felt that although they use RPs with students, this approach was not used among staff to resolve the recent issues.

RP Outcomes for Students and Staff

The existing empirical literature has explored outcomes associated with using RPs in schools. This body of research has consistently illustrated benefits for students' SEL, improvements to the student-teacher relationship, and improvements in overall school climate (González, 2012; Gregory et al., 2015; Jain et al., 2014).

Increase in SEL Skills for Students

The literature on RPs has identified a range of SEL benefits students can experience from engaging in RPs. Researchers have identified increased empathy, self-esteem, and better management of emotions as potential benefits for students (Jain et al.,

151

2014; Ortega et al., 2016; Wong et al., 2011). At North, several participants described how RPs can be a vehicle for students to practice and enhance SEL skills and better prepare them for their futures. Participants at North specifically referenced how RPs were beneficial for helping students to process and identify emotions in the moment, accept responsibility for their actions, and learn how to respond in difficult situations. Benefits for students were also identified at South, however, this theme also explored how RPs serve to empower students and enhance student voice. Participants at South described how sharing power with students through seeking their input and guiding them through resolving issues is beneficial for their development.

Benefits for Student-Teacher Relationships

In addition to benefits for students' SEL, RPs in schools have been associated with improvements in the student-teacher relationship (Oretga et al., 2016). Strong bonds with non-parental adults have benefits for children and have been shown to mitigate the negative effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (Bethell et al., 2019; Davis et al., 2019; Narayan et al., 2018). Not only have students reported closer relationships with teachers who use a more restorative approach (Gregory et al. 2015), but teachers have also reported feeling more connected to students following participation in restorative circles (Ortega et al., 2016). In the current study, improved relationships between students and teachers were identified as a theme across both cases. Participants at South and North described how engaging in RPs allows students to see teachers as people rather than authority figures. Participants across cases described how student-teacher mediations can be beneficial and positive experiences for repairing and enhancing the student-teacher relationship.

School-wide Benefits of RPs

The literature on RPs in schools has explored how these practices have improved school climate via reduction in fights, discipline referrals or suspensions (Armour et al., 2014; Gonzalez, 2012). RPs as a contributing factor to improving school climate did not emerge at either site as a theme. However, participants at North described how engagement in staff community-building experiences (e.g., Staff PACK) was a contributing factor to their strong staff community. RP experts suggest using a whole-school approach to RPs where everyone in the building engages in these practices, including staff (Morrison et al., 2007). The use of RPs at the staff level was one way that North and South differed, especially given the challenging events at South.

Significant Contributions

Although the themes in the current study align with existing empirical literature on RPs in schools, there were several unique contributions such as how schools navigate through staff issues (e.g., COVID, and South's damage to staff morale) and the overall effect of these experiences on RP implementation across two cases. Moreover, this study examined two schools in different stages or RP implementation and compared across cases to identify similarities and differences in their implementation approaches, which is not commonly addressed in the literature.

RPs in the Face of the COVID-19 Pandemic

RPs in schools have been highly dependent on in-person interactions to build and repair community and relationships. Few peer-reviewed empirical studies have examined how RPs in schools have adapted or changed over the course of COVID and the transition to and from virtual learning. In one article, DePaoli and colleagues (2021)

suggest a restorative opening of US schools given the significant traumas students have endured in recent years (e.g., issues of racial injustice, the pandemic). The few studies that have investigated the effect of the pandemic on schools have suggested that the transition to virtual learning has posed significant challenges for staff and students (Velez, 2021). Findings from the current study suggest challenges for RP implementation and increased mental health concerns for both students and staff related to COVID.

The current study contributes to the literature by providing insight into how RPs have changed over the course of the pandemic and the experiences of staff implementing RPs. In both cases, participants described feeling that RPs were disrupted due to the pandemic. In particular, restorative circles, mediations, and overall community and relationship-building were disrupted. South's experience with RP implementation was significantly altered by the pandemic, with their first year of formal implementation disrupted by COVID and the switch to virtual learning. Over the course of virtual learning, South's RP implementation plan dissolved and morphed into Democratic Classrooms. Although there are several significant ways that Democratic Classrooms and RPs overlap (e.g., focus on shared power, empowering students, emphasis on community and relationship-building), South's original implementation plan was shaped heavily by societal factors (e.g., issues of racial injustice, the pandemic). Staff at North described how the Pandemic slowed the momentum for RPs and has served as a barrier to relationship and community-building. Although participants at North described disruptions to RP implementation over the past few years, there have not been significant changes to their original implementation plan like there was at South. This could be due to the fact that North had several more years of experience formalizing and implementing

RPs in their environment, making it easier for them to weather the effects of COVID and remain on course with RP implementation.

Participants in the sample described feeling that their use of RPs over the course of virtual learning declined due to the lack of face-to-face interactions. Although some of the more formal RP interventions had fallen to the wayside at both sites (e.g., circles, mediations) I believe that the essential elements of RPs (e.g., focus on relationships and connection) were valued and sought out by participants. I believe that the pandemic reduced the focus on academics and highlighted the human experience. For example, participants across cases described how when the pandemic first started in March 2020, priorities shifted to checking-in with students, trying to establish and build relationships, and making sure everyone was okay. Although the formal structures of RPs may have dissolved or changed during virtual learning, the focus on relationships and community became a priority even though it proved challenging.

In the current study, COVID had a significant effect on the mental health of students and staff across both cases. These themes align with emerging research on COVID and mental health (APA, 2021). However, this study gives an in-depth analysis on the experiences of staff as opposed to survey responses. Staff across cases described the increased mental health needs for students returning during the 2021-2022 school year as well as the feelings of burnout for staff. Staff at South specifically described how staff burnout and emotional fatigue over several years has been a barrier in effective RP implementation, since RPs require some level of vulnerability. Participants across cases described the social emotional setbacks and stagnation they have witnessed from students returning to in-person instruction during the 2021-2022 school year. Participants

described students struggling with relearning how to behave in the school building and difficulty managing emotions and dealing with conflict. Overall, the current study contributes to the expanding literature on the effects of COVID in schools.

Navigating Staff Issues

The current study contributes to the literature regarding how schools navigate issues of relational harm among staff. Not only was South navigating the return to in-person instruction following a significant disruption to their school community, but the staff were also faced with multiple issues at the start of the year. The two staff events and loss of valued staff affected the staff community during a critical time of rebuilding and reconnecting. Participants at South described frustration with how these events were handled and identified a lack of restoration or community healing among staff. Instances of harm among school staff are not uncommon, however, much of the literature on RPs focuses on student outcomes or experiences with RPs rather than RPs used at the staff level. Themes from this study suggest the importance of providing safe and restorative spaces to process issues of harm among staff.

Analysis of Different Implementation Approaches

Another way in which this study contributes to the literature is by providing an across-case analysis of RPs. Case study is a common approach in the RP literature due to the uniqueness of each individual case and their implementation approaches. However, a multiple case study approach which examines similarities and differences in experiences is not as common. This multiple case study approach provides information on two individual sites but also draws comparisons across sites. Because RP implementation at

each school is such a unique experience, it can be beneficial to see how schools choose to implement RPs and understand their experiences.

Both North and South aim to use a whole-school approach where RPs are integrated across experiences. This was evident in the themes identified as well as in the observations at each site. RPs were described as naturally fitting into the work they had already been doing and it was clear that both sites used various spaces to embed relationship and community-building experiences (e.g., South: POGs, school events; North: PACK, lunch detention, ISS). There were differences in implementation approaches between the two cases, North utilized a more structured and formalized approach (e.g., IIRP) to guide implementation, had a position dedicated to RP implementation, utilized more formal documents regarding RPs, and were further along in their implementation than South. South's approach was more informal or organic, did not have a position dedicated to RP implementation, did not utilize structured documents at the same rate, and was just starting formal RP implementation. Although each case had unique implementation factors (e.g., length of time, degree of structure, training experiences) there were more similarities in their experiences with RPs than significant differences.

Connections to Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) was the theoretical frame which shaped the current study. Social Learning Theory suggests that individuals learn via observing behaviors modeled by others (1977). RP experts suggest that in a truly restorative school, RPs are used by everyone in the school environment and modeling is a critical piece for establishing buy-in (Thorsborne & Blood, 2013). The role of modeling

was identified in several spaces across cases. For South, participants described how they model relationship-building skills (e.g., active listening, empathy) to engage with students and build relationships. RP literature emphasizes how modeling informal RPs (e.g., using affective statements and restorative questions) is part of using a restorative approach (IIRP, 2011). In fact, Avery, a teacher at South, spoke directly about how teachers' views on RPs can influence student attitudes and buy-in. Establishing buy-in with adults in the building and adults modeling these practices are critical components for effective RP implementation. Modeling was also noted as a critical component at North. At North, staff engaged in Staff PACK which was modeled after PACK at the student level. It is beneficial to have teachers engaging in the same experiences as students and can be one approach to establishing buy-in with staff. This experience was described as positive by several staff members at North and as a contributing factor to the strong staff community at North.

Limitations

Although the current study contributes to the literature, there were several limitations to take into consideration. This investigation focused on RP implementation in two unique school communities and is not generalizable to the larger population, which is common with qualitative case study research. Another challenge with qualitative research is navigating the researcher's own biases. Although I engaged in bracketing through reflexive journaling throughout the process to address my own experiences and biases, it is important to note that fully separating this out is not possible. Therefore, my own perspective and experiences with RPs likely informed the way I conceptualized and analyzed the data.

There were limitations regarding the participants who were interviewed in this study. Interviews were conducted with participants who were willing to discuss their experiences with RPs at their school. It is possible that the participants who volunteered buy-in to RPs or had more positive experiences with implementation than individuals who did not volunteer. Moreover, since the current study aims to understand the challenges with RP implementation, it is possible that participants were not fully comfortable sharing negative experiences regarding other staff members or their school. Since this investigation was focused on two small schools, it was critical to ensure confidentiality of participants, therefore, various contextual factors regarding participants' own demographic factors could not be shared.

Recommendations for Future Research

The current study examined the experiences of staff in two charter high schools with RP implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since RPs can look different across developmental levels, it would be interesting to understand more about the experiences of staff in middle or elementary schools with RP implementation. Much of the research has focused on RP implementation in high schools, and this is an area that needs further exploration. Moreover, RP experts describe how implementation can take several years to take hold in a school environment (Morrison et al., 2007), it would be important to understand more about experiences in a longitudinal investigation. For instance, to understand the challenges and successes at various stages of implementation could better inform how to support educators using a developmental approach.

The current study has identified several challenges for implementing RPs in a virtual space during a pandemic. Participants in the current study described virtual

learning as a barrier to establishing meaningful community connections and as ultimately a challenge for RP implementation. It would be beneficial to investigate how RPs can be effectively and meaningfully adapted to virtual learning spaces. RPs have been heavily dependent on in-person interactions and connections, however, more needs to be understood on how to create and maintain relationships and repair harm in virtual settings. One recent chapter by Velez, Butler, Hahn and Latham (2021) explored how RPs could be adapted to online spaces, however, continued research is needed.

Implications

Findings from the current study have implications for individuals who work in or support school environments. Specifically, this study has implications for school counselors, administrators and teachers who are either interested in implementing RPs or are currently engaging in these practices. Implications for training of school professionals and educational policymakers who support schools and influence resources in schools are important to consider.

Implications for School Counselors

School counselors serve as critical support staff in schools and engage in a range of experiences that support holistic student growth. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2019) describes how school counselors are not traditionally viewed as disciplinarians, however, there are several ways school counselors can be involved with shaping disciplinary procedures in schools and contribute to creating an equitable school climate for all students (ASCA, 2019). In a recent position piece, Smith and colleagues (Smith et al., 2018) outline how the work of school counselors aligns significantly with RPs in schools. Smith and colleagues (2018) suggest that school

counselors are perfectly situated to lead restorative efforts on school campuses. Findings from the current study identify several themes regarding the increased mental health struggles for staff and students as a direct result of the pandemic. Specifically, participants described the struggles of students relearning how to be in social situations and managing emotions as they return to in-person instruction. Participants also spoke about the significant mental health challenges exacerbated by the pandemic for both students and staff. School counselors are essential in supporting the social emotional needs of students and staff. Findings from the current study underscore the need for more mental health professionals in schools.

Implications for Administrators

This study has highlighted the importance of modeling at the staff and administrative level for RP implementation. Participants at North shared how RPs used at the staff level (e.g., Staff PACK) can be an effective way to build a strong staff community, which is critical in schools. Participants described how important the framing of RPs is for the students. Participants at South described the challenging task of helping students to unlearn the role of administrators as "hammers" of justice or as a tool for harm and instead viewing administrators as supporters in the restorative process. Themes in this study also suggest ways that administrators can evaluate the structure of their school day. Both North and South have created specific times in the school day dedicated to community or relationship-building. Establishing consistent times for community- building circle experiences can be an important consideration for administration when developing a plan for RP implementation. Participants at North described communication challenges between teachers and administration when it came

to RP interventions. It is important for administrators to be aware of the challenges and issues that teachers deal with so that actions can be taken to properly support teachers. Findings from this study may be helpful for administrators to consider when they begin or continue to engage in RP implementation in their schools.

Implications for Teachers

The current study explores the experiences of school staff with implementing RPs amidst a pandemic. Several themes from this study have implications for teachers who are gearing up for or are currently implementing RPs in their school environment. For example, teachers at South described how they utilize informal RPs in their classrooms as a tool to build relationships with students and to intervene when issues first arise. Modeling of informal RPs has been noted as an important component of RP implementation, and teachers at South echoed this sentiment. Staff across both sites also described how flexibility with RP implementation is critical and has been beneficial in their experiences with RP implementation. This study also highlighted some of the benefits teachers experienced from implementing a restorative approach such as enhancing relationships with their students. This study provides teachers with considerations on how they can engage in leadership at their school with RP implementation. Both North and South made deliberate efforts to include teachers in the leadership of RP implementation. Ideally, these findings could provide a glimpse into how teachers can engage in RP leadership and advocacy in their school.

Implications for Training of School Professionals

Research consistently suggests the benefits for students who have positive relationships with non-parental adults (e.g., Narayan et al., 2018). In a school building,

there are range of adults with whom students can establish close relationships (e.g., teachers. school counselors, school psychologists, administrators), therefore, training school professionals in RPs may be beneficial. Although challenges to establishing staff buy-in did not emerge as a significant theme, this was discussed by participants in both cases. Given the documented challenges in the empirical literature with staff buy-in (e.g., Jain et al., 2014), training programs for school professionals may be an ideal place to integrate RP philosophy and experiences early in their careers. Moreover, mindfully crafting class content and experiences on the topic of RPs may shape the perspectives of school professionals before entering the field. Beyond mere exposure to the topic of RPs, engaging discussion and reflections about conflict or harm. Participation in restorative role play scenarios or participation in circles processes may be beneficial experiences in training programs.

In addition to integrating restorative experiences into training programs for school professionals, it may be important to intentionally assess and build future school professionals' social emotional skills. The current study identifies the critical role of staff modeling relationship skills with students and emotionally engaging in the restorative process. Findings from this study highlight the experience of burnout and mental health struggles for school staff over the past few years. It may be important to focus efforts on growing the social emotional capabilities and supporting future school professionals in their training programs.

Implications for Educational Policy Makers

Although the themes identified in the current study relate primarily to individuals who work directly with students in school settings, there are some implications that are

relevant to individuals who support schools, such as educational policymakers. Participants across cases described challenges with having enough time to implement RPs effectively in their classroom or school environment. Although educational policymakers may not be able to lengthen the school day to create more time, there may be possibilities for expanding resources. Limitations on time connect to limitations of resources. For example, teachers described the difficulties of being able to step out of the classroom and have a restorative conversation or mediation with students. Increasing the personnel in the building could be one way to assist teachers so they are able to step out of the classroom to resolve issues with students. Participants across cases also described intense feelings of burnout, which are also reflected on a national level in the field of education. Increasing funding in schools and support for teachers' mental health may be a critical point of consideration for educational policymakers who shape school budgets.

Conclusion

The aims of the current study were to use a multiple case study approach to (a) understand the experiences of school staff with implementing RPs, (b) identify the challenges or barriers of RP implementation, (c) understand the effect of COVID on RP implementation, and (d) identify similarities and differences across two unique charter high school environments. I used a multiple case study approach consisting of 16 interviews (Eight for each case) with teachers and non-teaching professionals. I used observation and document analysis to triangulate emerging themes in the data.

For research question one, regarding RP implementation experiences, six core themes were identified at South (alignment of RPs, embedding relationship-building opportunities, the preventative nature of RPs in the classroom, the role of structured

flexibility, RPs as a tool to strengthen student-teacher relationships, and to empower students) and seven core themes were identified at North (RP alignment, intentional spaces for relationship building, flexibility of RPs, a strong staff community, collaboration among staff, RPs as a tool to strengthen student-teacher relationships, and a tool for student SEL growth). Across-case analysis (Research sub question 1a) revealed several points of alignment across cases (RP alignment, intentional space for relationship-building, and RPs as a tool to strengthen student-teacher relationships and enhance/empower students' SEL) and differences (South: informal RPs as preventive, structured flexibility; North: strong staff community, staff collaboration, and flexibility).

For research question two, regarding challenges or barriers to RP implementation, there were several points of overlap across cases. Participants at North and South described challenges with student engagement and time. Both cases had themes regarding staff challenges, however, the challenges were different. Participants at South described challenges with RPs not happening at the staff level, whereas staff at North described communication issues. There was also significant overlap of themes for research question three, regarding COVID's effect on RP implementation. Participants at North and South described increased mental health and SEL challenges for students, burnout or concern over teacher's own mental health, and feeling that COVID was disruptive to RP implementation overall.

This study helped me to understand how individuals in school environments experience RP implementation and the challenges they endure. I gained insight into how larger societal issues shape approaches in schools (e.g., racial injustice events, the Pandemic) and how individuals in schools are dynamic and flexible in adapting to these

changes. This study also illuminated the challenges with measuring and fully capturing RPs in schools. RPs are deeply connected to other approaches in schools (e.g., PBIS, trauma-informed care) and embedded into several places in the school environment (ranging from informal to formal practices), making it difficult to fully define what is or is not restorative. I had to be intentional about asking about not only the specific RP interventions (e.g., circles or mediations) but also about how staff use informal approaches (e.g., conversations and questions) to build and repair relationships with students. The experience of interviewing participants was valuable to me as a researcher. I learned about the challenges of asking participants about difficult topics and how critical member checking is while compiling and composing the experiences and stories of individuals. I hope that this study will be informative not only for the schools who participated, but also for any educators who are considering using RPs in their school environment.

References

Abrams, G. B., & Wachtel, J. (2020). *During the COVID-19 crisis, restorative practices can help*. The International Institute for Restorative Practices Graduate School. Retrieved March 16, 2022 from https://www.iirp.edu/news/during-the-covid-19-crisis-restorative-practices-can-help

American Psychological Association. (2020). Stress in America 2020: A national mental health crisis. *Retrieved March 16*, 2022. https://doi.org/10.1037/e509532020-001

American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force. (2008). Are zero tolerance policies effective in the schools? An evidentiary review and recommendations. *The American Psychologist*, *63*(9), 852-862. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.63.9.852

American School Counselor Association (2019a). *The school counselor and discipline.* https://www.schoolcounselor.org/school-counselors-members/publications/position-statements

Amstutz, L. S. & Mullet, J. H. (2015). *The little book of restorative discipline for schools: Teaching responsibility; creating caring climates.* Good Books.

Anderson, C., Barnes, M. S., Beane, C., Bishop, J., Davis, E., Fishkind, P., & Truman, S. (2014). *Restorative practices: Fostering healthy relationships & promoting positive discipline in schools: A guide for educators*. Advancement Project.

https://advancementproject.org/resources/restorative-practices-fostering-healthy-relationships-promoting-positive-discipline-in-schools/

Anyon, Y., Zhang, D., & Hazel, C. (2016). Race, exclusionary discipline, and connectedness to adults in secondary school. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 57*, 342-352. https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12061

Augustine, C. H., Engberg, J., Grimm, G. E., Lee, E., Lin Wang, E., Christianson, K., & Joseph, A. A. (2018). *Can restorative practices improve school climate and curb suspensions? An evaluation of the impact of restorative practices in a mid-sized urban school district*. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2840.html

Backman, O. (2017). High school dropout, resource attainment, and criminal convictions. *Journal of Research in Crime & Delinquency*, *54*(5), 715-749. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022427817697441

Bandura, A., & McClelland, D. C. (1977). *Social learning theory* (Vol. 1). Prentice Hall.

Bazemore, G., & Umbreit, M. (2001). *A comparison of four restorative conferencing models: Juvenile justice bulletin*. US Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/184738.pdf

Bergseth, K. J., & Bouffard, J. A. (2007). The long-term impact of restorative justice programming for juvenile offenders. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 35*(4), 433-451. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2007.05.006

Bethell, C., Jones, J., Gombojav, N., Linkenbach, J., & Sege, R. (2019). Positive

childhood experiences and adult mental and relational health in a statewide

sample: Associations across adverse childhood experiences levels. *JAMA

Pediatrics, 173*(11), e193007. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2019.3007

Bradshaw, C. P., Koth, C. W., Bevans, K. B., Ialongo, N. S., & Leaf, P. J. (2008). The

impact of school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) on

the organizational health of elementary schools. *School Psychology Quarterly, 23*,

462-473. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0012883

Bradshaw, C. P., Mitchell, M. M., & Leaf, P. J. (2010). Examining the effects of

schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and supports on student outcomes:

Results from a randomize controlled effectiveness trial in elementary schools.

Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 12, 133-148.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300709334798

Breedlove, M. Choi, J., & Zyromski, B. (2020). Mitigating the effects of adverse

childhood experiences: How restorative practices in schools support positive

childhood experiences and protective factors. *The New Educator*, 1-19.

https://doi.org/10.1080/1547688x.2020.1807078

Brown, S. M. & Shillington, A.M. (2017). Childhood adversity and the risk of substance

use and delinquency: The role of protective adult relationships. *Child Abuse &

Neglect, 63*, 211-221. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2016.11.006

Bielas, H., Barra, S., Skrivanek, C., Aebi, M., Steinhausen, H-C., Bessler, C., & Plattner,

B. (2016). The associations of cumulative adverse experience and irritability with

mental disorders in detained male adolescent offenders. *Child and Adolescent*

Psychiatry and Mental Health, 10(34), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13034-016-0122-7

Bradshaw, W., Roseborough, D., & Umbreit, M. S. (2006). The effect of victim offender mediation on juvenile offender recidivism: A meta-analysis. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly, 24*, 87-98. https://doi.org/10.1002/crq.159

Brown, S.M. & Shillington, A.M. (2017). Childhood adversity and the risk of substance use and delinquency: The role of protective adult relationships. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 63*, 211-221. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2016.11.006

Choi, J. J., Green, D. L. & Kapp, S. A. (2010). Victimization, victims' needs, and empowerment in victim offender mediation. *International Review of Victimology, 17*(3), 267-290. https://doi.org/10.1177/026975801001700302

Chu, E. M., & Ready, D. D. (2018). Exclusion and urban public high schools: Short-and-long-term consequences of school suspensions. *American Journal of Education, 124*(4), 479-509. https://doi.org/10.1086/698454

Claassen, R. & Claassen, R. (2008). *Discipline that restores: Strategies to create respect, cooperation, and responsibility in the classroom*. BookSurge Publishing.

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). (2020). *What is SEL?*. https://casel.org/what-is-sel/

Copeland, W. E., Shanahan, L., Hinesley, J., Chan, R. F., Aberg, K. A., Fairbank, J. A., van den Oord, E. J. C. G., & Costello, E. J. (2018). Association of childhood trauma exposure with adult psychiatric disorders and functional outcomes. *JAMA Network Open, 1*(7), e184493. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2018.4493

Costello, B., Wachtel, J., & Wachtel, T. (2009). *The restorative practices handbook for teachers, disciplinarians, and administrators: Building a culture of community in schools.* International Institute of Restorative Practices.

Cunneen, C. (2007). Reviving restorative justice traditions. In B. Morrison (Ed.), *Handbook of restorative justice* (pp.113-131).

Craig, J. M., Baglivio, M. T., Wolff, K. T., Piquero, A. R., & Epps, N. (2017). Do social bonds buffer the impact of adverse childhood experiences on reoffending? *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice, 15*(1), 3-20. https://doi.org/10.1177/1541204016630033

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed). Sage.

Curran, F. C. (2016). Estimating the effect of state zero tolerance laws on exclusionary discipline, racial discipline gaps, and student behavior. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 38*(4), 647-668. https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373716652728

Darling-Hammond, S., Fronius, T. A., Sutherland, H., Guckenburg, S., Petrosino, A., & Hurley, N. (2020). Effectiveness of restorative justice in US K-12 schools: A review of quantitative research. *Contemporary School Psychology, 24*, 295-308.

Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017, June). *Effective teacher professional development*. Learning Policy Institute. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56b90cb101dbae64ff707585/t/5ade348e70a 6ad624d417339/1524511888739/NO_LIF~1.PDF

Davis, J. P., Ports, K. A., Basile, K. C., Espelage, D. L., & David-Ferdon, C. F. (2019).

    Understanding the buffering effects of protective factors on the relationship

    between adverse childhood experiences and teen dating violence perpetration.

    Journal of Youth and Adolescence, *48*(12), 2343–2359.

    https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-019-01028-9

Debnam, K. J., Johnson, S. L., Waasdorp, T. E., & Bradshaw, C. P. (2013). Equity,

    connection, and engagement in the school context to promote positive youth

    development. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 24*, 447-459.

    https://doi.org/10.1111/jora.12083

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2017). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. NYU Press.

DePaoli, J., Hernandez, L., & Darling-Hammond, L. (2020). Supporting a restorative

    opening of US schools. Learning in the Time of COVID-19 (blog). August 5,

    Available online: https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/blog/covid-supporting-

    restorative-opening-schools (accessed on 16 March 2022).

Dignity in Schools (n.d.). *The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) FAQ on School

    Climate and Discipline Reform*. https://dignityinschools.org/wp-

    content/uploads/2017/10/1-28-DSC-ESSA-FAQ-Final.pdf.

Evanovich, L. L., Martinez, S., Kern, L., & Haynes, Jr, R. D. (2020). Proactive circles: A

    practical guide to the implementation of a restorative practice. *Preventing School

    Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth, 64*(1), 28-36.

Evans, K., & Lester, J (2012). Zero tolerance: Moving the conversation forward.

    Intervention In School and Clinic, *48*(2), 108-114.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/1053451212449735

Evans, K., & Vaandering, D. (2016*). The little book of restorative justice in education: Fostering responsibility, healing, and hope in schools*. Simon and Schuster.

Fabiano, G. A., Vujnovic, R. K., Waschbusch, D. A., Yu, J., Mashtare, T., Pariseau, M. E., Pelham, W. E., Parham, B. R., & Smalls, K. J. (2013). A comparison of workshop training versus intensive, experiential training for improving behavior support skills in early educators. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 28,* 450–460. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2012.12.001

Felitti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D. F., Spitz, A. M., Edwards, V., Koss, M. P., & Marks, J. S. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults: The adverse childhood experiences (ACE) study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 14*(4), 245-258. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0749-3797(98)00017-8

Fletcher, J. M. & Vaughn, S. (2009). Response to intervention: Preventing and remediating academic difficulties. *Child Development Perspectives*, 3, 30-37. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-8606.2008.00072.x

Forster, M., Gower, A. L., Borowsky, I. W., & McMorris, B. J. (2017). Associations between adverse childhood experiences, student-teacher relationships, and non-medical use of prescription medications among adolescents. *Addictive Behaviors, 68*, 30-34. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2017.01.004

Fox, L., Dunlap, G., Hemmeter, M. L., Joseph, G. E., & Strain, P. S. (2003). The teaching pyramid: A model for supporting social competence and preventing challenging behavior in young children. *Young Children, 58*(4), 48-52. https://doi.org/10.1002/cbl.20134

Gall, J., & Healthfield, M. (2015). Working for justice in Chicago public schools. In M.

Heathfield & D. Fusco (Eds.), *Youth and inequality in education: Global actions in youth work* (pp. 241-258). Routledge.

Gardner, T. W. (2016). *Discipline over punishment: Successes and struggles with restorative justice in schools.* Rowman & Littlefield.

Garnett, B., Moore, M., Kiddie, J., Ballysingh, T. A., Kervick, C. T., Bedinger, L., Smith, L. C., & Sparks, H. (2019). Needs and readiness assessment for implementing school-wide restorative practices. *Improving Schools, 23*(1), 21-32. https://doi.org/10.1177/1365480219836529

Garrison, T. (2007). From parent to protector: The history of corporal punishment in American public schools. *Journal of Contemporary Legal Issues, 16*, 115-120.

Goodman-Scott (2019, March). How to write and publish qualitative research: Questions and conversations. *Evidence-based school counseling conference: Research day.*

González, T. (2012). Keeping kids in schools: Restorative justice, punitive discipline, and the school to prison pipeline. *Journal of Law & Education, 41*(2), 281-335. https://www.sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/law/student_life/journals/jled/index.php

González, T. (2016). Restorative justice from the margins to the center: The emergence of the new norm in school discipline. *Howard Law Journal, 60*(1), 267–308.

Gregory, A., Clawson, K., Davis, A., & Gerewitz, J. (2016). The promise of restorative practices to transform teacher-student relationships and achieve equity in school discipline. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 25*, 1-29. https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2014.929950

Gregory, A., Huang, F. L., Anyon, Y., Eldridge, G., Downing, B., & Bradshaw, C. (2017). An examination of restorative interventions and racial equity in out-of-

school suspensions. *School Psychology Review, 47*(2), 167-182. https://doi.org/10.17105/spr-2017-0073.v472

Hanson, A. L. (2005). Have zero tolerance school discipline policies turned into a nightmare? The American dream's promise of equal educational opportunity grounded in Brown v. Board of Education. *UC Davis Journal of Juvenile Law and Policy, 9*, 289-379.

Harper, K., Ryberg, R., & Temkin, D. (2019). *Black students and students with disabilities remain more likely to receive out-of-school suspensions, despite overall declines*. Child Trends. https://www.childtrends.org/publications/black-students-disabilities-out-of-school-suspensions

Heilbrun, A., Cornell, D., & Lovegrove, P. (2015). Principal attitudes regarding zero tolerance and racial disparities in school suspensions. *Psychology in The Schools*, *52*(5), 489-499. https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.21838

Hyman, I. A., & Snook, P. A. (2000). Dangerous schools and what you can do about them. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *81*(7), 488-498. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ601254

Ingraham, C. L., Hokoda, A., Moehlenbruck, D., Karafin, M., Manzo, C., & Ramirez, D. (2016). Consultation and collaboration to develop and implement restorative practices in a culturally and linguistically diverse elementary school. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, *26*(4), 354-384. https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2015.1124782

International Institute of Restorative Practices (2011). Safer saner schools: Whole school change through restorative practices. http://www.iirp.edu/pdf/SaferSanerSchools-Program.pdf

Jain, S., Bassey, H., Brown, M. A., & Kalra, P. (2014). *Restorative justice in Oakland Schools. Implementation and impact: An effective strategy to reduce racially disproportionate discipline, suspensions, and improve academic outcomes*. www.ousd.k12.ca.us

Jones, E. P., Margolius, M., Rollock, M., Yan, C. T., Cole, M. L., & Zaff, J. F. (2018). *Disciplined and disconnected: How students experience exclusionary discipline in Minnesota and the promise of non-exclusionary alternatives*. America's Promise Alliance. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED586336.pdf

Klassen, S. A., Chirico, D., O'Leary, D. D., Cairney, J., & Wade, T. J. (2016). Linking systemic arterial stiffness among adolescents to adverse childhood experiences. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 56*, 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2016.04.002

Kline, W. B. (2011). Developing and submitting credible qualitative manuscripts. *Counselor Education & Supervision, 47*, 210-217.

Krezmien, M. P., Leone, P. E., & Wilson, M. G. (2014). Marginalized students, school exclusion, and the school-to-prison pipeline. In W. T. Church, D. W. Springer, & A. R. Roberts (Eds.), *Juvenile Justice Sourcebook (2nd ed)* (pp. 267-287). Oxford.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). Critical race theory in education. *The routeledge international handbook of critical education*, 110-122.

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (2006). *Toward a critical race theory of education. Critical race theory in education: All God's children got a song*, 11, 30-36.

Latimer, J., Dowden, C., & Muise, D. (2005). The effectiveness of restorative justice practices: A meta-analysis. *The Prison Journal, 85*(2), 127–144. https://doi.org/10.1177/0032885505276969

Leadership Conference Education Fund (2016). *School discipline provisions in the every student succeeds act*. http://civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/education/School-Discipline-Provisions-in-the-Every-Student-Succeeds-Act.pdf

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.

Loades, M. E., Chatburn, E., Higson-Sweeney, N., Reynolds, S., Shafran, R., Brigden, A., ... & Crawley, E. (2020). Rapid systematic review: the impact of social isolation and loneliness on the mental health of children and adolescents in the context of COVID-19. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, *59*(11), 1218-1239. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2020.05.009

Losen, D., Hodson, C. L., Keith II, M. A., Morrison, K., & Belway, S. (2015). Are we closing the school discipline gap? Center for Civil Rights Remedies. http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/resources/projects/center-for-civil-rights-remedies/school-to-prison-folder/federal-reports/are-we-closing-theschooldisciplinegap/AreWeClosingTheSchoolDisciplineGap_FINAL221.pdf

Losen, D. J., & Skiba, R. J. (2010). *Suspended education: Urban middle schools in crisis.* The UCLA Center for Civil Rights Remedies at The Civil Rights Project. http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/school-discipline/suspended-education-urban-middleschools-in-crisis

Loukas, A. (2007). What is school climate. *Leadership Compass, 5*(1), 1-3.

McClusky, G., Lloyd, G., Stead, J., Kane, J., Riddell, S., & Weedon, E. (2008). 'I was dead restorative today:' From restorative justice to restorative approaches in school. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 38*(2), 199–216. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057640802063262

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*. Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Mihalic, S., Irwin, K., Fagan, A., Ballard, D., & Elliott, D. (2004). *Successful program implementation: Lessons from Blueprints*. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Programs. https://doi.org/10.1037/e300782005-001

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2018). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook*. Sage.

Mitchell, M. M., & Bradshaw, C. P. (2013). Examining classroom influences on student perceptions of school climate: The role of classroom management and exclusionary discipline strategies. *Journal of School Psychology, 51*, 599-610. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2013.05.005

Morrison, B. (2007). Schools and restorative justice In G. Johnstone & D. W. Van Ness (Eds.). *Handbook of Restorative Justice*. Routledge (pp. 325-350).

Morrison, B. E., & Vaandering, D. (2012). Restorative justice: Pedagogy, praxis, and discipline. *Journal of School Violence, 11*(2), 138-155. https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2011.653322

Morrow, S. L. (2005). Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*(2), 250-260. doi: 10.1037/0022-01676.52.2.250

Mowen, T., & Brent, J. (2016). School discipline as a turning point: The cumulative effect of suspension on arrest. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, 53*(5). 628-653. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022427816643135

Narayan, A. J., Rivera, L. M., Bernstein, R. E., Harris, W. W., & Lieberman, A. F.

    (2018). Positive childhood experiences predict less psychopathology and stress in

    pregnant women with childhood adversity: A pilot study of the benevolent

    childhood experiences (BCEs) scale. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *78*, 19–30.

    https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.09.022

Noguera, P. A. (2003). Schools, prisons, and social implications of punishment:

    Rethinking disciplinary practices. *Theory into Practice, 42*(4), 341-350.

    https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4204_12

Noltemeyer, A. L., Ward, R. M., & Mcloughlin, C. (2015). Relationship between school

    suspension and student outcomes: A meta-analysis. *School Psychology Review*,

    44(2), 224-240. https://doi.org/10.17105/spr-14-0008.1

Ohio Department of Education (2019). *Using house bill 318 requirements to create*

    caring communities. http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Student-

    Supports/Creating-Caring-Communities/House-Bill-318

    Requirements.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US.

Ortega, L., Lyubansky, M., Nettles, S., & Espelage, D. L. (2016). Outcomes of a

    restorative

    circles program in a high school setting. *Psychology of Violence*, *6*(3), 459-468.

    https://doi.org/10.1037/vio0000048

Planty, M., Hussar, W., Snyder, T., Kena, G., Kewal Ramani, A., Kemp J. et al. (2009).

    The condition of education. National Center for Education Statistics.

    http://nces.ed.gov/ pubs2009/2009081.pdf

Pranis, K. (2005). *The little book of circle processes: A new/old approach to*

peacemaking. Good Books.

Rehkopf, D. H., Headen, I., Hubbard, A., Deardorff, J., Kesavan, Y., Cohen, A. K., Patil, D., Ritchie, L. D., & Abrams, B. (2016). Adverse childhood experiences and later life adult obesity and smoking in the United States. *Annals of Epidemiology, 26*(7), 488–492. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annepidem.2016.06.003 https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1019&context=education pub

Rosenbaum, J. (2020). Educational and criminal justice outcomes 12 years after school suspension. *Youth & Society, 52*(4) 515-547. https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118x17752208

Ryan-Nicholls, K. D., & Will, C. I. (2009). Rigour in qualitative research: Mechanisms for control. *Nurse Researcher, 16*(3), 70-85.

Schonert-Reichl, Kitil, M. J., & Hanson-Peterson, J. (2017). *To reach the students, teach the teachers: A national scan of teacher preparation and social and emotional learning.* Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED582029

Shabazian, A. N. (2015). The significance of location: Patterns of school exclusionary disciplinary practices in public schools. *Journal of School Violence*, *14*(3), 273-298. https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2014.913254

Sharkey, J. D., & Fenning, P. A. (2012). Rationale for designing school contexts in support of proactive discipline. *Journal of School Violence, 11*, 95–104. https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2012.646641

Shollenberger, T. L. (2015). Racial disparities in school suspension and subsequent

outcomes: Evidence from the national longitudinal survey of youth. In D. J. Losen

(Ed.), *Closing the School discipline gap: Equitable remedies for excessive*

exclusion (pp.31-44). Teachers College Press.

Sircar, S. R. (2016). Students helping students: An alternative to current disciplinary

mechanisms in schools. *Rutgers Journal of Law and Public Policy, 14*(3), 347-

382.

Skiba, R.J., Chung, C.G., Trachok, M., Baker, T.L., Sheya, A., & Hughes, R.L. (2014).

Parsing disciplinary disproportionality: Contributions of infraction, student, and

school characteristics to out-of-school suspension and expulsion. *American*

Educational Research Journal, 51(4), 640-670.

https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831214541670

Skiba R. J., Horner R. H., Chung C., Rausch M. K., May S. L., Tobin T. (2011). Race is

not neutral: A national investigation of African American and Latino

disproportionality in school discipline. *School Psychology Review, 40*, 85-107.

https://doi.org/10.1080/02796015.2011.12087730

Skiba, R., & Rausch, M. K. (2006). *School Disciplinary Systems: Alternatives to*

Suspension and Expulsion. In G. G. Bear & K. M. Minke (Eds.), *Children's needs*

III: Development, prevention, and intervention (pp. 87–102). National

Association of School Psychologists.

Smith, L. C., Garnett, B. R., Herbert, A., Grudev, N., Vogel, J., Keefner, W., Barnett, A.,

& Baker, T. (2018). The hand of professional school counseling meets the glove

of restorative practices: A call to the profession. *Professional School Counseling,*

21(1), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X18761899

Song, S. Y., & Swearer, S. M. (2016). The care before the horse: The challenge and

    promise of restorative justice consultation in schools. *Journal of Educational and*

    Psychological Consultation, 26(4), 313-324.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2016.1246972

Sprague, J., & Tobin, T. (2017). Aligning positive behavioral interventions and supports

    and restorative practices: An implementation fidelity manual. *Draft. University of*

    Oregon, Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior, Eugene.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Sage.

Stake, R. E. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis.* The Guilford Press.

Stinchcomb, J., Bazemore, G., & Riestenberg, N. (2006). Beyond zero tolerance. *Youth*

    Violence and Juvenile Justice, 4(2), 123-147.

Steinberg, M. P., & Lacoe, J. (2017). What do we know about school discipline reform?

    Assessing the alternatives to suspensions and expulsions. *Education Next, 17*(1),

    44-53. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-51257-4_2

Strang, H., Sherman, L. W., Mayo-Wilson, E., Woods, D., & Ariel, B. (2013).

    Restorative justice conferencing (RJC) using face-to-face meetings of offenders

    and victims: Effects on offender recidivism and victim satisfaction. A systematic

    review. *Campbell Systematic Reviews, 9*(1), 1-59.

    https://doi.org/10.4073/csr.2013.12

Sugai, G., & Horner, R. H. (2009). Responsiveness-to-intervention and school-wide

    positive behavior supports: Integration of multi-tiered system approaches. *A*

    Special Education Journal, 17(4), 223-237.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/09362830903235375

Sumner, M. D., Silverman, C. J., & Frampton, M. L. (2010). *School-based restorative justice as an alternative to zero-tolerance policies: Lessons from West Oakland*. Thelton E. Henderson Center for Social Justice. https://www.law.berkeley.edu/files/thcsj/10-2010_School-based_Restorative_Justice_As_an_Alternative_to_Zero-Tolerance_Policies.pdf

Thompson, J. (2016). Eliminating zero tolerance policies in schools: Miami Dade county public schools' approach. *Brigham Young University Education & Law Journal*, (2), 325-349.

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

Tobin, G. A., & Begley, C. M. (2004). Methodological rigour within a qualitative framework. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 48*(4), 388-396. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2004.03207.x

US Department of Education. (n.d.). *Supportive school discipline initiative*. https://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/appendix-3-overview.pdf.

U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (2016). *2013-2014 Civil rights data collection: Key data highlights on equity and opportunity gaps in our nation's public schools*. http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-2013-14.html

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights. (2019). *2015-2016 Civil rights data collection: School climate and safety*. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-2015-16.html

Velez, G. M. (2021). School-Based Restorative Justice: Lessons and Opportunities in a Post-Pandemic World. *Laws*, *10*(3), 1-11. https://doi.org/10.3390/laws10030071

Wald, J., & Losen, D. J. (2003). Defining and redirecting a school-to-prison pipeline. In J. Wald & D. J. Losen (Eds.), *New directions for youth development: Vol. 99. Deconstructing the school-to-prison pipeline* (pp. 9–15). Jossey-Bass. https://doi.org/10.1002/yd.51

Winn, M. T. (2018). Justice on both sides: *Toward a restorative justice discourse in schools.* Sage.

Wong, D. S. W., Cheng, C. H. K., Ngan, R. M. H., & Ma, S. K. (2011). Program effectiveness of *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 55,* 846–862. https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624x10374638

Zehr, H. (2015). *The little book of restorative justice*. Good Books. New York.

Appendix A: Email Invitation to Participate

Request for Participants: Email Script

SUBJECT LINE: EXPERIENCES WITH RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Dear School Staff,

My name is Meghan Breedlove, and I am a doctoral candidate at The Ohio State University. I am completing my dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Colette Dollarhide. The results will be used for my dissertation defense, and for publication. I am conducting a multiple case study to explore the experiences of school staff with implementation restorative practices in schools. The results of this study will be used to understand how restorative practices can be implemented in schools and identify some of the potential successes and challenges to implementation.

Individuals who volunteer to participate in this study will be asked to donate an hour (60 minutes) of their time for an individual interview conducted by one of the researchers. Individuals who volunteer will be contacted to coordinate an interview time. All interviews will be conducted through secure Zoom software. With participant permission, responses will be recorded in order to produce a verbatim transcript. The opportunity to review the transcript will be offered at the time of the interview, and the transcript of the interview will be sent for review upon completion of the transcription. If the request for recording is not granted, the researcher will take detailed notes of the interview that may also be reviewed. Participants will also be asked to provide referrals of additional school staff to participate in the study.

Necessary steps will be taken to protect the confidentiality of the participants and their responses. The anticipated results will contribute to the field of restorative practices in schools. If you are interested in participating in the study, please contact Meghan Breedlove at Breedlove.36@osu.edu, at which time you will be sent the informed consent form and arrange to schedule an interview time.

Kindly,
Meghan Breedlove, MS, MC, LPC
Doctoral Candidate
The Ohio State University

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title:

RESTORATIVE PRACTICE IMPLEMENTATION AND EXPERIENCES ACROSS TWO CHARTER HIGH SCHOOLS: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

Researchers:
Dollarhide & Breedlove

Sponsor:
NA

This is a consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect.

Your participation is voluntary.

Please consider the information carefully, and feel free to ask questions. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to verbally consent to participation prior to beginning the interview, and you can retain this copy of the form. If you decide to participate, you are free to decline to answer any questions during the interview and may withdraw from the study at any point during the interview.

Purpose:

The research team is interested in exploring the implementation process and experiences of school staff (e.g., founders, administrators, teachers, other school staff) who are implementing restorative practices.

Procedures/Tasks:

All participants will be provided this informed consent document to review and asked for verbal consent to participate in the voluntary study. There are no risks to the participants.

The interview will last approximately 60 minutes, and, with permission, will be recorded for analysis. Interviews will take place through a secure, online Zoom meeting. For Zoom participants: We will work to make sure that no intercepts your interview responses without approval. But, because we are using the Internet, there is a chance that someone could access your online responses without permission. In some cases, this information could be used to identify you. During the interview, the participants will select

pseudonym, which will be used to identify the participant. After transcription, the tape will be destroyed so that there will be no connection between the identity of the respondents and the transcript. All responses will be attributed to the pseudonyms in any publication of the results. Contact information for respondents without attached pseudonym will be retained for member checking and any follow-up interview, and this information will be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked office for 5 years after the end of the study.

Duration:

Subjects will partake in interviews, which will last approximately 60 minutes.

You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The Ohio State University. You may also decline to answer any question during the interview.

Risks and Benefits:

There are no risks to respondents because the requested information is not threatening. Benefits include results that will contribute to the literature on restorative practice implementation in schools.

Confidentiality:

Subjects will select a pseudonym at the beginning of the interview, which will be the only form of identification. There will be no way to connect names to the participants. Recordings will be destroyed after transcription. Records for this study will be kept in locked cabinets in locked offices of the PI for at least 5 years after the study.
Efforts will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law. Also, the following groups may review records (as applicable to the research):

• Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;

• The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices;

• The sponsor, if any, or agency (including the Food and Drug Administration for FDA-regulated research) supporting the study.

Incentives:

No monetary incentives will be given for participation in the study. However, the information gathered from participants will be additive to the field of restorative practices in schools.

Participant Rights:

You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you are a student or employee of the Ohio State University, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status.

You may discontinue participation in this study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits and may also decline to answer any question during the interview. By verbally agreeing to this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.

This study has been determined Exempt from IRB review.

Contacts and Questions:

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, or if you feel you have been harmed as a result of study participation; you may contact Dr. Colette Dollarhide at Dollarhide.1@osu.edu.

For questions about your rights as someone taking part in this study, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-614-688-4792 or 1-800-678-6251. You may call this number to discuss concerns or complaints about the study with someone who is not part of the research team.

Informed Consent

Your de-identified information may be used or shared with other researchers without your additional informed consent.

By voluntarily participating in this study you are giving your informed consent.

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Note: before starting the interview, briefly greet the participant and try to connect with them/build rapport. Thank them for their expertise and passion, and for volunteering to be a part of this important study.

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me about Restorative Practices. I imagine you are extremely busy, and I appreciate you taking the time to talk to me today.
Before we get started, I would like to confirm that you are comfortable with the informed consent document you have received and to see if you have any questions.
The interview should last about 60 minutes and will be recorded for later transcription. If at any time you wish to stop the interview or to not answer a question, you are completely free to do so without penalty. I will take all necessary precautions to protect your anonymity, the anonymity of your school district, school, and students. After the interview is transcribed, I will blind any identifying information and email the transcribed interview back to you to see if you would like to change, clarify, or add anything.
Also, participants often use a pseudonym, such as a favorite name, that I can use during our interview. Is this something you'd like to use?
Before I hit the record button and we begin the interview do you have any questions?

Qualitative Interview Questions

Note: suggestions when interviewing: use your counseling skills: reflecting feeling and content to help clients expand; summarizing; probing, etc. If engaging in a semi-structured interview, start with planned questions, then ask follow-up probes based on the content/direction of the interview. Last, when asking and responding to questions, aim to remain somewhat neutral, rather than reinforcing/praising their responses.

Interview Questions

1) Tell me about your role here at the school.
2) How would you define Restorative Practices (RPs)?
3) How were you first introduced to RPs? What training did you receive?
4) How are RPs used here and how are you involved in RPs?
5) Tell me about how RPs are supported here at the school.
6) How are RPs communicated with students? Families? The community?
7) Describe experiences you have had with implementing RPs.
   a. Tell me about any specific RP interventions you have been part of (e.g., circles, mediations, family conferences)

       b. Tell me about any positive of successful experiences you have had with implementing RPs.

       c. Tell me about any challenges you have experienced with implementing RPs.

8) Describe any experiences you have had with RPs used at the staff level or to deal with issues among staff.

Demographic Questions
1) Age
2) Gender Identity
3) Race/ Ethnicity
4) Degree
5) Position on campus
6) Length of time in field (total)
7) Length of time in position at school

After asking all interview questions:

Thank you again for helping me to better understand RPs. This interview will be transcribed over the next several weeks and I will be in touch soon to get your feedback on some of the information I am gathering from the interview for you to check and provide feedback.

Turn off recording device when the call ends.

After the Interview:
- Save audio/video file to Carmen Zoom Cloud Storage
- Complete field notes
- Complete reflexive journal
- Obtain and check transcript for errors

Adapted from: Goodman-Scott (2019, March). How to write and publish qualitative research: Questions and conversations. *Evidence-based school counseling conference: Research day.*

Appendix D: Observation Protocol

Observation Protocol (adapted from Creswell & Poth, 2018 and Merriam, 1998)

Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes
1) **The physical setting** (what does the physical environment look like? What physical objects or resources are around?)	My personal reactions to the observed event as it is occurring.
2) **The participants** (Who is present in the space and why? How many people? What are their roles?)	
3) **Activities and interactions** (What is going on? How is what is being observed structured or unstructured? What are the norms of the activity or interaction?)	
4) **Conversation** (What is the content of conversations? Who is speaking or who is not?)	
5) **Subtle factors** (Nonverbal communication such as body language, posture, physical appearance, physical space)	